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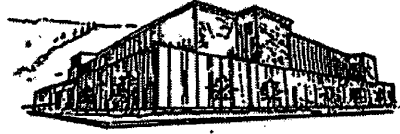
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**THE CHINESE PRESENCE IN VIRGINIA CITY, MONTANA:
A HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY PERSPECTIVE**

by

Kristin Bowen

B.A. University of Montana, 2002

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

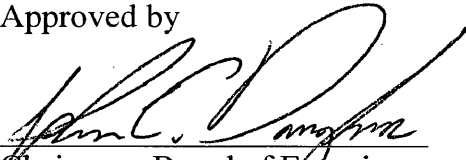
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2004

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ABSTRACT

Bowen, Kristin, M.A., May 2004

Anthropology

The Chinese Presence in Virginia City, Montana: A Historical Archaeology Perspective

Chair: Dr. John Douglas *J.D.*

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, a profusion of Chinese sojourners came to the western United States. Starting in 1849 with the discovery of gold in California a large population of Overseas Chinese lived and worked in the United States. Even though most western states had large populations of Chinese for around half a century, little is known about them, as in most places they left no written records behind.

This thesis aims to “make history” for these people by using historic archaeology to examine the Chinese living in Virginia City, Montana from the 1860s to the 1910s. As Virginia City was not isolated from the outside world, I will set this history in a background of the Overseas Chinese in Montana and other western States, using historical documents. Also in this thesis I present an overview of archaeological investigations done at Overseas Chinese sites using currently available research. Then I will show the results of excavations that have been done in Virginia City, and the small amount of remains that indicate an Overseas Chinese presence there.

Currently there is a lack of knowledge on the Overseas Chinese in Montana, and I am trying to change this. I feel compelled to put forth a database of knowledge on the Chinese in Virginia City to start trying to fill this void, as well as to aid future archaeologists dealing with the same topic or area. In the end of my thesis, I set up a research design for future archaeological work in Virginia City, in the Chinese area of town. Using maps and other accounts, I try and identify the most likely places to contain Chinese deposits. Finally, I propose research questions that could guide future excavations in Virginia City.

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1. Introduction

Introduction

The main goal of this thesis is to try and give the fullest picture possible of Chinese life in Virginia City, Montana. I also want to show how Virginia City sits in the larger picture of Montana, in the western United States, and in the world. While historical archaeologists have been criticized for focusing on specific sites, and overlooking the connections to the world around it (e.g. Orser 1996; Cleland 1998), I plan to correct this and place Virginia City in its context of the modern world.

Although historic archaeology is increasingly addressing links between sites and the modern world system, it has another major focus: an emphasis on underdocumented peoples (Cleland 2001). In response to this, a steadily growing amount of archaeology is being done on Chinese sites (e.g. Wegars 1993). Montana, however, does not fit into the current trend. Only a handful of archaeological excavations have been done on Chinese sites in Montana, and the only work done by historians in the state has consisted of a few magazine articles (Swartout 1988).

Historic archaeology of Chinese and other “non-white” groups in the United States is usually placed under the term “race and ethnicity” (Banks 1996:51). I think it would be useful to discuss the topics of race and ethnicity before I go much further. Many nineteenth-century, white EuroAmericans thought Chinese were a separate race. The Chinese were treated as though they were inferior due to this. I accept the anthropological idea that there is no

scientific basis to the concept of the different races (American Anthropological Association 1998). Therefore, I am treating and referring to the Overseas Chinese as an ethnic group. Sian Jones (1997) defines ethnic groups as culturally ascribed identity groups that are based on the expressions of real or assumed shared culture and common descent. Even though I am treating the Overseas Chinese as one group for the purpose of this thesis, I acknowledge the fact that they could have been from very different areas and understand that, while in China, they may not have identified themselves as all being part of the same group.

Thesis Organization

The first chapter of this thesis provides historical background information. It is designed to place Virginia City in its historic context as part of the mining West, as well as to give knowledge to those readers unfamiliar with the roles that the Chinese played in the development of the western United States. Due to the fact that the Overseas Chinese and mining in the West are such large topics and have been dealt with elsewhere (e.g. Francaviglia 1991; Hardesty 1988; Wegars 1993; Zhu 1997), I will focus more specifically on the Chinese in Virginia City. For instance, in the section on the history of Virginia City, I give a brief overview of what happened there, but will focus on what is known about the Chinese in the community, since numerous books have already been written on the general history and well-known peoples of Virginia City, including Plummer's gang and the Vigilantes (e.g. Dimsdale 1866; Langford 1890). Since so many have focused

on these topics, I can emphasize the more underdocumented Chinese in Virginia City.

The next two chapters of the thesis cover archaeology. First I look at the archaeology of the Overseas Chinese in the American West, and then I survey the specific archaeology that has been done in Virginia City, Montana. I then discuss the University of Montana excavations in Virginia City, what was found there, and the implications the remains have for future excavations.

Finally in the last chapter, I examine research topics and questions in historical archaeology today, and point out how those might guide future research in Virginia City. Virginia City is a uniquely underdeveloped site, giving it an advantage for future research potential to address issues regarding ethnicity as well as other aspects of the modern world.

2. Historical Background

Gold Mining in the West

In 1848 gold was discovered in California and nearly ten million dollars was removed from its streams that year (Greever 1963:9). In 1849 the California Gold Rush began as news of the riches that were available was spread worldwide. It had implications for what was to happen in the United States, and, later, in other countries, such as New Zealand. Patterns of mining boomtown development were started in California that were repeated again and again as gold was discovered in Colorado, Nevada, Idaho, Montana and throughout the Rocky Mountains.

The first phase of development began just after the discovery of minerals. A camp was set up rather haphazardly, and the buildings were crudely built, usually made of logs and canvas. Prospectors built right next to their claims, and the businessmen right next to the prospectors. During the second phase, street systems were built, commercial districts were organized, and buildings were more permanently constructed with stone (West 1979:28-36).

The third stage of boomtown development was as much a change in attitudes as construction. Prosperous families committed to the growth of the town typically made up most of the population. Stampmills and sawmills were built for the need of the communities. Churches, meeting halls, schools, and opera houses fulfilled other needs. Government started to provide services, such as protection from hazards like fire and crime. Additionally, sanitation became

an important issue. All of this came about because people were thinking of permanently staying instead of rushing on to the next find (West 1979:28-36).

