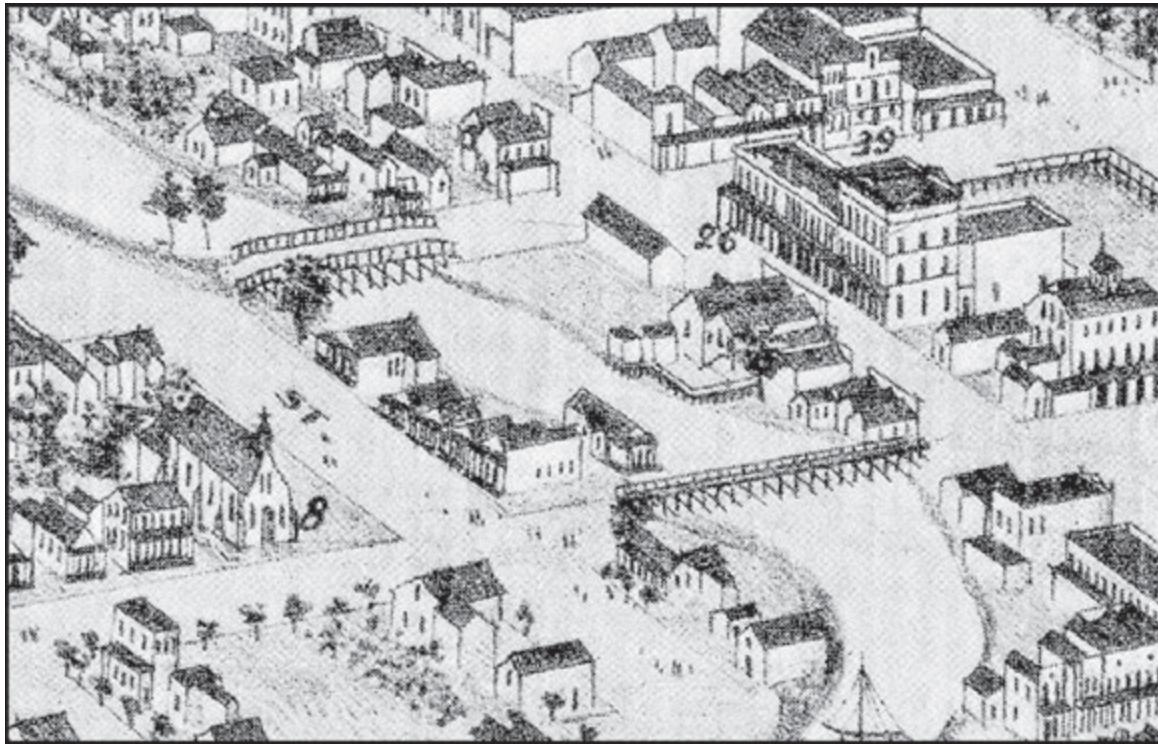


HISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS OF THE
CITY CENTER CINEMAS BLOCK BOUNDED BY MINER AVENUE AND
HUNTER, EL DORADO, AND CHANNEL STREETS, STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA



Prepared for the Redevelopment Agency of the City of Stockton

Cover: Detail of Stockton City Center Cinemas Block from the 1870 bird's-eye view (Koch 1870).

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Stockton, California

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CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTS

The following comments focus on two important research areas of the Stockton City Center Cinemas project: the evidence represented by 118-120 Miner Avenue Analytical Unit B for the role of waterway reclamation programs in shaping Stockton's urban landscape, and insights into the lives of early Chinese workers in Stockton provided by the Sing Lee Laundry deposit (117-123 Channel Street Analytical Unit B).

MANAGING MINER CHANNEL

The rivers and streams that bisected Stockton were the reason for the city's founding and its 19th-century economic success. Stockton's relationship to its waterways, however, was not a simple one. This is suggested by boosterish portraits of the young city such as Koch's 1870 bird's-eye view, in which the proud sense of civic order is subtly refuted by the numerous streams and waterways that amble across its superimposed grid of streets (Figure 12). These streams always threatened, and frequently did rise up to inundate the city. In the later 19th and early 20th century, Stockton attempted to control its waterways, including Miner Channel, as did many other cities and towns in the western U.S. that used publicly financed projects to control the vagaries of their natural environment.

Early maps and photos of the project block give a vivid impression of how Miner Channel must have looked and functioned in the first decades following Stockton's founding (Figures 12 and 13). The channel was between 60 and 65 feet wide, and cut a swathe across the project block. It was a tidal waterway (being directly linked to the San Francisco Bay, more than 50 miles to the west) and every ebb tide must have exposed bare mud banks along the channel. These mud banks blended into the backyards of houses and buildings along Miner Avenue and Channel Street, only sometimes demarcated by a back fence or outbuilding. Residents probably frequented the channel for fishing, and perhaps even to hunt waterfowl.

By the 1870s, the bucolic appearance of Miner Channel was beginning to be eroded by the creeping urbanism of Stockton. Impatient with having the full use of their lots constrained, property owners along Miner Channel began to steadily encroach on the stream. Maps and images from as early as the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s (Figures 12, 14, and 16) show that people began to build out over the channel, suspending their stores and later their houses on posts over the channel. By 1895 in some areas, such as the northeastern corner of the project block, residents had raised the levels of streets and buildings so that they sat on platforms, completely covering Miner Channel (Figure 22). Other areas of the channel appear to have been relatively untouched.

The lack of early uniformity in the development of Miner Channel was aided by the politics of property, as waterways in the U.S. were not automatically part of the public estate, but could be owned by private interests. Charles Weber owned Miner Channel as

MINER CHANNEL, FORMERLY BETWEEN MINER AVENUE AND CHANNEL STREET, IN 1895.
VIEW IS EASTWARD FROM SAN JOAQUIN STREET BRIDGE.

