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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
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Systems of Subordination:  
Race, Culture, and Imperial Order in the Gold Rush Pacific

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in History

by

Stephanie Narrow

Dissertation Committee:  
Professor David Igler, Chair  
Associate Professor Laura J. Mitchell  
Professor Yong Chen

2023



## DEDICATION

For

Grandma Rosie,  
*Recuérdame...Te llevo en mi corazón.*

and

Popo,  
*Remember me...I hold you in my heart.*



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## NOTE ON CONTENT AND DATES

“Systems of Subordination” contains visual and printed primary source materials that include violence, slurs, and racialized depictions of peoples of Chinese, Native, and African descent. In certain instances, particularly disturbing words or phrases have been redacted by the author, as indicated in the footnotes.

Dates for British Parliamentary, Colonial Office, and Foreign Office records are purposefully listed in the English style. All other dates follow the American system.

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I am honored and humbled to have found a wonderful community of scholars, mentors, and friends at UC Irvine. Sharon Block, Vicki L. Ruiz, and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu all treated me as a valued "equal sister" and saved me a seat at the table. My "grad gals"—Rachael De La Cruz, Clare Gordon Bettencourt, Olivia Hanninen, and Sarah Mellors Rodriguez—despite the thousands of miles sometimes separating us, you all kept me grounded, laughing, and loved. My "golden" cohort—Noah Patterson Hanohano Dolim, Javiera Letelier, Brian Spivey—we began our journey together in 2017, and all walked together six years later. Every Ph.D. student should be lucky enough to have such a thoughtful and supportive group of friends. This dissertation, quite literally, would not exist without the support of my writing group partners: Adebisi Akinyemi, Caroline Collins, Cristina de Haro, Danielle del Vicario, Spencer Gomez, Maryam Hassani, Pratchi Mahapatra, Vida Rebello, and Bedros Torosian. You kept me accountable and encouraged me to show up on the days where I wanted nothing more than to wallow in my bed.

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“Empires, Oceans, and Emotion: Unexpected Encounters in the Archive,” Americas and Oceania Collections Blog, Eccles Centre for American Studies, The British Library, August 2022.

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Systems of Subordination: Race, Culture, and Imperial Order in the Gold Rush Pacific

by

Stephanie Narrow

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Irvine, 2023

Professor David Igler, Chair

“Systems of Subordination” utilizes diplomatic correspondences from British and American consuls in the Pacific to explore these thickening networks of governance in an age of imperial expansion. It views the convergence of private and governmental interests through the lens of Chinese immigration, and diplomatic interventions from the American consuls stationed in Melbourne and Hong Kong and the British consul in San Francisco. This dissertation argues that print media and diplomacy—respectively framed as the *de facto* and *de jure* pillars of empire—shaped the coeval development of race-based laws and ideologies within, and between, British and American empires in the gold-rush Pacific. Moving beyond the comparative, it explores how rapid developments in transportation and communications technologies connected people, ideas, and laws between California and the British Empire in Hong Kong, Australia, and British Columbia.



## INTRODUCTION

### DIPLOMACY AND DIASPORA: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON PACIFIC GOLD RUSHES

On May 4, 1858, British Consul in San Francisco, William Lane Booker, sat at his desk at 126 California Street to pen an urgent dispatch to the Secretary of the Foreign Office. News had just arrived via the daily papers, reporting that eight days prior the California Legislature passed “An Act to prevent the further immigration of Chinese or Mongolians to this State.” The act built upon an 1855 statute that sought to “discourage” Chinese immigration. Both measures sought to stop the steady flow of Chinese immigrants into the state following the 1848 discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada foothills.<sup>1</sup> This most recent move towards a wholesale ban of immigration from China signaled growing xenophobia and anti-Chinese racism in the state. Booker enclosed with his letter to the Foreign Office a newspaper clipping that printed the precise language of the 1858 act. The law not only barred Chinese from entering the state, but also threatened “any [foreign] captain or commander” of vessels that carried Chinese into California with a misdemeanor charge and minimum \$400 fine per person transported.<sup>2</sup> Booker must have presumed that the act would not only impact the lucrative passenger trade between the British colony of Hong Kong and California but may potentially ripple outwards to affect broader trans-Pacific commerce. As he signed his name to the missive, the sounds of a bustling city would have drifted in through the open window of the consulate—which also served as Booker’s private residence as well as the headquarters for his branch of the Monarch Fire Assurance

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<sup>1</sup> “An Act to Discourage the Immigration to this State of Persons who cannot become Citizens thereof,” Chapter 153, Statutes of California (1855), pp. 194–95.

<sup>2</sup> “An Act to prevent the further immigration of Chinese or Mongolians to this State,” Chapter 313, Statutes of California (1858), 295–96.

Company. His building stood just a few blocks southwest from the crowded docks of the wharf. There, a deckhand would load the mailbag containing his letter onto one of the many transoceanic ships departing the city. Less than six weeks later, the Foreign Secretary in London opened Booker's dispatch, then copied the contents of the consul's letter to the Colonial Governor of Hong Kong, Sir John Bowring. News of California's discriminatory legislation circumnavigated the globe, propelled by interconnected systems of imperial bureaucracy and advancing transportations and communications technologies.

Consuls like Booker worked within a complex web of transimperial bureaucracy, commerce, legislation, print media and immigration that crisscrossed the nineteenth-century Anglo-American Pacific. "Systems of Subordination" utilizes diplomatic correspondences from British and American consuls in the Pacific to explore these thickening networks of governance in an age of imperial expansion. It views the convergence of private and governmental interests through the lens of Chinese immigration, and diplomatic interventions from the American consuls stationed in Melbourne and Hong Kong and the British consul in San Francisco. This dissertation argues that print media and diplomacy—respectively framed as the *de facto* and *de jure* pillars of empire—shaped the coeval development of race-based laws and ideologies within, and between, British and American empires in the gold-rush Pacific. Moving beyond the comparative, it explores how rapid developments in transportation and communications technologies connected people, ideas, and laws between California and the British Empire in Hong Kong, Australia, and British Columbia.

This work relies upon two important framings. Firstly, the narrow temporal focus on the 1850s is deliberate. This decade saw the outbreak of gold rushes throughout the Anglo-American Pacific: starting first in California, then New South Wales and Victoria in Australia, and then finally in British Columbia in 1858. However, the decade of the 1850s remains understudied in

histories of the Chinese diaspora, westward expansion across North America, and broader political histories of the Pacific world. William Deverell argues that 1850s California is treated as a time of transition, and he notes the dearth of scholarship analyzing the international context and consequences of the gold rush.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, broader scholarship on Chinese America privileges the early years of the California gold rush (1849-1852), Chinese railroad workers in the 1860s, and Exclusion Era (1882-1943) politics.<sup>4</sup> Works on Chinese communities in British Columbia favor Canada's exclusion era (1885-1945) or only provide glancing references to the earlier decades of Chinese settlement in the region.<sup>5</sup> Recent works by Kornel Chang, Mae Ngai, Elizabeth Sinn, and Heidi Tinsman analyze the Chinese diaspora in transnational and transpacific contexts, but their collective scholarship speaks to the global significance of the diaspora, and largely address the post-1860 era.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, my deliberate focus on a single decade allows

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<sup>3</sup> William Deverell, "The 1850s," in *A Companion to California History*, William Deverell and David Igler, eds. (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 163.

<sup>4</sup> See: Gordon H. Chang, *Ghosts of Gold Mountain: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2019); Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants Since 1882* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005); Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: WWNorton, 2000); Mark Kanazawa, "Immigration, Exclusion, and Taxation: Anti-Chinese Legislation in Gold Rush California," *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (2005): 779–805; Manu Karuka, *Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> See: Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989); Robert Edward Wynne, *Reaction to the Chinese in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia, 1850-1910* (New York: Arno Press, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> See: Kornel Chang, "Circulating Race and Empire: Transnational Labor Activism and the Politics of Anti-Asian Agitation in the Anglo-American Pacific World, 1880-1910," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 96, No. 3 (2009): 678–701; Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Mae M. Ngai, "Chinese Gold Miners and the 'Chinese Question' in Nineteenth-Century California and Victoria," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 101, No. 4 (March 1, 2015): 1082–1105; Elizabeth Sinn, *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: University Press, 2013); Heidi Tinsman, "Narrating Chinese Massacre in the South American War of the Pacific," *Journal of Asian American Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2019): 277-313.

for the broad geographic scope of this global history. In doing so, it offers a microhistory of global phenomena, echoing Jeffrey Wasserstrom's endeavors "to present a series of illuminating windows onto the local past....know[ing] that only some things will end up inside the frame."<sup>7</sup> The frame of this study moves between four different sites around the Pacific Ocean, focusing on trade, transit, and bureaucracy in San Francisco, British Columbia, Melbourne, and Hong Kong.

Secondly, I frame California as a project of the American Empire. The 1850s marked a crucial moment where America fulfilled its vision of a continental empire, then extending those aspirations outward toward the Pacific where it would establish military and territorial control of several Pacific islands within the next hundred years. Even British contemporaries perceived California as existing in a colonial relationship to the larger United States. In 1851, Lord Stanley—former Secretary of State for War and the Colonies and future Prime Minister—argued in Parliament that the United States "have no colonial possessions, one distant possession only excepted....I mean California."<sup>8</sup> This understanding of California as a terminus of America's continental empire borrows from Paul Kramer's conception of empire as a process and category of analysis predicated on naturalizing hierarchies of power and producing relations of discipline, dispossession, extraction, and exploitation.<sup>9</sup> Anglo-American imperialism in the mid-nineteenth century relied upon control of land, people, and resources. The British and American empires' insatiable needs for control were exercised primarily through a combination of bureaucracy, legislation, commerce, and colonial violence. Print media, including newspapers and political cartoons, reinforced these imperial aims and packaged them for public consumption. California,

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<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Wasserstrom, *Global Shanghai, 1850-2010: A History in Fragments* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 14.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Smith-Stanley, 14th Earl of Derby. "The Navigation Laws" in the House of Lords. Official Report of debates in Parliament. Last modified 1851. Hansard 1803-2005.

<sup>9</sup> Paul A. Kramer, "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World," *The American Historical Review*, Volume 116, Issue 5, December 2011, Pages 1348–1391.

like settler-colonial possessions in the British Pacific, enforced race-based hierarchies to support the capitalistic drive of empire. Concepts of racial differences became increasingly codified in the 1850s, reflecting the anxieties of white settlers as well as the emerging ideologies about race.

“Systems of Subordination” examines a pivotal period in the longer histories of anti-Asian exclusion, transimperial exchanges, gold rush legacies, and settler colonialism in the Pacific. The 1850s saw overlapping gold discoveries across Anglo-American Pacific rim empires: first in California in 1848, then in Australia in 1851, and lastly in British Columbia in 1858. The discoveries precipitated a massive swell of immigration to these regions, transforming colonial outposts into vibrant economic centers within the course of a decade. While people from across the globe flocked to the Pacific gold fields, one of the most significant streams of immigration came from South China.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, it is estimated that over 300,000 Chinese voluntarily emigrated to these U.S. and British settler regions, most of whom emigrated from Southern China via the British colony of Hong Kong.<sup>10</sup> Population data for California Chinese vary, due in part to loss of census bureau data and differences between Chinese and American sources.<sup>11</sup> However, conservative estimates place the population of Chinese in the state at 1,000-7000 in 1850 to nearly 35,000 in 1860.<sup>12</sup> When news of new gold discoveries in Fraser Canyon, British Columbia reached California in 1858, Chinese followed the flow of other American and international miners northward. Patricia Roy notes that early estimates of Chinese in British Columbia are imprecise, owing largely to the fact that an official colonial government was only

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<sup>10</sup> An almost equivalent number—nearly 250,000—of Chinese were sent by Europeans as indentured laborers to Caribbean plantations. Mae Ngai, *The Chinese Question: The Gold Rushes, Chinese Migration, and Global Politics* (New York: WW Norton, 2022), 3.

<sup>11</sup> For an extended analysis about the difficulties in accurate reporting on Chinese populations in gold rush California, see Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 51-53.

<sup>12</sup> Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 52.

established in late 1858. She estimates that there were approximately 4,000 Chinese in British Columbia during the height of its gold rush in the mid-1860s.<sup>13</sup> In the western Pacific, two simultaneous gold rushes in Victoria and New South Wales brought thousands of settlers in the 1850s. While gold was first discovered in Sydney in 1851, the Victoria rush surpassed that of its predecessor. Like other rushes, early census data for Chinese residents is unreliable. Victoria newspapers reported that there were 25,424 Chinese living in the colony in 1857, comprising approximately 16 percent of the total population.<sup>14</sup> In California, Chinese never comprised more than 10 percent of the total state population, but in 1860 was the largest foreign-born group.<sup>15</sup> Alongside Chinese, miners from Mexico, Chile, Europe, and Ireland flocked to gold rush sites throughout the Anglo-American Pacific.

The resulting demographic and infrastructure transformations wrought by the gold strikes necessitated bureaucratic oversight. Both local and imperial governance responded to rapidly evolving political situations and the need to manage heterogeneous populations and the accompanying expansion of trans-Pacific commerce. While state and colonial legislatures have occupied a central focus in existing scholarship, diplomats have been sidelined in these histories. Though the reason for this oversight is unclear, it is most likely attributed to the fact that foreign diplomats and dignitaries did not exercise the same direct political power as state and colonial governing bodies. Some scholars, like Beth Lew-Williams, note the important role played by diplomats in shaping Chinese immigration in the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> For instance, diplomats in China facilitated the Burlingame-Seward treaty in 1868, which (temporarily) eased the tension

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<sup>13</sup> Roy, *A White Man's Province*, x-xi.

<sup>14</sup> "Population of Victoria," *Mount Alexander Mail* (Victoria, Australia), September 18, 1857.

<sup>15</sup> Sucheng Chan, "A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, and Racism in the California Gold Rush," *California History*, Vol. 79, No. 2 (2000), 49, 73.

<sup>16</sup> Beth Lew-Williams, "Before Restriction Became Exclusion: America's Experiment in Diplomatic Immigration Control." *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (February 2014), 24–56.

surrounding Chinese immigration to the United States. Lew-Williams focuses primarily on ambassadors and ministers plenipotentiaries, who were able to enter into treaties and agreements on behalf of their home governments. Minor diplomats, like consuls, are often left out of the analysis. Anglo-American consuls were among the first dignitaries assigned to foreign posts, providing vital information back to their home governments while simultaneously navigating the ever-changing bureaucracy in developing regions.

Due in equal measure to expanding imperial borders and commercial interests, British and American governments established several consular posts throughout the mid-nineteenth century Pacific. The United States established a consular post in Hong Kong in 1843, a year after China's cession of the island to the British in the Treaty of Nanking.<sup>17</sup> In Australia, the U.S. appointed a consul in Sydney, New South Wales in 1836. But with the 1851 discovery of gold just north of Melbourne prompted the creation of the crown colony of Victoria, and in turn the U.S. Department of State established a new consular post in Melbourne the following year. Across the Pacific, in 1843 the Foreign Office formally appointed James A. Forbes as consul Monterey during Mexican rule. However, upon the cession of California to the United States in 1848 and the outbreak of the California gold rush, a new British consulate was established in San Francisco in 1851. Like California and Australia, the gold rush also precipitated the establishment of a consul in British Columbia. The 1858 discovery of gold in Fraser's Canyon brought a flurry of commercial and political activity to the region. Though falling short of the scale of the Australia and California rushes, the Fraser Canyon strike likewise led to the creation of British Columbia's as a crown colony in late 1858; three years later Allen Francis was

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<sup>17</sup> Though it dealt directly with the British colonial government in Hong Kong, this was the first U.S. official U.S. consular post in China. An unofficial consular representative existed in Guangzhou since the late-eighteenth century to deal primarily with trade, but this individual was not formally affiliated with the U.S. government and not recognized by the Qing government as an official diplomat.

appointed U.S. consul in the capital city of Victoria. Both British and American consuls were primarily tasked with supporting commercial interests, but their duties often extended beyond economic affairs. Most consuls in this period found themselves embroiled in legislative, judicial, and immigration issues. British and American consuls in the Pacific are vital to understanding how these national and transimperial issues played out, as they had one of the best, on-the-ground views in this period.

“Systems of Subordination” seeks to explore the sociopolitical and economic foundations of what is today identified as white supremacy and systemic inequality. George M. Fredrickson’s seminal work defined white supremacy as “attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the rise of blatant forms of white or European dominance over “nonwhite” populations” that requires “systemic and self-conscious efforts to make race or color a qualification” for inclusion.<sup>18</sup> This dissertation focuses on one of the pillars of that complex scaffold: how the British and American empires in the nineteenth-century Pacific coevally developed systems of subordination that targeted nonwhite peoples, focusing specifically on Chinese immigrant communities.<sup>19</sup>

In the United States, many attempts at Asian exclusion first began as legislative efforts to control, and later restrict, Chinese immigrants. The well-documented historiography of Asian exclusion in the U.S. includes foundational works by Erica Lee, Beth Lew-Williams, and Roger Daniels.<sup>20</sup> However, these seminal works focus primarily on the Exclusion Era immigration

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<sup>18</sup> George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1981), xi.

<sup>19</sup> Though in this period these same issues also carried profound and lasting impacts upon Indigenous communities and peoples of African descent, especially in American contexts.

<sup>20</sup> Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*; Lee, *At America’s Gates*; Beth Lew-Williams, *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).



policies and explore how Chinese in America navigated discrimination following the 1882 passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Others have explored Chinese in the American West in the 1850s and 1860s. Sue Fawn Chung, Suecheng Chan, and Gordon H. Chang explore the social histories of Chinese communities and laborers during the immediate and post-gold rush era.<sup>21</sup> Over the last few decades scholarship has noticeably taken a “transnational turn,” promoted largely by colonial studies.<sup>22</sup> With this broader reframing, scholars including Elliot Young, Madeline Hsu, Elizabeth Sinn, Adam McKeown, Yong Chen, and Kornel Chang have thought alongside and beyond borders to analyze Asian exclusion from transnational and trans-Pacific perspectives.<sup>23</sup>

More recent historiographical trends lean towards even larger frames of study. Following Jerry Bentley’s reminder, the “global turn” allows historians to move beyond the nation-state to analyze large-scale processes like imperial expansion, mass migrations, transfers of technology, and the spread of ideas and ideologies.<sup>24</sup> It is within this global framework that I situate this dissertation, similar to Mae Ngai’s recent study, *The Chinese Question*, which explores how Chinese communities during the age of global gold rushes “were born of a powerful alchemy of

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<sup>21</sup> Suecheng Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Chang, *Ghosts of Gold Mountain*; Sue Fawn Chung, *In Pursuit of Gold: Chinese American Miners and Merchants in the American West. United States* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Micol Seigel, "Beyond Compare: Comparative Method After the Transnational Turn," *Radical History Review*, No. 91 (2005): 63.

<sup>23</sup> Kornel Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*; Madeline Y. Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, and Hawaii 1900-1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*; Elliott Young, *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era through World War II* (Chapel Hill North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Jerry H. Bentley, “The Task of World History,” in Jerry H. Bentley (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of World History* (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2011), 10, 12-13.

race and money—colored labor and capitalism, colonialism and financial power.”<sup>25</sup> Where “Systems of Subordination” differs from Ngai’s work is in its framing of the important roles of technology, media, and diplomacy in shaping the Chinese diaspora and Anglo-American imperial expansion in the Pacific.

In exploring the role of technology and media, I build upon the transnational focus of Benedict Anderson and Joel H. Wiener. In considering the influence of Anglo-American print media, this work turns to Anderson’s understandings of print capitalism, “imagined communities,” and the homogenization of “print language.” I view such “languages-as-power” as integral components of empire. Indeed, the English language expanded its reach due to the expansion of the British and American empires, as evidenced by the proliferation of English-language newspapers published in foreign locales like China. The spread of the English language, and its supplantation of local dialects in colonial peripheries, underscores Anderson’s idea of “administrative centralization” that was centered within the various metropolises of the British and American empires.<sup>26</sup> Though Anderson is concerned with the nation-state, by focusing on a shared tradition of English language we may feasibly extend his analysis to explore how racialized hierarchies of power were communicated within and between English-speaking empires. Wiener emphasizes the transnational connections between the United States and England, claiming that the press in both countries reinforced “joint products of a common culture [that were] indefinably transatlantic in sensibility.”<sup>27</sup> Earlier studies of British media

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<sup>25</sup> Ngai, *The Chinese Question*, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 37, 56.

<sup>27</sup> Joel H. Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press, 1830s-1914: Speed in the Age of Transatlantic Journalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 4.

were nationalistic in scope, concerned primarily with circulation within England.<sup>28</sup> However, recent work by Paul French, Mary L. Shannon, and Simon J. Potter responds to this insularity by tracing the role of the press in Britain's colonial holdings, viewing it through a more global lens. Though these important works focus on the press' influence within the British empire, only a few offer transnational and/or transimperial analyses.<sup>29</sup> This dissertation's focus on transnational systems of discourse highlights the connections between mass media and politics, while also emphasizing the role of the press in producing and circulating racialized representations of nonwhite communities in the Anglo-American Pacific.

Both circuits of media and imperial bureaucracy relied upon nascent systems of global communications technologies to connect, and govern, the growing Anglo-American world. Transmissions from peripheral colonies to their political metropole, and then again *between* the metropolises of allied nation-states, required a tripartite cooperation between steamships, overland telegraphs, and submarine cable telegraphs. Recent scholarship builds upon the work of sociologist Bruno Latour, who argues that such communications technologies stabilized the circulation of information between various European and intellectual metropolises. These "centres of calculation" were both influenced by and contributed to global meanings of Western superiority.<sup>30</sup> I assert that domestic and international consumers of these periodicals demanded

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<sup>28</sup> See: Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (New York: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1985); Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press*, 4.

<sup>29</sup> Paul French, *Through the Looking Glass: China's Foreign Journalists from Opium Wars to Mao* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009); Simon J. Potter, "Journalism and Empire in an English-Speaking World: The *Review of Reviews*," in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 281-298; Mary L. Shannon, "Colonial Networks and the Periodical Marketplace," in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 203-223.

<sup>30</sup> Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 215-257

the most up-to-date reporting from peripheral Anglo-American territories, and in turn the international press exerted considerable pressure and influence upon the advancement of these communications technologies to meet the increasingly insatiable demands of its readership. Some scholars, such as Harold Innis, argue that the expansion of the press was the driving force behind the development of communications and transportation technologies.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, advancements in existing systems of overland and submarine telegraphs and railroads increased the appetite for public consumption of news via print media, in turn encouraged the expansion of railroads and telegraph lines to satiate the circulation of information.<sup>32</sup> As James Carey argues, the advent of the telegraph was a unique technology that separated communication from the constraints of space and time, as sending telegraph messages made the exchange of information near-instantaneous. He writes that “before the telegraph, ‘communication’ was used to describe transportation...[but] the telegraph freed communication from the constraints of geography.”<sup>33</sup>

Much like broader scholarship on immigration and the American West, histories of technologies in the United States often overlook the 1850s in favor of a focus on the Northeast during the first and second industrial revolutions of the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> But by shifting the geographic lens to focus instead on the Pacific, we see that the 1850s marked the beginning of

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<sup>31</sup> Harold Innis, *Political Economy in the Modern State* (Toronto: Ryerson Press: 1946), 32.

<sup>32</sup> Innis, *Political Economy*, 32.

<sup>33</sup> James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 1992), 203-204.

<sup>34</sup> For seminal works on the industrial revolution in U.S. and world history, see: T.S. Ashton, *The Industrial Revolution, 1760-1830* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1997); C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Austria: Wiley, 2004); Jack A. Goldstone, “Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the ‘Rise of the West’ and the Industrial Revolution,” *Journal of World History*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2002): 323–89; Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: From 1750 to the Present Day* (United Kingdom: Penguin, 1990); William Rosen, *The Most Powerful Idea in the World: A Story of Steam, Industry, and Invention* (United States: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Peter N. Stearns, *The Industrial Revolution in World History* (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2020); E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (United States: Open Road Media, 2016); Jan de Vries, “The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution,” *The Journal of Economic History* 54, no. 2 (1994): 249–70.

this region's own "revolutionary period." The discoveries of gold throughout the Anglo-American Pacific prompted the immediate expansion of transportations and communications technologies. The need to move people and information to and from these resulted in the massive expansion of telegraphs, steamships, railways, toll roads, and bridges, in turn spurring infrastructural and environmental transformations across Anglo-American empires.

Indeed, advancements in existing systems of overland and submarine telegraphs and railroads increased the appetite for public consumption of news via print media, in turn encouraged the expansion of railroads and telegraph lines to satiate the circulation of information.<sup>35</sup> No longer did news require the long transit across time and space; the sending and receiving of information became near-instantaneous.<sup>36</sup> Advancements in trans-oceanic passenger ships also ushered in a new age of (im)migration. Many of these vessels also carried goods, gold dust, newspapers, and mail. The circulation of news via personal letters and print media spread information at unprecedented rates; mail ships also transported political and diplomatic correspondences, the very lifeblood of imperial administration that brought the edges of empire into ever closer control of the British and American empires.

What began as a research project focused on transimperial media representations of non-white communities in the Pacific turned into a diplomatic history after a serendipitous discovery in the UK National Archives in Kew. Here I happened upon several large folios of correspondences between the San Francisco consul general and the Foreign Office. While reading through the thousands of pages of letters, I discovered that the moments when the consuls deviated from their perfunctory reporting of commerce were when they reflected on the discrimination California Chinese experienced in the state. Upon reviewing secondary literature,

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<sup>35</sup> Innis, *Political Economy*, 32.

<sup>36</sup> Carey, *Communication as Culture*, 203.

I was disappointed to find little on British and American consuls in Australia and California.<sup>37</sup> Most scholarship on consular histories in this region focus on China consuls, especially those in the major port cities of Hong Kong and Canton. Elizabeth Sinn incorporates diplomatic records from the American consulate in Hong Kong in her analysis on trans-Pacific Chinese communities, though her work is more a social history of the Chinese diaspora.<sup>38</sup> Specifically, Emily Whewall emphasizes on the influence of British consuls in Chinese treaty ports, specifically the extent of their legal connections across British consular posts in China.<sup>39</sup> There has been a recent upswing in diplomatic histories, but most that incorporate consular records focus on twentieth-century Latin America and transnational labor contracts with the United States.<sup>40</sup> What follows is my attempt to flesh out this historiographical opening by offering a transimperial study of technology, print media, immigration, and diplomacy in the 1850s Anglo-American Pacific. Chapter One explores the networks of transportation and communications technologies in the 1850s Pacific, arguing that these technologies shaped the logics of

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<sup>37</sup> Apart from Elizabeth Sinn, who discusses the Hong Kong consulate in *Pacific Crossing*, most secondary works that integrate consular histories during the Pacific gold rushes offer only glancing references to the British and American consuls during this era and/or are several decades old. See: Philip M. Hamer, "British Consuls and the Negro Seamen Acts, 1850-1860," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (May, 1935), 138-168; A. P. Nasatir, "International Rivalry for California and the Establishment of the British Consulate," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (March 1967); Roberta J. Park, "British sports and pastimes in San Francisco, 1848-1900," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 1:3, 300-317; D. C. M. Platt, "The Role of the British Consular Service in Overseas Trade, 1825-1914," *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1963), 494-512; Laura A. White, "The United States in the 1850's as Seen by British Consuls," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (March 1933), 509-536.

<sup>38</sup> Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*.

<sup>39</sup> Emily Whewall, *Law Across Imperial Borders: British consuls and Colonial Connections on China's Western Frontiers, 1880-1943* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 2019).

<sup>40</sup> See: Gilbert G. González, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest* (University of Texas Press, 2010); Maria L. Quintana, *Contracting Freedom: Race, Empire, and U.S. Guestworker Programs* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022); Bryan Winston, "Contesting Immigration Incarceration: How the Mexican Consulate in St. Louis Worked to Free Migrants," March 16, 2019, *Immigration and Ethnic History Society*, [iehs.org/bryan-winston-contesting-immigration-incarceration](https://iehs.org/bryan-winston-contesting-immigration-incarceration);

racialization by allowing for expanding webs of communication in the Pacific world. Chapter Two argues that English-language newspapers influenced public policy and popular perceptions of Chinese and Indigenous peoples in British and American empires. These depictions reinforced stereotypes of inferiority and backwardness, providing a justification for white settlers to exclude Chinese settlers, and in the case of Native peoples, to displace and murder them. Newspapers, political cartoons, and lettersheets shaped both the imaginaries and lived realities of non-white peoples in Anglo-American territories. However, Chinese in California recognized the power of the press, refashioning these tools of empire by printing their own Chinese language newspaper, *The Golden Hills' News*, thus asserting their own autonomy and countering these negative narratives. The final two chapters explore the roles that consuls in Hong Kong, Australia, and San Francisco played as vital inter-imperial mediators. They not only mediated between foreign and domestic interests, they also were key in maintaining peace between Anglo-American merchants and Chinese citizens amidst intensifying discrimination and racism in the Pacific.<sup>41</sup> British and American consuls operated at the nexus of commerce, bureaucracy, and legislation, exercising a level of extraterritoriality, but within the confines of imperial policies of both their home and foreign governments.<sup>42</sup> In doing so, they not only played a vital role in shaping global economies, but also enforced—and sometimes circumvented—foreign legislation in the name of private interests.

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<sup>41</sup> P.D. Coates, *The China Consuls: British Consular Officers, 1843-1943* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4.

<sup>42</sup> Whewall, *Law Across Imperial Borders*, 4.

## CHAPTER 1

### A NEW BOOM: TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN 1850S PACIFIC GOLD RUSHES

*“My hair!! How the wind blows!”*

In “The Way They Go to California” lithograph, an intrepid prospector whizzes through the open air aboard a “rocket line” to the California gold fields, his hat lost in the rush of wind (figure 1.1). Straight ahead, a dozen of his comrades venture forth aboard a dirigible balloon on the latest “air line.” Just below the airship descends a man with a pickaxe and shovel in hand via parachute. To his far right, a frenzied mob of miners leap from the docks to swim to a departing clipper ship, also destined for the gold mines.

Created by Nathaniel Currier (later of the prominent lithograph firm Currier and Ives), this scene is just one of hundreds produced in 1849 amidst the outbreak of the California gold rush. It captures the global “gold fever” that lured the entrepreneurial-minded to California—and later to gold rush Australia and British Columbia.<sup>43</sup> But beyond Currier’s critical social commentary about the California gold rush lies a tongue-in-cheek appraisal of the technological transformations erupting in the wake of these rushes. While rockets, airships, and parachutes were not actual modes of transportation in the 1850s, Currier’s imaginings of these fantastical transports demonstrates that transformative social events, like gold rushes, spurred technological revolutions akin to the two industrial revolutions bracketing the nineteenth century. Currier’s illustrations of the California gold rush, and the related transportation technologies which fueled

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<sup>43</sup> For an analysis of how the nineteenth-century press and public likened “gold fever” to madness, see: Angela Suzanne Hawk, “Madness, Mining, And Migration in The U.S. And The Pacific, 1848–1900,” PhD dissertation (University of California, Irvine, 2011).



it, constituted some of the firm’s most profitable illustrations.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, illustrations of clipper ships, in particular the 1852 drawing of record-breaking *Flying Cloud*, gained national popularity.<sup>45</sup> In “The Way They Go to California,” clipper ships feature prominently, sailing from the horizon towards California.

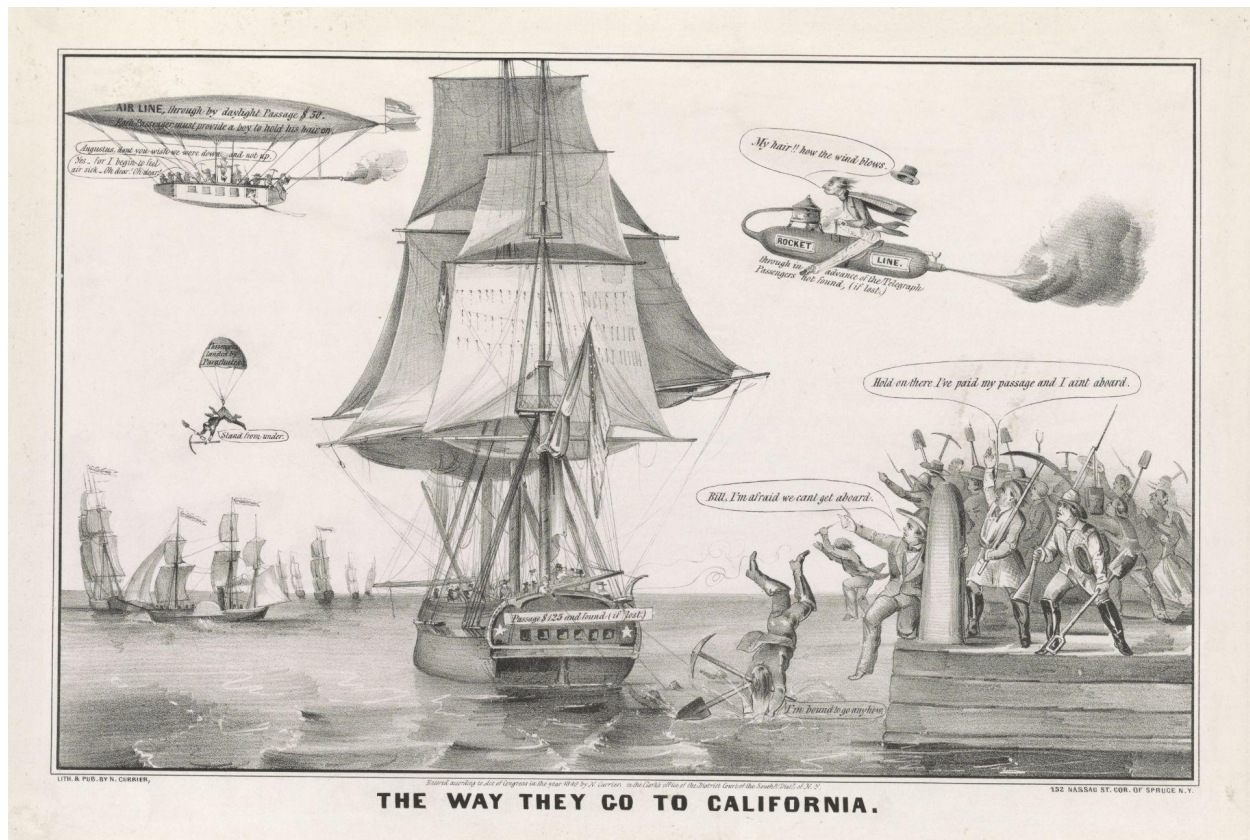


Figure 1.1. Nathaniel Currier, “The Way They Go to California,” New York: N. Currier, ca. 1849. Photograph. [www.loc.gov/item/91481165/](http://www.loc.gov/item/91481165/).

However, these technologies did more than transport people between destinations. Advances in transoceanic ships, railroads, and telegraph lines allowed for ever increasing

<sup>44</sup> Le Beau claims that illustrations of clipper ships—“Sweep-stakes” (1853), “Racer” (1854), and “Flying Cloud” (1852)—were some of the firm’s most popular. Bryan Le Beau, “‘Colored Engravings for the People’: The World According to Currier and Ives.” *American Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1994), 138.

<sup>45</sup> Smithsonian Institution, “The Clipper Ship *Flying Cloud*,” *Time and Navigation: The Untold Story of Getting from Here to There*, online exhibition, [timeandnavigation.si.edu](http://timeandnavigation.si.edu).

circulation of mail, news, and ideas. The increasing ease of communication created societies more aware of global events and peoples, while simultaneously developing surveillance practices and information networks throughout the Anglo-American world. This chapter explores how the British and American empires in the Pacific utilized these transportation and communications technologies to expand Anglo-American dominance in California, Australia, Hong Kong, and British Columbia. I argue that with the discovery of gold throughout the Pacific Basin, the 1850s marks a period of revolutionary transformations—technological innovations, bureaucratic centralization, and massive migrations—that complicate the periodization of American technological advancements. The ever-thickening webs of communication that precipitated the massive swell of colonialism in the Pacific irrevocably altered the lives and livelihoods of non-white peoples already living in these places, most notably Indigenous and Chinese communities. The widening gyre of imperialism bolstered British and American political and economic interests, while also creating the logics of racialization that today is recognized as white supremacy.<sup>46</sup>

The process of consolidating Pacific Rim empires—and the significant role that technologies played in ushering in the subsequent social, economic, and political revolutions—began with the swarm of people to California following the 1848 discovery of gold. The gold rush created San Francisco as a dominant and modern city on the Pacific’s eastern edge. From 1850 to 1860, California's population grew from 92,597 to 379,994, an increase of nearly 310

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<sup>46</sup> Here I am reminded of Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, and his interpretation of W.B. Yeats’ “The Second Coming” as a scathing critique of European colonialism in Africa: “Turning and turning in the widening gyre/ The falcon cannot hear the falconer;/ Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.” Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1958); W.B. Yeats, “The Second Coming,” November 1920.

percent.<sup>47</sup> Practically overnight, San Francisco became a hub of international trade, where the vast majority of global commerce and immigration funneled to and through in support of the gold fields in the Sierra Nevada some 150 miles east. Further, lucrative gold mining enterprises, coupled with the territory's ever-expanding cosmopolitan population, fast-tracked California to statehood, less than three years after the U.S. took possession of the region. By the late 1850s, the Bay Area had 64 toll roads, 117 bridges, and private trading companies had filled in the marshy banks of the Bay to build docks for maritime traffic.<sup>48</sup> The expansion of the press, empire, and technology was a symbiotic and mutually constituted relationship. Advancements in railroads, ships, and systems of overland and submarine telegraphs increased the rate of circulation for newspapers and government correspondences, and in turn newspapers and politicians encouraged the expansion of railroads and telegraph lines.<sup>49</sup>

The California gold rush quickly reverberated throughout the world. From across the globe, miners flooded the region, prompting unprecedented settlement of the territory that displaced and soon decimated Native Californians. News of the rush spurred immigration from China, both pulled across the Pacific in search of prosperity while also pushed from their home county to escape a civil war, plague, and famine. To escape the Qing directive prohibiting its citizens from leaving the country, the vast majority of Chinese immigration funneled through the British colony of Hong Kong.<sup>50</sup> As Elizabeth Sinn observes, “the California gold rush transformed Hong Kong from a small-scale entrepôt of goods into a large-scale entrepôt of

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<sup>47</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “California Gold Rush,” (January 2018.)

[www.census.gov/history/www/homepage\\_archive/2018/january\\_2018.html](http://www.census.gov/history/www/homepage_archive/2018/january_2018.html).

<sup>48</sup> James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 315-316.

<sup>49</sup> Innis, *Political Economy*, 32.

<sup>50</sup> Paul A. Kramer, “Imperial Openings: Civilisation, Exemption, and the Geopolitics of Mobility in the History of Chinese Exclusion, 1868-1910,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (July 2015), 324.

peoples, and launched the process by which it grew into a center for global migration serving not only Cantonese-speaking California-bound passengers, but Chinese from other dialect groups bound for all parts of the world.”<sup>51</sup> California might have been the first major gold rush of the nineteenth century, but it certainly was not the last. Subsequent gold discoveries in Australia and British Columbia soon followed the California gold rush. Each rush dramatically increased migration to the disparate regions, irrevocably transformed the landscapes, and displaced Indigenous peoples from their ancestral homelands.