The population of the first wave to these camps typically consisted of EuroAmerican men; many were miners, but just as many came in the initial rushes to make money providing goods and services to the miners. Overseas Chinese typically came in after the initial rush, during the second stage of development, and reworked the diggings that the white miners had abandoned. In the later two stages, after many of the initial placer miners had moved on, there was a switch to hard rock mining techniques, if lodes could be discovered. Later groups of placer miners formed companies in some regions, and reworked the ground with the more complex technologies of hydraulicking and dredging.

Donald Hardesty (1988: 1) calls the western mining frontier a network of islands, with each small town representing an isolated island populated by miners. Each island was connected to other islands through the transportation of supplies and the flow of people, as well as information. The flow of materials, population, and information linked each small town to another, as well as to the rest of the U.S. and Europe. Each little town was part of a world system (Hardesty 1988:1-4).

The Montana gold rush followed patterns similar to boomtown development elsewhere in the West. It began when gold was discovered in Bannack in 1862, and miners poured into the region overnight (Bancroft 1890:621). Many hopeful discovery parties set out from Bannack during the next year, until one of them discovered gold in Alder Gulch in the summer of 1863, which would become the location of Virginia City. Alder Gulch eventually

became the location where the largest amount of placer gold was recovered in the state (Lyden 1987:54). After the Alder Gulch discovery there were some other stampedes to different gulches, but these were not as significant as the rush to Last Chance Gulch, a place that would later become the town of Helena. Virginia City and Helena were the first two large cities in the state and eventually vied for the position of territorial capitol. The other mining town in Montana that stands out among the rest, and deserves mentioning, is Butte. Butte, Montana started out as a placer gold boomtown in the 1860s, then had its second revival in the 1870s as a silver mining town, but what finally gave it preeminence in mining after the other locations had played out, was the later and much longer lasting period of copper mining (Greever 1963).

In each of the boomtowns in Montana, the same general stages of development occurred. After initial placer discoveries occurred, populations burst overnight and towns were thrown together. Chinese typically came in as the placer gold was being played out, making successes out of reworking the grounds that whites had given up on. In 1870 several Chinese mining companies were listed as being among the most profitable companies in the state (Zhu 1999:57). Towns like Helena and Butte grew as they became more permanent, while others, like Bannack, died out and became ghost towns as gold was discovered elsewhere.

Chinese in the West

The first Chinese in the United States arrived in San Francisco in 1848 aboard the American ship, the *Eagle*. All the earliest Chinese had to be brought over on American and English ships, as Chinese junks and the currents they were

carried on could not make it to the U.S. Five years later, in 1853, Chinese started buying American and English ships to transport their fellow countrymen over. As Chinese who had made money started returning to China with their profits, the numbers coming over started rapidly increasing. The voyage from Hong Kong to San Francisco usually lasted around two months. Some ships were packed like slave ships, while others gained good reputations within the Chinese communities for the treatment they gave the Chinese passengers. Once in San Francisco, most of the newcomers did not stay. Instead they rapidly found their way into the mining districts of the West (Barth 1964).

The Overseas Chinese experienced frequent mistreatment and discrimination throughout the West. Typically discrimination that started in California was spread, sometimes even before the Chinese came to a new area. Scare tactics were printed in newspapers, with threats of the Chinese flooding the market. Barsness (1962: 233) repeats the ideas that were spread before the Chinese arrived in Montana: "Rumor said he was pouring toward Montana by the thousands, ready to take every white miner's job from him." Contrary to such rumors, in most cases the Chinese complemented the work of the white miners and did not compete with them. They bought old abandoned claims, effectively keeping mining districts producing longer than could have been possible without them (Rohe 2001:17). What most likely caused the scare tactics was that the easy placer gold, and sometime the whole town, would be drying up when the Chinese arrived; when times were tough people looked for someone to blame. The Chinese were easier to pick out and make a scapegoat than another ethnic group in the developing west's urban settings. In many places, other than the smear

tactics in the newspapers and some gossip behind their back, this was the limit of the discrimination against the Chinese. Conditions were much worse in other cities, even erupting in violence occasionally. For example, in the predominantly Irish town of Butte, Montana, it was an everyday occurrence to see Chinese insulted or attacked in the streets (Quinn 1967:84), and a general boycott against all Chinese businesses was enacted in 1897, severely harming business owners (Flaherty 1987).

The Overseas Chinese came to the United States for the sole purpose of making money to take home to their families in China. This was another reason for the discriminatory way the EuroAmericans treated them. The mining rushes throughout the West lead to the formations of states and territories as well as the beginning of nationalism in the West. The Chinese did not ascribe to these feelings towards the U.S. and had no problems leaving the country with money they made here to return to China. This lead to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The act ended free immigration of Chinese laborers. While some Chinese were able to come to the U.S. after this, they did so with great difficulty.

In most cities, the Overseas Chinese lived in a separate area of town, often referred to as Chinatown. This was due to several reasons, starting with legal segregation. In some cities they were not able to own property in any other part of town. Additionally, the frequency of fires in many Chinatowns apparently concerned the rest of the population, and the latter was afraid that the Chinese would burn the whole town down if allowed to integrate into neighborhoods (Smith 1967). Another reason certainly included personal choice to be with those similar to them.

There are many stories (or urban myths?) that the Chinese had underground tunnels. They provided safe passage in case trouble started above. It is unknown whether these underground features actually exist or not. Supposedly, they existed in Boise and Pocatello, Idaho (Elsensohn 1970:93,112-113) as well as Blackfoot City, Montana (Foster 1992:38); there are rumors that they exist in Virginia City, Montana as well. Workers in Virginia City have recently stumbled across what they called Chinese tunnels (Kelly Dixon 2004, pers. comm.).

The common segregation and discrimination prevented the Chinese from integrating into the broader populations in many western towns. In many communities, Chinatown and the Red Light district were in the same area of town (e.g. Sanborn 1988), indicating that the rest of the population thought similarly of the two areas. The Boise Basin in Idaho seems to be an exception to the common segregation of Overseas Chinese peoples. Zhu (1997:185) claims they were equal with whites there, actually living better than some whites. Their children could go to the public schools, and Chinese were even allowed to vote at a time when Mormons were banned from doing so (Zhu 1997:178).

There are reasons other than economic that the Overseas Chinese were treated differently than the other ethnic groups that comprised the American West. They stem mainly from their culture being so distinctly separate from the groups that came from various regions of Europe, including having different religions and holidays. EuroAmericans did not understand their religion, and thought them to be heathens, bowing down to their idols made of wood and stone (Barsness 1962: 212). EuroAmericans in Virginia City, Montana found the

funerals of the Chinese to be the most upsetting of all the practices they did not understand. The mourners dressed in white, and feasted at the gravesite with smiles on their faces, an idea that strongly contradicted with the Victorian notion of how a funeral should proceed (Barness 1962).