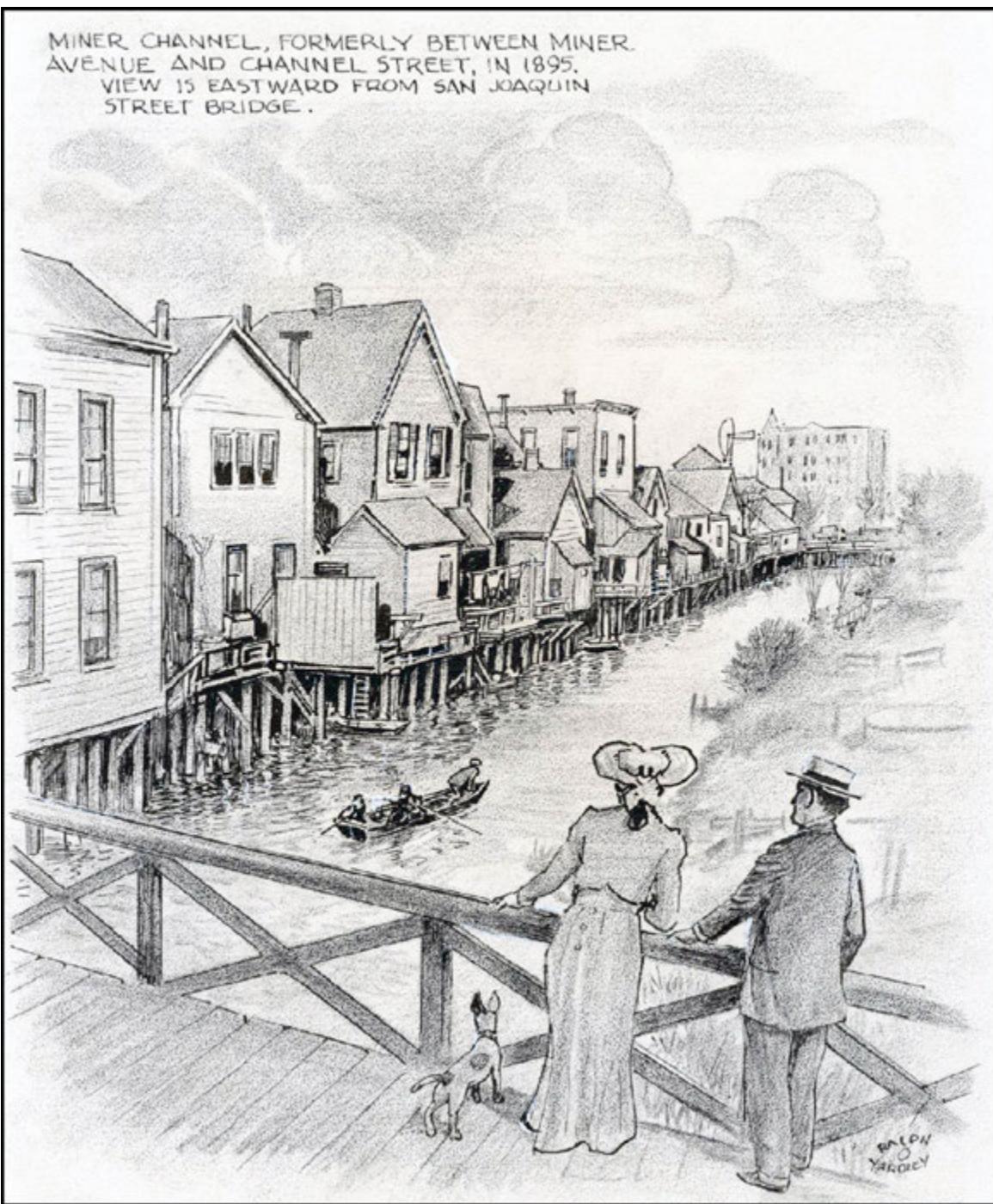


Figure 22. Buildings constructed over Miner Channel, ca. 1895; view to east from the San Joaquin Street bridge. (Drawing by Ralph Yardley. Courtesy of The Haggin Museum, Stockton)

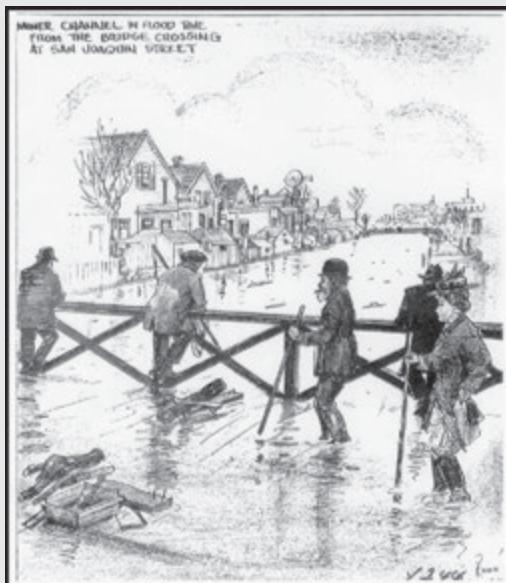
BOTH A SEWER AND A “SEETHING FLOOD”

The experience of living on the project block during the 19th and early 20th century must have been strongly influenced by the nearby Miner Channel. The channel may have been a place of recreation for local residents: a ready spot for hunting and fishing, or a playground for neighborhood children. The channel's impact on the block's residents, however, must also have had a negative side as both a source of regular floods and as a noxious drain.

The spring snowmelt in the Sierra annually resulted in high waters, freshets, and even floods in the Central Valley towns of California. During the early 20th century, floods were recorded on Miner Channel and other large Stockton waterways such as Mormon Slough in February 1901, April 1903, and March 1907. The last event was reportedly the largest flood to hit Stockton since 1862 (Kennedy 1967: Vol. 2:124-126). During these times, water would overflow the banks of Miner Channel and flood the surrounding streets. In the floods of 1903, an inundated Miner Avenue was described as a “seething flood” (*Daily Record* 1 April 1903:1, col. 1-2).

Even in summer, Miner Channel would have made its presence felt. The ca. 1870 photograph of Miner Channel and the project block (Figure 13) suggests that many households along Miner Channel had outhouses that emptied directly onto the slough bank to be (ideally) washed clean each day by the tides. However, when the stream ran low and then finally dried up, as the 1883/94 Sanborn suggests it did in the summer, the smell emanating from these outhouses would have been potent. As early as 1885, local residents were petitioning the City Council for immediate action to alleviate the sanitary condition of the channel, which by midsummer was becoming “very offensive” (Stockton City Council var.: Vol. 11:319). Although the City Council required landowners to connect to town sewers in 1893, sewage in Miner Channel continued to be a problem. In 1917 irate citizens stormed

the Council, upset that raw sewage was flowing down Miner Channel (Kennedy 1967: Vol. 2:276). On 3 July of the same year, a local resident pleaded for immediate action from the Council, to clean out the channel “so that the present well known malodorous unsanitary and filthy condition of said channel may be improved” (Stockton City Council var.: 3 July 1917)”.