### **Land, Sea, and Wire: Origins of the American Technology Revolution**

The early U.S. republic witnessed a gradual process of modernization, which began in earnest just after the turn of the century. The need to boost the U.S. economy post-War of 1812 saw a boom in communications and transportations technologies, which allowed people and goods to better move North, South, and westward. The 1820s and 1830s saw the first major technology advancement in the market revolution, with a burgeoning system of steamboats, railroads, and national roads transforming the United States in myriad ways. The completion of the 363-mile-long Erie Canal in 1825 expanded commercial networks that connected the Northeast with the U.S. interior and Canada. This revolution in transportation, communication, and industry made possible the second industrial revolution of the late nineteenth century, which further expanded technology through the development of factories, railroads, and oil companies. However, most of the scholarship on industrialization in the United States focuses on the northeastern United States.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*, 90.

<sup>52</sup> For seminal works on the industrial revolution in U.S. and world history, see: Ashton, *The Industrial Revolution*; Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*; Goldstone, “Efflorescences and Economic Growth”; Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*; Rosen, *The Most Powerful Idea in the World*; Stearns, *The Industrial*

Shifting focus away from the U.S. eastern seaboard to center on California and the Pacific reveals that the 1850s ushered in the era of western industrialism, largely prompted by Pacific gold rushes. As David Igler keenly observes, interdisciplinary analyses that attend to the “shifting locations, technologies, and labor forces” in the American West provides an “opportunity to reconceive the Far West as an industrial nexus.”<sup>53</sup> The discovery of gold—first in California, then Australia, and finally in British Columbia—made necessary the immediate expansion of transportations and communications technologies to these regions. Scholarship on American technology in the 1850s tends to follow one of two routes. It is either overlooked as a period of stasis, sandwiched between the two industrial revolutions, or distinguished primarily by the expansion of the telegraph.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, advancements in existing systems of overland and submarine telegraphs and railroads increased the appetite for public consumption of news via print media, in turn encouraged the expansion of railroads and telegraph lines to satiate the circulation of information.<sup>55</sup> As James Carey argues, the advent of the telegraph was a unique technology that separated communication from transportation. He writes that “before the telegraph,

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*Revolution*; Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*; Jan de Vries, “The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution.”

<sup>53</sup> David Igler, “The Industrial Far West: Region and Nation in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 69, No. 2 (May 2000), 165-166.

<sup>54</sup> Scholarship on technology in the American West largely tends to favor the post-1860 era, see: Ronald H. Limbaugh, “Making Old Tools Work Better: Pragmatic Adaptation and Innovation in Gold-Rush Technology,” *California History* 1 December 1998; 77 (4): 24–51; Andrew C. Isenberg, *Mining California: An Ecological History* (United Kingdom: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010); Maureen A. Jung, “Documenting Nineteenth-Century Quartz Mining in Northern California,” *The American Archivist*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (1990): 406–18; Mark Wyman, *Hard Rock Epic: Western Miners and the Industrial Revolution, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); For more on the history of the telegraph, see: Janna Quitney Anderson, *Imagining the Internet: Personalities, Predictions, Perspectives*. (United States: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), Daniel J. Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan* (University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's Online Pioneers* (London: Phoenix, 1999).

<sup>55</sup> Innis, *Political Economy*, 32.

‘communication’ was used to describe transportation...[but] the telegraph freed communication from the constraints of geography.”<sup>56</sup> No longer did news require the long transit across time and space; the sending and receiving of information became near-instantaneous.<sup>57</sup>

Though the telegraph was first invented in 1844, in the 1850s telegraphic wires were only utilized across short distances. In 1853 the California State Telegraph Company successfully and quickly laid the first permanent telegraph lines connecting San Francisco northeastward to Sacramento, Stockton, and Marysville—the latter known colloquially as the “Gateway to the Gold Fields” (figure 1.2).<sup>58</sup> By 1861, a transcontinental telegraph line connected California to the east coast—just eight years after the state’s first line, and eight years before the completion of the transcontinental railroad.<sup>59</sup> The introduction of the telegraph in California not only improved modes of communication that benefitted both the public and popular press, but it also supported the state’s rapidly expanding industry and commerce. As one trade journal from 1853 remarked, “the telegraph system...at its very birth, became the handmaiden of commerce.”<sup>60</sup> Merchants, business owners, and speculators in the state were, by and large, responsible for the telegraph’s success, as the ease of fast communication offered unprecedented commercial opportunities.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Carey, *Communication as Culture*, 203-204.

<sup>57</sup> Carey, *Communication as Culture*, 203.

<sup>58</sup> For an interactive map of telegraph systems in the United States, please see: Edmund Russell and Lauren Winkler, "Uniting the States with Telegraphs, 1844-1862," Carnegie Mellon Library, [telegraph.library.cmu.edu](http://telegraph.library.cmu.edu). “California State Telegraph Company,” *Sacramento Daily Union* (Sacramento, California), December 19, 1853.

<sup>59</sup> The California Legislature offered a financial incentive to expedite the transcontinental line, offering a \$6000 per year contract to the company to first connect California to the rest of the country. Alice L. Bates, “The History of the Telegraph in California,” *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1914): 183.

<sup>60</sup> “Editorial,” *National Telegraph Review and Operators Companion*, Vol. 1 (April 1853), 97.

<sup>61</sup> Richard B. Du Boff, “Business Demand and the Development of the Telegraph in the United States, 1844-1860,” *The Business History Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Winter 1980): 461.



However, many people remained skeptical of the telegraph's expansion and utility. Some criticism, in fact, came from the very top of the British and American press. Mowbray Morris, manager of the London *Times*, lamented the high cost of telegraph transmissions, finding it “a

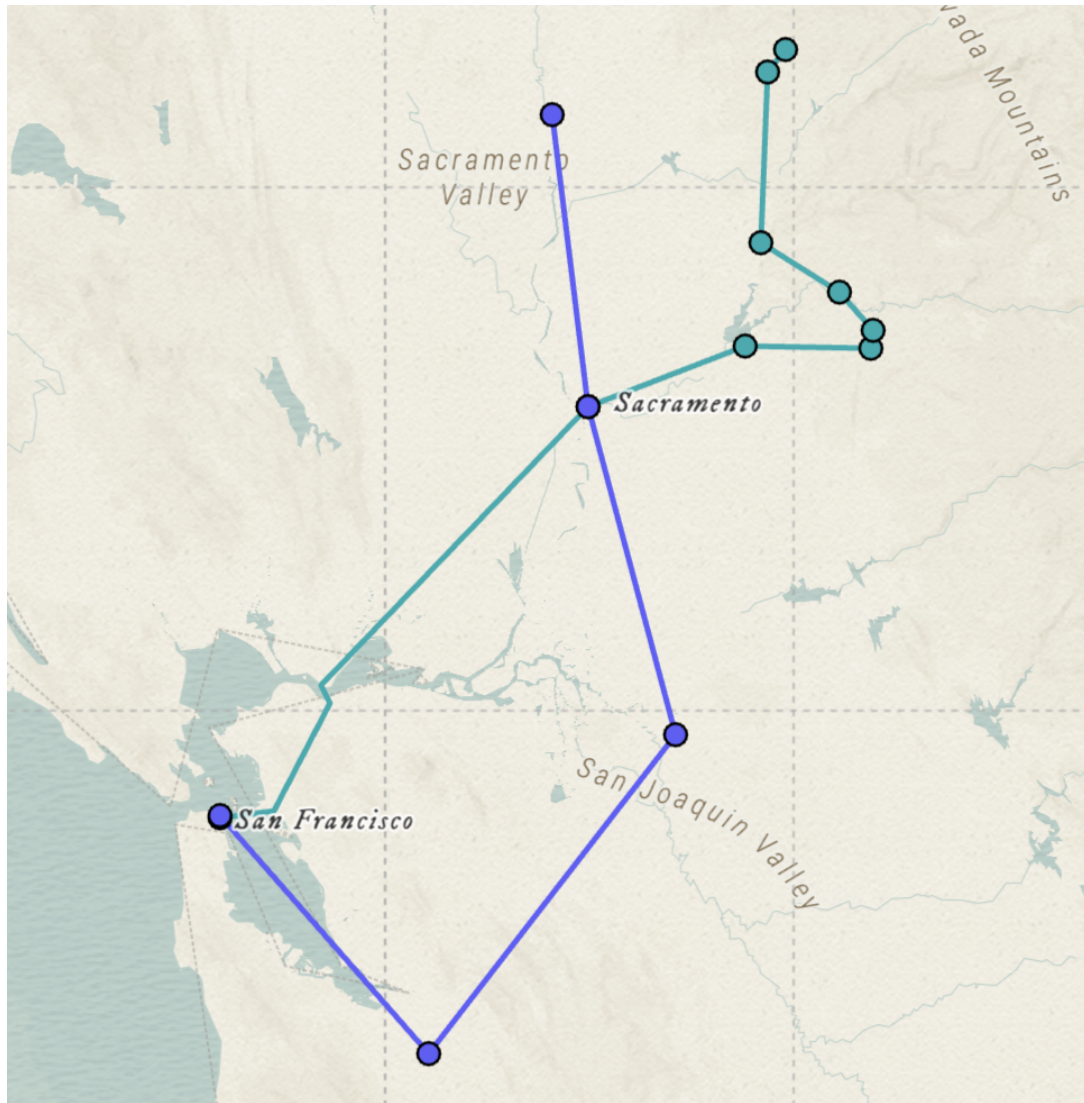


Figure 1.2. By the end of 1854, both the Alta California Telegraph Company (teal line) and the California State Telegraph Company (royal blue line) connected San Francisco, Stockton, San Jose, Sacramento with various sites in the California gold fields, including Marysville, Placerville, and Coloma. Edmund Russell and Lauren Winkler, "Uniting the States with Telegraphs, 1844-1862," Carnegie Mellon Library, [telegraph.library.cmu.edu](http://telegraph.library.cmu.edu).

great bore” for he presumed that the public would demand its use for conveyance of trivial information, thus jamming the telegraph lines for the *Times*’ more “important” use.<sup>62</sup> Some Americans shared Morris’s sentiments on the telegraph. In his 1854 memoir *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau saw the telegraph as a way to “talk fast and not to talk sensibly.”<sup>63</sup> Similarly, a satirical response of the Atlantic submarine cable appeared in Sacramento’s *Daily Democratic State Journal*:

What will be the difference between London and New York, or Liverpool and Boston, if the two continents are united!...the revolts of unborn Sepoys [in India] will be heard of on State street sooner than in Downing street, if not before they actually transpire....Worse than all this, Americans will be eternally behind the times. If we rise at sunrise, all England will have been up hours before us, and [sic] the result of a Presidential election will be known in England before it is known here...*Down with the Atlantic Telegraph!*<sup>64</sup>

The skepticism of the telegraph underscored the apprehension many felt in the wake of such a novel invention. As the telegraph was still a burgeoning and imperfect technology, people continued to rely primarily on ships to transmit mail and news. While many ship companies were based out of the eastern seaboard of the U.S., many of the most prominent of the decade—like Howland & Aspinwall, Currier & McKay—gained attention for their ships servicing the California gold fields. The latter of these companies built several record-setting “extreme” clipper ships, including the *Flying Cloud*.<sup>65</sup> The clipper gained worldwide notoriety in 1854 for breaking its own record for the fastest sailing time between New York and San Francisco: 89 days and 8 hours. It would hold this record for 135 years.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Overseas telegrams were charged per word, per transmission, and often at a high price. *The History of the Times: The Tradition Established, 1841-1884* (London: The Times Publishing Company Limited, 1939), 271.

<sup>63</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 48.

<sup>64</sup> “The Submarine Telegraph,” *Daily Democratic State Journal*, September 20, 1857.

<sup>65</sup> Steven Ujifusa, *Barons of the Sea: And Their Race to Build the World's Fastest Clipper Ship* (United States: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 176.

<sup>66</sup> Smithsonian Institution, “The Clipper Ship *Flying Cloud*.”



The U.S. government provided subsidies to private companies to develop oceanic steamship routes for the express purpose of carrying mail. In 1847, Congress passed two acts, the first to allow the Navy to contract out for the building of steamships, and the second to instruct the Postmaster general to establish a post route on the Pacific coast for said contracted vessels to follow. Just a few years later, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company received a \$199,000 advance from Congress to finish completion of the three steamers to deliver mail, alongside the company's other cargoes, to San Francisco and Oregon.<sup>67</sup> The Company would continue to dominate trade and mail conveyance in the Pacific in the coming decades, extending its established lines connecting East and West coasts of the United States by way of Panama, with transpacific routes to China and Japan.<sup>68</sup> However, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company's serendipitous incorporation right as the California gold rush unfolded led to both the company's success throughout the nineteenth century, and also played a key role in connecting the world to the gold fields.<sup>69</sup> The power of steam and its role in expanding American commerce and political influence in the Pacific was referenced in an 1848 report to the House of Representatives by the Committee on Naval Affairs, who assessed the need for transoceanic mail and merchant steamers. "It is with steam ships as it is with railways," the report stated, "they create wealth by

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<sup>67</sup> John Haskell Kemble, "The Genesis of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company," *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1934), 242; Fessenden Nott Otis, *Isthmus of Panama, History of the Panama Railroad and of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company* (United States: Harper & Brothers, 1867), 149.

<sup>68</sup> Otis, *Isthmus of Panama*, 149. See also: Minyong Lee, "Embodied by the Steamships: The Pacific Mail Steamship Company and the Making and Remaking of Pacific Connections in the Age of Empire," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (May 2023), 164–198; Elizabeth Sinn, "Pacific Ocean: Highway to Gold Mountain, 1850–1900," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (2014): 220–37.

<sup>69</sup> For more on the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, see: Robert Joseph Chandler and Stephen L. Potash, *Gold, Silk, Pioneers & Mail: The Story of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company* (United States: Friends of the San Francisco Maritime Museum Library, 2007); Karen Elizabeth Jenks, "Trading the Contract: The Roles of Entrepreneurs, Government, and Labor in the Formation of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company." PhD dissertation (University of California, Irvine, 2012).

facilitating intercourse.”<sup>70</sup> The Committee asserted the “unquestionable evidence” that San Francisco occupied a prime location to connect America with “commerce on the Pacific and with China,” and could house American naval stations, merchant dockyards, and serve as the terminus of the future transcontinental railway.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, they argued that creating a line of steamers and establishing a naval presence in the Pacific would not only place the U.S. on an equal footing with British merchants, but challenge “British supremacy” in China.<sup>72</sup> These desires were also echoed by the U.S. consul in Hong Kong, who in 1854 wrote to the Secretary of State that, “I feel confident that a line of Steamers from this port to San Francisco would find it a profitable business, if it were to convey Chinese freight and passengers alone, + that foreigners in all China + the East Indies, instead of traveling to Europe via Egypt, would take the route via California.”<sup>73</sup> Though the company did not expand its reach to Asia until the 1860s, steamer lines like the Pacific Mail Steamship Company became, as Karen Jenks observes, “a symbol of American expansion.”<sup>74</sup>

California entrepreneurs built railroads in California in the 1850s to service the gold industry.<sup>75</sup> Several companies were incorporated by 1852, but the first line did not become operational until December 1854, alongside the development of the state’s telegraph lines. The

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas Butler King, United States Committee on Naval Affairs, House of Representatives, “Steam Communication with China and the Sandwich Islands,” May 4, 1848. University of California, San Diego, Special Collections and Archives, 13. [library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb3347635w](http://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb3347635w).

<sup>71</sup> King, “Steam Communication,” 12-13.

<sup>72</sup> King, “Steam Communication,” 13.

<sup>73</sup> U.S. National Archives, General Records of the Department of State, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Hong Kong 1844-1906 (hereafter cited as Hong Kong Consular Despatches), Volume 2, July 23, 1851 - October 27, 1854. April 14, 1854.

<sup>74</sup> Jenks, “Trading the Contract,” 90.

<sup>75</sup> For more on railroads in California and the American West, see: Railroads in California and the Far West, *California History*, Vol. 70, No. 1, (Spring, 1991), pp. 2-11; William Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850-1910* (United States: University of California Press, 1994); Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals And The Making Of Modern America* (United Kingdom: WW Norton, 2012); Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930* (United Kingdom: University of California Press, 2005).

first railroad west of the Mississippi, the Union Wharf and Plank Walk Company, laid wooden tracks for horse-drawn cars to connect the Humboldt Bay and Trinity River mines in Northern California. Just six months later, the Sacramento Valley Railroad (SVRR) began locomotive-operated test runs along its English iron-ore rail line. The 23-mile long SVRR opened to passengers and freight in February 1856.<sup>76</sup> By the end of the decade, California had several more railroads, all with routes servicing the gold fields.<sup>77</sup>

Arguably the most important railway for the California gold rush was located some 3,000 miles south in Panama.<sup>78</sup> The Panama Railroad's construction in 1855 across the isthmus significantly eased transcontinental travel, saving vessels from having to sail thousands of miles south to the Cape Horn, or cross the isthmus by foot and mule-drawn carts. William H. Aspinwall, of the shipping company Howland & Aspinwall and the co-owner of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, secured the contract to build the Pacific portion of the Panama Railroad.<sup>79</sup> Ships leaving from the eastern U.S., Europe, Africa, and South America arrived at the Atlantic Ocean port town of Chagres, Panama. From there, passengers and cargo loaded onto the Panama Railroad, crossing the fifty-mile-wide isthmus to its terminus in Panama City. While the Panama Railroad transported goods, people, news, and specie to and from the California coast, it was also

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<sup>76</sup> The SVRR was later bought by Leland Stanford and incorporated into his Central Pacific Railroad, and SVRR's Chief Engineer maintained his position with CPR's acquisition. Greg Lucas, "Maiden Run of California's First Railroad," *California 170*, California State Library, [cal170.library.ca.gov/february-22-1856-maiden-run-of-californias-first-railroad-2/](http://cal170.library.ca.gov/february-22-1856-maiden-run-of-californias-first-railroad-2/).

<sup>77</sup> Other notable lines include the California Central Railroad (1857), which ran a line from Folsom to Marysville; San Francisco and Marysville Railroad (1857); the California Northern Railroad (1860), Sacramento, Placer, and Nevada Railroad (1861). Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, 16; By 1865 many more railroads were proposed and/or surveyed, including the Central Pacific Railroad, serving as the western portion of the transcontinental railroad. C. Bielawski, J.D. Hoffman, and A. Poett, "Railroad map of the central part of California, and part of Nevada," 1865. Map. [www.loc.gov/item/98688449/](http://www.loc.gov/item/98688449/).

<sup>78</sup> For more on the history of the Panama railroad and gold rushes, see: Aims McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Cornell University Press, 2008); John Haskell Kemble, "The Gold Rush by Panama, 1848-1851," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1949), 45-56; Peter Pyne, *The Panama Railroad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021).

<sup>79</sup> Otis, *Isthmus of Panama*, 16.

an integral avenue connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Not only did it connect the East and West coasts of the United States, but it also allowed the British Empire to exercise even more control over its colonies in the Pacific, providing a shortcut to Australia, British Columbia, and China (figure 1.3).



Figure 1.3. This map of oceanic routes connected by the Panama Railroad highlight its connection between American and Pacific empires: Australia, Canton (a treaty port just upriver from Hong Kong), England, and the Pacific Coast of North America, focusing on Vancouver and San Francisco. Only New York and San Francisco, the respective twin port cities of the Atlantic and Pacific, appear on the U.S. map, suggesting that the maker deemed only these two cities of lone global import. “Illustrated history of the Panama Railroad; together with a traveler's guide and businessman’s handbook for the Panama Railroad and its connections with Europe, the United States, the north and south Atlantic and Pacific coasts, China, Australia, and Japan, by sail and steam.” Fessenden Nott Otis, 1862, Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/item/04005049/](http://www.loc.gov/item/04005049/).

### Technology in the British Pacific

Across the British colonial holdings in the Pacific, the telegraph trailed behind California’s rapid expansion of networks. This was due largely to the fact that the vastness of the British Empire required telegraphic lines to cover much larger distances than in California.

Overland and submarine wires would be needed to connect eastern Chinese treaty ports to Canada, Australia, British India, and north Africa, and then back to the beating heart of the empire in London.<sup>80</sup> Though telegraph companies drafted plans for cables connecting the British colonies of Hong Kong and Shanghai eastward toward existing lines in British India and westward toward North America as early as 1864, the British-owned China Submarine Telegraph Company did not lay these lines until 1873.

Rather than telegraphy, it was the power of steam that transformed nineteenth century commerce.<sup>81</sup> As John Darwin argues, steam power, largely concentrated within U.S. and European empires, ushered in an era of “radical concentration of commercial, technological, and military power without precedent in world history.”<sup>82</sup> Darwin contends that port cities like Hong Kong, Melbourne, and Victoria, BC were “gateway cities” where differing cultures, economies, and peoples met, all fueled by the expansion of steamship technology.<sup>83</sup> Merchant and passenger steamship lines, like the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, followed regular routes connecting Europe and the U.S. to these British imperial gateway cities in the Pacific. In particular, the influence of Hong Kong radiated across the Pacific. It functioned as a British colony and treaty port city, as well as the prime embarkation point from which the vast majority of Chinese immigrants funneled through in the 1850s. However, mast-propelled sailing ships, and not just

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<sup>80</sup> Following the 1842 Treaty of Nanking, Hong Kong was officially ceded to the British, in addition to the establishment of five treaty ports for trade: Shanghai, Canton (Guangzhou), Ningbo, Fuzhou, and Amoy (Xiamen).

<sup>81</sup> Douglas R. Burgers, Jr., *Engines of Empire: Steamships and the Victorian Imagination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

<sup>82</sup> John Darwin, *Unlocking the World: Port Cities and Globalization in the Age of Steam, 1830-1930* (United Kingdom: Penguin Books Limited, 2020), xxi.

<sup>83</sup> Darwin, *Unlocking the World*, xxi.

steamships, also played an integral role in transporting Chinese passengers throughout the Pacific in this period.<sup>84</sup>

Many Chinese traveled directly from Hong Kong to major gold rush regions, like California and British Australia. Australian companies, like their Californian counterparts, began laying regional telegraph lines in the mid-1850s. In 1854, the first lines connected the port city of Williamstown to Victoria's capital of Melbourne less than 10 miles away. By the end of the decade, hundreds of miles of telegraph wires connected the colonial capitals of Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide.<sup>85</sup> The trans-Pacific submarine cable connecting major trading ports like San Francisco to Hong Kong did not arrive until 1906.<sup>86</sup> Until then, communications between California and Hong Kong took 40-50 days via steam or clipper ships.<sup>87</sup> Until a reliable mode of long-distance telegraph appeared, ships were the method of choice for circulating mail within and between the British and American empires.

Rapidly developing technologies like telegraphs, steamships, and railways aided the expansion of commerce as well as imperial governance. British and American politicians and diplomats stationed abroad relied upon these evolving methods of communication to maintain connection to their respective home governments in London and Washington, D.C. Anglo-American consuls, specifically, directly shaped the routes and speed of intergovernmental and

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<sup>84</sup> Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*, 94.

<sup>85</sup> "Overland Telegraph," National Museum of Australia, accessed June 3, 2023. [www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/overland-telegraph](http://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/overland-telegraph). For more on Australia and telegraphs, see: Ann Moyal, *Clear Across Australia: A History of Telecommunications* (Thomas Nelson: Melbourne, 1984); Peter Putnis, "The Early Years of International Telegraphy in Australia: A Critical Assessment." *Media International Australia*, Vol. 129, No. 1 (2008), 140–148.

<sup>86</sup> Irish American industrialist John Mackay and his Commercial Pacific Cable Company successfully laid a cable in 1906 that connected San Francisco to China and Japan.

<sup>87</sup> In the case of California, the state received information by way of both the Pacific and Atlantic, and steam and clipper ships often carried mail and newspapers in addition to passengers and goods. The *Sonora*, *Kate Hooper*, *Golden Gate*, and *Golden Age*, amongst others, made regularly scheduled circuits between Hong Kong, San Francisco, Panama, and New York, thus connecting the Pacific and Atlantic worlds. Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*, 3.

intraimperial communications by providing detailed and up-to-date information regarding the best, and most reliable, forms of communication to their heads of state. The British Foreign Secretary and the American Secretary of State then relayed this information throughout the various echelons of imperial government, influencing how empires communicated within and between each other. British and American consuls stationed throughout the Pacific paid close attention to advancements in communications and transportation technologies, as the success of their diplomatic missions abroad—as well as broader commercial interests—relied upon these technologies to transmit their reports.

### **Communication and Empire**

The expansion of technology did not just occur alongside the expansion of empire in the Pacific; it was an integral facet of colonialism. The massive expansion in communications and transport technologies—telegraph, steamships, railways, toll roads, bridges—resulted in infrastructural and environmental transformations across Anglo-American empires.

Advancements in trans-oceanic steamships allowed people to move to and between gold rush sites. Many of these transports also carried goods (including valuable gold dust exports), newspapers, and mail. The circulation of global events via personal letters and print media spread information about these regions at unprecedented rates. Mail ships also transported political and diplomatic correspondences, which constituted the very lifeblood of imperial administration and brought the edges of empire into clearer view of imperial administrators.

Communications and technological advancements in the 1850s strengthened British and American imperial control throughout the Pacific. Indeed, James Beniger argues that a societal and bureaucratic transformation occurred globally at the turn of the 20th century due to

communications and transportation technologies, what he deems a “Control Revolution.”<sup>88</sup> He claims that the advent of the “Control Revolution” reestablished “bureaucratic organization, and system-wide communication via the new mass media.”<sup>89</sup> While Beniger perceives this Weberian bureaucracy taking shape after the Second Industrial Revolution, I argue that a focus on British and American empires in the Pacific reveals that these forces of control began in earnest in the 1850s, alongside advancements in shipping, rail, and telegraph.<sup>90</sup>

Some scholars, like Harold Innis, argue that the expansion of the press was the driving force behind the development of communications and transportations technologies.<sup>91</sup> Others suggest that technology booms caused gold rushes, and they could not occur without modes of communication and transport.<sup>92</sup> Entrepreneurs who provided goods and services to gold regions relied on shipping, telegraphs, and roadways to support their ventures, and was the primary way most actually “struck it rich.” General stores, lumber yards, saloons, and lodging houses provided vital services and creature comforts that fueled the boom. These businesses required regular and reliable methods of shipping goods and people to support their operations. In major gold regions, like San Francisco and Melbourne, newspapers, banks, and post offices expanded in accordance with the gold rush, all made possible by the pre-existing transportation technologies.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> James R. Beniger, *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 6.

<sup>89</sup> Beniger, *The Control Revolution*, 7.

<sup>90</sup> For more on modernization and Weberian concepts of bureaucratic organization, see: Fritz Sager, and Christian Rosser, "Weberian Bureaucracy," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, September 29, 2021.

<sup>91</sup> Innis, *Political Economy*, 32.

<sup>92</sup> Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 312.

<sup>93</sup> It is little wonder how the Bay Area would continue to be synonymous with “tech booms” well into the twenty-first century.



As promoters of both information and communications technologies, the British and American press played an important role in shaping both public and government discourse about gold rush regions. Newspapers circulated between imperial metropolises and their peripheries, shaping the way society viewed issues like immigration, labor, and land rights. British colonial governments in Hong Kong, Australia, and British Columbia had dedicated government newspapers—periodicals owned and operated by the Empire to disseminate official colonial and imperial information to its citizens. Publications like the *London Gazette*, *Hongkong Government Gazette*, *The Government Gazette* (Vancouver Island), and the *Victoria Government Gazette* ensured that all residents of British colonies, citizens and foreign residents alike, had access to the most up-to-date legal notices and regulations impacting their respective colonies.<sup>94</sup> Through these gazettes, the British empire ensured that the public knew of and enforced directives that maintained the vitality of the empire.

Consuls played an important role in reinforcing these imperial mandates at the local level. While consuls were beholden to adhere to the laws of the foreign governments where they were stationed, they were also responsible for circulating information provided by their home governments to their fellow countrymen. Consuls were tasked by their heads of state to report back on foreign laws and ordinances impacting their empire's trade, diplomacy, and immigration. Consuls stationed in major Pacific port cities like San Francisco, Hong Kong, and Melbourne were also responsible for navigating the complex international laws impacting foreign trade on the open water. When captains of vessels found themselves in violation of maritime law, consuls often acted as legal representations, investigators, and judges. They recorded depositions and testimonies, advocated to local governments if their country's citizens

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<sup>94</sup> The *Government Gazette*, later the *British Columbia Gazette*, was not published until 1863, and the United States' own daily *Federal Register* began only in 1935.

were in violation of law, conducted investigations, and meted out legally binding verdicts when their countrymen broke the law of their home nation. As minor diplomats without the same power as ambassadors or ministers plenipotentiaries, they nonetheless exercised considerable authority and influence.

### **Consuls and Imperial Diplomacy**

Tracing the complex networks of consular correspondences throughout the Pacific reveals the impact of communications and transportations technologies on their duties. Consuls relied upon transoceanic ships, overland transportation, and, to a lesser extent, telegraphs to send dispatches to their heads of state. For the British consul in San Francisco, it usually took two to three months to send or receive letters between the consulate and the Foreign Office in London. Fastidious record keepers, the clerks for the Foreign Secretary made note of the date of receipt for any letters sent to the Foreign Office from its consuls.<sup>95</sup> On the consuls' side, most of their missives began with a routine acknowledgment of receipt of the Foreign Office's dispatch, and the date of the circular or dispatch sent by the Foreign Office.<sup>96</sup> By the end of the 1850s, direct steamship lines departed from British Columbia to London. In 1859, the Foreign Office instructed the San Francisco consulate to send any correspondences first to Vancouver Island, from which correspondences then departed onwards to England.<sup>97</sup>

In 1860, San Francisco British Consul Booker informed the Foreign Office about a new 10-day overland mail service: the Pony Express. Not necessarily a technological transformation,

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<sup>95</sup> See: UK National Archives, Foreign Office Political and Other Departments: General Correspondence Before 1906, United States of America, Series II (hereafter cited as FO), Series 5.

<sup>96</sup> For instance, a letter from Consul Aikin to the Foreign Office dated 28 April 1854 acknowledges receipt of 24 February 1854 circular from London. FO 5/603, Aikin to Foreign Office, 28 April 1854.

<sup>97</sup> FO 5/722, 10 March 1859.

the Pony Express utilized “old” technologies of horse and rider in an innovative way: the express mail service used cross-country relay teams, switching out teams at scheduled locations between Missouri and Sacramento.<sup>98</sup> Charging a staggering \$5 per half ounce letter at its inception—approximately \$180 in today’s value—the Express utilized both overground, telegraphic, and oceanic communications networks for expedited mail delivery.<sup>99</sup> Booker saw the Pony Express as a boon not just for his office's communications, but also as a tool for British imperial expansion throughout the Pacific. A short-lived venture, the Pony Express closed operations in October 1861 due as the completion of the transcontinental telegraph made the overland mail service obsolete.

Throughout the 1850s, the San Francisco consulate served as an important waypoint for the administration of British Columbia and Vancouver Island. Letters, goods, and people destined for Victoria, Vancouver Island would have to first travel to San Francisco. Additionally, the San Francisco consulate often received instructions from the Foreign Office on the administration of British Columbia, as in the fall of 1858 when Consul Booker was tasked to forward correspondences to Richard Moody, the first Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia.<sup>100</sup> In his letter to the Foreign Secretary in April 1860—just a few weeks after the establishment of the Express—he wrote, “it may be important to the Secretary of State for the Colonies to know that Letters sent to New York and forwarded by this Express would probably be received in Vancouver’s Island or British Columbia from seven to fourteens days quicker than

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<sup>98</sup> LeRoy Reuben Hafen, *The Overland Mail, 1849-1869: Promoter of Settlement Precursor of Railroads* (United States: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 165-194.

<sup>99</sup> Within a year, the company lowered the price to \$1 per half ounce letter, or approximately \$35 today—still a significant sum. Cost adjustments provided by MeasuringWorth.com. Hafen, *The Overland Mail, 1849-1869*, 165-194.

<sup>100</sup> FO 5/699, 15 November 1858.

the Mail.”<sup>101</sup> Booker’s sharing of the Pony Express aligned with the consular directive to forward to Her Majesty’s government “useful and interesting information relating to commerce [and] navigation,” thus supporting the success of British political and economic endeavors in the Pacific.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, the outbreak of the Fraser River gold rush in British Columbia brought a flood of American prospectors to the region, and the British government feared U.S. annexation of the region. Booker’s alerting the Foreign Office about new communications methods suggests he believed the Pony Express—in addition to steamships, telegraphs, and the forthcoming transcontinental railroad—might help the Empire maintain control of British Columbia.

The U.S. State Department also relied on consuls to aid in the administration of American diplomacy abroad, which relied heavily on the speed and reliability of mail systems. Consuls served as both diplomats and commercial agents, and both roles kept them abreast of evolving communications and transport technologies specific to their locations. In 1851, the State Department forwarded to the Hong Kong consul a request from the U.S. Post Office regarding the “transmission of mails from San Francisco to China.”<sup>103</sup> Consul Bush recommended to Secretary of the State Daniel Webster that any U.S. mail to China—apart from Shanghai which had a direct shipping route—be first sent to the Hong Kong consulate. The consul reasoned that “all vessels that have heretofore left California for Canton have invariably entered this port first, and awaited here instructions from their consignors at Canton this being a free port they avoid the port charges at Whampoa (the entry port of Canton).”<sup>104</sup> Bush was not only emphasizing the economic might of Hong Kong, as it was a “free” port and the preferred place of entry for any

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<sup>101</sup> Vancouver's Island, today simply known as “Vancouver Island,” is just off the mainland of British Columbia, and where the capital city of Victoria sits. Not to be confused with the city of Vancouver on the British Columbian mainland, located just across the Strait of Georgia. FO 5/744, 23 April 1860.

<sup>102</sup> FO 5/679, 1 May 1857.

<sup>103</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Vol. 2, July 23, 1851.

<sup>104</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Vol. 2, July 23, 1851.

foreign trade vessel, but that it also stood as a vital intermediary between foreign commerce and trade with the interior of China.

Bush knew that control over communication enhanced political and economic power. In this same letter, Bush positioned himself as de-facto “postmaster general” of China. He emphasized the consulate’s central position to other neighboring trade ports, as it was only one hundred miles via river from Canton, and about forty miles via sea to Macao.<sup>105</sup> As such, Bush portrayed his consulate as an ideal location to send and forward communications between both the U.S. and China, but also between the U.S. Post Office and British Royal Mail. He wrote, “for myself, I will receive the mail bag for this port and take upon myself the responsibility of forwarding the letters to the parties to whom they are addressed, or to their agents here. Should there be any to the address of parties who have no constituents here, they can be transmitted to the British Post Office at this.”<sup>106</sup> In this respect, Bush provided insight into British colonial management, translating, and transmitting inter-imperial knowledge that, in turn, shaped how the American empire operated in China. He also referenced the British mail system, offering to the U.S. Post Office a model of how to shape—or in this specific case, what *not* to do—regarding international mail: “The English Post Office charge on all letters received at this from any part of the world is 4 [pennies] sterling. This is in my opinion entirely too much to charge on letters from California as the object of any charge will be merely to reimburse the Consul for the expense he is put to in taking charge of the mail.”<sup>107</sup> Bush’s criticism could be read either as a critique of British colonial management from a U.S. diplomat, or a clever way to pressure the

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<sup>105</sup> In 1848 it took on average nearly six to eight weeks for the consul in Shanghai to receive communications from his counterpart in Hong Kong, some 955 nautical miles south. Coates, *The China Consuls*, 101.

<sup>106</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Vol. 2, July 23, 1851.

<sup>107</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Vol. 2, July 23, 1851.

State Department to increase his salary to account for his self-appointment as a pseudo-Postmaster General for American mail in the port.

Bush was a shrewd communicator and diplomat. He knew that by portraying the Hong Kong consulate—and thus, himself—as the most reliable and effective destination for China mail and communications, he could garner additional money from the State Department. He hinted at a potential increase in funding, stating that “should the Government see fit to order the mails to be forwarded to the consuls the Department will I trust make provision to reimburse the consuls for the expenses of landing and distributing the mails.”<sup>108</sup> The influence of the U.S. consul stationed in Hong Kong extended far beyond the boundaries of the island-colony. Any person serving as consul general would, for all intents and purposes, hold considerable power over intra-imperial commerce, communications, and diplomacy throughout Southern China.

In Australia, the American consuls stations in Melbourne routinely updated the State Department on the evolution and reliability of communications in the region. Consul Tarleton wrote to the Secretary of State in 1857 about the strides in transoceanic transportation technologies, observing that “steam communication being now sound between this Colony and England I preferred waiting for this opportunity in preference to forwarding per sailing vessel.”<sup>109</sup> The issue of private sailing vessels conveying mail, including official government correspondences like those between the consulates and State Department, was not just about the speed of delivery, but also about the entwining of imperial power and private enterprise. In these early days of transoceanic shipping, the U.S. government often offered lucrative contracts to privately-owned companies who would carry mail on behalf of the Post Office, as seen with the

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<sup>108</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Vol. 2, July 23, 1851.

<sup>109</sup> US National Archives, General Records of the Department of State, Despatches from US Consuls in Melbourne, 1852-1906 (hereafter cited as Melbourne Consular Despatches), Volume 2, February 22, 1858 - December 19, 1862, Tarleton to Secretary of State, January 27, 1857.

Pacific Mail Steamship Company. The company expanded its routes into Asia and the South Pacific by the late 1860s, but as Karen Jenks argues, the “expansion of the Pacific Mail...came from, in part, the solid routines, resources, and connections the company developed during the 1850s.”<sup>110</sup> PMSC’s expansion was largely due to government subsidies of \$500,000 to \$1,000,000, which were canceled by 1876 after the company was accused of financial mismanagement, corruption, and bribing members of Congress. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 funneled more commerce through towards London, bypassing both Asia and the United States. As Minyong Lee argues, the government’s continued backing of the PMSC during the 1870s was not only to satisfy “American mercantile elites [who] sought to redirect the flow to the transpacific and trans-American routes,” but also to “reap economic gains and to challenge British naval superiority.”<sup>111</sup>

Mail services continued to structure the struggle between Anglo-American interests in the Pacific played out in the gold rushes. In 1854, over a decade before PMSC’s expansion to Asia, Melbourne Consul Tarleton wrote to the Secretary of State asking for guidance about the transportation of foreign mail aboard American vessels. He requested that the State Department clarify if a “foreign nation can compel an American vessel to transport mail from their Government or Colony.”<sup>112</sup> An American shipmaster in the port refused to do so at the insistence of the colonial government of Victoria. Tarleton sided with the captain, claiming that shipmasters cannot be compelled by a foreign government to act on their behalf, even when in a foreign port, and sought advice from the U.S. government on how to proceed. The State Department’s response to the query could not be located. Nevertheless, consuls and colonial

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<sup>110</sup> Jenks, “Trading the Contract,” 217.

<sup>111</sup> Lee, “Embodied by the Steamships,” 178.

<sup>112</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Vol. 1, November 22, 1854.

officials stood at the center of entwined issues of diplomacy, interimperial relations, technological advancements, and the contradictory nature of laissez faire politics in the era of forced labor practices and government subsidization of private enterprise. What may appear outwardly as a simple matter regarding the conveyance of mail is, under the surface, a much larger issue regarding overlapping reaches of competing imperial ambitions in colonial peripheries.<sup>113</sup> Though the boundaries of American continental imperialism reached the Pacific coast of California in the 1850s, it would not remain so. By the end of the nineteenth century, the United States would expand and solidify its empire in the Pacific, bringing Guam, Hawai'i, and the Philippines under its imperial control. Thus, empowering consuls like Tarleton to advocate for American exception to British imperial law also positioned the United States to begin fashioning itself as an upcoming imperial rival in the Pacific.