The Chinese in California celebrated many holidays, one being the Chinese Festival of the Dead. During this spring holiday they celebrated with feasts of roasted pigs, oranges, sugar cane, bananas, and brandy. The feast was arranged around graves, while multicolored paper was burned over the graves. After this, the food was taken to town for a banquet. Other festivals were celebrated throughout the year. The main holiday Overseas Chinese always celebrated was the Chinese New Year. It was believed that all enemies must be forgiven, and all debts repaid in order to start the coming year fresh. Large parades were thrown, and every night for two weeks firecrackers were let off in Chinatown (Greenwood 1996:31). In Virginia City, Montana the entire town was invited to Chinatown to celebrate with the Chinese in partaking of food (which everyone was afraid to eat) and American whisky (which everyone was happy to drink) (Barsness 1962).

The mortuary practices of the Overseas Chinese represent other ways they stood out from the rest of the population of the West. Starting out in California, many Chinese made agreements with their tongs (voluntary organizations) that if they died in the U.S., their bones would be shipped back to China. In Los Angeles, the Chinese were buried in the cemetery and dug up around five months later. The bones were then scraped clean, bundled up, and sent back to China in large shipments (Greenwood 1996:33). These practices caused public outcry among the white residents who found the practice disgusting and offensive to

their Christian morals (Greenwood 1996:34). It has been reported that the same practices occurred throughout the West, and that tong members traveled to different mining districts collecting bones to ship them back to China. However this did not occur that often in Montana. One report mentions that the bodies of all the Chinese that had been buried before 1880 in Blackfoot City were dug up from the cemetery and shipped to China in barrels, but bodies remained buried for those who died after this (Foster 1992). In Phillipsburg and Helena, the Chinese were buried in a separate section of the town cemetery. The Chinese in Virginia City had their own cemetery away from the town's main cemetery, and there are no reports of the bodies being exhumed for shipment.

Chinatowns throughout the west typically had several places in common: Chinese stores, a Joss (temple), as well as buildings used for gambling and smoking opium. Wherever even a few Chinese lived, a Chinese store usually was started almost immediately. That was the first public place that showed up and became the focus of life in smaller Chinese settlements. Trading networks were established through the help of friends, clan associations, or district companies (Barth 1964). This was true in Montana towns as well as in California and other states. Blackfoot City's Chinatown had several stores, and shipments of rice came all the way from China for the residents there (Foster 1992:37).

Another thing that most Chinatowns or small Chinese camps had was a Joss house (McLeod 1948:294). The Joss house was the "temple", the religious center for the community. In Montana, unlike in other states, not all towns with Chinese residents had a Joss. The only towns in the state with a Joss were Virginia City, Helena, and Butte (the latter had two of them). Sometimes, as in

Virginia City, the Joss was housed in a building that served other functions for the Chinese community.

Other places commonly associated with Chinatowns are those relating to the vices of opium smoking, gambling, and prostitution. The Chinese communities, just like the rest of the population of western mining towns, were populated overwhelmingly by young men leading them to have many places geared towards entertainment. The Chinese and drank less than the EuroAmerican men, and instead spent more of their time in gambling houses (Zhu 1997:78). Most Chinatowns were filled with gambling houses and opium dens, and prostitution frequently occurred in these businesses as well. These were major complaints that EuroAmericans had about Chinatowns, but it is important to point out that the Chinese were not the only ones who used these places.

Prostitution in the west was an outgrowth of demand due to the ratio of men to women that existed (Simmons 1989). As more Overseas Chinese spread throughout the West the prostitution of Chinese women came as well, for there was an even higher ratio of men to women in the Chinese populations. According to Hardesty (1994: 135), in the 1860s and 1870s Chinese women in the U.S. were prostitutes more than any other occupation. Hardesty says that Chinese tongs brought the women into the country to be sold as prostitutes (Hardesty 1994: 135). Petrik (1987) confirms this was the case in Helena, Montana. In Helena all the Chinese prostitutes in town worked for a pimp, and there are no records of them owning property or even appearing in court on their own behalf, in the documentary record (Petrik 1987: 32). Chung (1998) cautions that the

correlation between Chinese women and prostitution is not as strong as it appears to be. She notes that it certainly was the most common occupation of Chinese women on Nevada's Comstock mining district; however, many more women were reported to be prostitutes than actually were. Chung (1998:208) says U.S. Census enumerates labeled women as prostitutes even when living with a man with the same last name, which would most likely indicate that they were actually wives or concubines.

In China there was a long tradition of clan, district, and fraternal organizations, as well as strong family ties. Since the Overseas Chinese were almost all male and separated from their families, they created clan and fraternal ties in the U.S. Voluntary organizations, known as tongs, were started in California and served as support systems in the Chinese communities. Tongs started as associations of men serving good purposes, and over time began controlling profitable activities such as gambling and prostitution. They started to get looked at negatively by the EuroAmerican population when so-called "tong wars" erupted. News of tong wars were spread throughout the Western states and because of this respectable tongs may have not wanted to be referred to as such. According to Wegars (1997), the Chinese in Lewiston, Idaho called their Hip Sing Tong the Chinese Masonic Lodge, to gain acceptance from the EuroAmerican population. This seems to be a common practice throughout the west.

The first Chinese coming into newly populated regions of the West were placer miners, and in almost every area replaced the white miners that were there before them (Rohe 2001:3). Zhu (1999:49) says the reason Chinese always did

placer mining and not lode mining was because of their uncertainty of their future in this country they did not want to commit the amount of capitol required for hard-rock mining. Because of their diligence, as well as thrifty living, the Overseas Chinese miners were able to profit off land that white miners could not, and they subsequently excelled at the occupation of placer miner.

The Overseas Chinese also worked in large numbers constructing railroads across the West. Chinese were used to build the Central Pacific in the 1860s. Fifteen thousand Chinese workers were hired to work on the Northern Pacific line through Washington, Idaho, and Montana in the 1880s (Swartout 1988).

Once they arrived in new regions, whether coming to mine the placer deposits, or stayed on after working on railroad construction, many remained working in other professions. Overseas Chinese typically worked in laundries, restaurants, ran their own stores, and worked as servants in homes. Butte, Montana, with its larger population of Chinese, had several Chinese doctors that saw Chinese as well as white patients (Swartout 1988:48).