Miner Channel in flood, ca. 1900; view to east from the San Joaquin Street bridge. (Drawing by Ralph Yardley, courtesy of the Bank of Stockton Photo Collection, Stockton, California)

part of the original Mexican land grant of the Stockton area. To encourage settlement in his new town of Tuleburg (Stockton), Weber gradually sold off parts of Miner Channel and adjoining lots to settlers. In April 1879, however, he granted the City of Stockton the “full and uninterrupted right” to Miner Channel, on the proviso that the City dredge and bulkhead the channel to maintain it as a 60-ft.-wide, navigable waterway to the west of El Dorado Street, which was to be declared the stream’s head of navigation. In addition, the City was required to construct bulkheads along various parts of the channel (City of Stockton 1879; Compton 1879). One result of Weber’s actions was that, increasingly, the development of Miner Channel was seen not in terms of private interests, but through the lens of public health, infrastructure improvements, and commercial interests.

During the 1880s, the relationship between public oversight and private actions in the development of Miner Channel gradually developed. As early as 1885, private landowners on the channel were pushing ahead with steps to reclaim land along its banks, with residents, such as Mr. L. Lang of Hunter Street, seeking permission of the Stockton City Council to build their own bulkheads along parts of the channel (Stockton City Council var.: Vol. 11:283). The City responded with its own program of waterway improvements, consisting of the gradual construction of bulkheads along Miner Channel (Figure 23). Bulkheads were used to reclaim land along the channel, raise the level of streets and backyards, and minimize the effects of high water and erosion. Bulkheads along the



Figure 23. Bulkheads and El Dorado Street Bridge, Miner Channel, ca. 1880, west of project block.
(Courtesy of the Bank of Stockton Photo Collection, Stockton, California)

channel west of El Dorado Street appear to have been constructed in the early 1880s. Publicly funded bulkhead construction along the remainder of the channel, however, does not appear to have commenced until the early 1890s (Stockton City Council var., Vol. 14:147). This gradual and somewhat haphazard approach to the improvement of Miner Channel was part of a program of waterway improvements undertaken by the City of Stockton in the 1890s that included the construction of bulkheads along the main Stockton Channel (Stockton City Council var.: Vol. 14:170).

Large-scale construction of bulkheads along Miner Channel on the project block appears to have occurred in the early 1890s: in 1893 the City Council's Committee for Public Improvements was contemplating the construction of bulkheads east of El Dorado Street as a result of petitions by adjacent property owners (Stockton City Council var.: Vol. 16:241). By 1895 construction was well underway and the 1895 Mitchell bird's-eye view (Figure 16) shows a series of what appear to be bulkheads along the rear of the Miner Avenue lots.

During the early 20th century the Stockton City Council, prompted by regular complaints from residents, gradually moved towards totally removing Miner Channel as a free-flowing stream east of El Dorado Street. In November 1917 the Council agreed that buildings could be built over the channel. This process however, must have begun some time before, as the 1917 Sanborn depicts Miner Channel as having been almost entirely built over (Figure 17). The structure of archaeological deposits of 118-120 Miner Avenue Analytical Unit B, suggests the large amount of fill that would have been required to reclaim the channel since 1895, when the Sanborn showed a relatively unimpeded stream. On 20 November 1917, the City Council declared that it intended to construct a storm-water drain in the channel across the project block. The City retained a 16-ft.-wide easement along the channel for future maintenance of the line (Kennedy 1967: Vol. 2:276; Stockton City Council var. Resolution 2583:p.440). This line appears to have been installed ca. 1921, when the company of Harron & Hayes contracted with the City to construct a 72-in.-diameter storm-water sewer main to carry Miner Channel from American Street to El Dorado Street. On the project block, the storm/sewer line was constructed along the southern boundary of Lot 13, diagonally across Lot 15 and the southeast corner of Lot 11, following the former route of the free-flowing Miner Channel. With this project, Miner Channel, which had played such a prominent role in the lives of nearby residents, was reduced to an underground drain.

The story of Miner Channel is one small example of the remaking of the urban landscape that was to be repeated in towns and cities across the American West. In the Central Valley of California, which historically suffered from regular, severe flooding from melting snows, towns adopted different methods for protecting their streets and buildings. Most towns in the California Delta built levees along river and stream channels to direct floodwaters. Many, like Stockton, sought to restrain streams by piping them underground. Sacramento had perhaps one of the most extreme responses to the threat of floods. Between 1853 and 1878 it raised streets, forcing property owners in the commercial core of the town to pay for the raising of their buildings and sidewalks (Praetzellis and Praetzellis 1990a:14). Reclamation of low-lying bay and slough areas was also an important urban development strategy in San Francisco since the 1850s.

Many of these efforts were marked by an often-uneasy collaborative effort between municipal authorities and private interests. In some cases, private monies paid for large portions of municipal schemes. In other instances, such as Stockton, large investments of public money were made in the redevelopment of waterways, often at the behest and pressure of private individuals. Interestingly, as the economies of many western cities have turned from commercial and industrial interests towards recreation and tourism, towns as diverse as Stockton and Santa Rosa have sought to reclaim their waterways. Streams and shorelines have been rehabilitated to an approximation of their natural selves, such that with the installation of promenades and parks, they have become recreational destinations.

INVESTIGATING LANDFILL

Bulkhead construction generally entails using fill to build up sloping land behind the bulkhead. The archaeological investigations of both 118-120 and 122 Miner Avenue indicate that large amounts of fill were used to raise and level the rear of these lots. The structure of a landfill deposit such as that found at 118-120 Miner Avenue can be valuable in understanding the implementation of such landfill projects.

The research potential of artifacts within landfill deposits is generally thought to be dependent on being able to link the original deposition of the artifacts to a particular community or ethnic group during a specific period of time (Praetzellis and Ziesing, eds. 1998:63; Yentsch 1992:4-107). It is unknown where the fill from the 118-120 Miner Avenue Analytical Unit B came from, although according to records of the Stockton City Council, the bulkheads on Miner Channel at El Dorado Street that were constructed in 1886, used fill from both Mormon Slough and Hunter Square in the center of Stockton. (Stockton City Council var.: Vol. 11:578). Some researchers have suggested that artifacts from landfill that cannot be associated with specific communities might be valuable for larger-scale analysis, which would compare the artifact contents of landfill sites between communities (Deetz 1991:7). Thus, collections derived from the sampling of city dumps could be compared to comparable sites of similar time periods in other cities. Yentsch (1992:4-105), however, has pointed out the difficulty of conducting such research using landfills from cities or towns that—having experienced a high degree of mobility, complex ethnic composition, and a steady influx of migrant cultures—did not have a largely homogenous population. It could be argued that Stockton, with its complex ethnic and social makeup, was not a homogenous community.