### **Influence of the Press**

Consuls were not the only players shaping the expansion of communications and transportation technologies. The British and American press were, arguably, leading that charge. In the 1850s, the expansion of telegraph lines swept across the globe, and the British and American empires grew increasingly committed to seeing the integration of these webs of wires. Long before the mid-century technological expansion in the Pacific, British and American bureaucrats and businessmen saw their futures as irrevocably entwined, equal parts competition and comradery. In 1838, the paddle-wheel steamship *Great Western* successfully completed its maiden voyage from Bristol, England to New York. Then-senator Daniel Webster toasted the mixed crowd of American and British crew and businessmen, proclaiming that “it is our fortune

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<sup>113</sup> While American shipmasters and diplomats in Australia were beholden to imperial policies whilst in the colony, they were also American citizens, answerable first to U.S. policies.



to live at a new epoch. We behold two continents approaching each other. The skill of your countrymen, sir, and my countrymen, is annihilating space.”<sup>114</sup> Webster’s observation that steamships easily traversed vast geographies relates to James Carey’s understanding of how the telegraph bypassed space: “new definitions of time could be used by industry and government to control and coordinate activity across the country, infiltrate into the practical consciousness of ordinary men and women, and uproot older notions of rhythm and temporality.”<sup>115</sup>

However, many remained weary of the future shaped by these technologies. In that same *Great Western* ballroom sat Cherokee statesman John Ridge, who responded to Webster’s speech with a reminder of the cost of that annihilation of space. Three years prior, Ridge negotiated the Treaty of New Echota that sanctioned Cherokee removal. Though Ridge advocated for removal, in the hopes it would spare his people from the violence of American settlers, the cost of such a decision was certainly at the forefront of his mind when critiquing Webster’s views.<sup>116</sup> He remarked that “England and the Americans have done us a wrong; it is too late to repair. The nations in common stand charged with the sin.”<sup>117</sup> Ridge alluded to the issue of space, and specifically the Cherokees’ loss of their homeland and forced relocation westward. As Ridge sat aboard the latest steamer vessel, surrounded by self-congratulatory British and American elites, the thought of the future wrought by these “innovations” must have surely weighed heavily on Ridge—as did the guilt of him betraying his people. The speed by

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<sup>114</sup> Edgar LeRoy Pond, Junius Smith; a Biography of the Father of the Atlantic Liner (United States: F. H. Hitchcock, 1927), 111.

<sup>115</sup> James Carey, “Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph,” *Prospects*, Vol. 8 (1983), 323.

<sup>116</sup> Ridge and the delegation who signed the treaty, however, were not sanctioned to do so, as it was not approved and signed by Cherokee chief John Ross. In 1939, less than a year after the *Great Western*’s voyage, Ridge and other Treaty Party members were murdered for their treachery. Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 151-152.

<sup>117</sup> “The Great Steam Ship,” *Salem Gazette* (Salem, Massachusetts), May 1, 1838.

which transportations and communications technologies brought people and ideas, willingly or not, into shrinking concentric circles of interaction and influence. Space had been a consistent barrier against settler encroachment, or in Douglas Burgess' words, "distance had always been the one impenetrable obstacle to imperial dominance."<sup>118</sup> Decades later, the advancements in technologies would continue accelerating the march of empire. Technologies like the telegraph allowed for, as Paul Gilmore posits, "the conquest of a disembodied white mind over both the globe," as through the proliferation of communications technologies, like the telegraph, and over "the bodies of inferior, primitive people" in settler colonial societies like Australia, California, and British Columbia.<sup>119</sup>

While empires and governments benefitted from, and provided funding for, technological advances that allowed them to exercise increasing authority of their borders, it likewise enveloped the broader public into global politics. As scholar Joanna Neumann observes, "advances in communication technology inspired fears among nineteenth-century leaders that they could no longer control public opinion."<sup>120</sup> Similarly, the explosion of print media by the mid-century completely transformed everyday people's access to information. The ever-expanding number of newspapers and popular graphic illustrations presented unprecedented access to global phenomena, such as the Pacific gold rushes. Artists' depictions of far-off destinations and peoples ranged from factual representations, like landscapes and city-scenes, to the outlandish and sensationalized, often with racialized and cartoonish imaginings of non-white peoples.

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<sup>118</sup> Douglas R. Burgess, *Engines of Empire: Steamships and the Victorian Imagination* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016), 9.

<sup>119</sup> Paul Gilmore, "The Telegraph in Black and White," *ELH*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (Fall 2002), 806.

<sup>120</sup> Joanna Neuman, "The Media's Impact on International Affairs, Then and Now," in *SAIS Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1996), 112.

Currier and Ives, arguably the most influential American lithograph firm of the age, produced thousands of such images. Their social commentaries fused ethnic and racial stereotypes told from middle- and upper-class American perspectives, and, as Bryan Le Beau observes, were characterizations of non-white peoples out of place in “the white man’s world.”<sup>121</sup> One illustration shows three men playing cards in a saloon, presumably in a gold rush settlement (figure 1.4). The Chinese man, shown on the left, plays what is presumably the winning hand, while the two other white men gaze in shock at the move. The accompanying caption reads:

But the hands that were played by that heathen Chineee  
 And the points that he made were quite frightful to see  
 Till at last he put down a right bower  
 Which the same Nye had dealt unto me.<sup>122</sup>

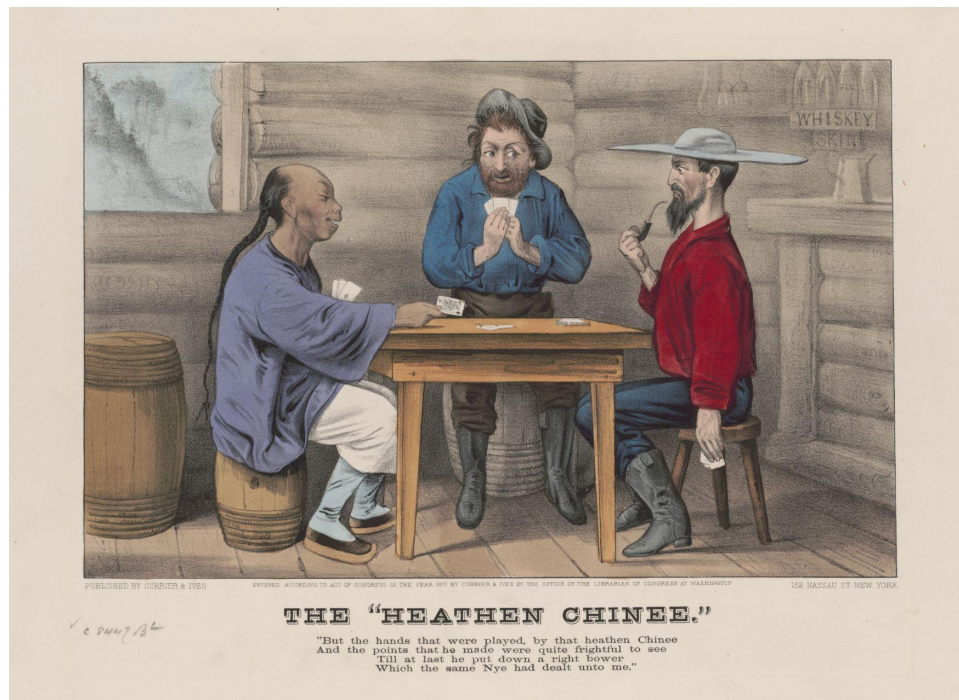


Figure 1.4. Currier & Ives, “The ‘Heathen Chineee,’” ca. 1871. New York: Published by Currier & Ives. Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/item/2002695850/](http://www.loc.gov/item/2002695850/).

<sup>121</sup> Le Beau, “Colored Engravings for the People,” 139.

<sup>122</sup> Currier & Ives, The “Heathen Chineee,” ca. 1871. New York: Published by Currier & Ives. Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov/item/2002695850/](http://www.loc.gov/item/2002695850/).

Currier and Ives' illustration reinforced contemporary stereotypes of Chinese: its use of broken English, the Chinese man's slightly cartoonish features with a wide mouth and exaggerated eyes, his self-conscious dishonor in that he cheated at the game, and the fact he got caught by the other two players suggests a lower level of intelligence compared to the white men. All these false, negative characteristics were reiterated across the spectrum of popular print outlets. From newspapers to serialized illustrated periodicals to lithograph firms like Currier and Ives, racialized depictions of Chinese and other non-white people only served to bolster the belief that Anglo-Americans were—racially, socially, militarily, and politically—superior. Such beliefs provided justification for the British and American empires' conquest and settlement of the Pacific.

## CHAPTER 2

### PACIFIC CONNECTIONS: CREATING RACE AND POPULAR CULTURE

On the afternoon of May 5, 1857, the merchant ship *Kate Hooper* moored at the Lombard Dock in San Francisco Bay. It sat low in the water, heavy with crates of rice, tea, sugar, and weary passengers who braved the 43-day, trans-Pacific voyage from the British colony of Hong Kong. Less than a mile away, in a corner office on the city's posh Montgomery Block, *San Francisco Bulletin* editor Thomas King eagerly awaited the delivery of what he considered *Kate Hooper's* most valuable cargo: newspapers. King, as with many other newspaper editors globally, reprinted articles from foreign and domestic newspapers. Bylines reveal a range of source attributions: "from our foreign correspondent," or directly citing the original newspaper: "via the *London Times* . . .," "says the *Hong Kong Register* . . .," or "the *Sydney Empire* remarks. . ."<sup>1</sup> In the age before a wire service, these reprints helped pad newspapers, which required a constant stream of content for their regular morning, evening, or weekend editions. Nineteenth-century British and American colonial worldviews became increasingly entwined as more newspapers reported on global events for its local readers.

As with much of the Anglo-American world, California looked to the "latest intelligences" from domestic and overseas periodicals to learn more about the ongoing churn of political, economic, and social events around the world. The 1850s was a decade of extraordinary upheaval and transformation across the British and American empires.

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<sup>1</sup> "The London Times," *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco, California), May 24, 1855; "Later from China," *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco, California), December 27, 1851; "Later from Australia," *Daily Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco, California), September 30, 1857.

Technological and communications advances, as explored in the previous chapter, brought the world into a dynamic connective web. In turn these innovations fueled the expansion of media systems while also providing for new ways of reporting on related developments in telegraph and railroad networks.

The 1850s was also a period of imperial consolidation across these empires. The British Empire emerged victorious from the 1856 Second Opium War in China and the 1857 uprising in India, known colloquially as the Indian Rebellion or Sepoy Mutiny.<sup>2</sup> The aftermath of these conflicts opened more Chinese treaty ports to British and American merchants, and formally brought India into the British Empire as a colony. The British East India Company's (EIC) influence extended outwards towards the Pacific, where valuable opium shipments fueled British trade with China. Meanwhile, the United States claimed a continental empire through the bloodshed of the US-Mexico War. Following this continental consolidation the nation looked further West, into the Pacific. Finally, the discovery of gold deposits in Australia, Canada, and California prompted unprecedented global immigration to mining regions.<sup>3</sup> Pacific gold rushes proved a significant pull factor in the Chinese diaspora. However, many Chinese miners and entrepreneurs faced race-based discrimination and attacks from Anglo-Americans. English-

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<sup>2</sup> The Crimean War (1853-1856) occupied significant public and governmental attention throughout the British Empire. Indeed, much diplomatic and imperial correspondences were devoted to gathering information on Russia. Heads of the Foreign Office, Colonial Office, Admiralty, and even the Prime Minister instructed diplomats throughout the empire to send any whispers of information back to the home government. Trevor Royle argues that the Crimean War was the first war which utilized new technologies like photography, railroads, telegraphs, and steam power, which "chang[ed] the pace of war." Trevor Royle, *Crimea: The Great Crimean War, 1854-1856* (United Kingdom: St. Martin's Publishing Group, 2004), 514.

<sup>3</sup> California itself was fast-tracked to its 1850 statehood due to its lucrative gold trade, becoming the first state admitted from the Western territories won from Mexico. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded more than half of its territory to the U.S. following the Mexican American War. This new land acquisition nearly doubled the size of the United States. Oregon became a state in 1859, following its own gold discovery, albeit just an echo of the rush seen in California.

language newspapers, reporting on these global events, shaped British and American trade and diplomacy in the Pacific, and simultaneously influenced the way the public perceived of non-white peoples in these colonized spaces. The 1850s ushered in a new era of imperialism that irrevocably shaped the geopolitical and social landscapes of the Pacific.

In this regard, the periodicals aboard the *Kate Hooper* did not disappoint. It carried editions of the British colonial paper *The Overland China Mail* dating back to March 15—which, at that moment, was the most recent newspaper from China available in San Francisco. King reprinted articles from this March 15th edition, documenting the Chinese “massacre” of the British crew aboard the steamer *Queen*, in the *Bulletin*’s evening edition. The uprising of Indian military troops and civilians against English occupation in India remained frontpage news throughout 1857. The *Bulletin* and other California newspapers continued to feature news articles of the Uprising, which were printed alongside articles questioning the expansion of slavery into newly acquired western U.S. territories and concerns over the rate of immigration from China. Additionally, these events occurred at a moment when the state grappled with how to suppress, and in many cases remove, its Native peoples and Chinese immigrants. Similar headlines appeared in Australian newspapers, where, like California, the rapid evolution of the gold rush brought unprecedented settler encroachment on Aboriginal lands and concerns over how to answer the “Chinese Question.”<sup>4</sup> These reprints from British and American newspapers replicated and reified transimperial ideologies regarding Chinese and Indigenous peoples.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For an examination of how newspapers shaped the language used about gold rushes, see Lloyd Carpenter and Alison Fields, “Mining the Language of the “Rush” for Gold in the 19th Century,” *Newspaper Research Journal*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2022), 29-46.

<sup>5</sup> For more on the concept of “media archeology” and the influence of historical media, like newspapers and illustrations, see Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, *Media Archeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

Depending largely upon the political leanings of each paper's editorial board, newspapers throughout California both supported and opposed the state legislature's aggressive approach to managing Chinese immigration and supporting the gold rush through exterminating the "obstacle" that Native peoples posed to mining and settlement. Many California observers saw in British imperialism a model from which to mold the state's rhetoric and provide answers to its own "Chinese Question" and "Indian Problem," terms popularized due to upswings in Chinese immigration and Native-settler confrontations. While British colonies in China and Australia proved an obvious guidepost to shape America's policies towards Chinese in California, and vice versa, India occupied a peripheral space in the American imaginary. But a reframing of India in the 1850s towards an Indo-Pacific orientation reveals the thickening webs of political, social, economic, and racial connections across the Pacific empires. While "Indo-Pacific" as a category of analysis has most recently been adopted by strategic analysts to understand a modern two-ocean regionalism where global superpowers interact and intersect, others argue that the Indo-Pacific is a historically constituted system that has actively connected the Indian and Pacific Oceans for the past two centuries.<sup>6</sup> And, while today "South Asian" is a broad term referring to those living in or diasporic communities originating from the Indian subcontinent, British and Americans in the nineteenth century largely conceived of, referred to, and wrote about South Asians as "Natives." Straddling these dual identifications by Anglo-Americans as both "Asian" and "Native" bridges the complex histories of Asian and Indigenous subordination throughout the British and American empires. This designation in turn shaped imperial policies and popular rhetoric about other Indigenous peoples globally, relegating them to the broad subclass of non-

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<sup>6</sup> Rory Medcalf, "Reimagining Asia: From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific," in Gilbert Rozman and Joseph Chinyong Liow (eds), *International Relations and Asia's Southern Tier* (Singapore: Springer, 2018), 9; Manjeet S. Pardesi, "The Indo-Pacific: A 'New' Region or the Return of History?," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (2020), 125.



white, colonial “subjects.” The influential white men who managed English-language newspapers in California and the British Pacific influenced public policy and popular opinions of non-white peoples throughout British and American empires. Such understandings highlight the global circulation of constructions of “otherness” between California and British colonies in China and India.

This chapter focuses on the California and British press’ contributions to and construction of Western systems of racialized discourse that reinforced hierarchies of Anglo-American power. It argues that Anglo-American print media—newspapers, political cartoons, and illustrations— influenced public policy and popular perceptions of Chinese and Indigenous peoples in British and American empires, shaping both the imaginaries and lived realities of “the other.” This connection between the British Empire and the United States contains an important legacy: though the British Empire enjoyed its position as the preeminent world power throughout the nineteenth century, the U.S. eventually usurped its place after the First World War. As a former colony of the British Empire, American perceptions of England in the nineteenth century were colored by a contradictory mix of indignation and adulation. In this period, the U.S. embraced the example of British colonialism while simultaneously rejecting much of the rigidity of English society. Indeed, historian Joel H. Wiener emphasizes the transnational connections between the United States and England, claiming that the press in both countries reinforced “joint products of a common culture [that were] indefinably transatlantic in sensibility.”<sup>7</sup> A focus on transnational systems of discourse highlights the connections between mass media and politics while also emphasizing the role of the press in producing and circulating racist representations. The British press’s negative depiction of Chinese peoples, and the colonial governments’ management of

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<sup>7</sup> Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press*, 4.

Chinese labor and livelihoods within Hong Kong, Australia, and British Columbia, closely aligns with similar regulations and attitudes arising in California at the same time. Negative press representations of non-white peoples throughout the Anglo-American Pacific were created in concert with discriminatory legislation and policies that emerged at this same time.<sup>8</sup>

Lastly, I contend that domestic reporting of international news placed those events directly in relation to domestic affairs. Anglo-American representations of Chinese, South Asian, and Indigenous peoples, both textual and pictorial, mirror many of the political cartoons and newspaper articles published in English-language newspapers. These negative depictions portrayed Chinese and Native communities as “inferior” and in need of control.

### **Newspapers, Popular Culture, and Race Formation**

Though the telegraph rapidly circled the globe, following trails of empire and commerce, mid-century communications between empires nevertheless relied upon multiple modes of technology.<sup>9</sup> Californians in the 1850s still largely consumed international news reports via foreign newspapers that arrived by steamship in San Francisco Bay. Indeed, the popular press was a booming industry: by 1858, San Francisco had twelve daily newspapers, 17 weeklies, four fortnightly journals, and four monthlies; statewide, California had over 90 newspapers.<sup>10</sup> California editors often reprinted, sometimes verbatim, foreign newspaper columns in their own periodicals. As Peter Putnis contends, “the point of initial arrival of international news became hubs for its further distribution. Hence, we find a similarity of framing and expression amongst

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<sup>8</sup> For connections between mass media and politics, see Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain*.

<sup>9</sup> Some newspapers also explicitly included that they received information via “telegraphic intelligence,” also demonstrating their use of the latest communications technologies.

<sup>10</sup> Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 316.

stories, even as they are repackaged for audiences separated by vast distances.”<sup>11</sup> The *Daily Globe*, *San Francisco Bulletin*, and *Daily Democratic State Journal* bore article attributions from a variety of international papers. Most gleaned their news of China from British colonial newspapers and news from India via the *London Times*. Many steamers arriving in San Francisco brought periodicals published in England, like the *Times* and *Punch*, and from British China, like the *China Mail*, *Friend of China*, *North China Herald*, and *Hong Kong*. Although it was at the western edge of the American nation, San Francisco’s press seemed inextricably linked to the machinations of the British world. The circulation and exchange of news media between Anglo-American empires in turn grew readership and subscription numbers, in turn prompting the proliferation of new media outlets. Literacy steadily increased throughout the nineteenth century, and, contrary to popular belief, was not strictly tied to class.<sup>12</sup> Particularly within working-class communities, many people shared and read a single newspaper.<sup>13</sup> Newspaper reading was typically a communal activity, so it required only one literate person to read aloud and relay information to other non- or semi-literate peoples, and sometimes a single paper was used and reused up to a dozen times.<sup>14</sup> The resourcefulness of working class consumption of print media allowed for communities in distant and developing places, like gold rush regions, to maintain their connection to the broader world.<sup>15</sup> These exchanges brought by

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Putnis, “International Press and the Indian Uprising,” in *Mutiny at the Margins: New Perspectives on the Indian Uprising of 1857*, vol. 3, *Global Perspectives*, ed. Crispin Bates and Marina Carter (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2013), 15.

<sup>12</sup> David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 22.

<sup>13</sup> While both Lee and Vincent write specifically about the Victorian England context, their analyses about reading practices may reasonably extend to similar Western cultures, like America. Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press, 1855-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 35.

<sup>14</sup> Hampton, *Visions of the Press*, 27.

<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, these consumption practices allowed for working- and lower-class peoples to have access to “elite” and/or pricey publications, thus challenging previous understandings of the rigidity of “class” based newspapers like the *London Times*, widely regarded as the preferred periodical of the British

advancing global communications technologies brought Anglo-American empires into closer contact, with the popular press serving as an integral conduit.

British colonial newspapers from Hong Kong and Shanghai informed much of California's understanding of British foreign affairs in China. Northern California newspapers reprinted articles from the *China Mail*, *Friend of China*, and *North China Herald* covering the Taiping Rebellion and Arrow ("Second Opium") War. Several California newspapers maintained recurring "Later from China" columns offering overviews of international affairs in British China.<sup>16</sup> The British colonial papers in China at this time differed from California periodicals in one significant way. Unlike the more opinionated, sensationalist reporting typical of many California papers, English-language newspapers published in Hong Kong and Shanghai were milder in tone. While the work of Elizabeth Sinn, John Fairbank, and Prescott Clarke finds that China-coast newspapers maintained strong political leanings, much of their content in the late 1850s was devoted primarily to regional trade with the occasional succinct overview of political affairs.<sup>17</sup> The reason for the different editorial practices in early British China are surprisingly straightforward. Beginning in the late 1820s, merchants in Hong Kong and Shanghai established newspapers to circulate information about economic affairs and trade. Articles appearing in these papers did, at times, dabble in the sensational, but usually only on issues affecting free trade in the region, like smuggling and piracy.

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aristocracy. Lee, *Origins of the Popular Press*, 35-36.

<sup>16</sup> "Later from China" and similar semi-permanent "China News" columns appear in the *San Francisco Bulletin*, *Daily Globe*, *Daily Democratic State Journal*, *Daily Alta California*, and the *San Joaquin Republican*.

<sup>17</sup> Frank H.H. King, ed., *A Research Guide to China-Coast Newspapers, 1822-1911* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); Elizabeth Sinn, "Beyond "Tianxia": The "Zhongwai Xinwen Qiribao" (Hong Kong 1871—1872) and the Construction of a Transnational Chinese Community," *China Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2004), 89-122.

A common topic of California coverage of Chinese international affairs focused on Britain's suppression of the threat of Chinese piracy near Hong Kong and Shanghai. Britain was keen to protect its own commercial interests in the region from smuggling and piracy, which had seen a significant uptick alongside the boom in Pacific commerce. British officials had a preoccupation with the perceived threat of piracy that they wrote into their 1856 request to revise the Treaty of Nanking, requesting that the Chinese government allow British forces to "provide for the suppression of piracy on the China coast."<sup>18</sup> This fear of piracy was carried over into California newspapers. A February 1858 article in the *Daily Democratic State Journal* reprinted news via the *China Mail* about the "barbarian" Taiping rebels and Britain's ongoing efforts to stave off smuggling in the region. The *Daily Alta California* reported on the mutiny of the Chinese crew aboard the British brig *Gallant*, ending in the murder of its English officers. A July 1857 article in the *Daily Globe* mentions that British vessels were obliged to disarm Chinese merchant ships as "a means of suppressing piracy."<sup>19</sup> As historian John Wong argues, "the advocacy of British economic interests in China was paramount in the minds of the policy makers."<sup>20</sup> It is no surprise, then, that California newspapers were similarly interested in Chinese piracy, as much of the state's concerns over Chinese immigration focused on the possibility of a negative impact to its economic interests. White Californian wage laborers sought to demonize those who encroached upon their prospects in the state's competitive labor market. Stories of Chinese "pirates" stealing from white, law-abiding merchants along the British China coast

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<sup>18</sup> Earl Clarendon to Sir John Bowring, FO 17/210, 13 February 1854.

<sup>19</sup> Though it is just as likely that Britain used piracy as an excuse to disarm and plunder Chinese ships amid the ongoing Opium War. "Late From China," *Daily Democratic State Journal* (Sacramento, California), February 24, 1858; "Later From China," *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco, California), June 8, 1858; "Northern China," *Daily Globe* (San Francisco, California), July 19, 1857.

<sup>20</sup> J.Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism, and the Arrow War (1856-1860) in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 29.

found purchase in California newspapers. On one hand, these stories played into pure sensationalization, as coverage of murder, intrigue, and crime stoked reader interest and drove up circulation. They also offered trans-imperial discussions of “piracy” that fit into California’s own nativist narratives surrounding Chinese “threats” to white labor and economic mobility.<sup>21</sup>

These criticisms reflect white laborers’ anxieties that Chinese workers encroached upon their access to limited labor opportunities. In the *San Francisco Bulletin*’s “Letter to the Editor” column, a resident identified only as “A.E.” argues against Chinese immigration due to the finite employment opportunities available in the state. “[Why] fill the State with a population which must necessarily become paupers,” he laments, “for we can give them no employment?” He blames not the state for the influx of immigrants, but rather both the “capitalists of New York and San Francisco [who] organize Immigrant Aid Societies” as well as the publishers of “public journals” for printing ads that promote these immigrant aid organizations. He argues that the journals have “made the state bankrupt, and the people paupers, and would fain gloss it over with the slime of deception, and persuade foreigners into an emigration which can only end in pauperdom.”<sup>22</sup> A.E. was not the only critic of mutual aid societies.<sup>23</sup> Just one month later, the *San Francisco Bulletin*’s lead article for the May 25 edition likewise argues that Immigration

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<sup>21</sup> For more on Nativism in California, see: Chan, “A People of Exceptional Character”; Peyton Hurt, “The Rise and Fall of the “Know Nothings” in California,” *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1930), 16–49; Leonard Pitt, “The Beginnings of Nativism in California,” *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (February 1961), 23–38.

<sup>22</sup> A.E., “Letter to the Editor,” *San Francisco Bulletin* (San Francisco, California), April 24, 1857.

<sup>23</sup> California had many different types of mutual aid societies, some of which were Christian charities. *Tongs*, or fraternal organizations, were societies created by and for Chinese immigrants. Later on, *huiguan*, or aid associations, were established. Membership was extended to Chinese immigrants who shared the same dialect, region, or ethnic group. The Six Companies, also known as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, became the most well-known *huiguan*. See also Lawrence Douglas Taylor Hansen, “The Chinese Six Companies of San Francisco and the Smuggling of Chinese Immigrants across the U.S.-Mexico Border, 1882-1930,” *Journal of the Southwest*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (2006), 37-61; Yucheng Qin, *The Diplomacy of Nationalism: The Six Companies and China’s Policy toward Exclusion* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009).

Aid Societies falsely encourage Chinese immigrants to settle in a place where there simply is not enough land and work to support them.<sup>24</sup>

*The Golden Hills' News* was one such “public journal” created by missionaries with the express intent of helping Chinese residents navigate their new lives in San Francisco.<sup>25</sup> First published in 1854 by William Howard, and later between 1855-1857 as *The Oriental* by Reverend William Speer, the paper was an important dual language newspaper.<sup>26</sup> It contained articles in both English and colloquial Cantonese, speaking to the significant influx of sojourners from Guangdong, written in their regional dialect. However, articles within each edition were not translated between languages. The English portions, while writing favorably, refer to Chinese residents as “they” (not “we”) suggesting that the anonymous author was, most likely, one of its white American editors. The Cantonese language portions, on the other hand, appear to be written by anonymous Chinese contributors. The separation of these two columns suggests that each section was written by and for their respective ethnic communities, though the number of subscribers and circulation of the paper remains unclear.<sup>27</sup> The English authors wrote in a decidedly philanthropic, reformist manner. In the May 27 edition, the English language section criticizes California’s hostility towards Chinese emigration and calls upon “Merchants, Manufacturers, Miners, and Agriculturists, [to] come forward as friends, not scorers of the

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<sup>24</sup> “The Other Side of the Immigration Aid Society,” *San Francisco Bulletin* (San Francisco, California), May 25, 1857.

<sup>25</sup> The missionaries also used the immigrant aid outlets, like *The Golden Hills' News*, under the pretense of offering aid to Chinese residents to convert them to Christianity.

<sup>26</sup> Scholars presume that Howard was William D.M. Howard, a successful American businessman who first arrived in California in 1839 when the region was still under Mexican rule. Judy Yung, Gordon H. Chang, and Him Mark Lai, eds. “The Founding of *Golden Hills' News* (1854),” *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>27</sup> *The Golden Hills' News* was originally intended as a daily, but due to high cost of printing was shortened to twice-weekly editions. Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 74.

Chinese, so that they may mingle in the march to the world, and help to open for America an endless vista of future commerce.”<sup>28</sup>

While the paper’s American contributors maintained reformist visions, *The Golden Hills’ News’* Chinese authors saw the purpose of the paper in far more practical terms. In its inaugural edition, the Cantonese language column opines:

The mission of a newspaper is to help merchants and salesmen to exchange ideas and serve as a channel to connect people with the government...Men of every nationality here have their own newspaper except us Chinese. This is why, despite our large numbers, we have little control of the market. We have been ill informed and exploited by others in purchase and sales. In dealing with American government officials, we are often misled, cheated, and bullied....For this reason, we have decided to set up a newspaper...to record and report daily news about market information, government announcements, and local events regarding Chinese and foreigners.<sup>29</sup>

This critique emphasizes the systemic oppression of Chinese residents in California. It was not only white Californians who exploited residents individually, but the Chinese author here acknowledges that the state likewise enforced modes of systemic subordination. Chinese in California recognized the power of the press and reused these tools of empire to assert their autonomy and refashion the negative narratives.

Furthermore, this passage highlights the frustrating unevenness between Chinese residents’ perceptions of themselves versus Anglo-Americans’ ideations of them. Though William Speer, the paper’s American missionary founder, maintained primary control over *The Golden Hills’ News*, three of the paper’s four pages were devoted to Cantonese language news. Across the Pacific Ocean in Australia, another dual-language newspaper entered publication in

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<sup>28</sup> “The Chinese Exodus,” *The Golden Hills’ News* (San Francisco, California), May 27, 1854.

<sup>29</sup> *The Golden Hills’ News* (San Francisco, California), April 22, 1854. Translation via Xiao-huang Yin, “Between the Local and the Global: Characteristics of the Chinese-Language Press in America,” *American Periodicals*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2009), 50.



1857: *The Chinese Advertiser*. The newspaper was founded and edited by Robert Bell, an English settler in Ballarat, Victoria who served as a Chinese translator. Like *The Golden Hills' News*, the paper included advertisements, government notices, and opinion pieces. Though Bell was not a missionary, the *Advertiser* certainly promoted Christian ideals, and its masthead included a Bible verse as the mission statement: "Pioneer of Christianity and Christian civilisation among the Chinese in Australasia."<sup>30</sup> However, Yewang Wang and Jula Ryder incorrectly identify *The Chinese Advertiser* as the "first bilingual newspapers with Chinese in the world," as *The Golden Hills' News* first published two years before the *Advertiser*.<sup>31</sup>

That Chinese contributors held a significant position in the crafting and dissemination of their worldviews—ranging from news to advertisements to insight on Chinese-friendly American merchants—must have been quite a welcome change in an otherwise hostile environment. Not only did Chinese contributors to the paper wield newfound outlets of verbal expression, but a recurring engraving featured in the Chinese-language columns of the newspaper depicted how they imagined themselves. Located on the front page of many *Golden Hills' News* editions was a picture of a man casually reclining in a chair, dressed in Chinese clothing with a queue hanging down his back, reading the latest edition of *The Golden Hills News* (figure 2.1). In the background of the parlor sits shelves filled with books and other reading materials. Such illustrations underscore Chinese self-identification as new residents of California—as comfortable, literate men who, though living abroad, still practice Chinese ways of life and living. These provide a vital counterpoint to the vitriolic rhetoric and pictorial depictions of Chinese residents in political cartoons and illustrated letter sheets. Nonetheless, California

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<sup>30</sup> *The Chinese Advertiser* (Ballarat, Victoria), June 14, 1856.

<sup>31</sup> Yewang Wang and Jula Ryder, "An 'Eccentric' Paper Edited for the Unwelcome Aliens: A Study of the Earliest Australian Chinese Newspaper, *The Chinese Advertiser*," *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (December 1999), 300.

Chinese continued to struggle against American xenophobia and racism. Their struggles reverberated across the Pacific and beyond, where Indigenous and South Asian peoples continued to combat both physical and rhetorical colonial oppression. Anglo-American portrayals of other non-white peoples, especially Native Americans and South Asians, took on far more racialized tones that sought to legitimize colonial oppression.

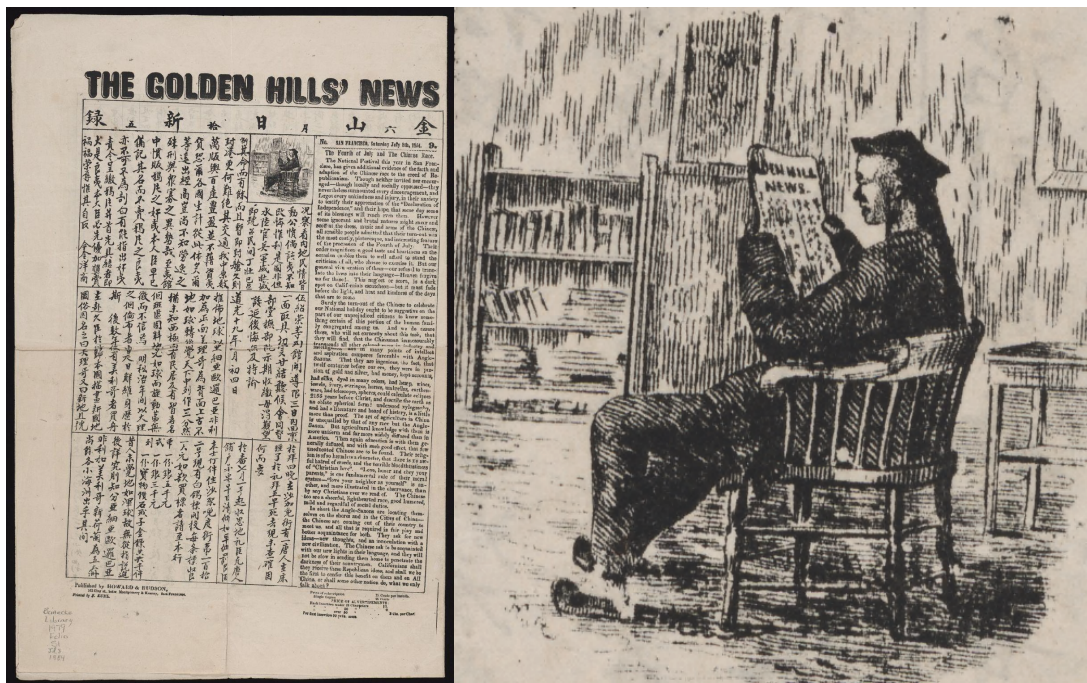


Figure 2.1. Copy of *The Golden Hills' News* (left), and enlarged image of inset drawing (right), depicting a Chinese man in San Francisco enjoys the latest edition of the *Golden Hills' News* in his home library. *The Golden Hills' News*, July 8, 1854. Yale University Library, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

## Global Constructions of Indigeneity

In late September 1857, the lead article for the evening edition of the *San Francisco Bulletin* detailed the ongoing mutiny in India against British colonial forces. “If we are to believe the expressed wishes and eager anticipations of the London *Times* and other leaders of the English press,” the article began, “a terrible vengeance awaits the native troops in India, who

recently glutted their hate in British blood.”<sup>32</sup> Not as widely reported was England’s increasingly hostile occupation of India. Though scholars disagree over the specific causes of the rebellion, many find fault in Britain’s overall disregard of India’s caste tensions and religious differences.<sup>33</sup> The British East India Company began its rule over India in the seventeenth century, and over the subsequent two hundred years undermined India’s socio-political structures by annexing the provinces of local rulers, enacting exorbitant land taxes, and passing decrees that overturned Indian inheritance laws. All these measures affected Indian civilians and military troops alike.<sup>34</sup> The Indian military revolted against British control in the spring and summer of 1857, and, as scholar Ranbir Vohra contends, was the “first time in the history of India that so many disparate elements, from many diverse regions...made foreign power the common target for attack.”<sup>35</sup>

Across the Pacific Ocean in California, journalists contextualized international news by placing it in relation to domestic affairs. As historian David Wrobel argues, European travelers to America throughout the nineteenth century placed their experiences and impressions of the West in a global context, in turn de-exceptionalizing the West while simultaneously highlighting the emergence of a global society.<sup>36</sup> The California press often contextualized its reporting of the Indian Rebellion by relating it to policies regarding Indigenous North American populations. Coverage of the Indian uprising was published alongside other socio-political issues involving

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<sup>32</sup>“The Sepoy Outrages in India,” *San Francisco Bulletin* (San Francisco, California), September 24, 1857.

<sup>33</sup>For a more in-depth history of the causes of the Indian Rebellion, see M. L. Bhargava, *Saga of 1857: Success and Failures* (New Delhi: Reliance Publishing House, 1992); S. B. Chaudhuri, *English Historical Writings on the Indian Mutiny 1857–9* (Calcutta: World Press Private, 1979); Saul David, *The Indian Mutiny: 1857* (United Kingdom: Viking, 2002).

<sup>34</sup>Alison Blunt, “Embodying War: British Women and Domestic Defilement in the Indian ‘Mutiny,’ 1857-8,” *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2000), 423.

<sup>35</sup>Ranbir Vohra, *The Making of India: A Historical Survey* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 80.

<sup>36</sup>David Wrobel, *Global West, American Frontier: Travel, Empire, and Exceptionalism from Manifest Destiny to the Great Depression* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), 5.

foreign immigration and domestic migration. An analysis of how the British and American press reported on the 1857 rebellion reveals how Anglo-American societies weaponized the logics of racialization to undergird settler colonialism across the gold rush Pacific.

As news of the rebellion slowly made its way back to England in the letters of relatives living in India, the editors of the *Times* capitalized on the crisis, devoting several semi-permanent columns to coverage of the Uprising. Though British military officers were initially cautious in classifying the “mutiny” as anything more than a military insurrection, they recognized that they needed public support for their suppression of the rebellion. By republishing their own graphic accounts of the insurrections in Delhi and Meerut in the *Times*, British military officers and government officials leveraged public outcry over the “injustices” of the “barbaric” Indian troops against British citizens living in India. Historian Peter Putnis contends that the press’ accounts of the Uprising “led to intensified racial discourse, which emphasized notions of ‘native savagery’ and legitimised the British Army’s brutal retaliation in the name of vengeance.”<sup>37</sup> British press reporting of the rebellion stressed the brutality of the “sepoys” against “innocent” England, reiterating sensationalized violence through racialized rhetoric aimed not only at dehumanizing Indians, but glorifying the “victimized” British.

News of the unrest among native troops circulated the February prior to the “first” *Times* report of the rebellion in August 1857.<sup>38</sup> According to various reports, the 19<sup>th</sup> Bengal Native Infantry, composed primarily of high-caste Hindus and wealthy Muslims, accused British army suppliers of greasing ammunition cartridges with pork and beef fat. The said cartridges were meant to be torn with one’s teeth before loading the greased cartridge into the narrow barrel of

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<sup>37</sup> Putnis, “International Press and the Indian Uprising,” 1.