The most common occupation of Overseas Chinese in the western United States, after miner, was laundryman. It is a common belief that the Chinese took up the occupation of laundryman, because it was a job that no one else would do. Studies in Virginia City, Nevada have shown that this is not true. Nevada's Virginia City had people from multiple ethnicities competing for the laundry business (James et. al 1994:181). So it seems that it was not really for this reason that Chinese were so commonly laundrymen. Dirlik (2001: xxii) claims that the Overseas Chinese purposefully chose this so called "women's work" to avoid competition from the EuroAmerican men. Others have said it is due to simple

economic reasons, the same ones that lead the Chinese to placer mining and not lode mining. The tools required for the trade were inexpensive and therefore it would be easier to give up to move on when one wanted to or when necessity demanded it.

Whatever the reasons, Chinese took up the laundry occupation throughout the western states. In Virginia City, Nevada, large companies formed that could do the laundry so rapidly and inexpensively that they dominated the market (James et al. 1994). Smaller towns like those in Montana did not have such large companies. Instead, small towns typically had a few older men running their own laundries, giving them an opportunity for self-employment. In many smaller western towns there were few women laundresses that were therefore affected by the additional Chinese businesses. In Helena, Montana however, there was a large population of EuroAmerican washerwomen who resented the Chinese competition. A women's committee was formed to start a boycott against the Chinese washermen, and this received the support of the newspapers (Wunder 1980:20).

From 1880 to 1890 there was a dispersion of the Chinese throughout the West. The main reason for this was the closing of the frontier. Changing economy and new social structure in western towns left no room for the Chinese inhabitants (Lee 1947: 65). Switches from small-scale placer mining, to large-scale mechanized mining pushed the Chinese out of their main occupation in the American West. The great railroad construction projects were finishing at this time, resulting in thousands of Chinese without jobs. Another factor was the fact that there were virtually no Chinese women in the West due to the block on

immigration; there was no chance of this changing, which left miniscule opportunities for starting families. Most of the Chinese living in the interior of the American West moved to the larger cities of the West coast where there were sizable populations of Chinese, like San Francisco and Seattle. The lack of larger cities and job opportunities influenced many Chinese to move out of states like Montana.

History of Virginia City with Emphasis on Overseas Chinese

Prospectors Thomas Cover, Henry Edgar, Bill Fairweather, Barney Hughes, Harry Rodgers, and Michael Sweeney were returning to their home in Bannack, from a gold-seeking trip, when on May 26, 1863 they made the initial discovery that would lead to the founding of Virginia City. When they stopped to take a break, they tested the gravels of a creek that Edgar named Alder after the trees growing along it. There they started turning up enough gold to know they had found a prime location (Hamilton 1970). They returned to Bannack to get supplies, and in doing so received the attention of the miners there. When they returned to Alder Creek with their supplies, a group of around 200 men followed them.

The gulch began multiplying with people practically overnight. On June 17 1863, less than one month after the initial discovery, the town site of Virginia City was incorporated. Soon after that, towns were laid out up and down the gulch. That first summer miners were living in the 14-mile gulch amongst the town sites in dugouts, brush wickiups, tents, and crude cabins (Hamilton 1970). The gold discovery in Alder Creek and the influx of thousands of miners to the area directly

lead to the formation of Montana Territory, on May 26 1864, exactly a year later (Ellingsen 1977:1).

One estimate lists the population of Virginia City in 1864 at 4,000 (Bancroft 1890). Hamilton (1970) gives the population of Alder Gulch (including Virginia City) in 1864 as 10,000. Most all of these early residents of the gulch were miners, and the rest were supplying the miners with a product or service. Miners applied placer techniques; lode mining was unknown in the gulch for the first few years. Lyden, in *Gold Placers of Montana* (1987), states that \$30,000,000 was mined in the first three years of the gulch, all from placer mining. First the miners used the conventional ways of getting placer gold, using hand tools, such as rockers, pans, and sluice boxes (Lyden 1987:54). It was not until around the late 1860's that most of the Euro-American miners in Virginia City switched to mechanized hydraulicking (Rohe 1985; Grant 1998).

These early miners in Virginia City came from many different locations. The U.S. Manuscript Census records from 1870 list the birthplaces for a majority of the miners in East Coast states, as well as other countries such as Ireland, Sweden, Poland, England, Scotland, Switzerland, Norway, Prussia, and Canada. Almost all of the early residents to the town were male. Mary Ronan remembers being a little girl arriving in town in the first rush to Virginia City and the atmosphere of the town at the time. Saloons, gambling and hurdy-gurdy houses were too frequent to count, and there were constant fights in the streets between the rough men that lived there (Ronan 2003:31). High stakes gambling; boxing; cock, bull, and dog fighting; and "fancy ladies" were among the towns entertainment (Baumler 1999:69).

A more elegant society added to the layers of Virginia City, with fancy dress balls appearing within the first year of the town's existence (*Montana Post* 1864:3). While most communities took a year or two to get to this sophisticated stage of boomtown development, Virginia City hit that stage in less than a year, and its first stone building was erected that first summer (Grant 1998:34). Right away the town plat was drawn up, and street systems were laid out in grids. Different fraternal organizations were formed. Theaters hosted local amateur groups, as well as traveling troupes. Virginia City got its nickname of the "social city" during this time because of all of these factors (Baumler 1999:69). The "social city" (see Figure 1) served as the cultural center of the surrounding region.



MHS Archives 956-061

Figure 1- Virginia City, Montana in 1866.

As just discussed, all of the earliest residents of Virginia City were of EuroAmerican descent. The first change in the Alder Gulch population was shown in the *Montana Post* in June of 1865. The unknown article author, writing with in an unwelcoming tone, reported that a group of Chinese had entered the gulch. No further reports were made right after this, but the new Chinese residents must have been setting up at the western edge of town. That same year Barsness (1962:20) talks about roaming through the gambling dens of Virginia City's Chinatown.

Starting with that first newspaper article, the press treated the Chinese in a discriminatorily manner. Articles spread rumors about the Chinese; including the idea that they were going to take away all of the white miners' jobs (Barsness 1962:233). The hate campaign continued and throughout the 1860s; when the Chinese were discussed in the *Montana Post*, they were mentioned mainly in the "Police Court" section of the paper. This certainly clouded the public opinion of them because negative press had started on the very first day they arrived in town.