Landfill such as that represented by 118-120 Miner Avenue Analytical Unit B, where the neighborhood association is unknown, primarily has the potential to contribute to research areas such as urban geography and the development of Stockton's landscape through municipal programs of waterway modification. The analytical unit helps us to understand the implementation of the extensive slough reclamation projects undertaken by the City along Miner Channel, and also focuses attention on this important process in the development of Stockton's urban landscape.

THE SING LEE LAUNDRY WORKERS

Archaeological scholarship has traditionally seen the Overseas Chinese, those Chinese who left China looking either for work or permanent relocation, as part of an exotic “other.” As a result, sites associated with the Overseas Chinese have been analyzed primarily in terms of issues of assimilation or acculturation. We do not intend to provide an overview of archaeological scholarship of the Overseas Chinese in this document. Praetzellis (2004) and Lydon (1999) provide valuable insights into this area. It is important to note, however, that increasingly, historical archaeologists in the U.S. and elsewhere are offering more nuanced portraits of the lives of Chinese immigrants, recognizing that the thousands of immigrants who left China for the U.S. were not a culturally homogenous mass, but encompassed differences in origin, skills, and economic and social standing. As Praetzellis notes, the “culture of the Overseas Chinese is varied, adaptive, sophisticated, multifaceted, and layered in meanings” (2004:238).

Chinese laundries are relatively common among the Overseas Chinese archaeological sites that have been excavated in the United States. In California and Nevada alone, laundries have been excavated in Ventura, Woodland, Santa Barbara, Sacramento, Oakland, and Lovelock (Greenwood 1997; Praetzellis 2004:239). Laundries were a popular choice of employment for Chinese men since the earliest days of the Gold Rush, although clothes washing in China was traditionally a woman’s occupation. The appeal of this work to male immigrants during the 19th century was undoubtedly the small capital outlay and minimal skills required, and the demand generated by the overwhelmingly male population of California (Praetzellis 2004:245). The trade of the Chinese laundries was always in the clothing of men, particularly bachelors. Women’s formal clothing during the 19th century was generally not designed to be washable, and if it was, it was taken to the more expensive “French” laundries—an early precursor to modern dry cleaning (Praetzellis 2004:245). Chinese laundrymen gradually developed a specialty in the washing of “whites” that was able to withstand later competition from mechanized laundries and eventually dry cleaners after 1900. The nearly exclusive focus on laundering the clothes of bachelors remained a characteristic of the Chinese laundry business into the 20th century. In the post-World War II period, Maxine Hong Kingston, who grew up in a laundry in Stockton operated by her Chinese-born parents, could still say that, “Laundry work is men’s clothes, unmarried-men’s clothes” (1976:228).

Chinese laundries were a feature of most major towns and cities of the western United States in the 19th century. They employed a substantial proportion of Chinese workers in the decades after large-scale work on western railroads subsided: in 1900, 32 percent of the 81,603 Chinese men residing in the U.S. worked as “launderers” (U.S. Census 1904:cx, cited in Yang 1999:32). Commonly, workers lived at the laundry, possibly both to save money and because the laundries were often located some distance away from Chinese enclaves within towns. The laundry workers living in the laundry often slept by night on the boards used for ironing during the day. They would receive clothes from customers, mark them perhaps with an ideogram to represent their owner, wash them in boiling water, with soap and bluing dye as needed, and hang them out on a drying platform or on a line inside the laundry to dry. Once dry, the clothes were ironed. During ironing, clothes

THE LOOK OF A LAUNDRY

If you could have stood behind the main building at 117-123 Channel Street, ca. 1895 as the Sing Lee Laundry was just commencing its operations, you would have seen a backyard that naturally sloped down, in places quite abruptly, towards Miner Channel. Quite possibly, you might have been able to see the waters of the channel itself over the rear lot line, with some shrubs and trees along the water's edge. Over the next 40 years, this bucolic outlook was transformed by the laundry's operations.

One of the first alterations to the backyard would have been the construction of key pieces of the laundry infrastructure, namely a boiler and a drying platform. Drying platforms were common features of unmechanized Chinese laundries before World War II. They were generally constructed in the backyard, although where space was of a premium, they could also be built on roof tops. The Sing Lee Laundry drying platform—raised on posts above the sloping, dirt backyard—gave a clean, level space on which to dry clothes. It also would have created a dark, under-floor area that grew progressively deeper as the ground sloped away towards Miner Channel.

The other major piece of laundry infrastructure that would shape the look of the laundry's backyard was a boiler. This boiler, the brick base of which was uncovered by archaeological excavation, was located in a one-story addition first visible on the 1895 Sanborn map. The boiler would have produced quantities of ash from heating water for the clothes washing operations. It was probably also used for disposing of household refuse that might have attracted pests, as indicated by the high proportion of calcined and burnt bone found in the deposit.

The laundry workers regularly cleaned out the boiler's firebox and dumped the ash and burnt organic remains in the space beneath the drying platform. The date range of artifacts found indicate that this practice

probably began in the 1890s, and continued for the life of the laundry. At first, disposing of the household and laundry waste in this way might have been intended to help level the yard. Perhaps the lower areas under the drying platform regularly flooded from water seepage and rains. The space below the drying platform probably also represented a highly convenient and largely out-of-sight dumping area during a time when municipal waste disposal was rudimentary at best.