<sup>38</sup> Though twentieth century scholarship considers the August 3, 1857, article as the first report of the rebellion, news about unrest amongst the Sepoy troops was frequently published in the preceding months.

the Enfield rifle. Placing cartridges potentially greased with beef or pork fat into their mouths stood in direct violation of Hindu and Muslim religious practices.<sup>39</sup> Though the type of tallow used was never confirmed, the rumor of its presence was enough to unsettle Indian servicemen, who were already dissatisfied with their treatment by the EIC's and its army. Members of the EIC's native infantry held long-term complaints of unequal wages, poor treatment, and oppressive laws that prohibited their practicing their religions.<sup>40</sup>

Widespread dissension spread amongst native servicemembers of the Bengal Native Infantry in response to the cartridge controversy, culminating in the May 1857 uprisings in Meerut and Delhi. Reports published in the British press reflect England's apparent willful ignorance of its role in the uprisings, and the *Times*' Calcutta special correspondent Meredith Townsend attributed the unrest among the Bengal army to their "irritation to the rapid progress of Christian ideas and measures. Doubtless the Sepoys, like all other Hindoos, feel a bitter conviction that Christianity is winning the day."<sup>41</sup> Of no mention here is the affront that offensively greased cartridges might pose to Hindu or Muslim servicemen, let alone the longer history of injustices of British rule in India. Later that month, Townsend would emphasize Britain's innocence, claiming that the mutineers did not "have any real cause to be dissatisfied."<sup>42</sup> A week after the uprisings, the *Times* justified Britain's retaliation to the uprising, claiming that they must exercise caution because they "don't know what natives will do."<sup>43</sup> These reports support Mary Louise Pratt's concept of "anti-conquest," where Europeans'

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<sup>39</sup> Daniel Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 88.

<sup>40</sup> Vohra, *The Making of India*, 80.

<sup>41</sup> Meredith Townsend, "The Bengal Mutinies," *The Times* (London, England), June 15, 1857.

<sup>42</sup> James Standen, "The Mutinies in the Indian Army," *The Times* (London, England), June 29, 1857.

<sup>43</sup> In June, the British army received relief troops, most of which were originally headed to China in the Second Opium War. With reinforcements, the British army was able to recapture Delhi and dispose of the Mughal emperor. Meredith Townsend, "The Indian Army," *The Times* (London, England), May 19, 1857.

strategies of representing the “other” secure their own “innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony.”<sup>44</sup> Similarly, *Times* articles reinforced the popular depiction of Britain as the blameless victim in the Indian uprisings.

Though the *Times* received its overseas intelligence from nationals living abroad, British representatives serving in local government, and members of the military stationed in India, the *Times* spent nearly half of its yearly budget on the maintenance of permanent “foreign” or “special” correspondents.<sup>45</sup> The *Times*’ Foreign News Editor was responsible for coordinating with these overseas journalists, many of whom were high-ranking officials in local government, and were able to pass valuable and sensitive information back to the *Times*’ London headquarters. The temporary appointment of Cecil Beadon as the *Times*’ Calcutta correspondent during the winter and spring of 1856-1857 was a closely guarded secret. Beadon, who served the EIC as the Home Secretary to the Government of India, was expressly forbidden by the Company from communicating with the press.<sup>46</sup>

As most of these foreign correspondents were British nationals affiliated with governing organizations, one must question the objectivity of the writers who, arguably, were predisposed to side with Britain against the Indian troops. James Standen, the *Times*’ special correspondent stationed in Bombay during the rebellion, discussed his own “difficulty” in maintaining neutrality:

I may appear, perhaps, unduly vehement and vindictive. I endeavor to write temperately, but I assure you it is no easy matter to preserve a uniform tone of unimpassioned narrative when oppressed by the recollection of the hundred

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<sup>44</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

<sup>45</sup> Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, 238-239.

<sup>46</sup> The London Times, *The History of The Times: The Traditional Established, 1841-1884* (London: The Times Publishing Company Limited, 1939), 309.

treacheries, murders, and horrors unutterable that have been perpetrated by the rebels.<sup>47</sup>

And, though many special correspondents claimed their accounts were factual reporting of the Uprising, their overall tone remained decidedly unsympathetic towards the Indian troops and their grievances. Throughout the summer and fall of 1857, the *Times* maintained semi-permanent sections, boldly titled “THE MUTINIES IN INDIA,” often featuring “specials” articles with blazoned sub-headlines like “THE MASSACRE AT CAWNPORE” and “THE MUTINY AT DELHI.”<sup>48</sup>

Foreign correspondents feigned neutrality, while their sensational accounts of the rebellion offered racialized representations of Indian troops and civilians. These racialization processes relegated the natives to the status of subordinates. Early reports of the rebellion asserted that the “wisdom of the European” evidenced an innate “hierarchy of race” that ranked English men and women above the Indian.<sup>49</sup> These prejudiced descriptions also served as a means for British imperialists to justify their violent retaliation to the broader public, both domestically and internationally. Indeed, Standen promoted this notion of justice by writing that “when the not far-off day of final reckoning arrives, God will defend the right,” that is to say, the British, against the “lying and insolent” Indian troops.<sup>50</sup> British justification of colonial violence did not start or stop with the Indian Mutiny. Rather, it is just one example in a longer history of colonialism, and a position routinely echoed in the imperial ambitions of their American counterparts across the Pacific.

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<sup>47</sup>James Standen, “The Mutinies in India,” *The Times* (London, England), August 31, 1857.

<sup>48</sup>“The Mutinies at India,” “The Massacre at Cawnpore,” *The Times* (London, England), September 2, 1855; “The Mutinies at Delhi,” *The Times* (London, England), July 21, 1857.

<sup>49</sup>“It would be perhaps too much to say,” *The Times* (London, England), June 8, 1857.

<sup>50</sup>James Standen, “The Mutinies in India,” *The Times* (London, England), August 31, 1857.

Broader appeals to justice were widely supported in England, and other London periodicals replicated the *Times*' demand for due vengeance. Weeks after Standen's emphatic declarations, *Punch*, a humor and satire magazine, published a political cartoon of British retaliation against the Indian mutineers (figure 2.2). The allegorical personification of Lady Justice, replete with her traditional sword and scales, fights alongside British troops against the Indian rebels. Behind her, Indian women shield their children from the battle, suggesting that Britain saw itself as the protector of the "weak." The depiction of Lady Justice mirrors the feminine personification of America's continental empire in the painting *American Progress* (figure 2.3.) Publisher George Crofutt originally commissioned artist John Gast to paint this under his direct specifications to include in his 1872 transcontinental travel guidebook. *American Progress* is now synonymous with westward expansion and Manifest Destiny. Like the *Punch* piece, the painting features a classically dressed woman as emblematic of an empowered and expanding empire that confronts an uncivilized West. Crofutt's accompanying description reads: "[A] beautiful and charming female...floating westward through the air, bearing on her forehead the "Star of Empire"...fleeing from "Progress"...are the Indians, buffalo, wind horses, bears and other game, moving westward—ever westward. The Indians...turn their despairing faces toward the setting sun, as they flee from the presence of the wondrous vision. The "Star" is *too much for them*..."<sup>51</sup> In both pieces, the feminine figures offer two versions of imperial expansion: an indirect, civilizing force as with *American Progress*, or a violent retribution of colonized resistance. As Alison Blunt argues, "representing British women as victims of the uprising helped to legitimize masculine retaliation against their 'unmanly' assassins."<sup>52</sup> To be sure, the

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<sup>51</sup> Emphasis in original. George A. Crofutt, *Crofutt's New Overland Tourist and Pacific Coast Guide* (United States: Overland Publishing Company, 1878), 300.

<sup>52</sup> Blunt, "Embodying War," 408.





## JUSTICE.

Figure 2.2. Lady Justice carries her vengeance against the Indian rebels. Though she carries a shield bearing the scales of justice, her blindfold is absent, perhaps suggesting Britain's lack of impartiality. John Tenniel. "Justice." September 12, 1857. Punch Magazine Cartoon archive.



Figure 2.3. The “Star of Empire” brings enlightened “progress” to the “uncivilized” West. John Gast, *American Progress*, 1872. Autry Museum of the American West.

“vengeance” of Britain ultimately culminated with the EIC bequeathing its *de facto* rule over India to the British crown in 1858, with Queen Victoria officially declared as the Empress of India in 1877.<sup>53</sup>

These images were not merely allegorical representations but provided illustration of the *Times*’ graphic reports of the “mutineers”’ violent murder of British women and children. Numerous reports emerging from India described horrors of the “sight of our murdered, violated,

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<sup>53</sup> “Queen Victoria Becomes Empress of India,” in “Making Britain: Discover how South Asians Shaped the Nation, 1870-1950,” The Open University, accessed May 13, 2019. [www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/queen-victoria-becomes-empress-india](http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/queen-victoria-becomes-empress-india).

and mutilated countrymen.”<sup>54</sup> In a reflection of Victorian sensibilities, both British reporters and the *Times*’ readership believed that the violation and rape of Englishwomen by the Indian troops and civilians was worse than a brutal and bloody death. In a candid “Letter to the Editor,” a self-identified “Anglo-Bengalee” man laments the “deflowered English ladies” who were “dragged naked through the streets by the rabble of Delhi.”<sup>55</sup> Less than a month later Meredith Townsend, the *Times*’ Calcutta special correspondent, echoed such sentiments, claiming that “[English] women were reserved for a worse fate” during the June 1857 Siege of Cawnpore.<sup>56</sup> In a published letter, dated June 27, an anonymous English woman writes of her capture by the mutinous troops near Agra, claiming that they not only threatened her and the other female captives with death, but with a fate “worse than death.” “I can scarcely write or think,” she intimated, “so fearful is it all.”<sup>57</sup> Regarding the intersections of race, colonialism, and power, Ann Stoler observes that European women were viewed as the bearers of colonial morality, and accordingly required “protection from the ‘primitive’ sexual urges around by the sight of them.”<sup>58</sup> Textual descriptions in the *Times* mirror *Punch*’s political cartoons, which also depicted women as innocent victims.

Reports abounded with brutal and bloody tales of the rebellion, and the *Times* circulated testimonies of British soldiers and civilians who supposedly bore witness to the atrocities of the rebellion. These “eyewitness” accounts supplemented the special correspondents’ articles, and as such, should likewise be understood as another instance of the imperial gaze.<sup>59</sup> The *Times*

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<sup>54</sup> Meredith Townsend, “The Massacre at Cawnpore,” *The Times* (London, England), September 2, 1857.

<sup>55</sup> “To the Editor of the Times,” *The Times* (London, England), August 8, 1857.

<sup>56</sup> “The Massacre at Cawnpore,” *The Times* (London, England), September 2, 1857.

<sup>57</sup> “The Indian Mutinies,” *The Times* (London, England), August 21, 1857.

<sup>58</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 57-58.

<sup>59</sup> As Pratt contends, “the European male subject[‘s]...imperial eyes passively look out and possess.” Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7.

eagerly republished family letters of British soldiers in India, and featured guest editorials or “Letters to the Editor” by those former British expatriates who spent time in India. The reading public expressed great interest in the rebellion, as suggested by the editors of the *Times*, who claimed in September 1857 that they continued to “publish from the numerous letters forwarded to us by the friends and relatives of officers in India such as contain any new details or matter of particular interest.”<sup>60</sup> An officer stationed in Delhi during the first wave of uprisings claimed that the 74<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry engaged in a “regular slaughter of all Europeans...men, women, and children all shared the same fate.” During the ensuing uprisings, the officer states he “blew [the] brains out” of a native trooper, only to have another attempt to strangle him with the torn remnants of his own shirtsleeve. He concludes his story by entreating the reader to “imagine the intense agony I must have been in!”<sup>61</sup> This officer’s account is just one of many, as the *Times* frequently utilized these graphic, first-person descriptions to both garner sympathy for British military retaliation, as well as maintain public attention on the “challenges” of imperial expansion.

### **Contextualizing Empire**

Just as Britain continued to generate official systems of colonial management and racial discourse in the wake of the 1857 Indian Uprising, a chorus of voices in California began to rise in opposition to the influx of non-Americans into the state following the gold rush. As historian Carey McWilliams observes, the discovery of gold in 1848 ignited a series of “chain reaction explosions” that catapulted California into the international spotlight overnight.<sup>62</sup> Enterprising

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<sup>60</sup> “The Mutinies in India,” *The Times* (London, England), September 2, 1857.

<sup>61</sup> “The Mutiny at Delhi,” *The Times* (London, England), July 21, 1857.

<sup>62</sup> Carey McWilliams, *California: The Great Exception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 25.

placer miners from around the world were drawn to the state by the magnetic pull of opportunity, and the Bay Area was suddenly flooded by incoming Chinese, Pacific Islander, Latin American, Australian, and European laborers. In the following decade, too, southern slaveholders would test the legal strength of California's free-state status as they brought enslaved people of African descent to toil in the gold fields on their behalf. These expanding populations encroached on adjoining Indigenous lands, thus re-igniting a series of violent confrontations over Native land rights. The gold rush produced a large, ethnically diverse population within a short frame of time, exacerbating settler colonization of Indigenous territories. Governed largely by nativist legislators, California leaders held little sympathy for its non-white residents' struggles for equality and freedom.<sup>63</sup> Many of these civil rights struggles stood in contradiction to white Californian's vision for their state's future.

In fact, California legislators actively passed some most notorious anti-Chinese and anti-Indigenous regulations, prompted largely by American desire for labor and land access. As California confronted the various legal and social parameters of what it meant to be a non-white person in the state, it was largely white politicians, some of whom maintained pro-slavery sympathies, who were determining race-based exclusionary policies.<sup>64</sup> Racial and ethnic communities in California, both American and foreign-born, were left out of conversations that determined their future. As historian Stacey Smith argues, the California gold rush forced state politicians to confront a variety of labor systems wherein underpaid or unfree minorities, they feared, could undercut wages for free white laborers.<sup>65</sup> State and federal acts, like the 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians and the Compromise of 1850, not only set the

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<sup>63</sup> Stacey Smith, *Freedom's Frontier: California and the Struggle Over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press: 2013), 3.

<sup>64</sup> Smith, *Freedom's Frontier*, 7.

<sup>65</sup> Smith, *Freedom's Frontier*, 4.

stage for subsequent discussions about California's labor systems, but more importantly allowed white Californians to dictate and determine meanings of racialization aimed at its non-white inhabitants. These issues were further complicated by presence of Californios, many of whom continued to reside in the territory following Mexico's 1848 cessation of its western territories to the United States. So, when international news reporting on British imperial consolidation reached California—including the Opium War, Indian Rebellion, and sister gold rushes in Canada and Australia—the state was already engaged in constructing the legal and ideological frameworks that targeted non-white residents.

In characterizing the Indian Rebellion, the California press often placed its foreign coverage of the Uprising in relation to domestic discussions regarding Native American policies. An August 1857 article published in the *Daily Globe* equated England's "peculiar course with the Sepoy Troops" with the "trouble" that the Third Seminole War in Florida was posing to "Uncle Sam."<sup>66</sup> Though the Seminole Wars were instigated by the forced removal of Seminole peoples from their ancestral Florida lands, Native Californians were likewise dealing with similar issues of white squatters' encroachment on Indigenous lands. In the 1850s, northern California bore witness to numerous violent confrontations between Native peoples and white settlers, in which thousands of Indigenous Californians were murdered by paramilitary vigilantes who justified "Indian hunting" attacks on Native settlements with the most spurious reasoning.<sup>67</sup> Most attempts by Natives to resist or retaliate against these attacks often resulted in more violent retributions from their white aggressors.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "Letter from Washington," *Daily Globe* (San Francisco, California), August 15, 1857.

<sup>67</sup> These vigilantes often (falsely) accused Native peoples of cattle theft and murder. Smith, *Freedom's Frontier*, 133.

<sup>68</sup> Smith, *Freedom's Frontier*, 133-134. For a more in-depth, and sobering, analysis of the massacre of Indigenous Californian peoples, read Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe 1846 – 1873* (New Haven: Yale University Press: 2016).

This juxtaposition between two contrasting instances of indigeneity, that of Indian “Sepoys” and Native Americans, underscores larger processes of racialization. American and British newspaper articles employed graphic and racially charged rhetoric against both groups of native peoples, describing them as “savage,” “barbarians,” and “merciless fiends.”<sup>69</sup> Indigenous California populations, regardless of tribal and ethnic diversity, were often collectively stereotyped by Anglo-European observers as “Digger Indians.” This ethnographic designation carried racialized meanings. As scholar Allan Lönneberg observes, the term “Digger” served to “encapsulate Indian as being treacherous, bloodthirsty, dirty, squalid, lazy, comic, and/or pathetic as the time and place dictated, and such portrayals were often accompanied by violence.”<sup>70</sup> One report in the *Daily Globe* describes the Indian “mutineers” as having “no human sympathy,” and a *Times* article re-published in the *California Farmer* describes the Indian troops as “monsters in human shape.”<sup>71</sup> While these articles can certainly be interpreted as sensational, they nevertheless perpetuated readily available racist stereotypes that deprived Indigenous Californian communities of their humanity. Such depictions likewise mirror *Punch* magazine’s animalistic renderings of Indians as the “Bengal tiger.”

California news articles about the rebellion reinforced broader understandings of racial supremacy that transcend mere comparisons of Indigeneity. California reporting of the Uprising were published alongside articles discussing “Bleeding Kansas” and the nation’s ongoing sectional crisis. Articles about the Indian rebellion were not read in isolation from other

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<sup>69</sup> “Indian Massacres on the Plains,” *San Francisco Bulletin* (San Francisco, California), September 18, 1857; “Some Features of the Sepoy Revolt,” *San Francisco Bulletin* (San Francisco, California), September 17, 1857.

<sup>70</sup> Allan Lönneberg, “The Digger Indian Stereotype in California,” *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Winter 1981), 215-216.

<sup>71</sup> “A Young Martyr,” *Daily Globe* (San Francisco, California), November 11, 1857; “The War in India,” *California Farmer*, (San Francisco, California), December 2, 1857.

newspaper columns, and these concurrent presentations underscore how racialized reporting of various communities of color unveil larger structures and processes wherein Anglo-Americans placed themselves above and before other minority groups.

Though a *Daily Globe* article published in August 1857 offers a relatively neutral overview of the sectional crisis following its report on the Indian rebellion, it also published a seemingly sensationalized article a few months later about an English officer's suicide during the "Sepoy massacre." The English officer, armed with only nine revolver charges, bravely fought off the rapacious mutineers who sought to defile his wife. Left with only two charges left, he nobly shot both his wife and himself in the heart, in order to save her from "fall[ing] into the hands of such barbarians."<sup>72</sup> The reader, heart still wrung from the harrowing tale of true love in the face of savage Indians, would only have to stray over two columns to read a hotly charged article about California's "Black Republicans."<sup>73</sup> The article discussed California's anti-slavery movement, and the first line reads, "What will the n\*\*\*\*r worshippers do *now*?"<sup>74</sup> By printing two negative accounts of Native and Black communities side-by-side, the *Globe* (similar to many other California publications), reinforced the notion that communities of color posed a threat, whether real or imagined, to white Americans.

Such accounts of minority transgressions against white Anglo-Americans further cemented racial and ideological divides. When a reporter for the *San Francisco Bulletin* discussed Native and white confrontations in California, he boldly proclaimed that "the politicians are too busy talking about slaves in Kansas, to give a thought to slaughtered whites [at

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<sup>72</sup> "Affecting Incident," *Daily Globe* (San Francisco, California), December 2, 1857

<sup>73</sup> "Letter from Washington," *Daily Globe* (San Francisco, California), August 15, 1857; "Affecting Incident," and "Assaults of the Opposition," *Daily Globe* (San Francisco, California), December 2, 1857.

<sup>74</sup> Word redacted by author for sensitivity. "Assaults of the Opposition," *Daily Globe* (San Francisco, California), December 2, 1857.



the hands of Natives] in...California.”<sup>75</sup> The discussions surrounding the innocence and vulnerability of white Anglo-Americans were reinforced and replicated in newspaper reporting on the Indian rebellion. One instance involved a published letter in the *California Farmer* from a British soldier stationed in Dinapore during the rebellion. Private Richard Douglas wrote to his family in England, describing the terrible “bloodshed, violation, rapine, and murder” of the mutineers, who he believes were waging a rebellion not only against Britain, but “against Christianity, and against the life and property of every white man in India.”<sup>76</sup> Reporting in California of India's rebellion against the British Empire resonated with their own fears that communities of color, and particularly Indigenous populations, would infringe upon the liberties and safety of white Californians.

Britain's responses to the rebellion not only underscored English systems of belief about indigeneity in South Asia, but the international circulation of geopolitical issues likewise informed American opinion about how to confront the “Indian Problem” in California. A reporter for the *San Francisco Bulletin* proclaimed that there would be no confrontations between white Californians and Native peoples if Britain still ruled in North America, alluding to England's quick suppression of the uprising.<sup>77</sup> In heralding Britain's forceful retaliation of the “mutineers,” California journalists were not merely making observations of British imperial policy, but were engaging in larger discourses of empire. Reporters highlighted Britain's position as a global power in the nineteenth century, and how their approaches to confronting issues in their colonial peripheries informed both official and unofficial protocols for how other empires

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<sup>75</sup> “Indian Massacres on the Plains,” *San Francisco Bulletin* (San Francisco, California), September 18, 1857.

<sup>76</sup> “The War in India,” *California Farmer* (San Francisco, California), December 2, 1857.

<sup>77</sup> “Indian Massacres on the Plains,” *San Francisco Bulletin* (San Francisco, California), September 18, 1857.

shaped their interactions with Indigenous peoples. Though Americans were by no means the first colonizer that Native Californians were forced to contend with, nineteenth-century Californians' reflections on the rebellion in India carried transnational meanings, as evidenced by white residents' responses to and applause for British imperial policies.

### **Picturing California: Race and Political Cartoons**

Alongside newspapers, illustrated magazines and political cartoons also reinforced racial hierarchies through their negative representations of non-white peoples, including Chinese, Native, and Black communities. These politicized images depicted various non-white communities into a seemingly homogenous, subordinate whole, while also creating a race-based social order. Even *The Golden Hills' News* invoked these hierarchies to position Chinese immigrants in California in closer proximity to whiteness. In the paper's June 10, 1854, English article, the editor reprimands other California newspapers for describing Chinese as "'Apes,' 'Brutes,' 'social lice' lower than the Negro-race. We protest against making targets of the poor Chinese."<sup>78</sup> Similar sentiments were earlier echoed by Norman Asing in his now famous 1852 petition to California Governor John Bigler. In response to Bigler's anti-Chinese remarks to the state legislature, Asing wrote: "we [Chinese] are as much allied to the *African* race and the red man as you are yourself, and that as far as the aristocracy of *skin* is concerned, ours might compare with many of the European races."<sup>79</sup>

Both authors deliberately weaponized anti-Black sentiments when the state contended with a spectrum of free-labor issues that were colored by race. As Stacey Smith argues, 1850s

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<sup>78</sup> "The Chinese and the Times," *The Golden Hills' News* (San Francisco, California), June 10, 1854.

<sup>79</sup> Norman Asing, "To His Excellency Governor Bigler (1852)," in Yung et al (eds.), *Chinese American Voices*, 9.

California saw the development of diverse forms of servitude and labor arrangements, including the threat of unfree Chinese “coolie” labor. The fusing of the anti-Chinese and antislavery causes, Smith surmises, ultimately resulted in the formulation of California’s immigration restrictions laws that “became the blueprints for the nation’s most racially exclusive immigration statutes.”<sup>80</sup> Sucheng Chan likewise contends that examining the historical experiences of Black and Chinese Californians in tandem reveals that “the early 1850s was a period during which racial lines hardened.”<sup>81</sup> The deliberate pitting of non-white communities against one another only bolstered Anglo-American racial supremacy. These racialized structures and processes are especially visible in contemporary political cartoons and illustrations, which promoted imaginings of Chinese, Black, and Native Californians not only as inferior to Anglo-Americans, but in many instances as less than human.

“Way-Side Scenes from California,” a widely popular graphic published in the mid 1850s in San Francisco, features stereotypical scenes from the gold fields (figure 2.4).<sup>82</sup> The top image shows American, Chinese, and Native miners passing each other on the road. Seated high on his horse, the American rider looks blankly down upon the groups traveling on foot. But his gaze is not indifferent, as suggested by the engraving’s accompanying description:

Indians are met in groups, and in every stage of filth and pitch, carrying their “papoose” or baskets of “chemuck” (food) upon their backs, or with pan and tin cup are looking out for “prospects” in the tailings of the miners. Strings of Chinamen pass, and greet you in broken English with “how you do, John?”—we

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<sup>80</sup> Smith, *Freedom’s Frontier*, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Chan, “A People of Exceptional Character,” 78.

<sup>82</sup> “Way-Side Scenes from California” was also modified into a letter sheet used by the public to send letters back home. The backside was left blank for the hand-written message, and only the top-most section of the front graphic, “A Road Scene in California,” was printed, most likely to allow the sender enough blank space to address the letter. The Bancroft Library has one just example in their collection, and the letter is addressed to a “Mrs. Chandler” in Holland, New York. University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library, “A road scene in California,” 1856, BANC PIC 1963.002:0117—B.



Figure 2.4. Charles Christian Nahl, "Wayside Scenes in California," c. 1855. UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library. California Heritage Collection, California Lettersheets from the Robert B. Honeyman, Jr. Collection of Early Californian and Western American Pictorial Material, BANC PIC 1963.002:179--A.

are all *Johns* to them, and they to us—their faces, tails and dress, their bamboo canes and heavy loads, are strangely singular to us.<sup>83</sup>

The lettersheet artist's voyeuristic rendering of the battle dehumanizes the people in more ways than one. The letter sheet refers to the Chinese queue—a long, braided hairstyle worn by Han men under the Qing dynasty rule—as “tails.” The queue became an exotic object of fascination across the Anglo-American world and often served as racialized symbolism in many political cartoons of the day. Here descriptions of the Chinese travelers as having “tails” and carrying “heavy loads” evokes images of a packhorse rather than a person. The Native peoples in the “Way-Side” letter sheet are portrayed as less than human, described here like animals in “every stage of filth.” Anglo-American portrayals of indigeneity often equated Natives—including Chinese—as extensions of the natural environment, and thus dehumanized.

The bottommost engraving on the letter sheet depicts a “Chinese Battle” in Weaverville, a historic gold mining town. Known colloquially as the “Weaverville War,” this fight was just one of a string of confrontations between Chinese miners in the Sierra Nevada gold fields of 1854 and 1855. Like these other skirmishes, hundreds of Chinese miners in Weaverville fought each other in August 1854, prompted largely by preexisting regional and cultural animosity brought over from China. The illustrated letter sheet portrays a throng of American miners watching excitedly in the background as the battle unfolds. The accompanying description reads:

It originated in sectional hatred and clannish differences, brought from their native land, which gradually increase, so that all endeavors by their leaders or Americans to settle them amicably, were in vain....At length the small party charged upon the large one, and amid shouts and cheers from many hundreds of Americans, who stood upon the hill side to witness the battle....On Sunday, the large party collected their dead together and burned them, as do the Indian, then burying the ashes.

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<sup>83</sup> “Wayside Scenes in California,” Charles Christian Nahl, c. 1855. UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library. California Heritage Collection, California Lettersheets from the Robert B. Honeyman, Jr. Collection of Early Californian and Western American Pictorial Material, BANC PIC 1963.002:179--A.

This “battle” of Chinese miners reveals American preoccupation with violence in the mining region. Chinese violence specifically became something of a “spectator sport” for white Americans.<sup>84</sup> Weaverville shopkeeper Franklin Buck noted that in the days leading up to the confrontation, the town’s blacksmiths and tinman were “busy making weapons...[and] we sold all our hatchets and powder” to supply the warring Chinese factions.<sup>85</sup> Buck’s description of the fervor erupting in anticipation of the fight suggests that the town’s arming of Chinese men was less about mercantile transactions than to provide entertainment to the white community. He wrote that “everybody came from near and far to see the battle,” and when the local sheriff tried to de-escalate the situation, white observers argued that “they had come a long way to see it. It was of no consequence if all the Chinese in the country got killed. So much the better. Fight they should.”<sup>86</sup> While the battle stoked white miners’ bloodlust, many Anglo-Americans resented Chinese miners’ success in recovering gold from their “tailings” (abandoned mining sites.) Presumably the white observers to the “Weaverville War” also saw the confrontation as a means to eliminate their competition.<sup>87</sup>

Additionally, sensationalized depictions promoted stereotypes of Chinese men as innately disposed to violent outbursts, and thus less civilized than—and undeserving of the equal treatment afforded to—white Americans.<sup>88</sup> However, most accounts of violent conflicts in gold

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<sup>84</sup> Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 303.

<sup>85</sup> Franklin A. Buck, *A Yankee Trader in the Gold Rush: The Letters of Franklin A. Buck* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 117.

<sup>86</sup> Buck, *A Yankee Trader in the Gold Rush*, 118.

<sup>87</sup> Robert G. Lee, “Red Turbans in the Trinity Alps: Violence, Popular Religion, and Diasporic Memory in Nineteenth-Century Chinese America,” *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (2017), 2.

<sup>88</sup> Susan Lee Johnson suggests that such stereotypes carry a grain of truth, as many men who came to California from Guangdong were raised around a strong local militia mustered in response to the First Opium War (1839-1842) and had grown up surrounded by warfare. While this might be true, such conclusions essentialize Chinese immigrants in California by replicating the tropes of barbarism and

country, like this one in “Way-Side Scenes,” are typically recorded by white observers who were oblivious to the long-standing tensions carried from China. Franklin Buck visited each of the warring Chinese camps in order to ascertain the cause of the war, but lacked the cultural and social context to understand the rising tensions between the Chinese “Hong Kong” and “Canton” factions. While Buck was unable to ascertain motives for the battle, Historian Robert Lee offers that “‘Hong Kong’ and ‘Canton’ were labels convenient for foreign consumption that obscured complex conflicts of class, ethnicity, and place, forged in a bitter struggle for survival that divided lineages and villages in the Pearl River Delta and were re-enacted in the Sierra Nevada.”<sup>89</sup>

Anglo-American stereotypes of Chinese men presented them as inherently prone to the vices of the world—violence, gambling, drink, opium, and prostitution. While the Western world considered them moral and sexual deviants, Anglo-Americans saw Asian men as effeminate. In California, the emasculation of Chinese men was tied, in part, to their labor. In the 1859 San Francisco City Directory, 22 of the 42 Chinese businessmen were listed as “washers”—an occupation viewed by most Anglo-Americans as women’s work.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, whites viewed the queue as evidence of Chinese men’s effeminacy across the British and American empires. To white observers, the long hairstyle resembled that worn by Anglo-American women. As Chinese immigrant populations soared in California during the 1870s, lawmakers used the queue to target and manage Chinese men under the notoriously named Pigtail Ordinance of 1873. This Ordinance required that the hair of any prisoner in a California jail must be one inch in length or

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violence. Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, 305-306.

<sup>89</sup> Robert G. Lee, “Red Turbans in the Trinity Alps,” 4.

<sup>90</sup> Though the occupations of Chinese residents were listed alongside their names in the alphabetized directory, Chinese launderers were excluded from the “Business Directory” section. See: *The San Francisco Directory for the Year Commencing June 1859* (San Francisco: Commercial Steam Presses, Valentine and Co., 1859).



less. This directly targeted Chinese men who wore queues, allowing Americans to police and punish markers of Chinese identity.<sup>91</sup> As anthropologist Bernard Wong describes, once the ordinance was passed, “gangs of roughnecks began to attack Chinese people with long hair, cutting off their braids and wearing them as trophies on their belts and caps.”<sup>92</sup> These laws normalized both physical and cultural violence against Chinese communities in California.

Satirists also depicted Chinese men as threats to Chinese women and children. An 1857 *Punch* cartoon shows British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston grasping a Chinese man by the end of his queue, flaying him with a cat of nine tails whip (figure 2.5). His crime? According to the sign hanging from his neck, he stands accused as “the destroyer of women and children,” referencing female infanticide practiced in Qing China. Twelve years later, American satire magazine *Harper’s Weekly* replicated the imagery of this *Punch* piece (figure 2.6), drawn by famous American caricaturist Thomas Nast.<sup>93</sup> Much like *Punch’s* Lord Palmerston, *Harper’s* “Pacific Chivalry” shows an American miner holding fast to the man’s queue while whipping him.

Famous for his Chinese and Native American sympathies, Nast here foregrounds the multilayered violence Chinese immigrants encountered in California. Though intended as a criticism of anti-Chinese sentiments, both this and the *Punch* illustration depict Chinese subjects

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<sup>91</sup> This ordinance relates to the Cubic Air Ordinance, which required boarding houses to allocate at least 500 square feet of air per room, per tenant. This specifically targeted Chinese residents, which ironically moved them from crowded boarding houses into overcrowded jail cells. Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 166.

<sup>92</sup> Bernard Wong, *Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship: The New Chinese Immigrants in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Needham: Allyn & Bacon, 1998), 12.

<sup>93</sup> Though *Harper’s Weekly* was a New York Publication, advertisements regularly appeared in Bay Area newspapers selling subscriptions to “American and Foreign” periodicals. One such ad appeared in the February 14, 1857, edition of the *Daily Globe*, which offered a subscription to *Harper’s Weekly* for 3 dollars per year.



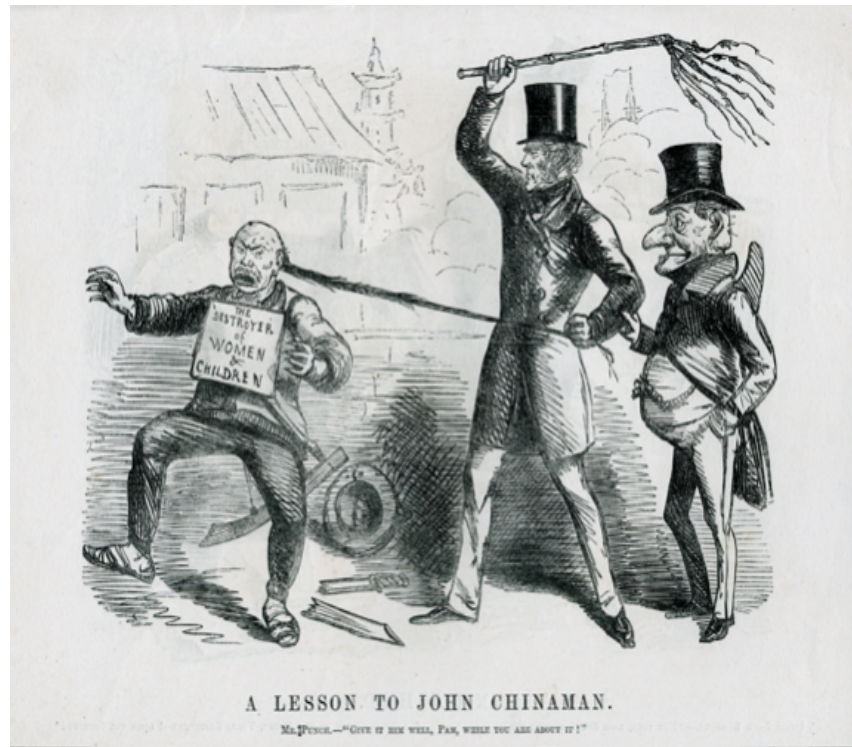


Figure 2.5 (top). "Mr. Punch" goads Palmerston as he punishes a Taiping rebel. John Leech, "A Lesson to John Chinaman." May 5, 1857. Punch Magazine Archive.

Figure 2.6 (bottom). A California miner "welcomes" a Chinese laborer with "Pacific chivalry." Background sign references the state's discriminatory regulations and taxes imposed on Chinese immigrants. Thomas Nast, "Pacific Chivalry." August 7, 1869. Harper's Weekly Archive.

with cartoonish features—oblong heads, buck teeth, and braids longer than their bodies. The miner, though shown as a brute, is realistically illustrated. Some scholars, including Sue Hum, argue that viewers should disregard inaccurate illustrations of many political cartoons. As Hum states, “Nast sought to humanize the coolie, who was considered an invading yellow peril.”<sup>94</sup> However, Nast’s exaggerated caricatures of Chinese immigrants suggest that he, nevertheless, viewed them as inferior. Nast may have considered Chinese residents human, but in his estimation they remained, undeniably, unequal.

The ethos of California’s “Pacific chivalry”—that is, pervasive anti-Chinese sentiment—carried across the Pacific to other gold regions, most notably Australia. Just as with American papers, Australian journalists took up the “Chinese Question,” arguably none more so than Francis H. Nixon. Born in London, Nixon immigrated to Australia in 1853 as a government architect during the height of the Victoria gold rush. By 1855, he founded *The Owens and Murray Advertiser*, later working as editor for a slew of other publications, including *The Melbourne Morning Herald*, and *The Daily Northern Argus*, *The Constitution*, *The Southern Courier*.<sup>95</sup> In July 1857, Nixon wrote *The Chinese Puzzle Adjusted: Letter on the Subject of Chinese Legislation in Victoria*, a political pamphlet composed of leading articles first published in his newspaper, *The Constitution*.<sup>96</sup> Addressed to members of the Victoria Legislative Assembly, the pamphlet warned of a “coming eruption” of violence in the gold fields, which Nixon blamed entirely on “John Chinaman,” who through “cunning and ingenuity...[serves] his

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<sup>94</sup> Sue Hum, “‘Between the Eyes’: The Racialized Gaze as Design,” *College English*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (January 2015), 206.

<sup>95</sup> Rod Kirkpatrick, *Sworn to No Master: A History of the Provincial Press in Queensland to 1930* (Australia: Darling Downs Institute Press, 1984), 108.

<sup>96</sup> Francis Hodgson Nixon, *The Chinese Puzzle Adjusted: A Letter on the Subject of Chinese Legislation in Victoria: with an Appendix Containing a Reprint of Leading Articles Published in the “Constitution” Newspaper; Addressed to the Members of the Legislative Assembly* (Beechworth, Victoria: James Ingram, 1857).

ends, at the expense of Europeans.”<sup>97</sup> Nixon describes Chinese miners as thieves, opium addicts, diseased, water and air polluters, underminers of European wage labor, and overall “bad colonists.”<sup>98</sup> Nixon’s pamphlet clearly and directly painted the issue in terms of race, a specific matter of the Chinese “threat” to white population of the colony. As Mae Ngai observes, Victoria colonial protocols of this period were “voiced in the paternalist language of protection, [and] conceded to and protected European interests.”<sup>99</sup>

The turning point that prompted the *Chinese Puzzle Adjusted* was the July 4 Buckland riot in northeast Victoria. Nixon suggested that American miners’ boisterous celebration of Independence Day instigated the subsequent riot that pitted white against Chinese minors.<sup>100</sup> The colonial government persecuted those who participated in the violence of these riots, and the Victoria government even paid £7300 restitution to Chinese shopkeepers whose goods were destroyed by Buckland rioters. Nevertheless, the overarching drive of colonial policy focused on restriction and exclusion of non-Anglo settlers. Indeed, Nixon’s suggestion to the assembly suggested one of two possible “solutions:” either call for full expulsion, or pass laws to “prevent the evils arising from their commingling with the Europeans.”<sup>101</sup> Though an initial bill to expel all Chinese miners was voted down in the Victoria Assembly on July 22, just days after Nixon’s publication of *Chinese Puzzle Adjusted*, anti-Chinese legislation was already a reality in the colony.<sup>102</sup> In 1855, law No. 39 limited the number of Chinese passengers allowed entrance to the

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<sup>97</sup> Nixon, *The Chinese Puzzle Adjusted*, 6.

