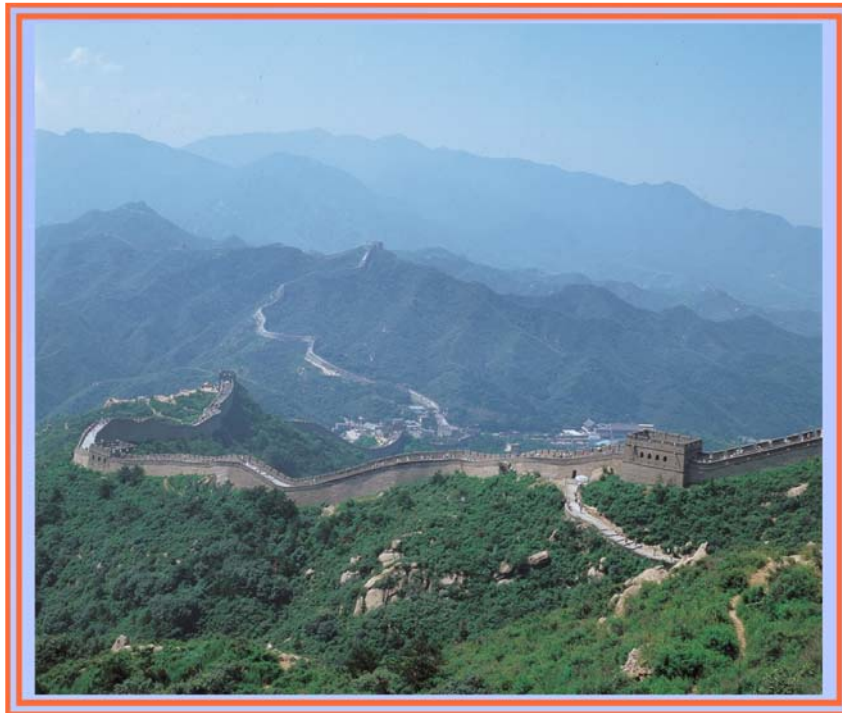


## RESEARCH LINKS



[www.notfrisco.com/calmem/chinese/](http://www.notfrisco.com/calmem/chinese/)

[www.cr.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/5views/5views3d.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/5views/5views3d.htm)

BIAS AGAINST THE CHINESE

[www.merrycoz.org/museum/CHINESE.HTM](http://www.merrycoz.org/museum/CHINESE.HTM)

## HEALTH GIVING

Medicine fulfilled an important health need in the nineteenth century for both Chinese and non-Chinese alike. Western medicine had not yet developed the extensive drugs, anesthetics, vaccinations, or sophisticated surgical techniques to which we have become accustomed. Thus, the Chinese understanding of plants used for medicinal purposes was an important component of how injury and disease was handled in the 19th century American west.

## RELIGION AND CULTURE

The Chinese brought with them to the United States traditions and practices that were integral to their daily lives. The Chinese Temple in Oroville, was built in 1863 to serve a community of 10,000 Chinese residents. This temple includes three chapels with the main chapel facilitating a place of worship for Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism.

Traditional Chinese festivals provided other occasions where the community gathered together to celebrate. The Chinese continued to observe the lunar New Year in the traditional manner. This important festival was celebrated with elaborate display and festivities. Songs, music and theater were attended and appreciated. Chinese theater was an important cultural event. In 1852, the first performance of Cantonese opera was held in the American Theatre. Family relationships were integral to their society, and by extension things associated with family and family members such as food, education, marriage and funeral customs.



## THE UNDERWORLD

Among the greatest attractions to visitors to Chinatown was its "underworld", consisting of highbinders, opium dens, and prostitution. Tourists, their interest piqued by salacious political rhetoric, warnings from the pulpit, or sensationalized newspaper stories, clamored for guided tours.

## A REAL WOMAN

**Tye Leung**, (1888-1972) lived in San Francisco's Chinatown, was sold into slavery at age 12. She was rescued and educated by Donaldina Cameron at the Presbyterian Mission Home, became the interpreter in many rescues of Chinese girls from slavery. Later, she worked at Angel Island Immigration Station as interpreter, she was the first Chinese-American civil servant for the U.S. government. Tye became the first American born Chinese woman voter in history in May 1912.

Also in the 1850s, the California legislature passed a law taxing all foreign miners. Although stated in general terms, it was enforced chiefly against the Mexicans and the Chinese through 1870. This discrimination occurred in spite of the fact that the Chinese often contributed the crucial labor necessary to the mining enterprise.

In many cases, they took on the most dangerous and least desirable components of work available. They worked on reclaiming marshes in the Central Valley so that the land could become agriculturally productive. They built the stone bridges and fences, constructed roads, and excavated storage areas for the wine industry in Napa and Sonoma counties. The most impressive construction feat of Chinese Americans was their work on the western section of the transcontinental railroad. Chinese-American workers laid much of the tracks for the Central Pacific Railroad through the foothills and over the high Sierra Nevada, much of which involved hazardous work with explosives to tunnel through the hills.

## LAWS AGAINST THE CHINESE

From their arrival during the Gold Rush, the Chinese experienced discrimination and overt racism, and finally exclusion. Action often in the form of Legislation was used against Chinese immigrants and started as early as the 1850 foreign Miners' License Tax law. In 1854 was the California State Supreme Court categorizing Chinese with Blacks and Indians, and denying them their right to testify against white men in courts of law. During the 1870s, an economic downturn resulted in serious unemployment problems, and led to more heightened outcries against Asian immigrants. The Chinese often became the scapegoats for business owners who paid them low wages.

Racist labor union leaders directed their actions and the anger of unemployed workers at the Chinese, blaming them for depressed wages, lack of jobs, and accusing them of being morally corrupt. Denis Kearney, head of the Workingmen's Party of California, led this inflammatory battle against the Chinese. As a consequence of this hostility, local and statewide restrictions continued to be enforced against the Chinese.

Eventually, the United States government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This barred Chinese laborers from immigrating for ten years. Only officials, teachers, students, merchants, and travelers were allowed to enter.



# THE LEE FAMILY MIGRATES TO MINNESOTA

## Research Narration

The Lee Family leaves San Francisco in 1882 to travel to Minnesota. The Lee cousins send for their brides from China before making the journey. By 1885 there were nearly 100 Chinese immigrants in Minnesota, almost all of them men.

The Gold Rush provides our starting point. Most Chinese immigrants entered California through the port of San Francisco. Because of the great value the Chinese had concerning strong family bonds they often chose one male member to make the voyage to California. He was expected to send back money to support the family who remained in China.

The Chinese formed part of the diverse peoples from throughout the world who contributed to the economic and population explosion that characterized the early history of the state of California. The Chinese who emigrated to the United States at this time were part of a larger exodus from southeast China searching for better economic opportunities and fleeing a situation of political corruption and decline. Most immigrants came from the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong (Canton) Province.

Chinese immigrants came to work in the gold mines, calling California **Gam Saan or Gold Mountain**. In 1848 more than 300,000 Chinese crossed the Pacific Ocean from 1850 – 1882. For the mining industry, they built many of the flumes and roads. Chinese immigrants faced discrimination immediately upon arrival in California. In mining, they were forced to work older claims, or to work for others. In the 1850s, the United States Constitution reserved the right of naturalization for white immigrants to this country. Thus, Chinese immigrants lived at the whim of local governments with some allowed to become naturalized citizens, but most not. Without this right, it was difficult to find work. For example, Chinese immigrants were unable to own land or file mining claims.