While this practice has given us an insight into the material culture of an Overseas Chinese laundry's inhabitants over a period of 40 years, (by the 1930s) it would have utterly transformed the view over the laundry backyard. The natural slope of Miner Channel's bank would have been replaced by a relatively level expanse, significantly raised in height. The area would have been dominated by the drying platform, with little space set aside for recreation, rest, or homely pursuits such as vegetable gardening. Walls and buildings on surrounding lots would have hemmed in the yard, which together with the bulky drying platform must have created a somewhat claustrophobic setting. The results were a commercial space that was devoted to the functions of washing and drying clothes, and a remarkable archaeological deposit that gives us insight into the appearance and workings of an overseas Chinese laundry.

were customarily dampened with water sprayed from the mouth of the ironer, sometimes using a brass mouth blower. This process was described by an 1870s observer in Nevada:

I have seen [the Chinese laundrymen] sprinkle three large garments with one mouthful of water . . . all the while they are ironing, one will hold the water in his mouth, every few moments spitting it on the dress until it is finished [Mathews 1880:252, cited in Yang 1999:26]

Ralph Yardley's illustration of a Chinese laundry in Stockton shows a small room, heating for irons provided by a potbelly stove, and benches built along the walls on which men are ironing clothes. Bowls rest next to each ironer, filled with water that they would sip and then spray on the clothes (Figure 24).

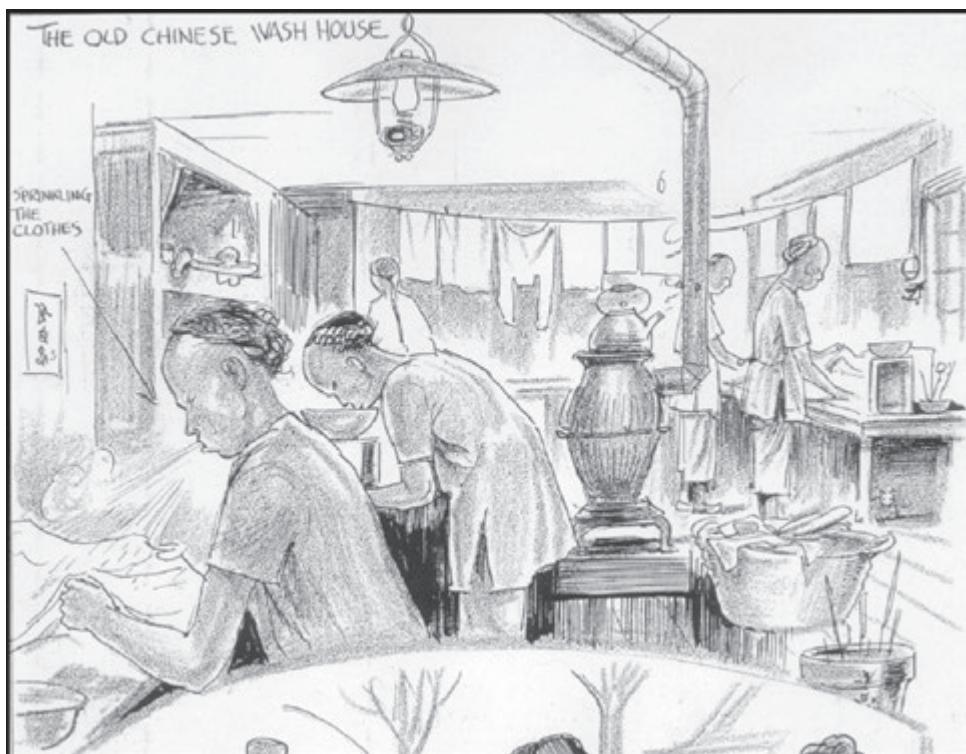


Figure 24. Chinese laundrymen at work in a 19th century Stockton laundry. Drawing by Ralph Yardley. (*Courtesy of The Haggin Museum, Stockton*)

The Sing Lee Laundry collection from 117-123 Channel Street contained many of the tools that would have been used in the typical Overseas Chinese laundry. In addition to the safety pins, straight pins, buttons and collar studs, the assemblage also included bluing balls, a sad iron, pleat roller, scissors, and four soap-stone clothes markers. Items such as bluing balls, and large numbers of buttons and collar studs, are common finds on archaeological sites of Chinese laundries (Benté 1976:477; Felton, Lortie, and Schulz 1984:70; Praetzellis and Praetzellis 1990b:12; Yang 1999:61).

Although the Sing Lee Laundry existed from ca. 1895 to ca. 1937, such longevity was not unusual. Once settled in a building, a laundry often existed for decades, run either by the same proprietor, his family, or fellow villagers. The San Fong Laundry in Sacramento for instance, operated from 1895 to 1954 (Praetzellis and Praetzellis 1990b). The inhabitants

and workers of laundries were generally men, although sometimes—as in the case of the Sing Lee Laundry—teenagers, perhaps the sons or relatives of some of the laundrymen, also lived there and went to school. For many laundry workers, washing clothes was a very different occupation from what they had been trained for or were accustomed to in China. Rather than being the stereotypical illiterate and unskilled laborer portrayed in 19th-century newspapers, many laundrymen had been educated in China. This can be seen in the Sing Lee Laundry where census records indicated the many of the workers were literate, and the artifact collection included 27 writing-related artifacts, such as ink bottles, ink stones, pencils, and a hard-rubber pen. After the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, which had restricted the migration of wives of Chinese immigrants, laundering became more closely associated with family operations, in which wives and older children formed part of the workforce (Kingston 1976).

Like most western towns, the laundry trade in Stockton was operated almost exclusively by Chinese. In 1886, all but two of Stockton's 24 laundries, were Chinese. Almost none of these businesses were located in Chinatown, but were scattered throughout the city (Minnick 1988:144). As in other cities and towns, these laundries were among the most visible symbols of the Chinese community to outsiders, and as such, were often the first targets of the anti-Chinese sentiment and even violence that began to gather force in American towns and cities in the 1870s and 1880s. During the 1880s in Stockton and other cities, much of this anti-Chinese sentiment was channeled into developing local ordinances that would effectively drive Chinese laundries out of towns. In 1885 the Stockton City Council, at the urging of several local newspapers, passed a local ordinance that banned laundries from most of the town. The local laundrymen gathered funds to launch a case against the ordinance, which was subsequently struck down in a federal court as unconstitutional (McClain 1994:126-130).