<sup>98</sup> Nixon, *The Chinese Puzzle Adjusted*, 7.

<sup>99</sup> Ngai, “Chinese Gold Miners and the ‘Chinese Question,’” 1099.

<sup>100</sup> Three years prior, the first anti-Chinese riot took place in the gold mines of Bendigo, also following Americans’ Fourth of July celebrations. George Fetherling writes that U.S. miners “believed that their Americanism required them to take action against Asians.” George Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades* (United Kingdom: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 60.

<sup>101</sup> Nixon, *The Chinese Puzzle Adjusted*, 19-20.

<sup>102</sup> Elizabeth Morrison, *Engines of Influence: Newspapers of Country Victoria, 1840-1890* (Australia: Melbourne University Publishing, 2005), 107.

colony, allowing only one person per ten tonnes of a ship's weight. And just four months after the Buckland riots saw the passage of law No. 41, requiring Chinese residing in Victoria to immediately pay for and regularly renew residency licenses or leave the country.<sup>103</sup> These seeds of racial discontent, fomented by journalists like Nixon and codified by the colonial government, laid the foundation of the "White Australia" policies enacted in the early-twentieth century. Similar laws passed in the United States, advanced primarily by California politicians.

Journalists, artists, and newspaper editors had both direct and indirect social and political influence. Whether it be through direct political lobbying, as with Francis Nixon, or the swaying of public opinion, as with racialized articles and political cartoons, the popular press possessed an extraordinary ability to shape the imagined and lived experiences of people throughout the gold rush Pacific. Newspapers also played an important role facilitating inter-imperial solidarity. As historian Chandrika Kaul argues, communication is an integral tool of empire, allowing the coordination between political and military interests.<sup>104</sup> Diplomats and politicians stationed in foreign posts often utilized local newspapers to provide contextual information about colonial happenings. In California, the British consul general stationed in San Francisco sent clippings, and even full editions, of newspaper in his regular dispatches to the Foreign Secretary stationed in London. Most of these clippings pertained to California's race-based policies that targeted Chinese immigrants—most of whom traveled through the British island colony of Hong Kong—to the state in the search for gold. The next chapter explores how the British consulate in San Francisco shaped imperial policies regarding Chinese immigration, land rights, and global trade,

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<sup>103</sup>For more on the longer history of anti-Chinese legislation throughout Australia, see: Joseph Lee, "Anti-Chinese Legislation in Australasia," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol 3, No. 2. (January 1889).

<sup>104</sup> Chandrika Kaul, *Reporting the Raj: The British Press and India, c. 1880-1922* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 3.

often using California as a guidepost by which to replicate, or in some cases reject, its own policies.

### CHAPTER 3

#### FROM THE MARGINS TO THE METROPOLE: BRITISH CONSULATE IN SAN FRANCISCO

On May 31, 1852, James Howard Harris, Earl of Malmesbury and the British Foreign Secretary, settled in at his desk on Downing Street in central London. Before him was a large stack of government correspondences, and he set quickly to work, reading each letter and dictating notes to his clerk, who would later pen the Earl's dozens of replies. As he progressed through the cache of missives, he came upon an unusually large package addressed from George Aikin, Consul General in San Francisco.<sup>1</sup> Apart from Consul Aikin's yearly market reports of California sent each January, his dispatches were usually one or two pages in length. While news and updates were in no short supply in the bustling, gold rush metropolis of San Francisco, Aikin generally kept his correspondences succinct. This was due, in part, to the high cost of international postage for sending more than a simple letter from California to England. If his consul took the effort and expense to send a package, Malmesbury knew it would require his particular, undivided attention.

Upon opening the package, Malmesbury found a copy of the *San Francisco Herald*, one of the city's leading newspapers, enclosed with the consul's usual dispatch. He first read through Aikin's accompanying letter, recounting the discovery of gold on British-claimed Haida Gwaii, an archipelago just north of Vancouver Island on the Pacific coast of Canada.<sup>2</sup> As he turned his attention to the *Herald*, he read through the paper's reports of the gold deposits on Haida Gwaii,

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<sup>1</sup> Often misspelled as "Aiken" in most secondary sources. FO 5/553, 16 April 1852.

<sup>2</sup> Also known as Queen Charlotte's Island. In 2010 the Canadian Government changed the name of the archipelago from Queen Charlotte's Island back to the original Haida Gwaii, a move that recognized the sovereignty of the Haida who have called this region home since time immemorial.

and the subsequent emigration of California miners to the region.<sup>3</sup> Then, presumably, his eyes would have wandered to the adjacent articles: “Exciting Humor—Indian Hostilities!”; “Increase and Character of Our Population”; “Battle with the Indians!”; “The Chinese and the Court of Law.”<sup>4</sup> As he glanced through each article, his gaze may have snagged on some of the journalists’ contradictory portrayals of both Indigenous communities and Chinese in California. One reporter attested that California Chinese “are quiet, industrious, and thus far have been honest,” while another accused all Chinese of “prefer[ring] to tell a lie to the truth.”<sup>5</sup> The *Herald* articles focused on violent settler-Native confrontations, asserting that Indigenous peoples lacked humanity or were unnecessarily hostile. One piece recounted how Gila warriors “inhumanely killed” seven American Army scouts, while the report on Haida Gwaii gold discovery accused the Haida of being “so hostile” to the flood of miners that it forced them to “return to Oregon for arms and assistance.”<sup>6</sup> Though Malmesbury’s immediate reaction to these headlines is unknown, the day after receiving the *Herald* the Foreign Secretary instructed Aikin to report on the “considerable immigration of Chinese Labourers” to California, and “in what manner they are employed.”<sup>7</sup> While Malmesbury also gleaned information about Chinese immigration from his informants in China, Aikin’s serendipitous enclosure of the *Herald* came at the precise moment

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<sup>3</sup> Two articles reported on the Queen Charlotte’s Island gold discovery, located on the first and last pages of the paper. *San Francisco Herald*, (San Francisco, California), April 17, 1852; FO 5/553, 16 April 1852.

<sup>4</sup> *San Francisco Herald*, (San Francisco, California), Saturday, April 17, 1852; FO 5/553, 16 April 1852.

<sup>5</sup> “Increase and Character of Our Population,” and “The Chinese and the Court of Law,” *San Francisco Herald*, (San Francisco, California), Saturday, April 17, 1852; FO 5/553, 16 April 1852.

<sup>6</sup> “Battle with the Indians!,” *San Francisco Herald*, (San Francisco, California), Saturday, April 17, 1852; FO 5/553, 16 April 1852.

“Foreign Intelligence,” *San Francisco Herald*, (San Francisco, California), Saturday, April 17, 1852; FO 5/553, 16 April 1852.

<sup>7</sup> FO 5/553, 1 June 1852.

the British Empire questioned the utility of Chinese labor in the Caribbean while also considering how quell Indigenous resistance to British colonization in its Indo-Pacific colonies.

Aikin and his successor, William Lane Booker, continued to report on Chinese in California throughout the decade. While their reports on general immigration, commerce, and employment in the state were relatively balanced, the British consuls routinely criticized Californians for their targeted and discriminatory treatment of Chinese. They reported on the passage of foreign miner's taxes, steep immigration fees, and the increasing lack of legal protection as factors deterring Chinese workers from settling in the state. Throughout the 1850s, the California legislature notoriously passed the first anti-Asian exclusion acts in U.S. history, decades before the enactment of similar federal laws in the 1870s and 1880s. These laws were a legal reflection of widespread anti-Chinese sentiments among white workers in the state, many of whom viewed Chinese laborers as competitors who drove down wage rates. These early attempts at Asian exclusion set a dangerous precedent of race-based legal exclusion and anti-Asian discrimination that echoed in other gold rush societies in the Pacific. However, the British consuls in San Francisco decried these laws not for their inhumanity and bigotry, but rather because anti-Chinese legislation had a negative impact upon Britain's lucrative maritime commerce. San Francisco was the primary American receiving city for trans-Pacific Chinese immigration, the vast majority of which funneled through British Hong Kong, and robust trade networks shipped goods through and between these major Pacific port cities. California's discriminatory legislation, in the consuls' estimation, extended beyond the confines of national immigration reform, and affected the growth of British commercial interests.



As the *Herald* articles demonstrate, Anglo-American imperialism in this period was predicated on control of land, people, and resources.<sup>8</sup> The British and American empires exercised this control through a combination of bureaucracy, legislation, commerce, and—as with settler response to “Indian hostilities” featured in the *Herald*—colonial violence. Like Frederick Cooper and Ann L. Stoler observe, government officials, entrepreneurs, and missionaries were agents of these forms of colonial control who had overlapping *and* competing strategies for using power and maintaining control.<sup>9</sup> These tactics and interests became increasingly complicated in developing colonial territories, like those in the nineteenth-century Pacific, where the ambitions of multiple empires intersected and clashed. As diplomats charged with enforcing interimperial laws, consuls are an integral, if understudied, component of empire. They stand at the nexus of British and American interests in the Pacific, acting as foreign correspondents to heads of government, navigating foreign diplomacy, and supporting commercial expansion. In this way, consuls challenge an easy dichotomy between private mercantile and imperial interests, and rather serve as a link between these sometimes aligned, but often competing, forces. Chinese immigration to California is an important lens by which to analyze the convergence of these issues, and consular critique of anti-Asian legislation is but one of many ways to understand how consuls exercised power in the Pacific. This chapter explores transimperial histories of race, commerce, and diplomacy through the lens of the British consulate in San Francisco. It argues that the British consuls who served in 1850s San Francisco operated within and contributed to this complex web of interimperial bureaucracy by bridging commercial and government interests. In turn this shaped the course of trade, immigration, and

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<sup>8</sup> Certainly, this continues to ring true in the present day, as settler colonialism is an ongoing process.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Cooper and Ann L. Stoler, “Introduction Tensions of Empire: Colonial Control and Visions of Rule,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (1989), 609.

diplomacy in the Anglo-American Pacific. This focus on consuls adds an important perspective to the growing body of scholarship that views the California gold rush as not a local or national history, but a global one.<sup>10</sup>

### **Golden Beginnings: Establishment of the San Francisco Consulate**

The formation of the British consulate in San Francisco coincides with the boom in the state's population following the outbreak of the gold rush. The first consul, George Aikin, was appointed on February 26, 1851, five months after California gained statehood.<sup>11</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, many consuls were merchants already living in cities of their subsequent consular posts, who were then selected by the Foreign Office for consular service.<sup>12</sup> Aikin himself had initially come to California some years earlier as a merchant; his successor and former clerk, William Lane Booker, was also the primary agent for Monarch Fire Assurance Company, but later saw a long career as a diplomat.<sup>13</sup> As former merchants and consuls, Aikin and Booker straddled two worlds.

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<sup>10</sup> See: Hawk, *Madness, Mining, and Migration*; David Iglar, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Benjamin Mountford and Stephen Tuffnell (eds.), *A Global History of Gold Rushes* (University of California Press, 2018); Ngai, *The Chinese Question*; Juan Poblete, "Citizenship and Illegality in the Global California Gold Rush," in *The Latino Nineteenth Century*, Rodrigo Lazo and Jesse Alemán (eds.) (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 278-300; Wrobel, *Global West, American Frontier*.

<sup>11</sup> California became a state on September 9, 1850. Its statehood was fast-tracked, in part, so the American federal government could levy taxes on the lucrative profits from the gold rush.

<sup>12</sup> This was also done to mitigate the risk and travel time of sending someone from the U.S. to a consular post. This was a legitimate fear and unfortunate reality. John Gorman Barr, the appointed U.S. consul to Melbourne, died enroute to his post in 1858.

<sup>13</sup> While Aikin's precise business connections are unclear, he may have been affiliated with merchant firm Aiken & Co. Even with the misspelling of his name, he is recorded in the *Daily Alta California* as the consignee of a shipment of goods into San Francisco in November 1850. Booker first assumed the role as acting consul in July 1856 whilst Aikin returned to England for a planned visit. However, Aikin chose not to return to his role, and Booker was then formally appointed as Consul General by the Foreign Office in 1857. "Consignees," *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco, California), November 1, 1850; *The San Francisco Directory for the Year 1858: Embracing a General Directory of Citizens, a Business*

As British consuls stationed in San Francisco, Booker and Aikin reported directly to the Foreign Secretary, who in turn answered to the Prime Minister. Any salient information they transmitted to the Foreign Secretary was also copied and forwarded to other relevant departments in London, including the Colonial Office, Board of Trade, Admiralty, and Treasury. In London, the content of consular correspondences was discussed and debated by imperial officials, in turn resulting in changes to protocols and laws. Some consular letters were read during sessions of Parliament.<sup>14</sup> The men who ran these departments were often members of the aristocracy, and those with English peerages also served in Parliament in the House of Lords.<sup>15</sup> Of the twenty-six men who held the position of Foreign Secretary from the time of the Office's inception in 1782 until the turn of the twentieth century, all but two were peers.<sup>16</sup> As merchants-turned-diplomats, Booker and Aikin straddled these traditionally steadfast social divides, providing working and/or middle class perspectives of commerce and diplomacy to aristocratic leaders. They utilized their on-the-ground trade and business expertise in their roles as diplomats, and the information they passed along to the Foreign Office reverberated throughout various branches of the British government.

The San Francisco consulate was run out of the consul's private and business residence, revealing the overlapping interests that diplomats juggled in this period. The first location was at

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*Directory, and an Appendix* (San Francisco: Commercial Steam Presses, S.D. Valentine & Son, 1858), 387.

<sup>14</sup> Consul Aikin's letter to Admiral Hornby, who served on the Board of Admiralty, regarding British vessels arriving in the port of San Francisco was read in a session of the House of Commons on March 7, 1853. U.K. Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, "Pilotage—The Mercantile Marine," Vol. 124, Column 1242, 7 March 1853; T.A. Heathcote, *The British Admirals of the Fleet, 1734–1995: A Biographical Dictionary* (London: Pen & Sword Books, 2002), 46.

<sup>15</sup> Aristocrats with Irish peerages, like Lord Palmerston, were not eligible for the House of Lords, but could serve as a member of Parliament (MP) in the House of Commons.

<sup>16</sup> There were a total of forty-three Foreign Secretaries from 1782 to 1900, but several men served more than once. The two non-peer Secretaries were George Canning, who served twice, and The Honourable Charles James Fox, second son of Baron Holland, who served three times.

Aikin's private residence on 104 Front Street, and in 1855 Aikin moved a few blocks away to the corner of California and Leidesdorff streets.<sup>17</sup> Once Booker assumed office, the consulate moved three blocks east at 126 California, which also served as the headquarters of his Monarch Fire Assurance Company.<sup>18</sup> These three locations were situated in somewhat close proximity to other consulates, and was within a short walk of the bustling business district that housed many newspaper publishers, including the *San Francisco Bulletin* and *Herald*.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, these consulate locations were situated on the outskirts of neighboring Chinatown. The British consulate's close proximity to both newspaper publishing houses and the heart of Chinese San Francisco meant they kept a close eye on changing social and political conditions in the state.

Consuls in this period maintained competing commercial and diplomatic responsibilities. As consuls, their primary roles were to report back to the Foreign Secretary on trade and commercial operations in their jurisdictions, provide support and resources for British citizens in California, and undertake any additional directives from the Foreign Office. Upon his 1851 appointment, then-Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston's instructions to Aikin were to "avail yourself of every favorable opportunity of collecting and transmitting to me any further useful or interesting Information which you may be able to obtain relating to commerce, navigation, and agriculture, + to any other branch of statistics."<sup>20</sup> Beyond the transmission of information to the Foreign Office, consuls were also expected by Parliament to, when necessary, "administer Acts

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<sup>17</sup> The 1852-53 *San Francisco City Directory* lists the consulate at 104 Front Street, and by 1855 the *Weekly Butte Records* reports on the offices at California and Leidesdorff. *The San Francisco Directory for The Year 1852-53: Embracing A General Directory Of Citizens, A Street Directory, A New And Complete Map Of The City, And An Appendix Of General Information, An Almanac* (San Francisco: James M. Parker, 1852), 31; *Weekly Butte Record*, (Oroville, California), May 5, 1855.

<sup>18</sup> *The San Francisco Directory for the Year 1858*, 387, 389.

<sup>19</sup> *The San Francisco Bulletin, the leading journal of the Pacific Coast. Office of the Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco: I.W. Taber, 1880). Print, California State Library; *The San Francisco Directory for The Year 1852-53*, 17-18.

<sup>20</sup> Palmerston to Aikin, FO 5/536, 26 February 1851.

of Parliament, and one of the most important functions of the Consul was to acquaint his Government with the state of trade, arts, industry, and agriculture, and with the exports and imports of the country in which he resided.”<sup>21</sup> However, the rapid and ongoing transformation of gold rush San Francisco meant that the consul’s workload was ever-increasing. In July 1854, George Aikin requested a salary raise, as he claimed that he could scarcely maintain his business prospects and could barely afford the cost of the consulate’s operations.<sup>22</sup> Two years later, the Foreign Office nearly doubled the consular salary from £300 to £500 per annum, with nearly £200 going just towards office expenses.<sup>23</sup>

Unlike the British minister plenipotentiary stationed in Washington, D.C., consuls did not have full diplomatic powers. They could not enter into treaties or diplomatic negotiations on behalf of the sovereign. As pseudo-foot soldiers of empire, their power lay not only in their official capacities as promoters of commerce, but also in their informal functions as foreign correspondents reporting on a range-of sociopolitical issues. Consuls reported back to the Foreign Office and communicated with related departments on key issues they deemed worthy of notice. In California, this included reports on foreign immigration, land disputes between settlers and Native nations, new gold discoveries on the Pacific Coast, business markets, and laws passed by the California legislature. During a period of rapid transformation in California’s political, social, demographic, and economic markets in its early years of statehood, the Foreign Office

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<sup>21</sup> U.K. Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, "Supply—Miscellaneous Estimates," Vol. 141, Column 1015, 14 March 1856.

<sup>22</sup> FO 5/603, 10 July 1854.

<sup>23</sup> However, Aikin already resigned by the time the letter from the Foreign Secretary reached San Francisco. FO 5/653, 30 May 1856.

exchanged more dispatches with the San Francisco consulate than any other consular post in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

## Consuls and Commerce

Every January, the San Francisco consulate provided a report of the previous year to the Foreign Office. These reports focused primarily on California's economy, ranging from updates on the price of gold dust exports to international trade to market prices of grains and goods. Functioning as the eyes and ears of Her Majesty's Government, consuls provided the most accurate local, national, and international mercantile information. This was especially true for consuls stationed in major port cities like San Francisco. The San Francisco consulate was uniquely situated in one of the prime commercial centers in the Pacific, often receiving and transmitting information to the Foreign Office on California's economy and its relationship to markets in the Pacific. Consuls established and fortified the movement of goods and people in the nineteenth century, as they shaped the way that their own governments and private citizens interacted with foreign bureaucracies.<sup>25</sup>

Consular reports focused on British trade in California, as well as California's trade with other countries. The 1857 annual trade report contained information on the booming California-China trade, claiming that the state's trade with China also opened up new trade networks throughout Asia. Brooker observed that, "the past year we have received Four Cargoes [*sic*]

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<sup>24</sup> San Francisco consular dispatches are located in bound volumes alongside correspondences from other U.S. consulates in New Orleans, Galveston, and Cincinnati. For most of the 1850s, San Francisco's dispatches tended to be, by and large, far more numerous than other consulates. For instance, in 1858, Consul Booker's dispatches to the Foreign Office constituted nearly half of the bound consular correspondences: 244 of 565 pages. The dispatches for the consuls stationed in Mobile, Galveston, New Orleans and Savannah were all contained within the first 321 pages. FO 5/699.

<sup>25</sup> Mullen and Phelps, "What is a consul, anyway?" *Consolation Prize*.

direct from Siam. We usually receive five or six cargoes during the year from Manila, Java, and Calcutta.”<sup>26</sup> Consul Booker then provided a detailed table of the imports of 1856 and 1857 from the East, accounting for rice, sugar, tea, and opium imports—the latter of which having nearly doubled between 1856 and 1857. In fact, prepared opium was Hong Kong’s most lucrative export to California in this period, with raw opium shipped in from British India.<sup>27</sup> This report would have been of special interest to the Foreign Office, as the opium trade was largely controlled by the British East India Company, who had maintained *de facto* colonial control of India since the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Opium was grown, harvested, and processed by the British East India Company in India, which was then exported to China for internal consumption and trade throughout the Pacific.

The consulate also gave direct and detailed statistics of British trade and private enterprise in California. America as a whole, and California in particular, relied heavily upon foreign investments during the nineteenth century. As Andrew C. Isenberg observes, during this time foreign investments, including those from the British Empire, fueled industrial expansion in the United States, and by 1900 foreign financiers owned 36 percent of capital investments in the country.<sup>29</sup> British-backed mining operations were the largest foreign beneficiaries of the state’s valuable gold dust exports, and many companies were also invested in mining operations throughout the West.<sup>30</sup> In 1856, 11 percent of the nearly \$9 million worth of gold dust mined from the state was sent to London, almost 15 times more than the state exported to any other

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<sup>26</sup>FO 5/699, 19 January 1858.

<sup>27</sup> Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*, 7.

<sup>28</sup> And the Company’s administrative hold of India would end in 1858, following British victory in the Indian Rebellion and the formal establishment of the India Office and the British Raj.

<sup>29</sup> Isenberg, *Mining California*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Ralph J. Roske, “The World Impact of the California Gold Rush 1849-1857,” *Arizona and the West*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Autumn, 1963), 212-213.

country.<sup>31</sup> The state's total gold production increased by nearly a million pounds sterling the following year, exports to England almost doubled.<sup>32</sup> Gold imports to Great Britain were a significant boost to the empire's economy, as it provided the fundamental backing for its lucrative manufacturing industries. Prior to the California gold rush, Great Britain relied upon the limited gold production from Latin America and Russia. The sudden flood of gold into Britain following the 1848 gold strike, and the Australian rushes soon after, provided the necessary gold reserves to support a credit base for British merchants and manufacturers. In turn, this fueled the import of British-made goods into high demand and developing regions, like California and Australia. Ralph J. Roske estimates that by 1856, British exports to California reached nearly \$2,226,937.<sup>33</sup> That same year, the San Francisco consular report estimated that English investors owned £250,000-£300,000 of capital in the state, in addition to approximately £250,000 worth of goods passing through British hands.<sup>34</sup>

Consul reports included charts detailing the number of trade ships and the tonnage of their cargoes. Consul Booker's detailed 1857 commercial report included charts of trade ships, allowing the Foreign Office to assess the importance of British trade to California trade relative to other foreign countries. These consular trade reports highlighted Britain's dominance as the lead importer to San Francisco, and indeed to other locations in the western United States. California's imports from England and other British colonies topped the list [see Table 1]:<sup>35</sup> California exports to Australia were sizable compared to other foreign countries, due in large

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<sup>31</sup> It is possible that the British Empire accrued even more capital from California gold dust exports, as colonial forces occupied—either formally or informally—regions in the other major exporters: Calcutta, Hawai'i, and China. FO 5/653, 1 February 1856.

<sup>32</sup> FO 5/699, 4 February 1856.

<sup>33</sup> Roske, "The World Impact of the California Gold Rush," 214.

<sup>34</sup> FO 5/653, 4 February 1856.

<sup>35</sup> Table shows all British colonial possessions and the top 5 foreign countries with the most arrivals (with a tie between Hamburg and the Russian Possessions). FO 5/699, 4 February 1858.



<b>Table 1 California's Top Export Countries, 1856</b>		
<b>Imports From</b>	<b>Number of Vessels</b>	<b>Tonnage</b>
Australia*	18	5,866
Calcutta*	3	1,190
China (including Hong Kong*)	32	23,593
France	18	8,335
Great Britain*	18	12,342
Hamburgh [ <i>sic</i> ]	10	3,370
Mexico	51	5,722
Panama	28	53,037
Russian Possessions	10	4,184
Sandwich Islands*	20	4,588
Vancouver's Island* [ <i>sic</i> ]	7	1,120
<p><i>* Indicates British colonies or territories</i>  <i>Data compiled from the commercial reports of the San Francisco consulate. U.K. National Archives, Foreign Office Political and Other Departments: General Correspondence before 1906, United States of America, Series II, 5/653, 1 February 1856.</i></p>		

part to Australia's overall reliance on foreign imports. Like California, it was also a burgeoning gold rush society struggling to attend to the infrastructural and agricultural needs of a developing region. Like California, Australia's chief export in this period was gold dust from mining operations.<sup>36</sup> By mid-decade, California became a chief exporter of grain and barley to British possessions like Australia and home markets like Liverpool.<sup>37</sup> Booker detailed the trade between

<sup>36</sup> See trade reports of the U.S. consul in Melbourne, showing cargoes of most ships leaving Australia at the time carrying passengers or gold dust. U.S. National Archives, Despatches from United States Consuls in Melbourne, 1852-1906, U.S. National Archives.

<sup>37</sup>FO 5/653, 4 February 1856.

San Francisco and British colonies in Australia since 1854, showing an overall decrease in Australian shipping into California during this period. However, the economic boost offered by Australia's multiple gold rushes in Victoria and New South Wales resulted in high wages and greater demand for foreign manufactured goods. The combination of these factors, as Summer J. La Croix demonstrates, meant that Australian laborers enjoyed the best living conditions of any working class in the world during this period.<sup>38</sup>

The chart clouds the broader networks of British business ventures rooted all over the world. Though the Panamanian imports (53,037) were significantly higher than the cumulative total of British exports (25,106), it is important to note that Panama served primarily as an U.S. gateway between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, fueling global shipping to Europe and beyond. While Pacific ships would terminate in Panama, their cargoes were transferred across the isthmus via the Panama Railway, a U.S. funded and operated company. These cargoes would then be loaded onto ships on the Atlantic side of the isthmus, often bound for ports along the U.S. eastern seaboard, Europe, Africa, and South America. So, while Booker's report lists Panama as part of the foreign export trade, it's possible that a sizable portion of Panamanian exports were due to British shipping interests. Similarly, Booker's export figures for China did not detail whether this shipping also included any British treaty ports or colonies in the country, like Hong Kong, Shanghai, Canton (Guangzhou), Ningbo, Fuzhou, and Amoy (Xiamen). It is possible that here, too, British shipping investors dominated California trade.

The 1850s marked a pivotal time in British maritime commerce. In 1849, Parliament repealed the longstanding Navigation Acts. Among the Acts' many mandates was a stipulation that the carriage of goods from British colonies must be aboard British vessels, even if foreign

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<sup>38</sup> Summer J. La Croix, "Property Rights and Institutional Change During Australia's Gold Rush," *Explorations in Economic History*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1992), 13.

ships were cheaper. Additionally, goods produced in British colonies were required to first ship to London before then being exported abroad. Two key figures in the Acts' repeal were Henry Labouchere, then-President of the Board of Trade and later Colonial Secretary, and U.S. ambassador in London George Bancroft.<sup>39</sup> Bancroft purportedly approached Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston and Labouchere in 1847 to propose a new commercial treaty that allowed free trade between British and American ports.<sup>40</sup> Labouchere is noted by scholars to have "shepherded the repeal of the Navigation Acts through Parliament," and was instrumental in many maritime and trade laws of the 1850s.<sup>41</sup> Though it's unclear to what extent Bancroft influenced the Navigation Acts' repeal, that he maintained a close and cordial relationship with Labouchere, and was explicitly named in the Repeal Bill's discussion in Parliament, indicates that the diplomat played an important role in the evolution of mid-century commerce.<sup>42</sup>

The repeal of the Acts marked a period of legislative instability that, in turn, led to clandestine activities like smuggling. As representatives of Her Majesty's Government, it was up to consuls to enforce British laws abroad. Aikin reported receipt of a Foreign Office dispatch from May 1851, encouraging him to remain vigilant in this new era of free maritime trade following the 1849 repeal of the Navigation Laws.<sup>43</sup> It was Aikin's duty to not only uphold new British maritime acts, but to also inform the British government on illegal activities. Consuls

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<sup>39</sup> In addition to his diplomatic career, George Bancroft was a historian of the United States and cousin of Hubert Howe Bancroft, prominent historian of the American West and for whom Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley is named.

<sup>40</sup> J.H. Clapham, J. H., "The Last Years of the Navigation Acts (Continued)," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 25, No. 100 (1910), 698-699.

<sup>41</sup> Leon Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World's First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 59.

<sup>42</sup> U.K. Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, "Navigation Bill," Vol. 103, Columns 1214-1226, 23 March 1849.

<sup>43</sup> The Navigation Laws had mandated that the carriage of goods from British colonies must be aboard British vessels only, even if foreign ships were cheaper. FO 5/536, 1 September 1851.

provided shipping clearances for British ships, coordinated with the San Francisco Harbor Master and Customs House for accurate shipping records, and assessed each ship's port of departure to ascertain if any British maritime laws were broken.

In addition to trade, consul's reports also provided the Foreign Office with updates about the California gold rush. Not merely a cursory accounting of the event of the gold rush, these updates covered the gold rush's impact upon the state and national economy, including the price of gold and extent of gold dust exports to foreign nations, including England. Consuls also went beyond these economic tabulations to include overviews on California demographics and legislation. The consul's knowledge of California as a whole—from economy to immigration to new legislation—provided the British government with key facets of this burgeoning American state. Reports also touched upon less obvious aspects of the gold rush, including immigration of foreign miners and land disputes among settlers. Lastly, the consuls reported on the passage of new laws affecting the gold rush, including mining taxes, land rights, and immigration and trade laws. Collectively, these reports helped the Foreign Office to provide Her Majesty's Government with an accurate, on-the-ground appraisal of a competing gold rush economy in the Pacific, and shaped how the empire approached, legislated, and managed gold rushes in Australia and British Columbia.

### **Consuls And Chinese Immigration**

Chinese immigration to California was prompted by a potent combination of opportunism, political instability, and ecological disasters. A series of rebellions throughout China in the 1850s—the Nian, Red Turban, Miao, Panthay, and most notably the Taiping Rebellions—created intense political and social instability, compounded by agricultural

downturns as a result of drought and locust outbreaks.<sup>44</sup> Then, in 1856 the British waged another colonial war with China, resulting in the ceding of Hong Kong to the British Empire and the expansion of the British East India Company-operated opium trade throughout China. These “push factors” certainly shaped the decision of emigrants; scholars now argue, though, that these economic, political, and ecological events do not offer a comprehensive portrayal of the diaspora.<sup>45</sup> Although these upheavals certainly impacted China broadly, its effects were less severe in the Pearl River Delta, the region where the vast majority of Chinese emigrants resided. Rather, it was the lure of striking it rich on the California and Australian gold fields that prompted the massive Chinese diaspora that continued throughout the century. This new perspective allows historians to perceive of Chinese immigration during the gold rush not as a “forced flight” but rather, as Yong Chen argues, a “rational decision by emigrants based on their experience and knowledge [of global politics and]...the hope and aspirations of the emigrants to achieve upward social mobility for themselves and for their families.”<sup>46</sup> Anglo-American geopolitics and capitalist investments shaped the lived experiences of those who participated in the diaspora. The Chinese who arrived in California were impacted, as Mae Ngai argues, by a “powerful alchemy of race and money—colored labor and capitalism, colonialism and financial power—across the nineteenth-century world.”<sup>47</sup>

Throughout the 1850s, the San Francisco consulate routinely sent information about the Chinese population in the state. Their reason for including this information was most likely

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<sup>44</sup> June Mei, “Socioeconomic Origins of Emigration: Guangdong to California, 1850-1882,” *Modern China*, Vol. 5 No. 4 (1979), 463–501; Kuan-Hui Elaine Lin et al., “Historical Droughts in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) of China,” *Climate of the Past*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (June 2, 2020).

<sup>45</sup> Chan, *This Bitter-Sweet Soil*, 16.

<sup>46</sup> Yong Chen, “The Internal Origins of Chinese Emigration to California Reconsidered,” *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Winter 1997), 546.

<sup>47</sup> Ngai, *The Chinese Question*, 2.

prompted, at least initially, by the Foreign Secretary. Beginning in 1852, the Foreign Office turned to the San Francisco Consulate as a means to inform Her Majesty's government about the widely reported influx of Chinese to the state. James Harris, the 3rd Earl of Malmesbury, served his first term as Foreign Secretary from February to December 1852. Malmesbury's instructions to his clerk on the matter, who penned all the consular responses on the Earl's behalf, reveal the expansive, global networks of imperial communications that linked London to China.<sup>48</sup>

Malmesbury's note to his clerk observed that "a great Chinese immigration has taken place to California...(So my confidants in China tell me). Have the Consuls there reported upon it? If not tell them to do so."<sup>49</sup> That same day, dispatches were sent to the consuls stationed throughout the United States, including Aikin, concerning the exodus of Chinese to California. To the San Francisco consulate, the Foreign Secretary wrote:

Her M's [Majesty's] Govt having been informed that a considerable immigration of Chinese Labourers has of late taken place into California, I have to desire that you will inform me in what manner they are employed and if as Agricultural Labourers whether their [sic] employment has been attended with success or the reverse.

You will also favour me by stating distinctly on what terms such Immigrants have been introduced, and by adding any particulars with regard to them that may appear to you important, with a view to enable Her M's Govt to form an opinion as to the probably success of a similar Immigrants into the British West Indies.<sup>50</sup>

The Secretary's dispatch was concerned not only about the state of their employment but focused also on their routes of immigration into the state and alluded to an interest in California and U.S. laws shaping Chinese immigration. The vast majority of immigration out of China funneled through the British treaty port of Hong Kong, which by 1860 became an official colony of the

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<sup>48</sup> Zara Steiner, "The Old Foreign Office: From a Secretarial Office to a Modern Department of State," in *Opinion publique et politique ext rieure en Europe: 1870-1915*. Proceedings of the Rome Colloquium (February 13-16, 1980) Rome: French School of Rome, 1981, 177-195.

<sup>49</sup> FO 5/553, 16 June 1852.

<sup>50</sup> FO 5/553, 16 June 1852.

British Empire.<sup>51</sup> By controlling the exit port of Hong Kong and legislating the scope and terms of Chinese labor and emigration, the British government played a pivotal role in shaping the Chinese diaspora throughout the Pacific World.

Malmesbury appeared eager to utilize Chinese labor in the Caribbean. The nefarious context of Malmesbury's inquiries relates to the coolie trade, which began in the 1840s and consisted of the transportation of male laborers from China and South Asia to perform primarily agricultural work in South America and the Caribbean. However, these men were often kidnapped or duped by British, European, and American agents into indentured servitude in the Caribbean, a colonial labor solution to the end of the African slave trade. Many white workers and citizens throughout the Anglo-American world developed a fear that coolie labor would replace enslaved African labor in the United States and might also undercut white wages. This meant that many anti-slavery advocates also championed Asian exclusion. Moon-Ho Jung observes that in this period, the expansion of unfree Asian labor in the Caribbean led many Americans to “equate coolies with slaves in the age of emancipation, enabling anti-Asian forces to present Introduction Chinese exclusion as an antislavery, pro-immigrant measure.”<sup>52</sup> American anxieties around the coolie trade culminated in the 1862 passage of the “Anti-Coolie Bill,” which prohibited American ships from transporting unfree Chinese laborers. While Jung argues that this bill “established the racial logic that would lead to the exclusion of Chinese laborers from the United States,” California’s passage of Chinese exclusion laws the decade prior reveals that these logics of racialization first began taking shape in the Pacific.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Following the signing of the Treaty of Peking after China’s defeat in the Second Opium War, Hong Kong was officially signed over as a British colony “in perpetuity.” However, in 1997 Great Britain transferred the island back to the People’s Republic of China.

<sup>52</sup> Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (United States: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 5.

<sup>53</sup> Jung, *Coolies and Cane*, 5-6.

Consul Aikin's reply must have disappointed the seemingly eager Malmesbury. In his response to the Foreign Secretary's inquiries, he shared that "scarcely any have engaged in Agriculture and I am therefore unprepared to state whether they could adapt themselves to it."<sup>54</sup> The rest of Aikin's response provided a detailed overview of Chinese in California, including their means of employment, trans-Pacific passage, and community networks. In his estimation, by mid-1852 about 18,000 Chinese had arrived in the state. Upon arrival, he noted that "about all have immediately left for the Mining regions where they have been engaged in working on their own Account claims abandoned by American and other Miners or by working their claims on wages of Two to Three Dollars per day."<sup>55</sup> Many American miners resented that Chinese were able to profit from the claims they presumed to be spent fueled violence on the gold fields, as with the Weaverville War. However, as Mae Ngai and Sucheng Chan argue, many Chinese also obtained claims through preemption, or filing the necessary paperwork to register ownership of mining claims.<sup>56</sup> This was a common method of acquiring land through squatter's rights, and the land could be declared unused or abandoned by previous owners.

The Chinese diaspora continued in the 1850s despite increasing legislation that regulated, and even barred, Asian immigration. Their ability to thrive in the face of oppression also compounded anti-Asian discrimination. Aikin mentioned that Chinese miners found success working claims abandoned by Americans. Aikin then briefly described the credit-ticket system of passage that many immigrants used to enter into California, a structure he clearly did not understand well. He states that "a large proportion have had their passage paid by Chinamen [*sic*] with Capital who accompanied them but the reports are too conflicting in regard to the

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<sup>54</sup> FO 5/553, 30 August 1853.

<sup>55</sup> FO 5/553, 30 August 1853.

<sup>56</sup> Ngai, *The Chinese Question*, 44; Sucheng Chan, "Chinese Livelihood in Rural California: The Impact of Economic Change, 1860-1880," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (1984), 281.



terms on which the money has been advanced that I cannot give your Lordship any very reliable information.”<sup>57</sup> In this system, transportation brokers in Hong Kong paid for migrants’ cost of passage to California. Upon landing, migrants’ travel debt was purchased by companies and associations in San Francisco, and workers had to pay back the cost of their passage to these organizations, with interest.<sup>58</sup> Aikin did not mention that the entities who purchased these debts were often well-to-do Chinese merchants, who provided necessities like clothing, food, shelter, and job contracts to their fellow countrymen. Unlike Anglo-American lending practices that ensured repayment using fear or threat of punishment, the credit-ticket system flourished for its reliance upon mutual respect and trust among Chinese. As Madeline Y. Hsu and Kornel Chang argue, the success of this arrangement was due largely to “relationships based on kinship or native-place ties” that made each person “accountable not only to his creditor but to a much wider (and more intimate) web of relationships.”<sup>59</sup> Free Chinese emigrants, like those who came to California, were varied in terms of background, labor, and class. Sing-Wu Wang argues that most emigrants fell in three different categories: those who paid their own passage, those who borrowed money from family or friends, and those who entered into “invisible contracts” with passage brokers.<sup>60</sup> Those who paid their own way tended to be of the merchant class—artisans, tradesmen, shopkeepers, or even medical practitioners. Wang surmises those who borrowed money for passage, either through brokers or friends, were contract laborers though often such contracts were casual or not documented.

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<sup>57</sup> FO 5/553, 30 August 1853.

<sup>58</sup> Chang, *Pacific Connections*, 23.

<sup>59</sup> Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home*, 36; Kornel Chang, *Pacific Connections*, 23.