Similar to Chinese communities elsewhere in the West the earliest Chinese to come to Virginia City were placer miners (see Figure 2). However according to Barsness (1962), during their time living in Virginia City, more of the men worked as domestic servants and laundrymen. The Chinese took over the laundry business at the time in Virginia City, and the rest of the population did not complain. Unlike in Helena, where the jobs were being taken from women, Virginia City did not yet have many women; the fact that the EuroAmerican men did not want to do the job made a niche for the Chinese. Another profession

started by Virginia City's Chinese was gambling house operator. According to the *Montana Post* (1866:5), "John" paid his license to keep his gambling house at the western end of Wallace Street, a place where Chinese men allegedly crowded into every evening to gamble. The author recommends that one gain a slight understanding of the "chow chow" jargon in order to make some money, and also notes the prevalence of opium smoking in the gambling house, however, states it had no effect on them (*Montana Post* 1866:5). The lack of Chinese businesses on the Sanborn maps and in city directories compared to the populations of Chinese in Virginia City indicates that Barsness (1962) may not have been correct and that most of the Chinese men in Virginia City were occupied as miners.

In 1870, the first national Census was taken in Montana, revealing the presence of 18,306 white, 1,949 Chinese, and 183 black living in the new territory (Hamilton 1970:352). Swartout (1988:44) points out that the actual number of Chinese was probably much higher, as Census records notoriously underestimated the numbers of Chinese. In 1870, Virginia City was the second largest city in the territory, after Helena. Virginia City still remained the territorial capital, and had high hopes of becoming the state capital in the near future. Trying for this distinction, many grand buildings in town were built during this time. Additionally there were twelve grocery stores in town, four hotels, a bowling alley, a pool hall, two breweries, four saloons, a restaurant, seven shoe stores, a newspaper, and many other businesses (Leeson 1885). This was when the town truly lived up to its nickname the "social city." The town aimed to grow larger and larger, but its plans were never carried out.

In 1875, Virginia City lost the fight to remain the territorial capital to Helena, which almost guaranteed the city's further decline. With the majority of the placer gold gone, and the town no longer a political hotspot, there was nothing left to encourage the population to rise. While the EuroAmerican population declined, the number of Chinese kept steadily growing.



MHS Archives

Figure 2- Chinese miners in Alder Gulch (Hayden Survey 1869-1871).

In the 1870 Census, one-third of the population of Virginia City was Chinese. They were reworking abandoned placer claims, as well as running businesses. In the late 1870s there were two Chinese stores (Leeson 1885) and a handful of Chinese laundries (Fireman's Fund 1878). Compared to other western towns, Virginia City was not very harsh in its discrimination of Chinese. For example, fighting between Chinese and white residents is not noted in newspapers or personal accounts from the time. Additionally the Chinese in Virginia City were allowed to own property, and they owned businesses as well as mining claims in the gulch. In town they were restricted to the property at the west end of Wallace Street by city ordinance (Grant 1998). The western end of the street was full of Chinese laundries, stores, dwellings (see Figure 3), and brothels (Ellingsen 1977), with residential cabins extended from these buildings to the outskirts of town.

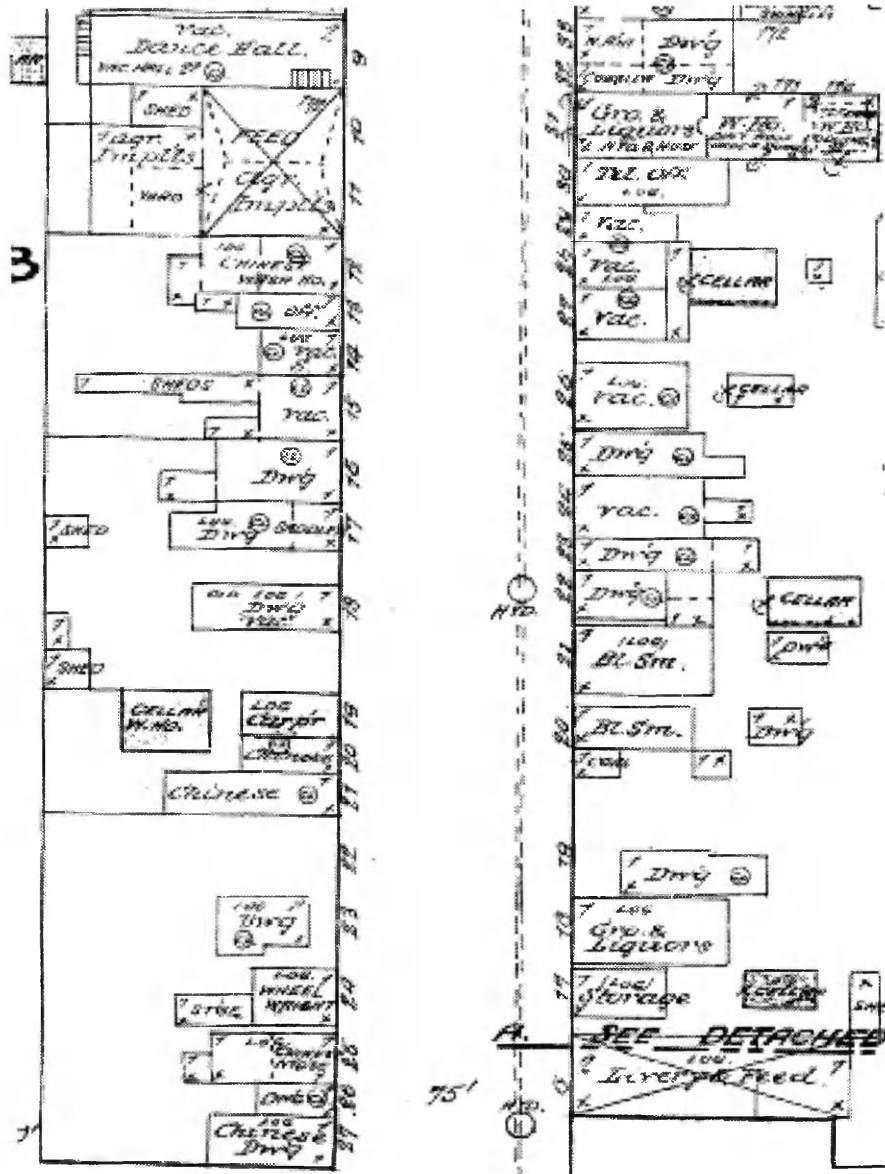
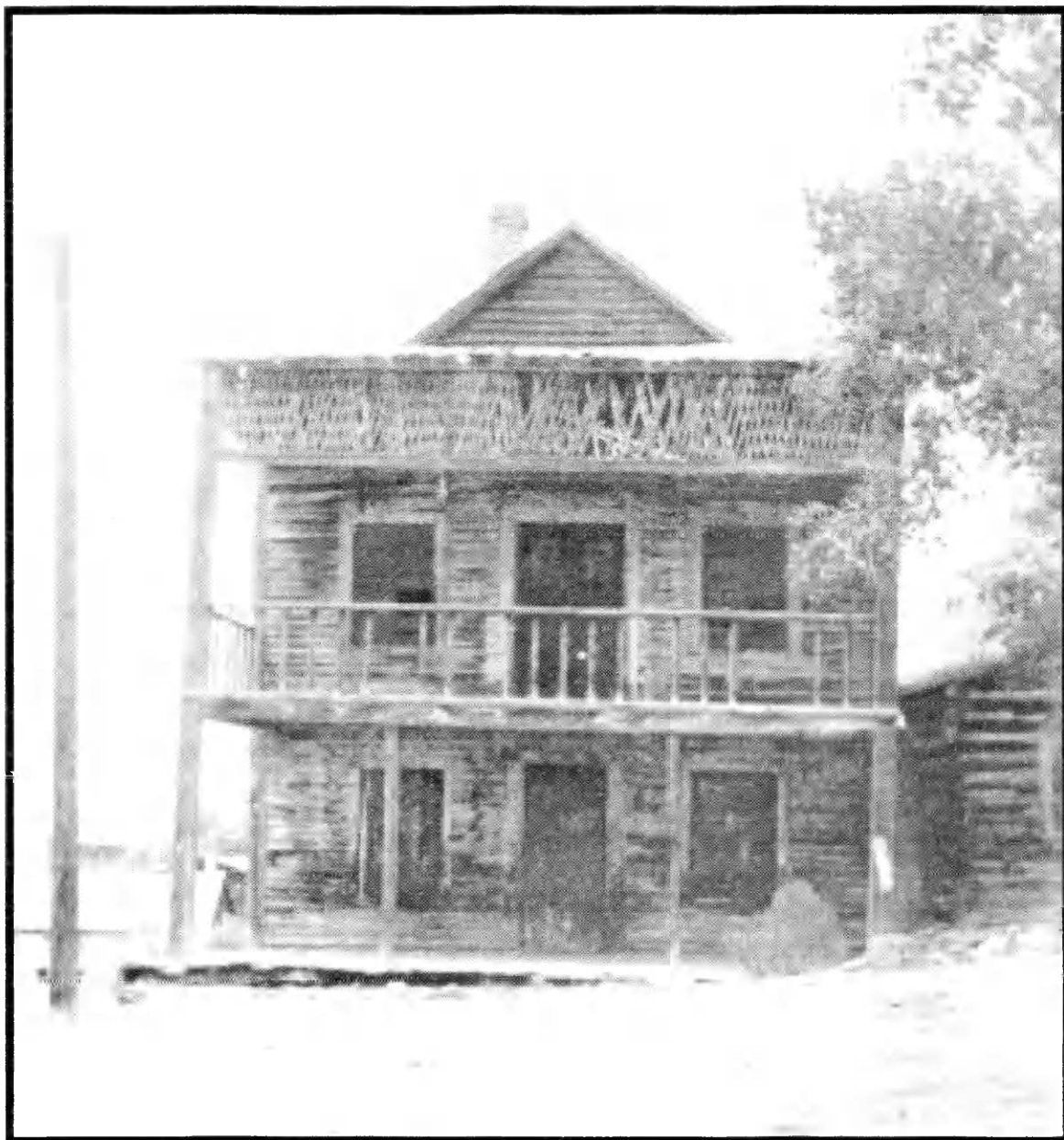