The known occupation period of the Sing Lee laundry began after the major anti-Chinese ordinances of the 1880s, although widespread anti-Chinese feeling persisted in many American communities including Stockton. For instance, on 22 September 1913 the Stockton City Council passed an ordinance that required laundries and public wash houses to: obtain a permit, be connected to a sewer if available, and have cement floors that could be drained. Furthermore, no person who owned or was employed in a laundry was allowed to “dampen any clothing for purpose of enabling the same to be ironed, with water emitted from the mouth of such owner or employee” (Stockton City Council 1922). The reference to dampening the clothes by spraying was specifically aimed at Chinese laundries, although a concern for sanitation and hygiene indicated by the requirements for laundry drainage and cement floors was also a characteristic of the Progressive-era health reform movements that influenced government and civic infrastructure developments during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

ILLNESS FAR FROM HOME

The Sing Lee Laundry collection provides some valuable insights into the balance between traditional and Euroamerican medicinal practices in the lives of the laundry workers. Euroamerican and traditional Chinese medicine are very different in their philosophical basis. The principles and practices of Chinese medicine are of great antiquity,

OF CROW AND HERBS



To those more accustomed to the practices of western medicine, the finding of the remains of five American crows and assorted herbs packed into a bottle in the Sing Lee Laundry deposit must be intriguing. In fact, *yaojim*—or liquor, wine, or spirits in which medicinal ingredients have been steeped—is a common treatment in traditional Chinese medicine (Zhufan and Xiaokai 1984:146-147). These preparations are made by combining selected portions of birds, reptiles, and mammals with different herbs to create remedies for a variety of ailments, or potions to produce desired effects, such as increased strength or virility. Maxine Hong Kingston's mother, who trained as a midwife before she left China, employed such a preparation in treating her family:

In a glass jar on a shelf my mother kept a big brown hand with pointed claws stewing in alcohol and herbs. . . . My mother used the tobacco, leeks, and grasses swimming about the hand to rub our sprains and bruises [Kingston 1976:107].

Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) was a commonly used bird in traditional Chinese medicinal preparations. It was thought to be good for spasms and breathing complaints (such as tuberculosis), epileptic conditions, and for “headwind” (headaches, dizziness, or vertigo). It was suitable for use in medicine for men, women, and children, although it would not have been steeped in alcohol if intended for the latter (Loh 2004, pers. comm.). Chinese medical texts offer an array of herb combinations that could be used with crow to treat various complaints. In the case of the Sing Lee Laundry, the crow was combined with five herbs, three of which could be identified. Albizia Bark (*Albizia julibrissin*) was traditionally used for its sedative effect to treat insomnia and, by invigorating the blood circulation, was thought to relieve swelling caused by injuries or carbuncles. *Notopterygium Root* (*Notopterygium spp.*) was an aid in ridding the body of dampness and moisture and was therefore a popular treatment for rheumatic and arthritic pain. The third herb, Red Sage Root (*Salvia miltiorrhiza*), was also used to promote blood circulation and as a tranquilizer (Loh 2004, pers. comm.; Zhufan and Xiaokai 1984:170, 193, 201). These herbs are commonly used in Chinese herbal

medicines. They would probably have been imported from China, and may have been more readily available from herbalists in San Francisco's Chinatown than from smaller local suppliers in Stockton. The crow preparation was a type of medication that could be prepared by the patient, after consultation with a doctor or herbalist (Loh 2004, pers. comm.).

It is possible that a worker at the Sing Lee Laundry, seeking to cure some type of pain or complaint, used locally caught crows and herbs purchased from San Francisco to prepare the treatment himself. The complaint from which he sought relief, however, is unknown, since such preparations could be used to treat a range of conditions. The use of an American species of crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) as a substitution for the more traditionally used Chinese species, suggests both a determination to persist in the use of traditional remedies and a certain flexibility in adapting these remedies to the realities of a new life far from China.

(《滇南本草》),老鵠(《痘疹論》)。

【基原】为鸦科动物大嘴乌鸦等的全体或肉。

【原动物】大嘴乌鸦 *Corvus macrorhynchos* Wagler

为鸦科较常见之一种。体长约50厘米。嘴粗壮强直，色黑，嘴缘光滑。虹膜黑褐色。通体纯黑色；上体除头顶、后颈及颈侧外，多少染有绿色亮辉；喉部沾深蓝色；翼及尾的下覆羽有些羽尖带蓝或绿色辉，下体余部无光亮；翼羽底面的羽干基段灰白色。脚强，趾爪均黑色。

常常见于田野、屋旁及山区村姑中。性机警，鸣声粗厉；食物为玉米、花生、豆类、瓜果及昆虫、腐肉等。分布全国各地。

本动物的头(乌鸦头)、翅羽(乌鸦翅羽)、胆(乌鸦胆)亦供药用，各详专条。

【性味】酸，平。

①《嘉祐本草》：“平，无毒。”

②《日用本草》：“味咸，平。”

③《纲目》：“酸涩，平，无毒。”



大嘴乌鸦

Chinese medical text showing combinations of herbs that might be used in medicinal preparations containing crow.

since by the 8th century B.C.E. the fundamental principles of traditional Chinese medicine had already been established. These principles are largely concerned with the circulation of vital energy, or *qi*, within the body. According to traditional Chinese medicine, disease is ultimately caused by an imbalance in the body's dichotomy (yin/yang). These imbalances are most often caused by excessive heat, cold, wet, or dry conditions within the body. Within traditional Chinese medicine, disease is seen as having two aspects: the fundamental or the ultimate cause of the illness, and the incidental or the actual symptoms. Successful treatment requires that the cause rather than the symptoms be identified and treated, an often difficult proposition since different diseases may have the same symptoms, or the same disease may cause different symptoms in various individuals.

Herbal medicine is only one of the therapies encompassed by traditional Chinese medicine. Rather than being in two distinct spheres, medicinal herbs and regular foods are seen as existing along a continuum with increasing degrees of potency. Herbs and food are believed to be effective in treating disease because they cause energy to move within the body in certain ways, and so can be used to correct diagnosed problems in the body's energy flow (Kang-Ying and Dahlen 1994:2-5).

Among the poorer classes, Chinese medicine was generally not practiced using invasive techniques such as acupuncture, but was conducted via oral prescriptions employing herbal and other ingredients. In traditional Chinese herbal medicine, doctors make diagnoses based on the patient's description of his or her symptoms, along with visual cues as to the functioning of the body. Once a diagnosis is made, the doctor writes

a prescription, which may contain from 5 to 20 ingredients that are tailored to the patient's complaint and symptoms. The prescription is then filled at a medicinal herb shop. The medicines are generally prepared at home in special earthenware pots with angled spouts and handles. In addition to customized prescriptions, there is also a strong tradition of using patent medicines that are bought off the shelf to aid in a wide range of conditions. Chinese herb shops often stock a variety of both Chinese and western patent medicines for sale to patients (Kang-Ying and Dahlen 1994:6-11).