<sup>60</sup> Sing-Wu Wang, “The Organization of Chinese Emigration, 1848-1888, with Special Reference to Chinese Emigration to Australia,” Master’s Thesis, (Australian National University, 1969), 4.

While the Foreign Office may have found Aikin's report succinct and unsatisfactory, his account, perhaps unintentionally, points to the complex networks of community, labor opportunity, and resources that California Chinese built in spite of emerging discrimination. Aikin's description of the credit-ticket system, Chinese passage brokers, and the mutual aid societies that helped arrivals settle into California, would demonstrate to the Foreign Secretary that Chinese maintained sophisticated, trans-Pacific organizational networks that allowed them to thrive in the face of rampant Anglo-American discrimination. Regardless of Malmesbury's reaction to Aikin's letters, the Foreign Secretary then forwarded a copy of the consul's dispatch to the Colonial Office in October 1852, presumably to alert them not only of the conditions of outward migration from Hong Kong, but also to provide an assessment of the possibility of employing Chinese laborers in its Caribbean colonies. That same year, Parliament passed the Passengers Act, which was viewed as a step toward abolishing the illegal coolie trade and ensuring that passenger vessels provided the adequate sanitation and living conditions for safe travel. However, while some British officials fought against forced or coerced Asian labor, others, like Malmesbury, continued to explore whether voluntary and *cheap* Chinese wage labor could line the pockets of British investors and merchants, thus benefiting the economic and political might of the Empire. Private citizens and foreign diplomats continued to circumnavigate these laws, and the illegal trafficking of Chinese and South Asian laborers to the Caribbean continued well into the latter half of the century.

The British Empire's struggle to control the illicit coolie trade continued in its Pacific colonies. In November of 1857, the colonial legislature of Hong Kong—the main artery that funneled the majority of immigration—passed Ordinance 11. This colonial ordinance regulated Chinese movement by dictating the terms of Chinese immigration, requiring that prospective

travelers arrange passage with approved passage brokers, who could only obtain licensure from the colony's Emigration Officer.<sup>61</sup> Both the Passengers Shipping Act and Ordinance 11 were passed after Aikin's dispatch to the Foreign Office was copied to adjacent branches of the British government, including the Colonial Office which oversaw Hong Kong. While there are no direct linkages showing that these laws passed in response to the information circulated by the Foreign Office, the British colonial government's regulation of Chinese immigration at the same moment California passed similar statutes to control the movement, labor, and status of Chinese in the state.

### **Consuls and Chinese Exclusion in California**

British interest in Chinese immigration to California continued throughout the 1850s. Dispatches from the San Francisco consulate went beyond statistics and tables, and the consul-general often shared his contempt of Americans' treatment of Chinese in the state. Apart from their normal duties, which required them to report on trade and local economies, consuls began reporting on the anti-Chinese laws passed in the state. In February 1856, Consul Aikin wrote to the Foreign Secretary that "the Chinese have left [California] in great numbers, the Laws affording them but very scanty protection. The Courts have decided their evidence to be inadmissible—except against Negroes and people of their own race, and the Legislature has received their Tax for Mining and imposed one of \$50.00 on all arriving."<sup>62</sup> The consul referred to two California laws, resulting in the decision of *People v. Hall* (1854) and the passage of California Statute 194 in 1855. In 1854, the California Supreme Court determined in *People v.*

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<sup>61</sup> A.J. Leach, *The Ordinances of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Hong Kong, Commencing with the Year 1844* (Hong Kong: Noronha & Co., Government Printers: 1890), 387.

<sup>62</sup> FO 5/653, 1 February 1856.

*Hall* that testimony from Chinese witnesses against white people was inadmissible in court, overturning the murder conviction of George W. Hall, who killed miner Ling Sing according to three Chinese eyewitnesses. As Andrea Kwon observes, this verdict “hinged on notions of racial inferiority and embodied one of numerous legalized attempts to restrict the rights, and ultimately presence, of Chinese immigrants in nineteenth-century America.”<sup>63</sup> Many Californians interpreted *People v. Hall* as a ban on Chinese testimony. In practice, some judges excluded Chinese from testifying against each other, on the grounds that either Chinese did not fully understand the “sanctity” of the Christian oath, or that courts could not properly swear in witnesses.<sup>64</sup> These skewed rationalizations were echoed in the *Herald* article, “The Chinese and the Court of Law,” sent by Consul Aikin to the Foreign Secretary four years earlier in 1852.<sup>65</sup>

Statute 194, also known as “An Act to Discourage the Immigration to this State of Persons who cannot become Citizens thereof,” required that any foreign shipowner docking in any California port and carrying Chinese passengers pay a \$50 tax per person.<sup>66</sup> This law directly impacted British passenger vessels throughout the Pacific, as well as influencing the immigration funneling through British Hong Kong. This capitulation tax was just one of many passed with the intention of applying to all foreigners in the state, but enforced primarily against Chinese. In 1850 and 1852, the state passed a series of “Foreign Miner’s” taxes, requiring any non-U.S. citizens to pay a monthly tax to mine in California. The 1850 tax set the rate at \$20 per month, a fee that surpassed most miner’s monthly earnings.<sup>67</sup> Some scholars argue that this 1850 law

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<sup>63</sup> Andrea Kwon, “*People v. Hall*, 1854,” in Lan Dong, ed., *25 Events that Shaped Asian American History: An Encyclopedia of the American Mosaic* (United States: ABC-CLIO, 2019), 18.

<sup>64</sup> Ngai, *The Chinese Question*, 108.

<sup>65</sup> *San Francisco Herald* (San Francisco, California), Saturday, April 17, 1852. FO 5/553, 16 April 1852.

<sup>66</sup> “An Act to Discourage the Immigration to this State of Persons who cannot become Citizens thereof,” Chapter 153, Statutes of California (1855), 194–95.

<sup>67</sup> “An Act for the better regulation of the Mines, and the government of Foreign Miners,” Chapter 97, Statutes of California (1850), 221–23.

aimed to push out Mexican and Chilean miners in particular, as Chinese miners had not yet constituted a sizable population in the state.<sup>68</sup>

In the face of legal persecution, foreign miners created loose forms of solidarity on the California gold fields. Accurate population estimates for Chilean, Chinese, and Mexican residents do not exist for 1850, due in part to the loss of census data for three populous counties, a lack of strong bureaucratic administration, the transient nature of miners, and the census workers' difficulty in accessing remote gold mining regions.<sup>69</sup> Existing data suggests that California had one of the highest percentages of foreign-born residents in the 1850s, ranging between 23 percent in 1850 to 38 percent in 1860.<sup>70</sup> This is corroborated by Consul Booker's 1858 estimation that "in California there are nearly one hundred thousand people engaged in Mining, one third of whom at least are Foreigners."<sup>71</sup> Existing records for gold rush counties reveal that Chinese lived and worked alongside other foreign miners groups on the gold fields, as indicated by the 1850 census table from Calaveras County (figure 3.1). However, delineating between the existing Californio population, who had long resided in the now-U.S. state, and Chilean and other Latin American immigrants may have also proven a difficult task for American census workers. The most conservative estimates would place the Chinese population of the state in 1850 anywhere between 1000-7,000 people, compared to roughly 6,500-7,000 Mexicans (not counting other

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<sup>68</sup> According to Abraham P. Nasatir, Chileans not only comprised the majority of South Americans in California during this period, but their large population led to the need for the Chilean government to establish a consulate in the state in 1849. Abraham P. Nasatir, "Chileans in California during the Gold Rush Period and the Establishment of the Chilean Consulate," *California Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Spring 1974), 53; Ngai, *The Chinese Question*, 95.

<sup>69</sup> Chan, "A People of Exceptional Character," 49.

<sup>70</sup> Paul Jacobs, "The Foreign-Born Population by U.S. Region, 1850-2016," Presented at the Annual Southern Demographic Association of America. Durham, N.C. October 10-12, 2018. Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>71</sup> FO 5/699, 19 January 1858.

348 SCHEDULE I.—Free Inhabitants in Calaveras District in the County of Calaveras State of California enumerated by me, on the 23<sup>d</sup> day of Oct 1850. Ans. W. Jones Ass't Marshall

Dwellings whose number in the order of valuation.	Families numbered in order of valuation.	The Name of every Person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1850, was in this family.	Description.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each Male Person over 15 years of age.	Value of Real Estate owned.	Place of Birth. Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Married within the year last ended.			Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict.
			Age.	Sex.	Color, or Race, or Inhabitant.				10	11	12	
1	3575	Juan Anis	34	M		Miner		White	✓			
2		Manuel Oella	34	M		"		"	✓			
3	3576	C. S. A. Mason	25	M		"		Eng	✓			
4		Chung Hing	30	M		"		China	✓			
5		Tow Hing	16	M		"		"	✓			
6	3577	Ah say	28	M		"		"	✓			
7		Hany Chan	25	M		"		"	✓			
8		Loo Hing	24	M		"		"	✓			
9	3578	Choo Hing	26	M		"		"	✓			
10		Jung Hing	60	M		"		"	✓			
11		Hoa Hing	60	M		"		"	✓			
12	3579	Sam Hing	38	M		"		"	✓			
13		Ah Hing	25	M		"		"	✓			
14		Mr. Chu	29	M		"		"	✓			
15	3580	Hoi Chan	35	M		"		"	✓			
16		Ah Yit	27	M		"		"	✓			
17		Ah Hing	29	M		"		"	✓			
18		Ah Hing	45	M		"		"	✓			
19	3581	M. W. Riley	48	M		"		Chili	✓			
20		Spencer J. J. J.	47	M		"		"	✓			
21		A. S. Chastley	35	M		"		Chili	✓			
22	3582	Francisco Castitgo	45	M		"		Mexico	✓			
23		Juan Godena	18	M		"		"	✓			
24		Jos. Armenta	18	M		"		"	✓			
25	3583	Enasie Ribaso	32	M		"		"	✓			
26		Francisco Ribes	24	M		"		"	✓			
27		Juan Lamica	29	M		"		"	✓			
28	3584	Joseph Jolo	27	M		"		"	✓			
29		Herman	38	M		"		"	✓			
30		Manuel Anderson	12	M		"		"	✓			
31	3585	Wiles Riley	31	M		"		"	✓			
32		A. D. Lohmann	28	M		"		Chili	✓			
33	3586	Juan Andro	25	M		"		Mexico	✓			
34		Gabriel Walker	57	M		"		"	✓			
35		Antoine Valencielle	30	M		"		"	✓			
36	3587	M. Alce	20	M		"		"	✓			
37		Juan Marcos	30	M		"		Mexico	✓			
38		Patrice Marcos	28	M		"		"	✓			
39	3588	Manuel Marcos	25	M		"		Mexico	✓			
40		Dolores O'Leary	20	M		"		"	✓			
41		Wm. J. Jones	18	M		"		"	✓			
42		John Whitney	30	M		"	100	"	✓			

Figure 3.1. This 1850 census from Calaveras County, California shows that miners born in Mexico, China, and "Chili" (Chile) lived in dwellings alongside each other. U.S. Census Bureau, 1850 U.S. Census, Calaveras County, California, Schedule I, generated by John W. Jones, Assistant Marshall. October 23, 1850, 348.

ethnic Latin American groups.)<sup>72</sup> For those who paid the tax, the state issued a license that asked for identifying information, including their “complexion,” a clear indication that the state used race as a category to regulate labor. One such license exists for a German miner, Charles Hage, to mine in El Dorado County—shows one instance of the state enforcing the law on a white European (figure 3.2). The 1850 Census had three categories for race: “white,” “black,” and “mulatto.”<sup>73</sup> Census workers in California for 1850, including the person assigned to El Dorado County, left the race column blank for all entries. While some might attribute this omission to lazy accounting, the diverse and cosmopolitan populations of gold rush regions suggests that many individuals did not readily fit into these narrow racial categories. California’s shaped nineteenth-century bureaucratic race management policies in the U.S., as evidenced in the 1860 where the category of “Chinese” was included in the state’s questionnaire only.<sup>74</sup> By the time of the next U.S. Census in 1870, “Chinese” as a racial category was listed on every state and territorial questionnaire. This was the first time a national origin category was used along with color and race, as Karen Humes and Howard Hogan note.<sup>75</sup>

Tensions over the taxation of foreign miners continued for the next several years. Opposition to the 1850 tax led to violent confrontations between tax collectors and American authorities on one hand, and foreign miners on the other. Tens of thousands abandoned their mining claims, either changing professions or returning home, before the legislature repealed the tax in 1851.<sup>76</sup> However, this was not the last of taxes levied against foreigners, though these later

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<sup>72</sup> Chan, “A People of Exceptional Character,” 49; Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 52.

<sup>73</sup> The 1850 Census data also tracked, in another section, “domesticated Indians.”

<sup>74</sup> In 1870, the Census Bureau added “Chinese” as a racial category to every state and territorial questionnaire in the country. Karen Humes and Howard Hogan, “Measurement of Race and Ethnicity in a Changing, Multicultural America,” *Race and Social Problems*, Vol. 1, (2009), 113.

<sup>75</sup> Humes and Hogan, “Measurement of Race and Ethnicity,” 113.

<sup>76</sup> “An Act to repeal “An Act for the better regulation of the Mines, and the government of Foreign Miners,” Chapter 108, Statutes of California (1851), 424.

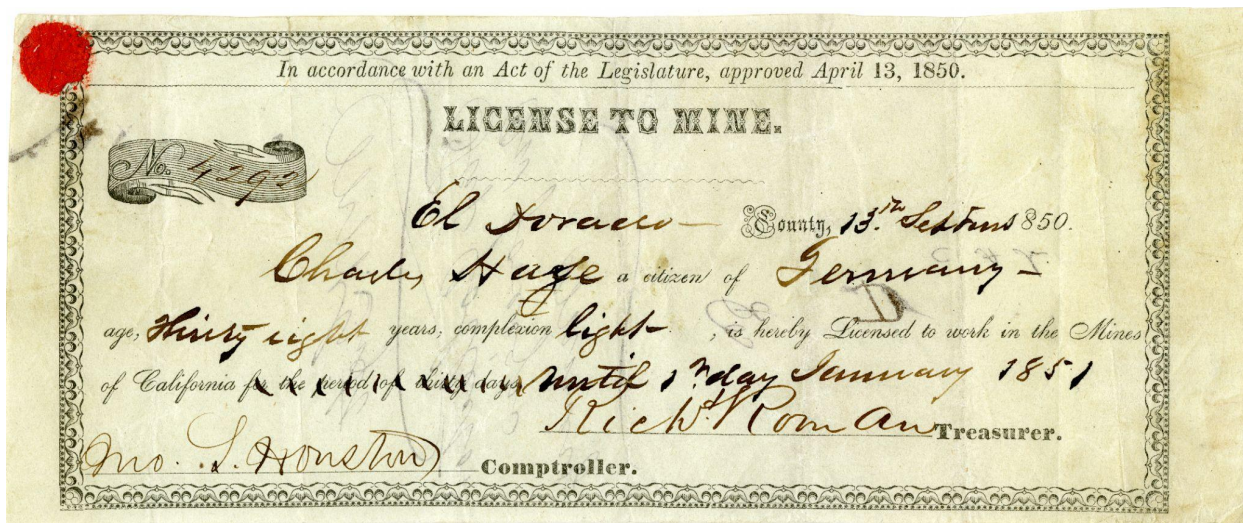


Figure 3.2. The above license for German miner Charles Hage shows that the state required foreign miners to list their race. San Francisco Consul General William Booker echoed these observations in 1858, saying that primarily Chinese residents were the targets of such licensing taxes. License issued for Hage to mine in El Dorado Country, dated 13th September 1850. "License to Mine (ca2617)." Foreign Miners Tax documents, 1850-1867. Courtesy of California State Library.

iterations would evolve to specifically targeting Chinese workers. By the time the second Foreign Miners tax passed in 1852—charging \$3 per month as opposed to \$20 in the 1850’s law—the Chinese population of the state stood at over 25,000, far surpassing other foreign-born groups.<sup>77</sup> As their numbers and visibility increased “Chinese soon found themselves at center stage in California’s racialized politics,” as Yong Chen contends.<sup>78</sup>

Six years on from the passage of the 1852 Act, the San Francisco consul sent a lengthy update to the Foreign Secretary regarding the state’s taxes levied on foreigners, observing the specific targeting of Chinese. Consul Booker shared that several English-owned quartz mining operations in the state employed Chinese wage laborers, and while the laws should have equally applied to all foreigners, in practice taxes were primarily collected from Chinese. He wrote that

<sup>77</sup> “An Act to provide for the Protection of Foreigners, and to define their liabilities and privileges,” Chapter 37, Statutes of California (1852), 84–87.

<sup>78</sup> Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 45.



“since when several English Companies were engaged in Quartz Mining operations, from the Miners in their employ the Tax was invariably collected. In 1857 the whole amount paid into the State Treasury as the proceeds of this Tax was One hundred and fifty four thousand Six hundred and Sixty Dollars [\$154,660], or quite two thirds of which, I have every reason to believe, was paid by the Chinese.”<sup>79</sup> Of the nearly three thousand British subjects residing in Nevada County, he continues, the miner’s tax “could not have been collected from over two hundred and twenty people, as the total receipt were Ten thousand three hundred and fifty five Dollars [\$10,355].”<sup>80</sup> The 1852 Foreign Miners Tax was updated again in 1853, raising the monthly tax from \$3 to \$4. Like the 1850 Foreign Miners tax, this \$3 payment was what California Governor John Bigler believed to be the equivalent to a month’s worth of wages earned by California Chinese, effectively taxing them out of their livelihoods to force them to leave the state.<sup>81</sup> The Foreign Secretary sent a copy of Booker’s evaluation of California’s discriminatory mining taxes to the Colonial Office on October 25, 1858, at the same moment when the Australian colonies were contending with local resistance to the influx of Chinese immigrants from its gold rushes.<sup>82</sup>

Consul Booker continued to send the Foreign Office updates about California’s anti-Chinese laws throughout 1858. Unlike his predecessor George Aikin, who mostly reported on such matters in his yearly trade reports, Booker was quick to update the Foreign Office with news of Chinese in California. On May 4, 1858, he forwarded news clipping to the Foreign Secretary of the state legislature’s passage of anti-Chinese immigration laws in California just eight days prior (figure 3.3).<sup>83</sup> With the passing of “An Act to prevent the further immigration of

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<sup>79</sup> FO 5/699, 19 January 1858.

<sup>80</sup> FO 5/699, 19 January 1858.

<sup>81</sup> Ngai, *The Chinese Question*, 95.

<sup>82</sup> Chapter 4 will provide more detailed examination of Australian anti-Chinese laws and Anglo-American transimperial governance.

<sup>83</sup> FO 5/699, 4 May 1858.

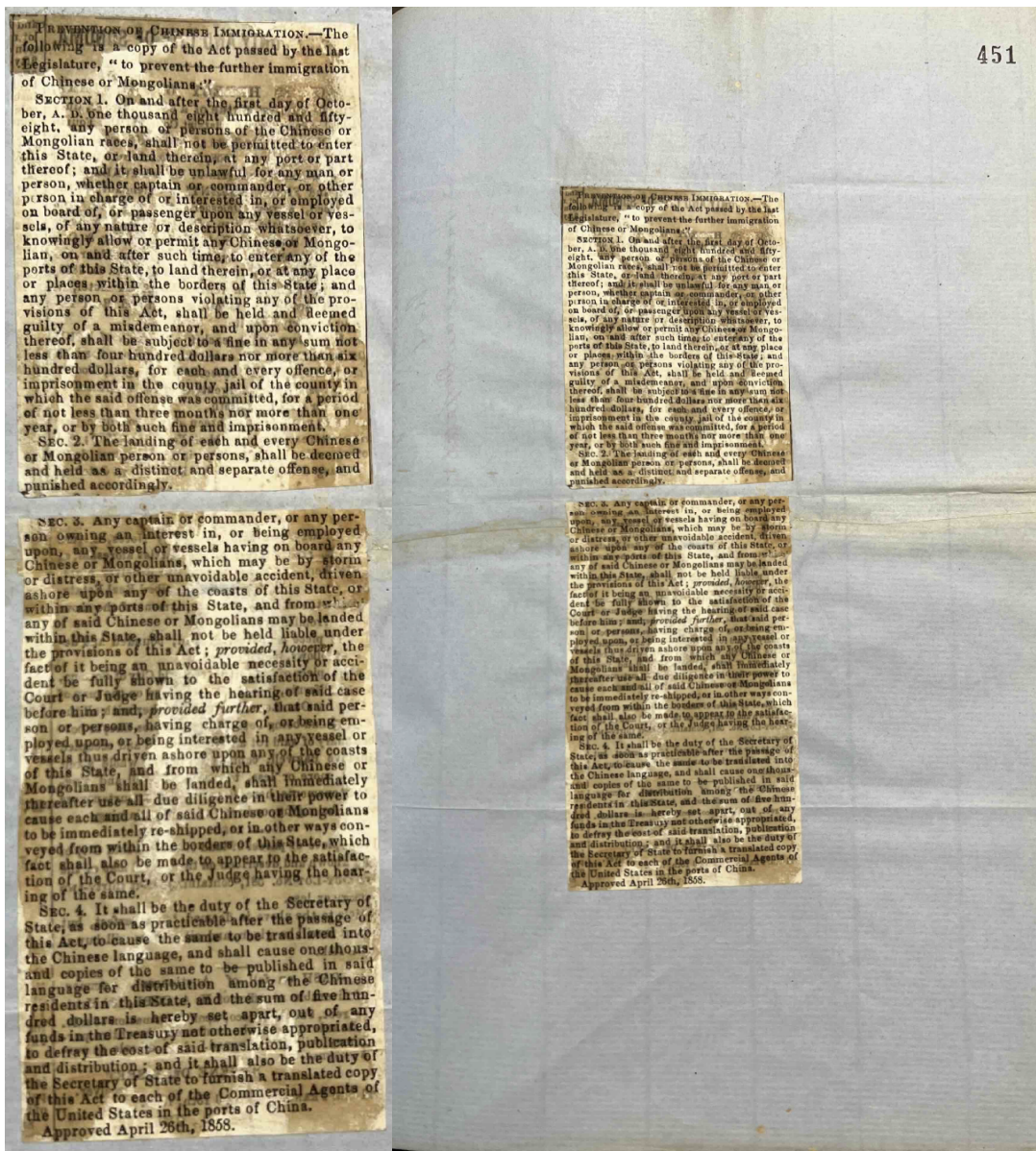


Figure 3.3. Newspaper clipping of “An Act to prevent the further immigration of Chinese or Mongolians to this State,” forwarded by Consul Booker to the Foreign Secretary immediately after its passage. FO 5/699, 4 May 1858.

Chinese or Mongolians to this State,” Governor John Bigler and California politicians focused less on driving the Chinese out and sought to prohibit them from entering the state altogether.<sup>84</sup>

Newspapers, including the clipping forwarded by Booker, published widely on the laws’ passage

<sup>84</sup> “An Act to prevent the further immigration of Chinese or Mongolians to this State,” Chapter 313, Statutes of California (1858), 295–96.

and reprinted the exact verbiage of the act. These reports were sent to the Earl of Malmesbury, who was currently serving his second term as Foreign Secretary. Malmesbury was also the same Foreign Secretary who had first instructed Aikin to provide accurate information on Chinese in California during his first term as Secretary in 1852. Upon receiving Booker's dispatch, Malmesbury then forwarded two copies in June 1858: one to the Colonial Office, and the second to the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir John Bowring.<sup>85</sup>

Though the California Supreme Court ultimately declared the 1858 act unconstitutional in 1862, as only the U.S. federal government maintained the right to regulate immigration, the act was enforced for four years. In that time, it not only shaped the lives of Pacific Chinese communities, but also impacted immigration from Hong Kong. This also affected trans-Pacific commerce from British passenger and mercantile vessels, impacting the significant trade between British colonies in the Pacific and California. British captains and merchants were subject to the law, and California authorities may have mistaken Chinese crewmembers as immigrant workers to the state, thus resulting in severe fines and/or imprisonment.

However, it was a British ship that would prompt the overturning of this law. In February 1859, the San Francisco consulate reported to the Foreign Office news of the law's repeal, stating that "the British ship "Cyclone" arrived [in San Francisco] with either Chinese Passengers and the Master was arrested under the Act, but the Supreme Court discharged him, declaring the first and the second Sections of the Act, which comprise all the important facts, unconstitutional."<sup>86</sup> He assured the Foreign Secretary that the mercantile and passenger commerce between California and Hong Kong could once again commence, stating that "from

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<sup>85</sup> FO 5/699, 4 May 1858.

<sup>86</sup> FO 5/722, 4 February 1859.

this decision there is no appeal and shipmasters can again with safety bring Chinese into the State.”<sup>87</sup>

### **Consuls And British Pacific Gold Rushes**

The San Francisco consulate alerted the Foreign Office to preliminary reports of gold discoveries in other British colonies throughout the Pacific. Reports of gold deposits in the backcountry near Sydney, Australia reached San Francisco in late 1851. Consul Aikin sent a dispatch to then-Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston. Palmerston was an influential member of the British government in the first half of the nineteenth century and served in a number of prominent positions, including two terms as Prime Minister and three as Foreign Secretary.<sup>88</sup> Aikin’s dispatch to the Foreign Secretary informed him that recent arrivals from Australia spread news of the gold discovery at Bathurst. Excitement erupted over the intelligence, even at the height of the California rush, and Aikin reported that “several Vessels have been laid on the berth for that destination and are rapidly filling with Passengers and Freight.”<sup>89</sup> He concluded his letter by sharing he felt it his duty to inform the Foreign Office of the news, even as it would have been received from other officials, because, “this intelligence would cause a large portion of the population from the Australian Colonies [in California] to return.”<sup>90</sup> Aikin recognized that in his role as consul-general his correspondences proved a vital component in a complicated bureaucratic ecosystem. Even if his reports duplicated information provided from other

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<sup>87</sup> FO 5/722, 4 February 1859.

<sup>88</sup> In fact, it was Palmerston’s second term as Foreign Secretary that helped secure a British victory during the first Opium War (1839-1842), leading to Hong Kong becoming a crown colony. Some of Lord Palmerston’s ministerial positions include: Prime Minister (1855-1858; 1859-1865); Home Secretary (1852-1855); Foreign Secretary (1830-1834; 1835-1841; 1846-1851); Secretary at War (1809-1828).

<sup>89</sup> Karen Clay and Randall Jones, “Migrating to Riches? Evidence from the California Gold Rush.” *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (2008), 1000; FO 5/536, 14 August 1851.

<sup>90</sup> FO 5/536, 14 August 1851.

government officials, the duplicate news would only serve to corroborate information. From there, Foreign Secretary would determine how best to proceed with the intel his diplomats supplied. In this instance, Palmerston chose to forward Aikin's letter to the Colonial Office, who would have direct jurisdiction over Australia. By the time the Colonial Secretary received a copy of Aikin's dispatch in mid-October 1851, a cresting wave of miners had already descended upon Australia. But the news of gold deposits at Bathurst, New South Wales was just the beginning of a series of gold rushes erupting across the continent, the largest being those found near Ballarat in the adjacent colony of Victoria. The Victoria gold rush would prove a defining, if controversial, facet of Australian history. Like California, the Australian gold rush led to rapid settlement of the region, which in turn displaced Aboriginal peoples from their ancestral homelands, wrought horrific environmental destruction, and prompted race-based policies about who could, and could not, become "Australian."<sup>91</sup>

### **Pacific Gold Rushes in Triplicate: British Columbia**

Issues over colonial governance, immigration, and commercial interests in the wake of gold discoveries also converged in the colony of British Columbia throughout the 1850s. While the most notable gold rush occurred in Fraser's Canyon, B.C. in 1858, not as widely known was a much smaller, contained "rush" to Queen Charlotte Islands, an archipelago also known as Haida Gwaii, situated just north of Vancouver Island off the coast of British Columbia. In March

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<sup>91</sup> For recent works that explore Australia's contested colonial histories, see: Sophie Couchman and Kate Bagnall, (eds.) *Chinese Australians: Politics, Engagement and Resistance* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Ann Curthoys and Jessie Mitchell, *Taking Liberty: Indigenous Rights and Settler Self-Government in Colonial Australia, 1830–1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Marilyn Lake, "The Golden Country: Australia's Changing Identity," *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (2020), 243-244; Sophie Loy-Wilson, "Trouble in White Australia: Marilyn Lake, Australian History and Asian Exclusion," in Joy Damousi and Judith Smart (eds.) *Contesting Australian History: Essays in Honour of Marilyn Lake* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2019), 175-189.

1852, the San Francisco consulate sent news to the Foreign Office of discoveries of gold-bearing quartz on Haida Gwaii. Consul Aikin reported that he received correspondences from British sailors and a Mr. Robert Staines, a Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) chaplain stationed at Fort Victoria, Vancouver Island. They reported to Aikin that a Company schooner, *Alexa*, moored off the southern coast of the islands and traded with Haida, one group of Indigenous inhabitants of the region. HBC sailors tried to continue to extract gold on a return visit, staying on the island for about three days. The sailors, however, overstayed their welcome. Haida warriors forced the sailors to return to their ship. In the coming weeks, Haida warded off no less than three different crews attempting to mine gold on the island. As news of the discoveries made its circuit among merchants in the region, Aikin shared that the American schooner *Damariscove* sailed from San Francisco to Puget's Sound to "ascertain the truth of the reports concerning the Gold."<sup>92</sup> The Haida who met them upon arrival "made so horrible a demonstration as to compel there being few in numbers to hasten their departure."<sup>93</sup> Upon its departure, the *Damariscove* crew received news from the British Master of the *Georgiana*, a sloop wrecked on the island while in search of gold. The enterprising crew was now held captive by Haida "who stripped them [the crew] of everything."<sup>94</sup> The captain of the *Damariscove* reported the wreckage to the United States Collector of Customs at Olympia. The Collector then chartered the schooner to rescue the stranded crew, providing "a Lieutenant and four Privates of the U.S. Artillery and ten volunteers."<sup>95</sup> Aikin reported that on arrival the *Damariscove* "found the whole party in captivity and secured their liberation by donations of Blankets and Trinkets. Three of the party rescued were British Subjects. It is reported that lately several small vessels have sailed from Oregon for

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<sup>92</sup> FO 5/553, 1 March 1852.

<sup>93</sup> FO 5/553, 1 March 1852.

<sup>94</sup> FO 5/553, 1 March 1852.

<sup>95</sup> FO 5/553, 1 March 1852.

Queen Charlotte's Island and three are endeavoring to procure passengers here for that destination.”<sup>96</sup> As with the Bathurst rush, the British Consulate in San Francisco played an integral role in both reporting these events to the Foreign Office, as well as other British officials. Aikin sent a flurry of dispatches to related departments, taking the initiative to address this news to Admiral Fairfax Moresby, Commander of the Pacific Station, as well as U.S. Consul in Panama Horatio Perry, and British Consul Eustance Barron in Tepic, Mexico.

Aikin followed up with the Foreign Office on the Haida Gwaii gold discovery the following month.<sup>97</sup> In this dispatch, Aikin enclosed a full copy of the *San Francisco Herald* newspaper, which contained several reports on the confrontations between Haida and Anglo-American settlers in the wake of the gold discovery. The *Herald* reported that “the Indians had large lumps [of gold] in their possession but were so hostile to the expedition that attempted to make a settlement as to compel them to return to Oregon for arms and assistance.” These news reports, coupled with bureaucratic correspondences like Aikin’s, reinforced Anglo-American settler entitlement, and asserted an innate right of possession and ownership of resources. The *Herald* insinuated that Haida were greedy and unwilling to allow settlement upon their lands in the pursuit of gold extraction, whereas the settlers who attempted to encroach and take the gold for themselves are written as if they are victims. As with Aikin’s March 1 dispatch, the gold required quartz mining, a particularly invasive process that required breaking down rock in order to access and process the embedded gold veins. These processes irrevocably altered the landscape and ecology of gold rush regions. The “unwillingness” to accommodate a flurry of settlers who wanted to embark on catastrophic mining methods, is painted by Anglo-American

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<sup>96</sup> FO 5/553, 1 March 1852.

<sup>97</sup> FO 5/553, 16 April 1852.

observers as unreasonable, rather than as an attempt to preserve cultural, political, and environmental autonomy.

Aikin's reports of the Haida Gwaii gold discoveries were but one component in a much larger process of the colonization of British Columbia, which occurred in earnest in 1858. That May, news circulated of gold deposits found in Fraser Canyon, British Columbia, situated some 300 miles east on the mainland from Victoria, Vancouver Island. The San Francisco consulate found itself again at the unexpected waypoint of the rush. In a letter informing the Foreign Secretary of the early fervor over the discovery, the consul wrote that "over twelve hundred people have left San Francisco during the past Month for Vancouver's [*sic*] Island and Puget Sound en route for Thompson and Frazer [*sic*] Rivers, in the Northern British Possessions, where Gold is stated to exist in large quantities."<sup>98</sup> The consulate continued to supply news of the rush throughout the summer of 1858, meanwhile providing shipping clearances to British trading vessels leaving for the northern coast, overseeing mass immigration of British subjects from California to British Columbia, and supporting the traveling delegation of military units and politicians who would become the first "official" governing body of British Columbia. All these, in turn, prompted Her Majesty's Government to address issues of immigration and citizenship in the region. The British Government feared the possibility of U.S. annexation of the region, due to the massive influx of American miners to Fraser Canyon. British territories in the Pacific Northwest also fell under an unusual administrative arrangement. Until the 1850s, the Hudson's Bay Company held territorial rights to the lands of present-day British Columbia. But as a mercantile enterprise, most of its operations in the Northwest Territories also fell under the purview of the Board of Trade. It was at this moment when governance of these territories

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<sup>98</sup> FO 5/553, 16 April 1852.



transferred from the Hudson's Bay Company's *de facto* rule to an official government arranged by the Colonial Secretary.

The San Francisco consulate played an integral role in facilitating this colonial transition. The Foreign and Colonial Offices instructed both the San Francisco and Panama consulates to assist the detachment of Royal Engineers, presently on their way to establish control of British Columbia. An August 30th dispatch addressed to both consuls stated clearly that they insure the "safe and speedy conveyance" of a bag of official dispatches headed to British Columbia.<sup>99</sup> A subsequent letter sent on November 15 instructed the consuls to help the Royal Engineers and its commander, Colonel Richard Moody, to their destination in Victoria. Moody became the first Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, serving under former HBC factor and Governor James Douglas. The San Francisco consul, despite its thousand-mile distance from the activities of western Canada, provided support to the burgeoning colonial government of British Columbia.

The rapid transformation of British Columbia following the Fraser Canyon rush would prove an echo of the rapid evolution of San Francisco. So great were the similarities in its cosmopolitan demographics, discriminatory legislation, and violent confrontations with Indigenous communities that some contemporary newspapers from California referred to the capital of Victoria as "San Francisco in miniature."<sup>100</sup> British Columbia would come to enact notorious anti-Chinese legislation, a move that Jay M. Perry argues was purposefully echoed and adapted from California's earlier laws.<sup>101</sup> As the networks of transimperial communication reveal, the San Francisco consulate stood at a pivotal intersection of commerce, bureaucracy, and

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<sup>99</sup> FO 5/699, 30 August 1858.

<sup>100</sup> *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco, California), July 18, 1858.

<sup>101</sup> Jay M. Perry, "The Present of California May Prove the Likeness of the Future of British Columbia: Transnational Anti-Chinese Policies Before the Exclusion Era, 1850-1885," *BC Studies*, No. 201 (Spring 2019), 35.

commerce. Operating at a moment of extraordinary legislative, mercantile, and colonial transition, the British consuls who served in California were a fundamental mechanism of empire, providing vital support and information from their strategic position in a major foreign port city.

## CHAPTER 4

### WEST OF THE WEST: U.S. CONSULS IN HONG KONG AND MELBOURNE

On May 11, 1855, the *Tuskina*, an American passenger ship owned by a San Francisco firm, docked at Melbourne, Australia. Aboard the ship were 342 Chinese passengers, weary from a long journey from the British colony of Hong Kong.<sup>1</sup> The passengers disembarked from the cramped and damp confines of the ship, shuffling down the dock to await processing by the colony's Immigration Officer. However, Captain S.H. Cushman immediately found himself in a heated exchange with the Melbourne harbormaster. After measuring the *Tuskina*, the harbormaster accused Cushman of grossly overselling passage aboard his ship, as the passenger capacity was legally determined based on the size of the vessel. Not only was the *Tuskina* in direct violation of the Passengers Act of 1852—which regulated the voluntary, safe, and sanitary conveyance of passengers aboard any vessel entering a British port—but it also breached Hong Kong's newly enacted Chinese Passengers Act.<sup>2</sup> Passed by the Hong Kong Legislature January 1855, the Act consolidated colonial control of Chinese immigration and maritime transportation. It also was an attempt to prevent the transport of unfree, or "coolie," laborers, stipulating that any

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<sup>1</sup> There are conflicting reports of the exact number of passengers aboard the *Tuskina*. Sing-Wu Wang lists the total at 342, but a May 12, 1855, article in *The Argus* reported it as 292, and the U.S. Consul in Melbourne wrote there were 305. Wang "The Organization of Chinese Emigration," 332-335; "Shipping Intelligence," *The Argus* (Melbourne, Australia), May 12, 1855; Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 1, May 29, 1855.

<sup>2</sup> "An Act to Amend and Consolidate the Laws Relating to Carriage of Passengers by Sea," (150 & 160 Vict. Cap. XLIV) June 30, 1852 (United Kingdom: J. Hedderwick, 1852); "The Chinese Passengers Act," (Imperial Act 18 & 19 Vict. Cap 104), *The Colonization Circular, Issued by Her Majesty's Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1874), 400-401.

passenger vessel leaving Hong Kong required inspection from Crown emigration officers.<sup>3</sup> If issues arose between American shipmasters and British colonial authorities over legal violations, as with Captain Cushman, U.S. consular agents stepped in to mediate the situation. This is how James Tarleton, U.S. Consul General to Melbourne, found himself embroiled in the issues arising from the *Tuskina*'s apparent breach of British law. Over the next several months Tarleton acted as Cushman's solicitor, sending inquiries to colonial officials and his fellow U.S. consul in Hong Kong, and submitting repeated appeals to the Victoria governor in the hopes of overturning the captain's fines.

Though Tarleton's efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, the *Tuskina* demonstrates that U.S. consuls stood at the heart of commerce, legislation, and inter-imperial relations in the nineteenth-century Pacific. While their primary objective was to protect U.S. economic interests abroad, they also ensured that American maritime commerce adhered to foreign and domestic laws enforced in foreign ports. On occasion they also attempted to circumvent those laws on behalf of American merchants and private citizens. They served as intermediaries between the U.S. and foreign governments and reported back to the heads of the executive and legislative branches of the federal government on issues affecting American trade and maritime affairs. Much like their British consular counterparts in San Francisco, American consuls in the Pacific operated at the nexus of interimperial commerce and bureaucracy, balancing private and governmental interests. They were integral components of American geopolitics in the Pacific, keeping the mechanisms of an emergent U.S. empire whirring smoothly and in tandem with other imperial powers. The 1850s marked a crucial period in American foreign service, as it

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<sup>3</sup> British consuls could also act as crown immigration officers as per section 6 of the law if stationed in foreign ports, like San Francisco. See also Kevin Brown, "The Coolie Trade, 1838–1916: The Migration of Indentured Labor from India and China," *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 33 (Spring 2020), 30-46.

teetered on the precipice of bureaucratic centralization and the professionalization of the consular service. The Hong Kong and Melbourne consulates in this period were predominantly led by men whose brash personalities compensated for little-to-no diplomatic experience. Some possessed a potent—and chaotic—mix of ego and ardent patriotism that often resulted in the consuls’ attempts to overstep positions, butting heads with both American and British officials.