Figure 3- This 1884 Sanborn map shows the clustering of Chinese buildings at the western edge of Wallace Street, also note the Chinese washhouse in the northeast portion of the block.

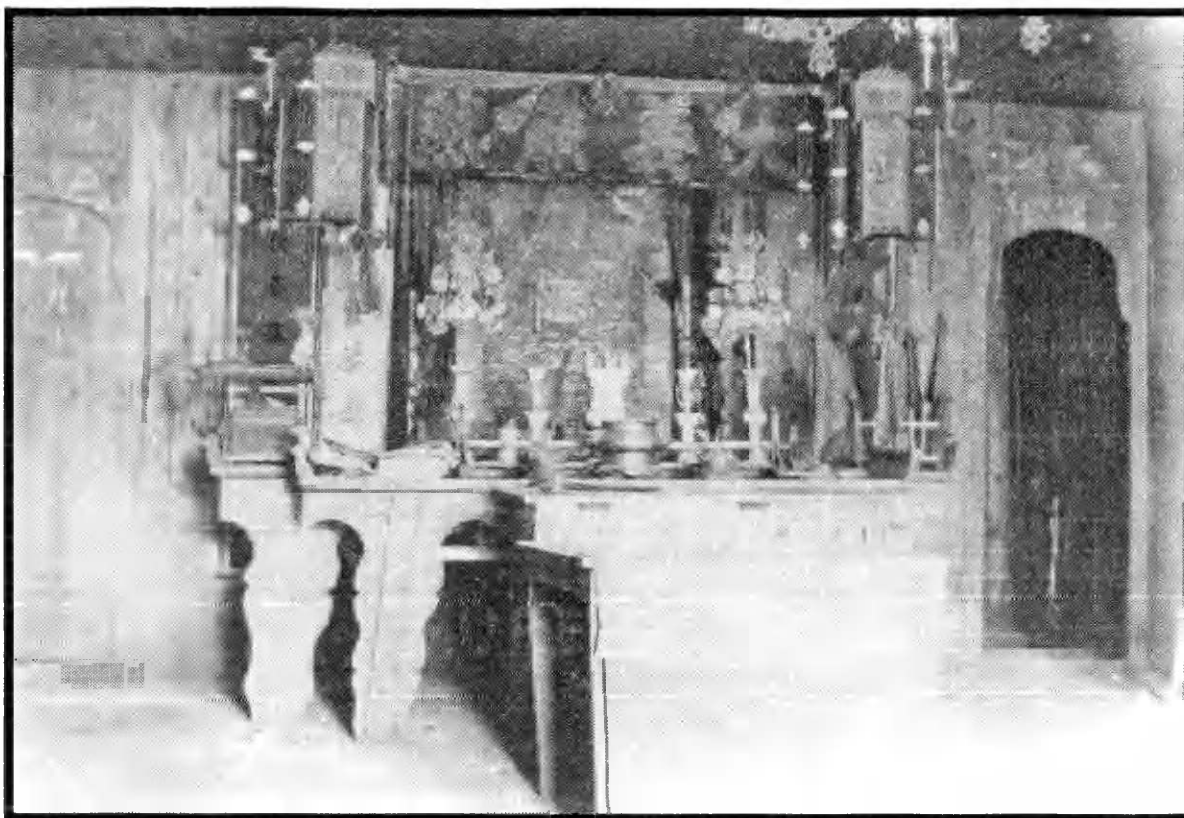
The heart of Virginia City's Chinatown was the Chinese Masonic Lodge, which sat at the west end of Wallace Street (see Figure 4). Ellingsen (1977) estimates that the lodge was constructed in the 1860s. This wooden building served multiple purposes. It was the home of the Masonic Lodge, which was a fraternal society that reinforced Chinese social and cultural values, taking the place of the family for these single men. A banner hanging inside listed 21 rules that the men had to abide by, including avoidance of fighting in public and not coveting someone's wife or sister for her beauty. These rules seem to indicate the Chinese were trying to maintain order in their community; this might have been part of an effort to prevent trouble with the surrounding community, which were already prejudiced against them (Swartout 1988).