The Sing Lee Laundry archaeological deposit indicates that the laundry's workers and inhabitants experimented both with western medicines and with traditional Chinese cures and remedies. Numerous small homeopathic vials were found. Several of these were painted with Chinese characters, although translations did not give clear indication of the type of medicine that the vials might have contained. These types of vials are frequently found on archaeological sites associated with Overseas Chinese. Although often incorrectly termed opium bottles by collectors, they usually contained medicines, including tinctures of opium (Lydon 1999:100). The medicines sold in these vials were often very powerful, very expensive preparations administered in small doses (Loh 2004, pers. comm.).

Other evidence of the use of traditional Chinese remedies by the laundry workers were three Chinese stoneware apothecary jars with lids, and a bottle bearing a red paper label with Chinese characters from the “..ee Sang...Drug Company” of San Francisco. The kind of remedy contained in this bottle could not be discerned from the label.

The medicinal assemblage from the Sing Lee Laundry deposit also contained 78 bitters bottles, some empty and some that contained traces of bluing dye. Twenty-one bitters bottles were found without bluing-dye residue, suggesting that the laundry workers purchased the bitters for consumption and only later used them for storage. The laundry workers may have favored the bitters for their medicinal benefits. The use of bitters would be compatible with the Chinese tradition of using off-the-shelf patent cures to treat some ailments. Moreover, the assemblage contained a preponderance of bitters advertised for liver, kidney, stomach, and blood complaints, such as Dr. J. Hostetter's Stomach Bitters, Brightsbane Great Kidney and Liver Cure, and Lash's Kidney Liver Bitters. This suggests that the laundry workers used these bitters to self-medicate.

Bitters may also have been purchased for their high alcohol content. The laundry's large number of alcohol bottles indicates that alcohol was certainly consumed by the laundry workers. Although the bitters may have been treated as primarily another form of alcohol, evidence from several Overseas Chinese sites in Australia and New Zealand suggests that high levels of patent-medicine consumption may be a response to the banning



BITTERS, BLUING DYE, AND REUSED BOTTLES

The Sing Lee Laundry archaeological collection presents an interesting case for the systematic reuse of bottles by an Overseas Chinese household. Fifty-seven bottles, the great majority of them brown glass bitters bottles, had been refilled with liquid bluing dye for use in the laundry's operations. It is probable that the original contents of the bitters bottles had first been consumed by the laundry workers, based on the finding of 21 other bitters bottles in which no residue of bluing dye was evident. The marked preference for reusing bitters bottles, rather than the many other bottle types found at the laundry, might be explained by the laundry workers' frequent use of bitters for either their medicinal or alcohol contents, or the bottles' square base profile, which would have made for efficient storage. Overseas Chinese use of Euroamerican glass bottles to store bluing dye has been documented on at least one other U.S. archaeological site: a laundry excavated by archaeologists in El Paso, Texas, contained a patent-extract bottle that contained traces of bluing dye (Staski 1993:134).

Few archaeological examples have been uncovered that demonstrate the systematic reuse of Euroamerican bottles by the Overseas Chinese. Those examples that do exist indicate that reuse took two forms. Like the Sing Lee Laundry workers, some households consumed the contents of bottles and then reused those bottles. This appears to be the case in the El Paso Overseas Chinese site, where the mean manufacturing dates for bottles were found to be approximately 10 to 15-1/2 years earlier than the date of deposition of the archaeological features as determined from archaeological and documentary sources. Archaeologists explained this discrepancy as a result of the systematic reuse by Chinese households of Euroamerican bottles (Staski 1993:133-34).

The reuse of bottles by Overseas Chinese may also represent a more organized and widespread practice than that casually practiced by a household. The El Paso site



contained several Euroamerican bottles to which Chinese character labels had been adhered, including a Dr. J. Hostetter's Stomach Bitters bottle with a Chinese label for a clothes-cleaning product. These relabeled bottles indicate that a network existed for distributing products to Chinese communities in the U.S. using systematically collected, refilled, and relabeled used bottles (Staski 1993:133-134). It is already known that Chinese merchants and businessmen in large cities such as San Francisco maintained extensive networks by which foodstuffs, opium, and medicinal items imported from China were distributed to U.S. Overseas Chinese communities. The distribution of products in reused Euroamerican bottles may have been carried out through similar networks.

of opium use. Neville Ritchie has reported evidence for the increase in the use of opium-based medicinal preparations on several New Zealand sites after the national government banned the use of opium in 1901. Justin McCarthy, in researching Chinese miners in the Northern Territory of Australia, also noted an increased use of medicines, many of which contained opium and alcohol, after opium was banned by the Australian government in 1901. These authors suggest that the increased use of commonly available Euroamerican and Chinese medicinal preparations by Overseas Chinese was in part an attempt to maintain an opium habit that was no longer legal (McCarthy 1986 and Ritchie and Harrison 1982:28 cited in Lydon 1999:100-101). While the possession of opiates was made illegal in the U.S. by the Harrison Narcotic Act of 1914, restrictions against smoking opium were made earlier, in the late 19th century (Sando and Felton 1993:167-169). Only seven items relating to opium smoking were recovered in the Sing Lee Laundry. It may be that the laundry workers were using bitters to compensate for or attempt to maintain their now-illegal opium habits. The lack of temporal control within the Sing Lee Laundry archaeological deposit, however, does not allow a correlation of an increase in consumption of bitters with the banning of opium in 1914.

FOOD AND ALCOHOL

The Chinese immigrant was defined by the relationships he shared with family members (both those remaining in China and those already in the U.S.), fellow villagers among the immigrant community, and work mates. Traditionally in China, the sharing of food has been one of the predominant ways of symbolizing the strength and status of relationships. The symbolism of the shared meal rests not only in the actual act of sharing food, but also in the type and cost of the food consumed, together with the meal's setting and tablewares used. For this reason, although food conservatism is a characteristic of most ethnic immigrant groups, the central role of food and shared meals in reinforcing the cohesiveness of Chinese relationships means that evidence of foodways and food-consumption habits are an especially valuable tool for archaeologists studying Overseas Chinese communities.