This chapter explores how U.S. consuls stationed in the British colonies of Victoria, Australia and Hong Kong navigated these dynamic socioeconomic and political evolutions in the gold rush Pacific.<sup>4</sup> This chapter argues that in this transitional period—just before the professionalization of the U.S. foreign service and during the era of Pacific gold rushes—U.S. consuls exercised indirect political influence. Their influence sometimes extended beyond “official” duties as protectors of trade and supporters of citizens abroad. They communicated directly with foreign governments on many matters—administrative, legal, diplomatic, economic, and political—and shared local knowledge of foreign locales to the top of the U.S. federal government. As Nancy Shoemaker reflects, it was consuls “and not politicians in the nation’s capital—[who] were the driving force behind the United States expanding global presence.”<sup>5</sup> Consuls stationed in the major port cities of Hong Kong and Melbourne helped to anchor the western rim of the Anglo-American Pacific. The vast majority of Chinese immigration funneled through the British Colony of Hong Kong, many of whom traveled to gold

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<sup>4</sup> Like the gold rushes in California and Australia, British Columbia would come to adopt severe anti-Chinese regulations and prejudices. However, this happened later than its predecessors, as the 1858 Fraser Canyon rush occurred almost a decade after the commencement of the California and Australian rushes. A *de jure* colonial government was not organized until late 1858. In 1861 Abraham Lincoln appointed Allen Francis as the first American consul to Victoria, Vancouver Island. The consulate opened upon Francis’ arrival in April 1862. “History of the Consulate,” U.S. Embassies and Consulates in Canada, accessed August 11, 2023, [ca.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/vancouver/history-of-the-consulate](https://ca.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/vancouver/history-of-the-consulate).

<sup>5</sup> Nancy Shoemaker, “The Extraterritorial United States to 1860,” *Diplomatic History*, Volume 42, Issue 1 (January 2018), 36.

rush regions in Australia.<sup>6</sup> During the early years of this diaspora, U.S. and British forces in the Pacific also sought to exploit the new phenomenon of Chinese immigration, either for personal gain or for national interests. U.S. consuls were no exception. Consular officials witnessed the on-the-ground effects of mass immigration; their personal support or condemnation of anti-Chinese colonial policies and attitudes in the Pacific bled into their official duties as consuls. As seen with the *Tuskina*, consulates stood at the intersection where U.S. laws, foreign laws, and private interests converged and competed. Consuls navigated these fluid sociopolitical circumstances. The more enterprising diplomats explored how U.S. laws and interests could stretch to fit within, or sometimes extend beyond, the contours of foreign laws.

### **U.S. Consulates in the Pacific**

The core duties of U.S. consuls were nearly identical to their British counterparts. American consuls reported directly to the U.S. Secretary of State, who tasked consuls to report on trade and economy in foreign cities, assist American citizens abroad, and protect the nation's commercial interests. Like the British consulate in San Francisco, the influence of U.S. consuls throughout the Anglo-American Pacific often reached beyond these routine responsibilities. They engaged in an extended political process that brought both local and imperial matters to the immediate attention of top federal officials. U.S. consuls were key facilitators of American

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<sup>6</sup> And, of course, also on to San Francisco, the Caribbean, and throughout South America. Conservative estimates suggest that the Chinese population in California quadrupled during the 1850s, from 7,370 in 1851 to nearly 35,000 by 1860. 1851 estimates provided via Mary Roberts Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration* (New York: Henry Holt, 1909), 498, 499; 1860 numbers provided via Allyn C. Loosley, *Foreign Born Population of California, 1848-1920* (San Francisco: R&E Research Associates, 1971), 33. Yong Chen claims that these demographic discrepancies are due to inaccurate reporting practices conducted by white, English-speaking recorders. Chen finds that, when consulting Chinese sources, the population estimates are significantly higher, with 40-50,000 Chinese Americans in 1854 and 46,987 in 1860. Chen, *Chinese San Francisco*, 283.

intervention in foreign and domestic affairs that impacted not just trade, but also legislation and policies that influenced immigration, labor, land rights, and transportation.

Most American consuls in the early to mid-nineteenth century were merchants already working and living abroad, selected because they possessed in-depth knowledge of trade, regional differences, and local ordinances in their respective locations. The U.S. State Department identified and commissioned such individuals to serve as consuls, which was administratively (and logistically) easier to do than to appoint and transport an American to a foreign locale. In the early years of mass transoceanic transportation, travel remained a precarious endeavor; passengers risked their health and lives making these journeys. As was the case with John Gorman Barr, who died enroute to his consular appointment in Melbourne after Tarleton's resignation.<sup>7</sup> While some believed that consular posts were lucrative, most were given an all-too modest operating stipend, the State Department encouraging them to attend to their consular responsibilities alongside their business interests in order to maintain their livelihoods.<sup>8</sup> For many consuls—especially those stationed in major commercial areas like Hong Kong—juggling these multiple roles proved to be impossible. As a result, in 1856 the State Department reformed the consular service, making 50 percent of offices—usually those in major cities—staffed by fully salaried officials.<sup>9</sup> By the late 1850s, the earlier model of consular appointments fell out of fashion, and the State Department began recruiting consuls domestically before sending them off to foreign appointments.

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<sup>7</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 2, June 15, 1858.

<sup>8</sup> News of Tarleton's presumably "lucrative" appointment was published in *The Farmers' Cabinet*: "James M. Tarleton, formerly of Concord, has been appointed consul at Melbourne, Australia. This, it is believed, will be a very lucrative post. *The Farmer's Cabinet* (Amherst, New Hampshire), June 2, 1853.

<sup>9</sup> Mullen and Phelps, "What is a Consul, Anyway?" *Consolation Prize* podcast.

Thomas W. Waldron was the first U.S. consul appointed in Hong Kong in 1843, the same year China ceded the island to the British Empire following the First Opium War. This officially established Hong Kong as a British crown colony. Waldron brought his extensive knowledge of Pacific trade and geography to his term as consul, as he had just concluded four years of service as a captain's clerk on the Wilkes Expedition. This surveying expedition mapped Antarctica, the Pacific Northwest Coast, and the South Pacific.<sup>10</sup> Waldron's successors—Frederick Bush, Henry Anthon, and James Keenan—would continue to navigate international trade and diplomatic relations at Hong Kong through the tumultuous events of the subsequent decade, including the Taiping Rebellion and Second Opium War. In addition to reporting directly to the Secretary of State, the Hong Kong consul also worked under the U.S. ambassador to China. But from 1844 to 1858, there was no appointed minister plenipotentiary assigned to China, but rather a series of temporary commissioners and *chargés d'affaires* to serve as acting Chiefs of Mission to China.<sup>11</sup> The instability of ambassadorial leadership in China created a unique power vortex where American consuls exercised more influence than usual.

American consulates in China relied heavily on Chinese labor for day-to-day operations. China consuls depended upon local Chinese clerks and translators, who provided indispensable cultural, linguistic, and geographic knowledge, to ensure the on-going success of the consulate.<sup>12</sup>

For example, in 1856 James Keenan sent the Secretary of State a list of six Chinese workers

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<sup>10</sup> For more on the Wilkes Expedition, see: Iglar, "Chapter 6: Assembling the Pacific," *The Great Ocean*; Barry Alan Joyce, *The Shaping of American Ethnography: The Wilkes Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> These were: Alexander Hill Everett (Commissioner) October 26, 1846–June 28, 1847; John Wesley Davis (Commissioner) October 6, 1848–May 25, 1850; Peter Parker (Chargé d'Affaires ad interim) May 1850–July 1853; Humphrey Marshall (Commissioner) July 4, 1853–January 27, 1854; Robert Milligan McLane (Commissioner) November 3, 1854–December 12, 1854; and Peter Parker (Commissioner). July 15, 1856–August 25, 1857. U.S. Office of the Historian, "Chiefs of Mission for China," Foreign Services Institute, United States Department of State.

<sup>12</sup> Mullen and Phelps, "What is a Consul, Anyway?" *Consolation Prize* podcast.



employed by the consulate: Ah-Soy from Macau, an “office boy” who presumably performed general secretarial duties; Yu-sung, from Kowloon, employed as a letter carrier; boatmen Luk-Sun and Sam, both from Whampoa; interpreter Ah-Cheuch from Canton; and Ap-sing, also from Canton, employed as comprador.<sup>13</sup> Compradors, or *mai-pan*, served as liaisons between Chinese and foreign businesses and organizations, like U.S. consulates. They were often the top-ranked Chinese employees within their respective firms. While Comprador Ap-sing reported directly to the American Consul and Vice Consul, the five other Chinese workers at the American consulate reported directly to Ap-sing. The comprador performed a wide range of duties: office manager, accountant, housekeeping steward, agent to the Chinese government and local businesses, market analyst, and business agent.<sup>14</sup> Compradors were often men of a higher socio-economic standing, but were “always men of character,” as American merchant-diplomat Augustine Heard wrote while working for his family’s firm in Hong Kong in 1857.<sup>15</sup> Ap-sing, then, was assuredly a person the American consulate entrusted with extraordinary responsibility, and without whom the success of the diplomatic mission in Hong Kong would suffer. Even though Hong Kong was a *de jure* British colony, its dealing with mainland China and a significant portion of its Asia maritime commerce—as well as the culture and practices of the majority of its residents—remained Chinese. As Elizabeth Sinn observes, nineteenth-century Hong Kong was a “Chinese society beyond Chinese jurisdiction.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 3, March 31, 1856.

<sup>14</sup> Yen-p’ing Hao, “A ‘New Class’ in China’s Treaty Ports: The Rise of the Comprador-Merchants,” *The Business History Review*, Winter 1970, Vol. 44, No. 4, pg. 447.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine Heard, “The Poisoning in Hong Kong—An Episode of Life in China, Forty Years Ago.” 1894. Heard I/Box: GQ-1 GQ-2, Folder GQ-2-1 (Various Articles by Augustine Heard Jr.) Baker Library, Harvard Business School, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*, 83.

Hong Kong, and neighboring Canton, represented the primary trading center of Asia Pacific, connecting China to the Anglo-American world and serving as a gateway to India. Due to consular influence, in the early 1850s Hong Kong became the hub for U.S. communications to China. Mail from the United States would first funnel directly to the consulate before being redirected to interior regions, like Canton, or the treaty ports along the China coast. Hong Kong Consul Frederick Bush suggested to the State Department in July 1851 that any mail or dispatches from the federal government should be first directed to the Hong Kong consulate.<sup>17</sup>

Bush remarked that:

Commercial Houses in Canton, Shanghai, and in fact in all China and India have their Agencies at this port, so that letters to their address being received at this can be immediately transmitted to their Agents who become responsible for them, and who will protect the interests of their Employers by forwarding said letters to their respective address as expeditiously as possible.<sup>18</sup>

Because of Bush's influence, Hong Kong became an integral waypoint to other smaller cities. He specifically identified the Hong Kong port cities of Canton and Macau, both within a days' journey by boat from Hong Kong, was another major trade port and where the U.S. stationed another consulate, writing that Hong Kong was "one hundred miles from Canton and forty miles or thereabouts from Macau, and daily communication is held with both these places by Steam or post boats." He continued, asserting that Hong Kong stood at the nexus of communication between America and other locations throughout Asia, adding that "vessels are continually leaving this for Shanghai, Amoy, Manila, Singapore, Batavia, Peking, Bombay, and Calcutta. And great facilities are thereby given to communication with these ports. The overland mail also arrives at and leaves this port every month."<sup>19</sup> Bush here convinced the State Department to

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<sup>17</sup> Apart from Shanghai, which was further north towards the capital of Beijing.

<sup>18</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 2, July 23, 1851.

<sup>19</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 2, July 23, 1851.

consider Hong Kong, rather than other Chinese treaty ports, as the epicenter of East-West trade and communications. This move successfully centered Hong Kong in the U.S.-China diplomatic orbit. In turn, this also transformed Canton—the 1851 headquarters of the U.S. chargé d'affaires—and Beijing—the capital of the Qing empire—into satellite cities for the majority of the decade.<sup>20</sup>

Trade between Hong Kong and San Francisco occupied a significant portion of transpacific commerce, as the California gold rush transformed the Pacific from a “peripheral trade zone to a nexus of world trade,” in turn making Hong Kong “Asia’s leading Pacific gateway.”<sup>21</sup> Freight and passengers moved between the major ports of San Francisco, Hong Kong, Whampoa (Singapore), Canton, Melbourne, and Sydney. Near the height of the California rush, Consul Bush remarked on the increasing arrival of California imports into the port. In his 1851 quarterly report he wrote that “the Department will notice the large amount of American Tonnage that has called at this port during the last nine months upwards of Sixty thousand Tons. The greater portion of the vessels having arrived from California, where having landed their Cargoes, they have proceeded to China for freight to the United States or England.”<sup>22</sup> He goes on to add that “the trade between China and California is increasing, a number of American and Foreign vessels having taken Cargoes to San Francisco the past year.”<sup>23</sup> That next year marked the first time that California exports surpassed the number of imports to the state, the most valuable being gold, quicksilver (mercury), and wheat.<sup>24</sup> The California and Australia gold

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<sup>20</sup> At least temporarily. Once a permanent minister plenipotentiary was appointed to China in May 1858, the diplomatic headquarters of the U.S. mission to China moved to Beijing (also known as Peking).

<sup>21</sup> Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*, 1, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 1, April 11, 1851.

<sup>23</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 1, April 11, 1851.

<sup>24</sup> Quicksilver was not only to produce vermilion pigment, as well as to extract gold embedded in ore. James Gerber, “The Gold Rush Origins of California’s Wheat Economy,” *América Latina en la Historia Económica*, No. 34 (July-December 2010), 57; Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*, 175-185.

rushes ushered in an unprecedented era of commerce, and the crisscrossing traffic of goods and people across the Pacific strengthened Anglo-American geopolitics and economies in the region. The transformations wrought by gold rushes inaugurated a period of truly transimperial and trans-Pacific networks. By the 1850s, as David Igler observes, the Pacific Ocean's "people, markets, and natural resources were thoroughly entwined with the surrounding world," and previously disparate or remote regions became increasingly connected by transoceanic activity.<sup>25</sup> Consuls stood at the heart of these transformations. Consuls not only observed these changes in real-time, but as the scope of their duties required them to foster commercial relations with foreign governments, they in turn helped facilitate these interimperial, economic transformations.

Consuls encouraged American commercial expansion in the Pacific by promoting advancements in transportation technologies. This not only benefited the economic interests of American merchants and investors but would also extend the reach of American bureaucracy. In 1853, the Hong Kong consulate reported that "the Chinese are beginning to appreciate steamboats. Two native firms own each, an interest in two boats plying on the Canton River."<sup>26</sup> The next year, the consul made the case for the expansion of American steamer ships to not only facilitate the increasing commerce and passenger transportation between San Francisco and Hong Kong, but to establish a stronger global presence. Consul Keenan wrote that he felt "confident that a line of Steamers from this port to San Francisco would find it a profitable business, if it were to convey Chinese freight and passengers alone + that foreigners in all China + the East Indies, instead of traveling to Europe via Egypt, would take the route via California."<sup>27</sup> He added his observations that most Chinese emigrating from Hong Kong left via steamer ships,

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<sup>25</sup> Igler, *The Great Ocean*, 185.

<sup>26</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 3, August 5, 1855.

<sup>27</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 3, April 14, 1854.

and that they “now prefer it to any other mode [of transportation.]”<sup>28</sup> In fact, the U.S. federal government had been exploring the question of sponsoring an expansion of mercantile and military vessels in the Pacific for several years. In 1848, the House Committee on Naval Affairs drafted a report that assessed the need for transoceanic mail and merchant steamers.<sup>29</sup> Although a U.S. government-supported line of steamships would not reach Hong Kong and Asia until 1860, Consul Keenan’s observations echoed larger, existing efforts to expand the reaches of the American empire in the Pacific.<sup>30</sup> Until then, British and American private investors dominated trans-Pacific maritime commerce throughout the 1850s.

In April 1851, the transformative effects of the California gold rush continued to impact the island-colony of Hong Kong. In a letter to the Secretary of State, Consul Bush wrote to call “the attention of the Department to the large Chinese emigration to California taking place at this time, since the commencement of the present year upwards of twelve hundred Chinese have embarked at this port for San Francisco.”<sup>31</sup> He described those emigrating as belonging to “different classes, Merchants, small tradesmen, Agriculturalists, and Artisans, all of them respectable people, and without doubt the emigration will increase largely if the people now going are successful in their pursuits.”<sup>32</sup> Bush’s assurances to the Secretary of State of the “respectability” of Chinese served two purposes. Firstly, it delineated between the free emigration of Chinese, and the forced migration of Chinese “coolie” labor to the Caribbean at a moment when the U.S. grappled with the question of slavery in the country’s newly acquired

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<sup>28</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 3, April 14, 1854.

<sup>29</sup> For more details on the committee’s report, please refer to Chapter One of this dissertation; King, “Steam Communication,” 13.

<sup>30</sup> The Pacific Mail Steamship Company, funded in part by the U.S. government, expanded service to Asia in 1860. Jenks, “Trading the Contract,” 90.

<sup>31</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 1, April 11, 1851.

<sup>32</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 1, April 11, 1851.

western territories.<sup>33</sup> Some critics of the coolie trade likened the forced transportation of Asian laborers to the middle passage of enslaved Africans. In 1856, Peter Parker, the interim U.S. Commissioner to China to whom the Hong Kong Consulate reported, described the coolie trade as “replete with illegalities, immoralities, and revolting human atrocities, strongly resembling those of the African slave trade in former years, some of them exceeding the horrors of the ‘middle passage.’”<sup>34</sup> Abolitionists proclaimed that so-called “indentured” coolie laborers were in fact enslaved, and therefore violated the 1807 Act Prohibiting the Importation of Slaves to the United States.<sup>35</sup> William R. Reed, Parker’s successor as the U.S. commissioner to China, looked to his China consuls to inform American shipmasters in their ports that the transport of “any Chinese coolie or laborer, for the purpose of disposing of such a person as a slave” was “expressly prohibited by law.”<sup>36</sup> Reed referred to the 1807 anti-slavery law, which prohibited the transportation of enslaved Africans into the country. However, as Kevin Kenny observes, this law did not expressly mention Chinese migrants.<sup>37</sup> Reed attempted to interpret the law to extend to the expanding coolie trade, a move which technically held no legal grounds.

Secondly, Consul Bush’s altogether positive appraisals of the social character of those emigrating came as California prepared to pass the first of several discriminatory laws aimed at deterring, and later barring, Chinese immigration into the state. Within a year of Bush’s letter,

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<sup>33</sup> The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded more than half of its territory to the U.S. following the Mexican American War. This new land acquisition nearly doubled the size of the United States. Oregon became a state in 1859, following its own gold discovery, albeit just an echo of the rush seen in California.

<sup>34</sup> Public Notification by Peter Parker, January 10, 1856, 34th Cong., 1st Sess., H.R. Exec. Doc. no. 105, at 156, 157.

<sup>35</sup> The Coolie Trade Prohibition Act of 1862 would ban American ships from trafficking Chinese laborers.

<sup>36</sup> “Message from the President of the United States on the Chinese Coolie Trade,” 36th Cong., 1st Sess., H.R. Exec. Doc. No. 36–88, 75, 76 (1860), enclosing a letter from William B. Reed to S. B. Rawle, U.S. Consul at Macao, January 5, 1858.

<sup>37</sup> Kevin Kenny, “The Antislavery Origins of Immigration Policy,” *The Problem of Immigration in a Slaveholding Republic: Policing Mobility in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New York: Oxford Academic, 2023), 150.

California passed “An Act Concerning Passengers Arriving in the Ports of the State of California,” also known as the Immigrant Bonding Law. This statute required all shipmasters of passenger vessels landing in California to pay a \$500 bond for any foreign-born arrivals.<sup>38</sup> While appearing on the surface to apply to all non-citizens, in reality the law was enforced primarily against Chinese immigrants. This was but one in a series of anti-Chinese laws passed by California in the 1850s, all of which reverberated globally. Bush’s relatively positive insights on the demographics and character of Chinese immigration provided to the federal government a critical counterbalance to pervasive racialization of Chinese in this period.

As California continued to pass discriminatory legislation, the Hong Kong Consulate reported its effects on U.S.-China commerce to the State Department. In an August 1855 dispatch, Consul James Keenan informed the Secretary of State that the “commerce of the United States with this port, is decreasing—[be]cause [of] the California [anti-Chinese] Legislation.”<sup>39</sup> Just four months prior, California passed “An Act to Discourage the Immigration to this State of Persons who cannot become Citizens thereof.”<sup>40</sup> This law levied a \$50 tax on any shipmasters who brought persons into California who were “incompetent by the laws of the United States or the laws and constitutions of this State to become citizens thereof.”<sup>41</sup> As per the 1790 Naturalization Act, only white immigrants were permitted to become citizens of the United States.<sup>42</sup> In essence, this California law specifically targeted Chinese residents, who by mid-decade constituted the largest foreign-born, non-white population in the state. Keenan also

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<sup>38</sup>“An Act Concerning Passengers Arriving in the Ports of the State of California.” The UC Law SF Library. May 3, 1852. University of California Libraries.

<sup>39</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 3, August 8, 1855.

<sup>40</sup> “An Act to Discourage the Immigration to This State of Persons who Cannot Become Citizens Thereof,” in *The Statutes of California Passed at the Sixth Session of the Legislature* (Sacramento: B.B. Redding, State Printer, 1855), 194.

<sup>41</sup> “An Act to Discourage the Immigration,” 194.

<sup>42</sup> Naturalization Act, “Sess. II, Chap. 3; 1 stat 103,” in *1st Congress*. 1790.

reiterated his earlier insights from the year prior, reflecting on how California's discriminatory legislation could impact steamship transportation in the Pacific. He argued that a successful line of trans-Pacific steamers would increase commerce at the port "if assisted by the repeal of the anti-China laws of California."<sup>43</sup> In these instances, the Hong Kong Consulate opposed these exclusionary laws using an economic justification, making the case that California's anti-Chinese laws negatively impacted commerce. Their missives contained no discussions of the unethical and derogatory treatment of trans-Pacific Chinese.

Though many of these early laws were later declared unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court, they nevertheless shaped trans-Pacific perceptions and legislation regarding Chinese immigrants throughout the 1850s. In 1857, *People v. Downer* overturned California's 1855 immigrant head tax. However, newspapers continued to publish the public's xenophobic frustrations over increasing Chinese immigration. On January 1, 1857, the *Daily Alta California* published an article lamenting the news of the Act's overturning, claiming that the law was the one true "check" on Chinese immigration into the state. The article declares that the decision "will meet with the unqualified approbation of so large a number of residents in California," imagining that when "John Chinaman" hears of the news he will respond with "'Ko-Shang Hi-lo, San-tuck-no-coot,' which, being translated into broken China [sic], signifies 'Berry good Melican man, Supreme jutchy. [sic]'"<sup>44</sup> Just a few months later, the *Daily Alta California* continued its laments over the state legislature's veto of the law, claiming that their "vacillating" policy towards Chinese immigrants threatened the lives and livelihoods of white Californians. "We refuse to acknowledge [Chinese] as our peers," the author decries, "and they promise to

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<sup>43</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 3, August 5, 1855.

<sup>44</sup> The article's derogatory translation of "very good American man, [this] Supreme [court] judge." *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco, California), January 7, 1857.



approximate in time nearly to us in point of numbers.”<sup>45</sup> These racialized, and inaccurate, depictions of California Chinese only further fortified anti-Asian public sentiment and would serve to discriminate against and exclude Chinese with or without legal backing.

While the U.S. consulate in Hong Kong criticized California’s anti-Chinese laws for impacting transoceanic commerce, consuls nevertheless maintained underlying prejudices against Chinese. Despite working closely with Chinese clerks and translators at the consulate, James Keenan expressed frustration with intercultural barriers that he perceived as inhibiting U.S. trade in Hong Kong. He wrote to the Secretary of State that even in treaty and colonial ports like Hong Kong, “nearly all the business is carried on thru Chinese, who with characteristic suspicion of foreigners, and of all inquiries or interference of foreigners, refuse to give any information or answer only to mislead...in many instances almost impossible, to elicit correct information, hence the delay.”<sup>46</sup> This echoes popular anti-Asian sentiments regarding the trustworthiness of Chinese who settled throughout the Pacific. As discussed in Chapter 3, Anglo-American’s perceptions that Chinese were untrustworthy were pervasive. This discriminatory belief was used as a racialized rationale for barring Chinese testimony in British and American courts, as seen with *People v. Hall* (1854).<sup>47</sup> Even the British Colonial Secretary parroted similar claims in 1856 when debating the question of extending voting rights to Chinese in Hong Kong. In a dispatch to Hong Kong Governor Sir John Bowring, Secretary Henry Labouchere claimed that Chinese in Hong Kong “are deficient in the most essential elements of morality....The Chinese have not yet acquired a respect for the main principles of which social order rests.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Daily Alta California* (San Francisco, California), July 6, 1957.

<sup>46</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 3, August 8, 1855.

<sup>47</sup> *People v. Hall*, 4 Cal. 339 (1854).

<sup>48</sup> No. 82, Labouchere to Governor Sir John Bowring, 29 July 1856. *Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons*, Vol. 43, Session 2 (United Kingdom: Parliament, 1857), 12.

Two years later, the Hong Kong Legislative Council debated if Chinese residents could serve on a jury after the name of a Chinese man first appeared on a jurors list drafted by the Court Registrar.<sup>49</sup> While the Council ultimately decided to allow Chinese men to serve on juries, only those who owned property valued over \$1,000 were eligible to do so. In the British-dominated colony, where Chinese were often subject to discriminatory property and labor laws that often refused them full citizenship rights, juries were predominately white.

### **Seeing Double: Anti-Chinese Legislation in Hong Kong**

These anti-Asian prejudices seeped beyond discriminatory beliefs and solidified into British colonial law. Like legislative efforts in California, the British government in Hong Kong passed discriminatory laws in the late 1850s meant to subordinate Chinese in the colony. Following the outbreak of the Second Opium War in 1856, the Hong Kong colonial government enacted a series of new and increasingly stringent laws. Collectively, these “Ordinances” sought to regulate the movement and labor of Chinese residents of the colony. Passed on May 5, 1857, Ordinance No. 6 contained several provisions that monitored Chinese merchants and laborers. Articles 22 and 23 mandated that Chinese merchants could not “hawk wares or goods” without a license from the Registrar General and Protector of the Chinese.<sup>50</sup> Article 29 set the standards for the hiring of “coolies and labourers” and their rates of pay, both of which were to be determined by the Registrar General. This article also prohibited Chinese laborers from protesting the terms of their employment, stating that “no such person shall refuse, without reasonable and sufficient cause, to accept employment according to his scale, and whensoever offered in conformity with

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<sup>49</sup> Nigel Cameron, *An Illustrated History of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1978), 70; Richard Klein, “Law and Racism in an Asian Setting: An Analysis of the British Rule of Hong Kong,” *Hastings International and Comparative Law Review*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Winter 1995), 256-257.

<sup>50</sup> Leach, “The Ordinances of the Legislative Council,” 376.

this Ordinance, or use any abusive or insolent language to any person soever, so employing or offering him such employment.”<sup>51</sup> This law was approved under John Bowring’s tenure as Governor of Hong Kong. Its passage also occurred at the height of debates over the trafficking of unfree Chinese labor in the coolie trade to the Caribbean when the British empire vowed to end forced servitude in its colonies. That Bowring approved these Hong Kong Ordinances, which enforced stringent labor restrictions, contradicts some scholars who laud him as a fierce opponent of the coolie trade.<sup>52</sup>

News of the Ordinance’s passage spread quickly throughout the colony. The May 14 edition of *The China Mail* reprinted an article that mentions the passage of the Ordinance from the Government Gazette, the official publication for the colonial government.<sup>53</sup> The widespread publication of this ordinance would not only publicize its passage but gave a greenlight to less scrupulous shipmasters eager to capitalize on the profitable coolie trade. Chinese continued to immigrate via Hong Kong in large numbers throughout the decade, and the year after Ordinance 6’s passage Hong Kong Vice Consul O.E. Roberts reflected upon the complicated nature of the Chinese diaspora. In a letter to the Secretary of State, in which he enclosed a newspaper detailing the coolie trade out of China, Roberts proclaimed that “it is necessary to distinguish between this coolie trade + the large + profitable carrying trade of emigrants to Australia + California. Many American vessels are engaged in taking these respectable and voluntary emigrants to those places. They consist of traders, shop-keepers and gold diggers.”<sup>54</sup> Even the British Governor of

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<sup>51</sup> Leach, “The Ordinances of the Legislative Council,” 376.

<sup>52</sup> See: Philip Bowring, *Free Trade’s First Missionary: Sir John Bowring in Europe and Asia*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014); David Todd, “John Bowring and the Global Dissemination of Free Trade,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (June 2008).

<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, since *The China Mail* was regularly circulated to and reprinted in California newspapers, California readers were aware of such overseas legislation.

<sup>54</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 4, April 13, 1858.

Hong Kong, Sir John Bowring, assured the Colonial Secretary that all Chinese who immigrated to California were “respectable people” who did so freely.<sup>55</sup> However, Chinese emigrants were only “respectable” when their labor was of value, prime for exploitation by the colonial officials and private enterprises—as Bowring and the Hong Kong Consulate observations reveal. That praise ceased once the questions of equality and legal rights—like serving on juries, testifying in court, or access to fair employment—came into play.

Ordinance 11, enacted in November 1857, regulated how Chinese could emigrate from Hong Kong. The law required that the prospective travelers arrange passage with approved Passage Brokers, who could only obtain licensure from the colony’s Emigration Officer at a cost of 200 Hong Kong dollars.<sup>56</sup> These stipulations nullified the established methods that Chinese emigrants used to arrange trans-Pacific travel within their communities. With Ordinance 11, Chinese were required to arrange passage through the colonial government, modifying previous systems that allowed them to arrange passage on their own, through friends, or via “invisible contracts” with Chinese agents.<sup>57</sup> While this may have been a move to ban Chinese passage brokers in favor of British ones, some scholars argue that this ordinance provided much-needed protection for passengers against dishonest brokers, thus characterizing Hong Kong as a reputable and safe emigrant port.<sup>58</sup>

British concern over Chinese immigration echoed across the Pacific Ocean in California and elsewhere. The May 21, 1857, edition of the *San Francisco Bulletin* reprinted an article from

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<sup>55</sup> U.K. National Archives, Colonial Office, Original Correspondences: Hong Kong 1841-1951, Series 129 (hereafter cited as CO), Bowring to William Molesworth, 6 October 1855; CO 129/69, Bowring to Edward B. Lytton, 22 October 1858.

<sup>56</sup> Leach, “The Ordinances of the Legislative Council,” 387; “Ordinance 11 of 1857: Licensing Emigration Passage Brokers,” *The Colonization Circular*, 401.

<sup>57</sup> Wang, “The Organization of Chinese Emigration,” 14.

<sup>58</sup> Sinn, *Pacific Crossing*, 78.

the London *Times* that stoked the state's fears of mass emigration from China. The article contained a testimony of Sir John Bowring, the Governor of Hong Kong, that outlined emigration from China, finding that "about three million [Chinese immigrants], from the provinces alone, are settled in foreign countries."<sup>59</sup> Indeed, many of these immigrants traveled across the Pacific to settle, either temporarily or permanently, in California. But trans-imperial exchanges between British China and California were not limited to people and goods. Newspapers and correspondences likewise facilitated the exchange of ideas about colonial and race-based governance. The coeval development of discriminatory sets of laws, like the Hong Kong Ordinances and California's anti-Chinese laws, demonstrates the existence of a public ecosystem and political culture that encouraged and sustained anti-Chinese discrimination.

The current of Chinese emigration from Hong Kong branched off in the mid-1850s, diverting to Australia as gold was discovered in Victoria and New South Wales. In 1854, the Hong Kong Consulate informed the State Department that "the heretofore increasing Chinese emigration and consequent commerce to San Francisco, has turned towards Australia."<sup>60</sup> The consul was optimistic that the tide of trade and emigration could be redirected back towards the United States, which was in part affected by California's anti-Chinese laws. However, he felt this commercial redirection was an urgent matter. "With a little encouragement," the consul continued, "our Commerce with China would soon become great + steadily increasing; but if the tide is not woo'd to our shores in its incipiency, so much are these people addicted to follow the course of their ancestors, that it will be hard to change the current in after years."<sup>61</sup> While Chinese immigration to California and the United States did continue throughout the decade,

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<sup>59</sup> "Sir John Bowring's Description of the Chinese Empire," *San Francisco Bulletin* (San Francisco, California), May 21, 1857.

<sup>60</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 3, April 4, 1854.

<sup>61</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 3, April 4, 1854.

Australia rose to become a formidable competitor of Pacific commerce. In most every way, it was a mirror of California, dealing with related issues surrounding gold rush economies, labor disputes, foreign immigration, and settler encroachment upon Indigenous lands.

### **U.S. Consulate in Melbourne**

The outbreak of gold strikes across eastern Australia irrevocably transformed the social, political, and economic landscapes of the region. In 1851, gold was discovered in the regions surrounding the ports cities of Sydney and Melbourne. As in California, news of the gold strikes spread quickly, and miners, entrepreneurs, and settlers quickly flooded the country, eager to strike it rich or start life anew. The Australian gold rush played an important role in the development of the country's political institutions, in turn altering how foreign governments interacted with the colonial government. The year as the first gold discoveries also saw the colony of New South Wales split in two, with Sydney remaining the capital of the territory, and Melbourne becoming the seat of the newly established Colony of Victoria. A U.S. consulate had been active in Sydney since 1836; upon the formation of Victoria, the Department of State established a new consular post in Melbourne in 1852. As the decade progressed, the Victoria gold rush quickly eclipsed that of New South Wales and the rapid demographic, political, ecological, and infrastructural transformation of Melbourne were a mirror to that of California. While some scholars argue that the California gold rush did not act as an agent of political change, but rather reinforced existing political institutions, the state's attempts to pass anti-Asian legislation in the wake of the gold rush set the stage for the legal exclusion of Chinese immigrants to the U.S. decades later.<sup>62</sup> Mining enterprises, especially the more invasive quartz

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<sup>62</sup> Jerome O. Steffen, "The Mining Frontiers of California and Australia: A Study in Comparative Political Change and Continuity," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (November 1983), 428.

mining operations, wrought devastating ecological transformations, altering landscapes and waterways. Coupled with the influx of settlers, these environmental changes also altered traditional food sources of Indigenous communities and decimated their homelands.

The magnitude of the Victoria rush meant that the newly established U.S. consulate in Melbourne had plenty to contend with. The first two years of its operation were fraught with instability. J.A. Henriques, the first U.S. consul in Melbourne, was a merchant who had lived in the area since the late 1840s.<sup>63</sup> It's unclear how he initially came to the attention of the State Department, but in May 1851 the Secretary of State appointed Henriques to the newly-established position as Melbourne Consul General. Unfortunately, his commission letter was lost in the mail for nearly a year, and by the time it reached the erstwhile consul in Melbourne that following May, Henriques had already made arrangements to leave the colony. Though he expressed remorse at his inability to serve in the post, he recognized the necessity of a consulate in Melbourne. In his resignation letter to the Secretary of State, Henriques remarked that "this is to be regretted as the great and increasing trade between this place + the U [sic] States render a Consul absolutely necessary."<sup>64</sup> In June 1853 Henriques appointed an interim consul in his place, Frederick Hennell, who served in that role until James M. Tarleton officially assumed his appointed role as Melbourne consul in February 1854. Tarleton served as Consul-General throughout the height of the gold rush, stepping down in 1859.

The Melbourne press portrayed Tarleton as a boisterous and steadfast patriot, a diplomat with a larger-than-life personality to match the drama of the Victoria rush. Less than a year after assuming office, a group of American residents in Melbourne hosted a dinner in Tarleton's honor

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<sup>63</sup> *The Argus* shows that a J.A. Henriques and Co. had been shipping goods into the city since 1849, two years before the gold rush. "Shipping Intelligence," *The Argus* (Melbourne, Victoria), June 30, 1849.

<sup>64</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 1, Henriques to Secretary of State, May 17, 1853.

at the Victoria Hotel. Also in attendance were members of the colonial government, including Charles Prendergast Hackett, the newly appointed Police Magistrate, and Robert William Rede, the Commissioner of Crown Lands.<sup>65</sup> Following the dinner and a lively rendition of the “Star-Spangled Banner,” Tarleton addressed the room. According to the reporter’s account, Tarleton thanked the American organizers for providing “such a reception to the representative [Tarleton] of a great and powerful country.”<sup>66</sup> Knowing he commanded the attention of British colonial officials, the consul observed that the “laws and institutions” of the United States were “superior to those of any other in the world.” Though the “merits” of the British empire, he added, were a close second and “nearest to [America’s] perfect liberty.”<sup>67</sup> He ended by asserting that he would “always be found ready to attend to the interests of all Americans, no matter what political creed. The interests of England and America were so blended...that he hoped no difficulty would ever occur between them for the sake of human happiness.”<sup>68</sup> As Tarleton finished his toast and took a seat, the room erupted in a “perfect hurricane of applause.”<sup>69</sup>

Tarleton’s patriotism and suggestion of the British Empire’s emulation of American principles of freedom and liberty, were decidedly Anglocentric. An avowed Democrat, Tarleton was an ardent supporter of President Franklin Pierce, a pro-slavery sympathizer who had appointed Tarleton to consular service in Melbourne. Although Tarleton is remembered as opposing Southern cessation in the U.S. Civil War, he maintained personal and professional relationships with two leading pro-slavery politicians: New Hampshire Governor Nathaniel

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<sup>65</sup> Mark Hillyer, “Charles Prendergast Hackett, 1817-1889,” and “Robert William Rede, 1815-1904,” in *The Golden Colony: Administration of the Victorian Gold Fields*. [www.thegoldencolony.au/](http://www.thegoldencolony.au/)

<sup>66</sup> “Complimentary Dinner,” *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* (Victoria, Australia), 30 November 1854.

<sup>67</sup> “Complimentary Dinner,” *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* (Victoria, Australia).

<sup>68</sup> “Complimentary Dinner,” *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* (Victoria, Australia).

<sup>69</sup> “Complimentary Dinner,” *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* (Victoria, Australia).



Baker and President Franklin Pierce.<sup>70</sup> Tarleton's patriotic spirit and Democratic leanings informed his actions as consul. To him, the United States was an ideal upon which other empires should measure themselves. He openly advocated for Australia to mirror an American land system, whereby land was surveyed and doled out by the government to individuals for settlement, farming, development, mining, or ranching. Tarleton bemoaned that in the face of rising immigration due to the Victoria rush, "that under the present 'Land System' most all go to the gold fields, and do not become identified with the soil of the Country."<sup>71</sup> The consul insisted that permanent settlement of Victoria was integral to the colony's success. However, the question of *who* should, or could, establish themselves as residents arose during this period. Much like in California, white Australians perceived that Chinese immigrants would come to outnumber Anglo-American settlers in the colony. It is from this fear which sprang subsequent anti-Chinese laws in the colony, culminating with the "White Australia" policy in 1901. This law deterred non-white persons from immigrating to the country, but also sought to deport non-British residents.<sup>72</sup> The law's focus on barring foreign-born settlement and visions of a white Australian continental colonization have led scholars to refer to it as the "Monroe doctrine of the commonwealth."<sup>73</sup>

During his tenure as consul, Tarleton advocated on behalf of American shipmasters who violated laws mandating the safe and humane transport of Chinese passengers. Tarleton's campaigns for an easing of coolie labor transport regulations occurred as the colony penned

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<sup>70</sup> Obituary for James M. Tarleton, in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), December 27, 1880.