The Chinese Masonic Lodge building also held the temple or "Joss," which was the focus for social and religious activities in the community (see Figure 5). In larger cities, the Joss had its own building (Swartout 1988); here it was located inside in the lodge. A primary source claims the temple was on the top floor and the ground floor was an opium den filled with booths for lying down and smoking in (Davis 1976:777). According to Davis (1962), other than serving as a fraternity house and temple, the lodge also served as a brothel and gambling house for all the Alder Gulch Chinese. It is hard to tell how accurate this account is. No Chinese brothels or gambling dens were ever listed on any maps of Virginia City, but reports of them (not their exact locations) are found in the town's newspapers.



MHS Archives 956-185

Figure 4- Chinese Masonic Lodge in Virginia City.



MHS Archives 956-180

Figure 5- The Joss located in the Chinese Masonic Lodge in Virginia City.

Even though Virginia City's population was declining in 1880, it still served as a commercial center for Madison County. There was still a newspaper being printed, several places sold clothing and groceries, and a barber, a bank, a hospital, and even a roller rink were among the many businesses that continued operation (Polk 1884).

EuroAmerican miners started a hard rock mining boom around Virginia City in the early 1880s (Friedman 1990:62). However, this never reached commercial success because the ore that was recovered had to be moved to the railroad in Alder, and then shipped to smelters far away for treatment, resulting in high production costs (Friedman 1990:62).

The 1880-1910 Census records document a decrease in numbers as well as a steady aging of the Chinese residents in Virginia City. Eighty-nine Chinese were recorded living in town in 1880; two of them were children and six were women. Interestingly, in the U.S. Census for 1880 and 1890, the occupations of almost all of the Chinese in Virginia City were listed as “Day Laborers.” This is most likely due to EuroAmerican beliefs that Chinese were here just to make some money and move on, but may not accurately state their occupation. In 1885 there were still two Chinese stores open (Leeson 1885:774) (see Figure 6). The business directory lists Hop Hing Kee as the owner of one of them, and he was the same man that owned one of the two stores listed previously in the late 1870s (Polk 1877, 1884). So not all of the Chinese were simply making some cash and moving on as suggested by folklore and as implied by Census records. The Census also greatly underreported the number of Chinese living in Virginia City, as shown below.

There is a story that has been retold several times concerning a battle that was fought between warring Chinese companies over a land lease in Virginia City in 1881 (Davis 1962; Wolle 1963). The story is usually told humorously as it points out the indifference whites showed towards Chinese at the time. The story begins with a battle in which several Chinese men are killed, and two are arrested for their murders. The case eventually had to be dismissed because the two Chinese charged with murder had left the country. They had been allowed to walk out of their jail cells with visitors, the jailors keeping two completely different Chinese in custody because they all looked the same to them (Davis



MHS Archives 956-176

Figure 6- Store in Chinese section of Virginia City (ca. 1900).

1962; Wolle 1963). This account is contradictory to Census records, as the 600 men reported to be in that one battle was a larger number of Chinese than the population indicated by the Census at the time. This is just one of the many instances where the historical records do not agree on the topic of the Chinese in Virginia City.

More importantly, this draws attention to the cursory treatment Census enumerators and mapmakers gave to the Chinese. Not too much later, in 1900, around 200 Chinese were said to be living in rows of neat cabins in Chinatown, raising vegetables on their roofs (Barsness 1962:245). A historical photograph of a woman standing outside of two buildings in Chinatown in 1899 reveals what look like log cabins (see Figure 7). Yet the 1904 map made by the Sanborn Company just has a small notation at the edge of the city map noting that there is “20’ TO GROUP OF CHINESE SHANTIERS.” Even more amazing, this is the only Sanborn map made of Virginia City that makes a notation of Chinatown. It is apparent that this was something that did not even seem important enough to insure and add to the Sanborn Map.



MHS Archives 956-178

Figure 7- Woman standing outside of buildings in Chinese section of town, 1899.

The Conrey Placer Mining Company formed in 1897, bringing about a new phase in the mining history of Alder Gulch. Conrey began dredging operations in Adobetown at the end of Alder Gulch, which permanently changed the landscape of the gulch. For a few decades, the six dredges used by the company moved up and down the gulch, covering around 400-500 acres total. As the dredge moved its way north along the gulch towards Virginia City, it rendered the land unusable to placer miners, as well as completely covering the cities of Central, Nevada, Adobetown, and Junction with dredge piles (Spence 1989).

After the turn of the century, the population of Overseas Chinese really started fading out, following the pattern that was seen throughout the west. Many of the first Chinese immigrants had already chosen to leave for newer discoveries like those in Last Chance Gulch decades earlier. As the dredge came up Alder Gulch to Virginia City, the company was buying up and obliterating all the placer ground the Chinese had been reworking; some Chinese mining companies even sold their claims to the Conrey Company (Chong et al. 1906). A few stayed on running stores and laundries, but, as the Chinese population they served grew smaller and smaller, they too started moving on as well. Due to the very small amount of Chinese women, receding opportunities for other Chinese in the U.S., and the government's blocking of immigration, the population could only decline and eventually disappear. Most moved on to try their luck in other diggings, to live in the bigger cities of the West Coast, or return to China.

As was the case in other cities and small towns of the west, a few older Chinese remained to live out their life in Virginia City, Montana. The 1907 Sanborn Map still listed the one building at the end of Wallace Street as a "Chinese Dwelling," so at this point there must have still been a few Chinese living there. U.S. Census in 1910, notes the last documented Chinese person living in Virginia City as Sam Lee Haw, a man who had been running a Chinese laundry on Wallace Street for over a decade. According to the 1910 U.S. Census only nine Chinese residents lived in all of Madison County. This is probably a low number, as there were likely some Overseas Chinese still living in or around Virginia City after that. Indeed, some historians have said that a sizable Chinese population lived there until the 1930s (Ellingsen 1977). Barsness (1962:245)

claims (and does not cite any reference) that the last Chinese resident of Virginia City was China Mary, who lived here in the 1920s and told stories of her life as a prostitute in the town.