The Sing Ling Laundry collection, despite its relatively late date in the 19th and early 20th centuries, shows a high degree of conservatism in the type of foods consumed and the tablewares and serving wares employed. The 24 Chinese brown-glazed stoneware items recovered would have contained foods such as oils, soy sauces, preserved vegetables, and condiments imported from China. These items would have been used in combination with local fresh vegetables, grains, and meats to replicate the structure and composition of traditional Chinese meals, even if specific Chinese ingredients were not available. The Sing Lee Laundry collection also indicates that the workers chose to use Euroamerican ingredients and foodstuffs, including pickles, dairy products, and spices. This may have been due to a number of factors: the substitution of Euroamerican products for unavailable Chinese ingredients, the cost of imported foods, or simply choice and preference.

Although the laundry operated over a long period of time, with no temporal control within the deposit, it is unclear if the food choices of the laundry workers changed over time. As they became more accustomed to the surrounding Euroamerican culture, the residents may have begun to more readily adopt local foodstuffs and products.

Alternatively, as they became more settled and financially secure, these immigrants may have been able to spend more money on imported foods that reminded them of their homes. At least until 1920, however, the laundry was staffed primarily by Chinese immigrants rather than first-generation Chinese-Americans, suggesting that the cultural preferences for the consumption of traditional Chinese foodstuffs would have remained strong.

The laundry workers' preference for conservatism in food is suggested by the table- and serving wares used at the laundry. Although various pieces of Euroamerican food preparation and consumption vessels were recovered, the majority of the assemblage (69.6%) were of Kitchen Ch'ing—the Chinese porcelain bowls, cups, and spoons in traditional patterns commonly found on Overseas Chinese sites. These tablewares were made in China for local use and for export to Overseas Chinese communities, rather than for sale to western markets.

The food choices of the laundry workers suggests a strong adherence to traditional Chinese foodways. In China, pork was by far the preferred meat, although other types of meat were frequently consumed (Gust 1993:187-88). The laundry assemblage was characterized by a high proportion of pork (71.2% of meat weight, as opposed to 22% beef), which is unusual for later Overseas Chinese deposits. Such high proportions of pork are generally found on earlier sites, such as that associated with Chinese merchants in Sacramento during the 1850s (95% pork). Gust reports that of three later Overseas Chinese sites in Tucson, Ventura, and Lovelock that were occupied between the late 1890s and the 1930s, only Lovelock had greater than 51 percent pork, while in Tucson and Ventura, pork was surpassed by beef as the preferred meat (Gust 1993:178-181). Gust suggests that these differing preferences for pork and beef reflect the relative economic security of the different communities. Pork was a more expensive meat than beef in most areas of the West (Gust 1993:208). As such the preference of some Overseas Chinese for beef rather than pork might have been an economic one. Unfortunately, relative prices for pork and beef in Stockton during the period of the laundry's operation are not available. If Gust's hypothesis is true, however, the strong dominance of pork as the meat of choice for the workers at the Sing Lee Laundry might suggest that they enjoyed a degree of economic comfort and security or that they were willing to economize in other areas to maintain traditional food practices.

The consumption of cat (*Felis catus*) at the Sing Lee Laundry, as indicated by the bones of one butchered individual, is an instance of a widespread, if infrequent, event in Chinese households. On U.S. Overseas Chinese sites, 1 butchered cat was found at Woodland, 1 at Ventura, 4 at Tucson, and 11 at Riverside (Gust 1993:183; Langenwalter 1987:86-87). Butchered bobcat bones were also found at Lovelock, a site dating from the 1920s and 1930s (Figure 25; Gust 1993:182). Although evidence of cat consumption is found on several sites, it is generally only a small proportion of the total food bone collection. While the cat was not a major food source, its consumption may have had special significance.

Fish was a traditional source of cheap protein in southern Chinese diets. The remains of fish recovered from the Sing Lee Laundry suggest that laundry workers continued this tradition, making use of both freshwater and salt-water local varieties, such as carp,



Figure 25. Wild cat being offered for sale in San Francisco's Chinatown. While cat meat was only occasionally consumed by Overseas Chinese, wild cat was particularly prized.

(Image by Arnold Genthe. Courtesy of the Library of Congress)

together with species often sold in dried form, such as sheepshead and sea bass. The finding of Chinese croaker and puffer indicate that at times, dried fish from China were also part of the laundrymen's diet.

Euroamerican and Chinese alcohol is represented by 356 alcoholic beverage bottles, including 133 beer and 128 Chinese liquor bottles, in addition to the large numbers of bitters bottles whose contents may have been consumed either for their alcoholic or medicinal benefits. One striking aspect of the laundry collection is the extensive use of alcohol in relation to the very low number of opium-related artifacts found. This may be due to the relatively late occupation of the laundry, during a period when opium-smoking was banned, thereby



encouraging the use of alcohol as a more appropriate means of relaxation. Evidence of extensive alcohol use however, is not uncommon on Overseas Chinese sites. For example, the Chinese laundry at 1813 Seventh Street, Oakland contained 21 bitters bottles which may have been favored either for their alcohol content or their medicinal properties (Yang 1999:56). Writing of the Chinese community in Sydney, Australia, Lydon notes that although alcohol had traditionally been used medicinally by the Chinese, by the late 1900s it had also become part of their regular diet, often used in social drinking games (Lydon 1999:97). This is in contrast to the common 19th- and 20th-century Euroamerican image of Overseas Chinese as sober and industrious. Staski points out that most of the historic Euroamerican commentary on the drinking patterns of ethnic groups in the late 19th century are based on patterns of public, social drinking. The Chinese, instead, tended to drink in private areas, among fellow Chinese, effectively hiding most of their alcohol consumption from non-Chinese gaze (Staski 1993:141-143).

THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE CONTINUES

The Sing Lee Laundry collection provides an unedited glimpse into the lives of Overseas Chinese laundrymen. Much of the importance of the laundry collection lies in the fact that the backyard of the 117-123 Channel Street lot was the major deposition area for the laundry's refuse over 40 years, and so can be taken as a representative sample of the material culture of the laundry workers. As such, the Sing Lee Laundry deposit gives a voice to these largely anonymous men, who sought a more secure economic future for themselves and their families through a new life in the United States.

Drawn home by tradition or pushed out by prejudice, some workers chose to return to China. But others, such as Maxine Hong Kingston's family or the Ah Tye family both of Stockton, stayed, adapted, and prospered. It is the story of those who remained that comes to us in the curiously mixed Chinese and American collection from the Sing Lee Laundry—a story that is as bound in history as it is relevant to modern times as Stockton's latest wave of hopeful immigrants weighs the competing forces of tradition and innovation in their own lives.