<sup>71</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 1, January 27, 1857.

<sup>72</sup> House of Representatives and Attorney General's Department, "An Act to place certain restrictions on Immigration and to provide for the removal from the Commonwealth of prohibited Immigrants—Immigration Restriction Act 1901," National Archives of Australia, A1559, 1901/17.

<sup>73</sup> Andrew Markus, *Fear and Hatred: Purifying Australia and California, 1850-1901* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979), xii.

multiple discriminatory laws, akin to those passed in California. Though unlike California, Tarleton's advocacy meant that he supported the importation of Chinese laborers, who many saw as a cheap, replenishable, and exploitable workforce that would enable the colony to maximize growth. The consul's support of the illegal trafficking of Chinese passengers reinforced the pervasive anti-Chinese sentiments that fueled exclusionary policies in the nineteenth-century Pacific.

### **Troubled Waters: Tarleton and the *Tuskina* Incident**

In 1855, Consul Tarleton became embroiled in defending Captain Cushman of the American ship *Tuskina*. Cushman fines imposed by the Melbourne harbormaster for violating British Passenger Laws by illegally and unsafely transporting Chinese immigrants into the colony. These Passenger Laws, passed in several iterations in the 1850s, provided protection against the expanding coolie trade and regulated health and safety standards on passenger vessels.<sup>74</sup> The *Tuskina* departed Hong Kong on March 11, 1855, carrying nearly 350 Chinese passengers to Melbourne; the vessel was large enough to safely accommodate only 255 people.<sup>75</sup> Although the *Tuskina* was not a coolie transport ship, the captain nevertheless took advantage of desperate emigrants eager to begin prospecting on the Australian gold fields. As an American shipmaster in a foreign port, Cushman appealed to Consul Tarleton for assistance. Tarleton attended to the issue with a particular enthusiasm, obtaining testimonies from British colonial administrators in Hong Kong and coordinating communication with the Victoria colonial government in Australia.

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<sup>74</sup> "An Act to Amend and Consolidate the Laws Relating to Carriage of Passengers by Sea."

<sup>75</sup> See footnote 1.

In a series of dispatches sent to the Secretary of State, Tarleton detailed the multiple infractions levied against the *Tuskina*'s captain.<sup>76</sup> Cushman had purportedly bribed harbor masters in Hong Kong to evade these passenger laws, in turn overselling passage aboard his ship to maximize profits. Consul Tarleton spent the next several months petitioning the Victoria government for a fine reduction. Dozens of letters circulated between Tarleton, U.S., and colonial officials on the matter of the *Tuskina*. He first appealed to the Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, Sir Charles Hotham, in May 1855. Tarleton claimed that the *Tuskina* was inaccurately measured, and since Cushman was "only" 84 passengers over the legal limit, urged the Lieutenant-Governor to reduce the fine. Hotham declined Tarleton's request, and though his precise response to the consul is not available, Hotham held strong anti-Chinese prejudices. It was Hotham who, in 1854, appointed Chinese protectorates on the gold fields, effectively segregating Chinese from European miners.<sup>77</sup> One of his final acts as Governor was the June 1855 passage of "An Act to make provision for certain Immigrants," also known as the "Chinese Immigration Act," which passed a series of restrictions on Chinese entering the colony.<sup>78</sup> This law passed just a month after Tarleton's appeals, and Hotham would have been wholly unsupportive of any attempts to transport Chinese workers into the colony.

While these initial appeals were unsuccessful, Tarleton continued to entreat other British colonial officials. After receiving Hotham's refusal, he then turned to the Colonial Governor's office, communicating with the Governor's secretary, James Moore. Tarleton's petitions to the Governor's office included testimonies from the Melbourne and Hong Kong harbor masters, colonial immigration officers, Crown Law Offices, and the U.S. consulate in Hong Kong. C.B.

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<sup>76</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 1, May-December 1855.

<sup>77</sup> Ngai, *The Chinese Question*, 125.

<sup>78</sup> "An Act to Make Provision for Certain Immigrants (No. 39 of 1855)." Parliament of Victoria.

Hellier, Immigration Officer for Hong Kong, reported that Cushman deliberately falsified *Tuskina's* passenger list, showing that on paper he fell within the parameters of law.<sup>79</sup> Hellier claimed that the list Cushman first presented him “contained originally the names of three hundred and five persons but, the last Twenty five were erased in consequences of the refusal of the Emigration Office to pass the Ship with this large number, a portion of the space set apart for passengers having been improperly partitioned off for other purposes.”<sup>80</sup> Cushman also insisted that the measurements of the *Tuskina* were incorrect, that the Melbourne harbormaster inaccurately listed her as being smaller than her actual size. The captain argued that forty-five of the Chinese passengers were part of the crew, but comparable records for a ship of comparable size to the *Tuskina* indicate that the vessel would only require nine to fourteen crewmembers to sail.<sup>81</sup>

The communications surrounding the *Tuskina* reveal issues beyond allowable shipping tonnage. Rather, Cushman’s deliberate decision to oversell passage aboard his ship and the ensuing administrative drama, touched upon issues of immigration, labor, trade, and inter-imperial governance. Tarleton’s appeals to the Victoria colonial government were unusually persistent. He was informed on three separate occasions—in June, August, and September 1855—that the Victoria Governor could not overturn the fine, “the master of this Vessel having confessedly violated a British Imperial Act of 1852.”<sup>82</sup> Despite remeasurements, months of correspondence across two continents, and Consul Tarleton’s petitioning of the Victorian

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<sup>79</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 1, March 9, 1855.

<sup>80</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 1, March 9, 1855.

<sup>81</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 1, March 10, 1855; Douglas C. North, “Sources of Productivity Change in Ocean Shipping, 1600-1850.” *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 76, No. 5 (September-October 1968), 961.

<sup>82</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 1, August 10, 1855.

government for a fine reduction, Cushman was ultimately forced to pay in full.<sup>83</sup> The American consul, in this case, was unsuccessful in his attempt to overturn the case against an American ship captain.

Cushman and the *Tuskina* were but one instance in a much longer history of Chinese passenger ship violations, many of which involved British and American consuls. Some vessels walked the line of legality, feigning or presuming ignorance of existing passenger laws. In September 1851, U.S. President Millard Fillmore wrote to the Secretary of State regarding a similar instance of an English vessel, *Margaritta*, in violation of American passenger laws.<sup>84</sup> The *Margaritta* sailed from Hong Kong to San Francisco, where the American customs officer found the ship in violation of the Steerage Act of 1819.<sup>85</sup> The law set standards for passenger conveyance in relation to ship size. President Fillmore noted to the Secretary of State that the *Margaritta*'s captain claimed to have conferred with Hong Kong Consul Bush before his departure "to ascertain how many passengers he was permitted to take to San Francisco, and was informed by said consul there was no law limiting the number any ship might take...to ports in California."<sup>86</sup> Bush's misinformation resulted in the Secretary of State sending a circular to every U.S. consul in China to reacquaint them with U.S. laws.

Other vessels in the Pacific purposefully and unabashedly participated in the illegal coolie trade. In June 1852 the Hong Kong consulate wrote to the State Department on the matter of the *Robert Browne*, an American ship implicated in the coolie trade. Earlier that year the captain of the ship, Leslie Bryson, received word that the California legislature would introduce

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<sup>83</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 1, August 10, 1855.

<sup>84</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 2, September 4, 1851.

<sup>85</sup> "Steerage Act of 1819," Fifteenth Congress of the United States. Session II, Ch. 46, 3 Statute 488.

<sup>86</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 2, September 4, 1851.

coolie bills the following year, which explicitly marked Chinese workers for non-mining labor.<sup>87</sup> Bryson, perceiving an opportunity to turn a profit, left San Francisco for Amoy (Xiamen) with the express purpose of transporting “coolies” into California to work as agricultural laborers. The *Robert Browne* left Amoy in March 1852 with some 400 Chinese laborers. Hong Kong Vice Consul Henry Anthon wrote to the Secretary of State that within 10 days at sea, the Chinese passengers aboard the ship rose against the captain, who Anthon determined had “treated the Chinese with severity and in one instance with downright cruelty.”<sup>88</sup> Additionally, the *Kate Hooper*—the same vessel that delivered foreign newspapers to the editor of the *San Francisco Bulletin* (see Chapter 2)—faced a similar uprising of Chinese laborers as the *Robert Browne* upon landing in Havana in 1857.<sup>89</sup>

### Questions of Freedom: Chinese Labor in the Pacific

In both California and Australia, there existed a pervasive—yet inaccurate—belief that the Chinese who immigrated to gold rush regions were unfree laborers. There were attempts, certainly, as the *Robert Browne* illustrates, to pass coolie laws in the state of California. As Mae Ngai observes, this “big lie” of coolie labor in places like Australia and California cemented an “enduring myth...[that] would persist throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.”<sup>90</sup> However, the coolie trade remained in active operation to support agricultural

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<sup>87</sup> “Minority Report of the Select Committee on Senate Bill no. 63,” March 20, 1852, CAJ, 3rd sess. (1852), 669.” For more on the political turmoil surrounding the bill, see: Ngai, *The Chinese Question*, 177-181.

<sup>88</sup> Hong Kong Consular Despatches, Volume 2, June 23, 1852.

<sup>89</sup> For details on these and other coolie ships, and Americans’ reactions to news of these coolie trade, see: Moon-Ho Jung, “Outlawing “Coolies”: Race, Nation, and Empire in the Age of Emancipation.” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (2005): 677-701; Lisa Yun, “Under the Hatches: American Coolie Ships and Nineteenth Century Narratives of the Pacific Passage,” *Amerasia Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 2, (2002), 38-61.

<sup>90</sup> Ngai, *The Chinese Question*, 137.

operations in South America and the Caribbean, fueled largely by European and American shipmasters. But the “Chinese Question” extended beyond immigration to color every aspect of British and American policymaking, shaping laws pertaining to labor, land, and trading rights for the next several decades.

Alongside the lucrative passenger trade—and illicit coolie trade—the 1850s also marked a period of dramatic commercial transformation in the British Empire. In 1849, the British Parliament repealed the longstanding Navigation Acts, which had attempted to regulate trade between British colonies and foreign countries.<sup>91</sup> With the end of regulated colonial commerce came the dawn of a new era of free trade, which meant uncertainties about changing colonial policies. Though for American merchants, this provided an opportunity to exploit emerging trade systems. As Richard Waterhouse posits, with the repeal of the Navigation Acts “a new set of attitudes developed, attitudes reflecting a belief that trade with the United States boosted colonial prosperity.”<sup>92</sup> In burgeoning colonies like Victoria which had little yet in the way of agricultural and manufactured products, foreign imports provided vital goods for residents. U.S. consuls leveraged their dual role as diplomats and commercial agents to provide American traders with an edge in foreign ports. Among the pressing issues in 1850s Victoria were those surrounding shipping and transportation fees, including those for passenger ships—like the *Tuskina*— as well as merchant vessels. Like other consuls, the U.S. consulate in Melbourne provided local trading and market reports from the colony to the Secretary of State. The Secretary would then forward

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<sup>91</sup> For more on the repeal of Navigation Acts and the free-trade British Empire, see: Anthony Howe, *Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846-1946* (United Kingdom: Clarendon Press, 1997); Sarah Palmer, *Politics, Shipping, and the Repeal of the Navigation Laws* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1990).

<sup>92</sup> Richard Waterhouse, “The Beginning of Hegemony or a Confluence of Interests: The Australian-American Relationship, 1788-1908,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (December 1990), 14.

the most pertinent details of these commercial updates on to other governmental departments and trade officials. Navigating these complicated waters of inter-imperial legislation and protocols was not without difficulty.

In the summer of 1853, Melbourne port authorities were in an uproar over the pervasive issue of American shipmasters illegally importing goods without proper reporting through the Customs House. As the burgeoning colony had little in the way of exports apart from gold, the accurate reporting of imported goods—and the subsequent import duty collected from them—was vital to the functioning of the colony. In August 1853 the Melbourne Collector of Customs, James Cassell, sent a letter to the Interim U.S. Consul Frederick Hennell, Tarleton’s predecessor, urging him to address the ongoing issues surrounding the illegal importation of goods aboard American vessels.<sup>93</sup> American shipmasters were deliberately reporting their import cargoes as “free goods” with the Customs House to avoid paying duties on taxable items. Cassell contacted Hennell to not only alert him, but also to request that Hennell inform the U.S. Secretary of State about the issue, forwarding him a copy of the customs regulations to avoid additional penalties or consequences. This continued to remain an issue for the remainder of 1853, with Cassell meeting with the U.S. consul to provide detailed information about the colony’s shipping laws.

Hennell took this opportunity to interrogate Cassell about possible loopholes in Victoria colonial policies. The questions Hennell posed to Cassell—if free goods can be imported to nearby British colonies, or if they can be stored aboard American vessels in the port of Melbourne—were clearly intended to find ambiguous or unclear wording that U.S. merchants could exploit. Dissatisfied with Cassell’s responses, Hennell took it further. In November 1853 he contacted William Foster Stawell, the British Attorney General for the Colony of Victoria, to

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<sup>93</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 1, August 23, 1853.



ask his “professional opinion” on the matter.<sup>94</sup> Stawell supplied perfunctory responses—he sided with Cassell and said the Collector’s responses are “in my opinion in complete accordance with the spirit of both the British legislation and the Colonial Customs Law.”<sup>95</sup> However, the fact that Hennell circumvented Cassell and communicated directly with a more senior colonial authority on behalf of the State Department signals a bold, if unsuccessful, extension of consular powers. Whether it be sheer hubris or an internalized ethos of American exceptionalism, such behavior echoed in Hennell’s successor, James Tarleton. The issue of the *Tuskina* was not Tarleton’s only heated conflict with the colonial government on behalf of American merchants. In June 1858, Tarleton submitted a complaint to the Secretary of State regarding a mutiny aboard American passenger ship *Tornado* that had sailed from Liverpool to Melbourne. As with the *Tuskina*, the American captain sought aid and representation from Tarleton, who as U.S. consul investigated the incident. Unlike some of his consular colleagues who used more restrained language in communicating with their superiors, Tarleton demanded redress from British authorities for the “gross violation” of the English crew’s mutiny against the *Tornado’s* American captain.<sup>96</sup> His remarks centered on a presumed sense of U.S. supremacy, although transoceanic commerce was still largely dominated by British interests. He wrote, “what I conceived to be a most unwarrantable outrage against the authority and Jurisdiction of the United States, and upon the Flag of the American ship ‘Tornado.’”<sup>97</sup> The maintenance of continued goodwill between the U.S. and British imperial interests, he concluded, “...demands in my humble opinion redress and better security for the future.”<sup>98</sup> As seen with his displays before his compatriots and his handling

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<sup>94</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 1, November 9, 1853.

<sup>95</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 1, November 9, 1853.

<sup>96</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 2, June 12, 1858.

<sup>97</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 2, June 12, 1858.

<sup>98</sup> Melbourne Consular Despatches, Volume 2, June 12, 1858.

of the *Tuskina*, Tarleton's patriotism and entitlement at times found him questioning, rather than respecting, British colonial laws. Tarleton's resistance to enforcing the regulations of the Colony of Victoria, coupled with his underlying anti-Chinese sympathies, meant that he did little in the way of reporting to the Secretary of State on the slew of anti-Chinese laws that Victoria passed in the 1850s. In fact, apart from broadly mentioning the increase in Chinese immigration to Australia, he did not report at all upon these laws. These laws parallel those passed in California and were largely enacted to regulate the "threat" of Chinese workers, who white laborers and officials often viewed as unfair competition and sometimes unfree labor in settler colonies.

Chinese labor was integral to the functioning of the Anglo-American economies throughout the Pacific. In gold rush regions, Chinese not only provided wage-labor to mining companies (in addition to their own individual mining efforts), many were also employed as domestics servants, and operated small businesses such as laundries and food service.<sup>99</sup> Later in the nineteenth century, Chinese railroad workers, especially in the American West and British-controlled Canada, made possible the sprawling networks of railways which transformed the region's infrastructure, politics, economies, and demographics. The importance of Chinese labor to the Anglo-American Pacific did not preclude its exploitation or aggressive legislative oversight. In fact, that white laborers perceived Chinese workers as a threat to wage and employment opportunities *resulted* in the passage of discriminatory anti-Chinese laws throughout the Anglo-American Pacific. Many anti-Chinese laws were first enacted in California; those prejudices carried over throughout the Pacific, resulting in the codification of discrimination through parallel legislation in Australia, Hong Kong, and British Columbia.

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<sup>99</sup> For a comparative view of British mining operations in Australia and California, see: John Woodland, *Money Pits: British Mining Companies in the Californian and Australian Gold Rushes of the 1850s* (United Kingdom: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014).

Blatant anti-Chinese laws, similar to those passed in California, began in Australia in 1855. That year newly-elected Governor Hotham passed law No. 39, which required shipmasters of passenger vessels to pay £10 for any Chinese person brought into the colony.<sup>100</sup> This law mirrored the 1852 and 1855 California “head” taxes, which charged a \$50 fee for any Chinese who immigrated to the state.<sup>101</sup> Earlier that same year, Consul James Tarleton reported that Chinese immigration was on the rise in the colony, but made no mention in his consular dispatches of Victoria law No. 30. As the number of Chinese immigrants increased—particularly in relation to the decrease in immigration from Great Britain—the Victoria legislature passed the series of discriminatory laws, presumably to balance the flow of immigration in favor of a white-majority colony. Two years later Victoria law No. 41 was enacted, requiring every Chinese resident of the colony to purchase a work license. This “Act to Regulate the Residence of the Chinese Population in Victoria” mirrored an 1862 California law, “An Act to Protect Free White Labor against Competition with Chinese Coolie Labor, and to Discourage the Immigration of Chinese...into California.” This California law likewise required Chinese workers who were not employed as agricultural laborers growing tea, rice, coffee or sugar to pay a monthly licensing fee of \$2.50.<sup>102</sup> But anti-Chinese legislation spread back towards British North America by the early 1870s. The echoes of the discriminatory laws first passed in California, then passed along to British colonies in China and Australia, finally landed in British Columbia in 1873.

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<sup>100</sup> For additional details on anti-Chinese laws in Australia, see: Lee, “Anti-Chinese Legislation in Australasia,” 218-224.

<sup>101</sup> “An Act to Discourage the Immigration to This State of Persons who Cannot Become Citizens Thereof,” in *The Statutes of California Passed at the Sixth Session of the Legislature* (Sacramento: B.B. Redding, State Printer, 1855), 194.

<sup>102</sup> “An Act to protect Free White Labor from competition with Chinese Coolie Labor, and to discourage the Immigration of the Chinese to the State of California.” UC Law SF. April 26, 1862. University of California Libraries.

British Columbia also saw anti-Chinese laws and attitudes grow in the 1860s, a decade after its gold rush corollaries in Australia and California. British Columbia's Fraser Canyon gold rush in 1858 likewise ignited a frenzy of settlement, albeit on a much smaller scale. Like the California and Australia strikes, local governments enacted anti-Chinese policies in the wake of these gold discoveries. The United States would not establish a consulate in British Columbia until 1861, but by that time British colonial administrators in the region had already begun contending with both anti-Chinese and anti-Native laws and attitudes impacting everyday life. For the burgeoning colony of British Columbia, 1871 saw the first codification and discriminatory legislature, the same year British Columbia joined the newly created Dominion of Canada. The first provincial legislature wasted no time in enacting laws meant to clearly delineate who was—and was not—eligible for Canadian citizenship. In 1872, the Victoria Legislative Assembly passed the “Qualification and Registration of Voters Act,” a law that denied the right to vote to Chinese and Indigenous residents of the region, as well as banned them from holding certain professions.<sup>103</sup> This gave political power only to a small minority of residents, as less than a quarter of British Columbia's population was white.<sup>104</sup> By 1873, discrimination towards Chinese took root among the general population, with the Anti-Chinese society forming in 1873 in Victoria, just a year before Chinese and Native peoples were officially disenfranchised. Certainly, British Columbia's policies toward Chinese residents were influenced by preexisting discriminatory laws in California and Australia.

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<sup>103</sup> These included barring Chinese and “status Indians” from holding professions in law, pharmacy, accounting, and government. Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: History of British Columbia* (2007), 143.

<sup>104</sup> According to the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia's figures, the demographic makeup of the province in 1871 was (approximately) 25,660 Indigenous, 8,500 white, 1,500 Chinese, and 500 Black residents of B.C. "1872 - Indigenous and Chinese Peoples Excluded from the Vote." Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. Accessed August 4, 2023.

While consuls acted as intermediaries between the U.S. and foreign governments, consular agents in the 1850s also acted in their own interest, exercising great power in what they chose to report to the federal government. A focus on diplomatic histories offers yet another critical lens to analyzing the Chinese diaspora, the global impacts of the Pacific gold rushes, and America's expanding imperial ambitions. The federal government saw consuls as a first line of defense in rapidly developing situations in foreign locations. State Department officials entrusted consuls with enforcing American laws and protecting its citizens and national interests abroad. Though they were not empowered at the same level as ambassadors or commissioners, due to the rapid development of gold rush regions, consuls exercised an outsized ability to interpret the U.S. government's response and interests, finding liminal spaces to exercise power and influence. Consuls often had contradictory interests, a reflection of how diplomacy in this period paralleled the instability wrought by the Pacific gold rushes. As Benjamin Mountford and Stephen Tuffnell likewise observe, the seductive lure of gold embodied a "paradoxical power...to both connect and divide, to enrich and impoverish, and to create and destroy."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Mountford and Tuffnell, "Seeking a Global History of Gold," *A Global History of Gold Rushes*, 7.

## EPILOGUE

### GOLDEN STATE, GILDED MEMORIES

In this dissertation I have provided a broad portrait of the economic, political, commercial, and social issues that shaped the rise of the Anglo-American Pacific in the mid-nineteenth century. In doing so, I have argued that both print media and imperial diplomacy jointly shaped the coeval development of race-based policies in British and American territories in the Pacific. “Systems of Subordination” explores how the circuits of nation and empire building formed in the 1850s. These imperial bureaucracies struggled with questions about how, and by *whom*, to manage race, labor, and commerce. This process of imperial race management and commercial exploits was made possible by advancing transportation and communication technologies that intensified the connections between these two nation-empires. As this dissertation demonstrates, consuls were an integral facet of these transimperial exchanges, offering both direct and indirect connections between America and the British Empire in the Pacific. Situated at the nexus of commerce, bureaucracy, and legislation, consuls served multiple functions and were highly adaptable to local circumstances. Playing multiple roles, they were diplomats as well as traders, port authorities, welfare agents, solicitors, and colonial officials. In this framing, Anglo-American consuls operated as extended arms of empire. Due to the transformative and unstable sociopolitical and economic environment of the gold-rush Pacific, consuls in the 1850s were imbued with more power and influence than might be expected. Consuls both advocated against Chinese exclusion—often using economic rationales, as seen with American consuls in Hong Kong and the British consuls in San Francisco—and supported a global project of anti-Chinese

discrimination, as with James Tarleton in Melbourne. This view of consular histories offers a more complicated history of Chinese exclusion, racial subordination, and the rise of white supremacy in the Pacific world.

The development of anti-Chinese laws and prejudices in this period is often overshadowed in historical memory by the powerful nostalgia of the gold rushes. This is especially true in California. From its official motto of “Eureka!” to its nickname of the “Golden State,” the ethos of the gold rush has become thoroughly entwined with California’s identity as a place of “seemingly limitless possibilities.”<sup>106</sup> Here, the state’s nostalgia manifests in triumphalist narratives of colonial expansion, whitewashed commemorations of mining communities, and fascination with transportation systems like the transcontinental railroads.

These processes began in California during the *denouement* of the state’s gold rush. Starting in the early 1860s, large numbers of Chinese workers were hired by the Central Pacific Railroad Company (CPRR) to complete the western portion of the transcontinental railroad. The CPRR hired over 20,000 Chinese laborers, accounting for over ninety percent of the company’s payroll. For the five-year period between 1864-1869, Chinese railroad laborers constituted by far the largest single workforce in American industry, a figure that was only surpassed during the Industrial Revolution later in the nineteenth century.<sup>107</sup> In the decade following the railroad’s completion in 1869, many Chinese crossed the northern U.S. border into Canada. Recruiters from San Francisco and China brought over ten thousand Chinese laborers—many of whom previously worked on the United States’ transcontinental railroad—to construct the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) between 1881 and 1885. Much like the CPRR, the portion of the

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<sup>106</sup> State of California Capitol Museum, “State Nickname: Golden State,” accessed September 4, 2023. [capitolmuseum.ca.gov/state-symbols/nickname-golden-state/](https://capitolmuseum.ca.gov/state-symbols/nickname-golden-state/).

<sup>107</sup> Chang, *Ghosts of Gold Mountain*, 7.

Canadian railway that passed through the mountainous, rocky terrain of British Columbia was extremely difficult to build. Many Chinese died due to exposure, sickness, or dangerous working conditions. Wong Hau-hon, a CPR railroad worker recruited from Guangdong, testified in 1926 that over three thousand Chinese laborers died during the railroad's construction.<sup>108</sup> Though Chinese labor made possible some of the most significant infrastructural transformations in nineteenth-century North America, they remain noticeably absent from the historical record. Despite their sacrifices and recent attempts by Gordon Chang to recover these "silent spikes" and "nameless builders," nationalistic sentiment has "made no room for the alien Chinese, no matter how pivotal their role in the history of the nation itself."<sup>109</sup>

### **Gilded Age Politics and Rising Anti-Asian Racism**

Almost immediately following the CPR's 1885 completion, Canada passed the first of two anti-Chinese laws. The 1885 Chinese Immigration Act forced Chinese immigrants to pay entry fees; the second act of 1923 banned Chinese immigration completely. Three years after the passage of the 1923 law, Hau-hon reflected on his experiences in Canada:

I am now sixty-two and I have experienced many hardships and difficulties in my life. I am proud of the fact that we Chinese contributed much to the development of transportation in Canada. Yet now the government is enforcing forty-three discriminatory immigration regulations against us. The Canadian people surely must have short memories!<sup>110</sup>

Similar to the Canadian example, with the completion of the U.S. transcontinental railroad in 1869, America soon turned its back on the labor force that strengthened its continental empire. As Lon Kurashige notes, the 1870s marked mounting xenophobia and anxieties over

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<sup>108</sup> Wong Hau-hon, "Reminiscences of an Old Chinese Railroad Worker (1926)," In *Chinese American Voices*, 41.

<sup>109</sup> Chang, *Ghosts of Gold Mountain*, 6.

<sup>110</sup> Hau-hon, "Reminiscences," 41-42.



labor, driven by increased immigration into the U.S., the advent of a new industrial age, and the resurgence of the Democratic party in federal politics.<sup>111</sup> While these fears were responding to new sets of circumstances in the postbellum era, they were a near-clone of those echoed in California during the gold rush. Kurashige describes the late-nineteenth century as a “‘gilded age’ of disillusionment” where white Americans “targeted immigrants as both cause and symptom of the decline in the nation’s promises of economic opportunity and social mobility.”<sup>112</sup> In the United States, the 1875 passage of the Page Act—drafted by California congressman Horace F. Page—created classes of “illegal” immigrants and specifically targeted Chinese women, who were largely stereotyped as prostitutes. This marked a quick end to the era of trans-Pacific tolerance ushered in by the 1868 Burlingame Treaty. The treaty underwent lengthy diplomatic renegotiations, and in 1881 a new version was ratified which gave the U.S. unilateral rights to “regulate, limit, or suspend” Chinese immigrant laborers, but still allowed certain professions (teachers and merchants) to travel freely to America.<sup>113</sup> However, less than a year later Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which enacted a 10-year ban on the immigration of Chinese laborers into the U.S., which would continue until the 1965 abolishment of quota-based immigration.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Lon Kurashige, *Two Faces of Exclusion: The Untold History of Anti-Asian Racism in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 35.

<sup>112</sup> Kurashige, *Two Faces of Exclusion*, 35.

<sup>113</sup> Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 18.

<sup>114</sup> Some scholars point to 1943 and the passage of the Magnusen’s Act as the end of the “exclusion era.” However, the Magnuson Act set new immigration quotas, allowing only 105 visas per year for any person of Chinese descent. Quota and nation-based systems of immigration remained in effect until 1965 with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act. For a particularly nuanced discussion of the Magnuson Act, see: Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 49-58.

## **Nostalgia and (Mis)Remembrance**

For those who grew up in California, the specter of the gold rush always loomed large. For my family, it was a benevolent presence. My childhood was filled with Saturdays spent frolicking around Knott's Berry Farm, a theme park that capitalized on the nostalgia of the Old West. My dad and I spent Monday nights watching Huell Howser's "California Gold" series on public television, and on the weekends would venture out to the streambeds in Cajon Pass or Azusa Canyon with gold pans and a sluice box to try our luck. To this day, California fourth graders take part in an extensive gold rush curriculum that often consists of social studies lessons on the California rush, followed by a range of activities like square dancing, dressing up as a "pioneer," gold panning, and role-playing games. As a fourth grader in 1999, I donned a pink calico dress and gathered with my class in the school's library to compete in a gold rush trivia game, hosted by a "Forty-Niner." Our day culminated in a Wild West themed party, where every fourth-grade class at our elementary school participated in "authentic" activities like panning for gold, viewing an actor portraying a nineteenth-century dentist who feigned performing a tooth extraction, and taking photos in a covered wagon (figure 5.1).

As I peer back through the haze nearly twenty-five years later, I now recognize that the history presented to us that day was a whitewashed, triumphalist narrative that excluded the more complicated and gruesome facets of gold rush history. I have no recollection of any curriculum covering Chinese miners in California and the exclusion and racism they encountered. There was no discussion of how the gold rush precipitated the displacement, and subsequent genocide, of countless Indigenous Californians. How did my Asian and Native classmates feel when they looked around the room, and saw no reflection of themselves or their histories? Did their disappointment and isolation weigh heavier in the face of their (white) classmates' exuberance?

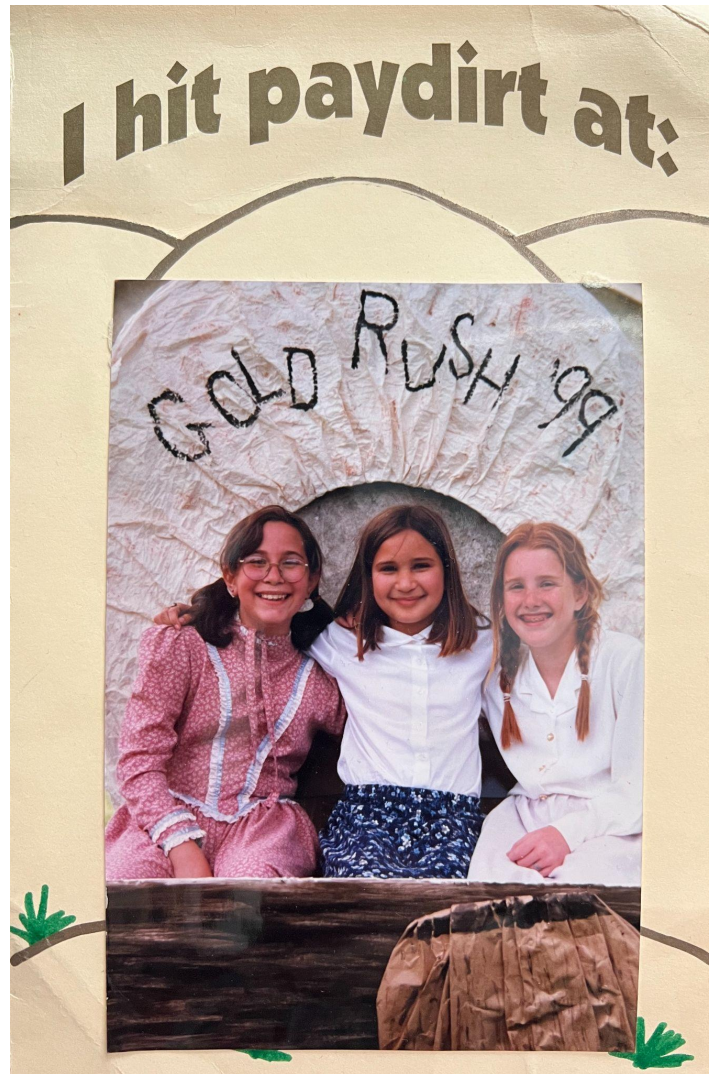


Figure 5.1. The author (far left) poses with classmates in a faux covered wagon at her fourth-grade gold rush party in 1999. “Gold Rush ‘99.” Courtesy of the author.

California’s intense focus on gold rush history differs from other Pacific gold regions. In the state of Victoria, Grade 5 students learn about the gold rush alongside broader discussions of the state’s colonial period. Within these learning standards, students explore settler-Indigenous conflicts like the Pinjarra (1834) and Myall Creek Massacres (1838).<sup>115</sup> In British Columbia, social studies content learning standards for Grade 5 touches briefly upon the gold rush, but in

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<sup>115</sup> Victoria Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Content description VCHHK0, accessed September 1, 2023, [victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCHHK090](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCHHK090).

the context of larger social and political issues in Canada. Here, there is a concerted focus on the history of discriminatory government policies, including those targeting Chinese immigrants, and centers the sovereignty of Canada's Indigenous peoples.<sup>116</sup> The closest California's social studies content standards come to discussing Indigenous or Chinese communities in this era is a focus on how the "gold rush transformed the economy of California ... and economic conflicts between diverse groups of people."<sup>117</sup> Any coverage of California's discriminatory practices is done entirely through an economic lens.

This is but one instance in a much longer history of state and national (mis)remembering, a process of selective commemoration that glosses over California's complicated, and often violent, past. January 2023 marked the 175th anniversary of the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in Northern California. The event was celebrated with a day-long commemorative ceremony at Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park. Despite the state park's 2020 "Reexamining Our Past Initiative" that offers a reinterpretation of "marginalized" histories, the Gold Discovery Day squarely centered Anglo-American narratives.<sup>118</sup> The day included performances by actors impersonating white settlers James Marshall, John Sutter, and Henry Bigler, and ended with a series of timber, mining, and blacksmithing demonstrations. At midday, the President of the Native Sons of the Golden West offered remarks on the organization's past preservation work of Marshall Monument. The Native Sons began as a white, fraternal organization in 1875, and quickly morphed into a nativist group advocating for a wide range of

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<sup>116</sup> British Columbia's Curriculum, "Social Studies 5 - Canadian Issues and Governance," accessed September 1, 2023, [curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/social-studies/5/core](https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/social-studies/5/core)

<sup>117</sup> California Department of Education, "California: A Changing State, Grade 4: HSS-4.4.2 (History–Social Science)," accessed September 1, 2023, [www2.cde.ca.gov/cacs/id/web/4207](https://www2.cde.ca.gov/cacs/id/web/4207).

<sup>118</sup> California Department of Parks and Recreation, "Reexamining Our Past at Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park," accessed September 1, 2023, [www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=30767](https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=30767).

anti-Asian policies.<sup>119</sup> Clearly the state of California and its public education system faces a reckoning with how it presents this pivotal event.

But not all commemorations suffer from the same amnesia that seems to plague California. In May 2019, hundreds of people gathered in Salt Lake City, Utah for the 150th anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad. This sesquicentennial “Golden Spike” anniversary—so named for the golden railroad spike driven in 1869 to connect the western CPRR and eastern Union Pacific routes in Utah—included several speeches that acknowledged the vital role of Chinese laborers in “building one the greatest infrastructure projects in the world.”<sup>120</sup> In her opening remarks, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao reflected being the first person of Chinese descent to hold this office provided her with a “unique and moving opportunity to fully acknowledge and recognize the contributions and sacrifices” of the CPRR’s Chinese workforce.<sup>121</sup> Also in attendance were dozens of descendants of the Chinese railroad workers, including Gene O. Chan (figure 5.2). Chan’s great-grandfather, Jow Kee, came to California in 1855 in search of gold, and was later hired by the CPRR as a Chinese labor contractor.<sup>122</sup> Earlier that day, descendant Connie Yu delivered a speech that reflected on the many layers of exclusion that railroad Chinese and their descendants faced. Her parents had attended the Golden Spike centennial in 1969 in honor of their ancestor, CPRR worker Lee Wong Sang. The 100th anniversary event made no mention of the thousands of Chinese who

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<sup>119</sup> Huping Ling and Allan W. Austin, *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2015), 153.

<sup>120</sup> Elaine Chao, “150th Anniversary of the Golden Spike Ceremony Marking the Completion of the First Transcontinental Railroad,” May 10, 2019, U.S. Department of Transportation, accessed September 2, 2023, [www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/150th-anniversary-golden-spike-ceremony-marking-completion-first-transcontinental](http://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/150th-anniversary-golden-spike-ceremony-marking-completion-first-transcontinental).

<sup>121</sup> Chao, “150th Anniversary.”

<sup>122</sup> Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project, Gene O. Chan interview, June 27, 2014, accessed September 2, 2023, [web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/website/gene-o-chan-interview](http://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/website/gene-o-chan-interview).

made the railroad a reality. In fact, Chinese Historical Society of America President Philip Choy was removed from the centennial program at the last minute to make room for an “unexpected” guest and hyper-masculine icon of the American West: John Wayne.<sup>123</sup>



Figure 5.2. Prominent Chinese American photojournalist Corky Lee snaps a photo of the Chinese Railway Workers Descendants Association, recreating the iconic 1869 “East Meets West” photo ahead of the 150th Golden Spike Anniversary. “Corky Lee taking portrait of Chinese Railway Workers Descendants Association,” The University of Utah, J. Willard Marriott Digital Library, Golden Spike Sesquicentennial Collection, May 5, 2019, ID1429649.

Yu saw her inclusion in the 150th celebration as an opportunity to “reclaim history.”<sup>124</sup> She ended her speech with a direct address to fellow descendants in the audience: “We stand on the broad shoulders, my ancestors and yours, those who fought exclusion, and struggled for

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<sup>123</sup> Hilton Obenzinger, “One More Spike in Utah: Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Completion of the Transcontinental Railroad at Promontory Summit,” Chinese Railroad Workers of North America Project, Stanford University, 2-3.

<sup>124</sup> Obenzinger, “One More Spike in Utah,” 3.

justice and equal rights. Let us be proud that immigrants make up America, so we can have this moment of solidarity, and fortify a milestone in U.S. history.”<sup>125</sup> Yu’s remarks are a stirring reminder that seemingly “lost” histories, like those of diasporic Chinese in the nineteenth century, are recoverable through historiographical methodologies that privilege reading against archival grains, interdisciplinary approaches, and community building through oral history outreach. As Gordon Chang surmises, “while the ghosts of Gold Mountain remain silent in so many other contexts, they live on in the spirit and stories of their descendants who proudly cherish their ancestry and help keep history alive.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Connie Young Yu, Spike 150th Celebration Speech, 2019, accessed September 4, 2023, [vimeo.com/338326576](https://vimeo.com/338326576).

<sup>126</sup> Chang, *Ghosts of Gold Mountain*, 240.



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