The overall population of Virginia City was changing at this time. Crews working on the gold dredging operations lived in town and apparently kept several brothels in business during the early 1900s (Baumler 1999:73). Amazingly, no “Female Boarding Houses” were shown on the Sanborn maps in the busiest days of the gold rush in Virginia City. Not until the 1904 and 1907 maps were these shown, confined to the same general area of town that the Chinese had been. The 1920s marked the end of the Conrey Company, and while other dredges were tried in the gulch during the 1930s, they did not last long. In 1942 the war was on and the U.S. government stopped gold mining, as it was no longer deemed an essential industry in the United States (Baumler 1999:73). This effectively ended mining in Alder Gulch for good.

The Chinese were not the only ones to vacate Virginia City at that time. In the 1940s, when it was on the way to becoming a dilapidated ghost town, Charles and Sue Bovey visited the town and became interested in saving it. Charles Bovey began buying buildings in town and restored them. He tried to refurnish them to retain their original character, and even tried to reconstruct some buildings that were gone at that time (Baumler 1999). By the 1950s, Virginia City had become a tourist destination in Montana. In the 1960s, Charles Bovey had the railroad depot from Harrison, Montana brought to Virginia City and placed right on top of the area that at one time was the center of Chinatown (Ellingsen 1977). Bovey connected a rail link from Virginia City (for no real railroad was ever constructed

to Virginia City) to Nevada City, for tourists to ride back and forth. Today Nevada City is there, not as it was originally, but full of salvaged buildings and antiques that Bovey collected and put there. Since all the other towns in the gulch were demolished by the dredging operations (Spence 1989), Virginia City is left as the only lasting remains of the golden days of Alder Gulch.

3. Archaeological Evidence

Archaeology of Chinese in the West

Historic archaeologists have been increasingly interested in the topic of the Overseas Chinese in the last 15 years, as evidenced by the number of publications that are now available on the subject. Some, such as Greenwood's (1996) *Down by the Station*, provide detailed accounts of one large site, while others such as Wegars' (1993) *Hidden Heritage* include collections of the different types of Overseas Chinese archaeological sites throughout the West. A search through the journal *Historical Archaeology* turned out a surprisingly small number of articles that dealt with the topic of Overseas Chinese. Almost every single article was about Chinese coins and the debate over whether they served as monetary purposes in the United States or not. Farris (1979), and Olsen (1983), try to prove how the coins found in excavations show that they were used as circulating currency. Akin (1992) makes a more compelling argument in her article on the non-currency use of the coins; she believes they were used as gaming pieces, talismans, decoration, and as medicinal accessories.

Many archaeological works dealing with Overseas Chinese examine acculturation. Staski (1993: 134-137) found glass bottles in El Paso with Chinese and English writing on them, and he sees this as evidence of bilingualism, and therefore, acculturation. Greenwood found that there was very minimal degree of acculturation of the Chinese in Ventura, California. No remains of silverware or plates, as well as the presence of porcelain spoons and several sizes of bowls, indicate that the Chinese were still using chopsticks and eating out of their

traditional dishes. James (1995:52) also looks at dishware to examine the level of acculturation in an Overseas Chinese community. He found a mire of adaptations in British plates, cups, and spoons. He also found the traditional Bamboo, Celadon, and utilitarian stoneware vessels. He sees this as a mixture of cultural adaptation and necessary compromise (James 1995: 52).

Other studies trace levels of acculturation through food remains found in the archaeological record. Diehl et al. (1998) wrote a very convincing article on the level of acculturation in Tucson, based on plant and animal remains unearthed in archaeological excavations. Others have found evidence of bread being made by Overseas Chinese and think this is a strong sign of assimilation (Lagenwalter 1980).

Archaeologists also are trying to identify Chinese women in the archaeological record. It is hard enough to glean ethnicity from artifacts, but it is even more difficult to try and use artifacts to interpret both gender and ethnicity. While we can never be 100% sure who used an artifact, there have been artifacts identified that are thought to represent Chinese women in the archaeological record. Noah's chapter on items of adornment, from *Wong Ho Leun* (1987) associates artifacts such as hair adornments, brass buttons, and jewelry with Chinese women.

Overall, a good deal of research has been done on ethnicity in historical archaeology over the last 29 years. Much of the work however, is a letdown, because it has not yielded an effective way of dealing with ethnicity. Schuyler's book *Archaeological Perspectives on Ethnicity in America* (1980) was one of the first compilations on ethnicity in historical archaeological literature. However all

of the chapters on the Chinese merely identify some types of Chinese artifacts that can be found; there are no interpretation of how those artifacts can help archaeologists understand issues such as ethnic identity and acculturation.

More recent literature continues to be guilty of this. I hope to see this change and advocate historic archaeological investigations in Virginia City, Montana to do so.

Archaeology of Chinese in Montana

Almost 100% of the archaeology that is done in Montana is affiliated with Cultural Resource Management (CRM) work. Because this involves working for a company with its own interests, time limits, and so on, professional published works are not commonly associated with CRM. Some archaeologists however, do the extra work to publish peer-reviewed books and articles based on CRM excavations (e.g. Greenwood 1996; Praetzelis & Praetzelis 2001). Absolutely no archaeological works have been published about Chinese sites in Montana.

A good number of excavations of Chinese sites in Montana probably exist, but the information is unavailable to the public, making it difficult to track down such literature; this makes it seem as if no work has been done at all. Brian Fagan, in his article “Archaeology’s Dirty Secret” (1995:15-17) identifies this as the main problem with archaeology today. He states that publication is a fundamental responsibility of archaeology, noting that if archaeologists start living up to their responsibility; this discipline would not be seen as a narrow pursuit that is unable to contribute useful information to other fields.

The only work that I have come across that could be defined, as “literature” on the Chinese in Montana is an unpublished master’s thesis on the

German Gulch Chinese, by Garren Meyer (2001). Meyer's thesis is the only synthesis of a Chinese community in Montana. His interest grew out of a series of excavations carried out by the CRM firm that employed him. These excavations took place on German Gulch, a mining district near Butte, and yielded five Chinese associated sites. In his research, he found that the Chinese there socially organized themselves based on their regional affiliations, as was done in California. There were two rival regional groups of Chinese in German Gulch, the Sam Yups and the Sze Yaps, which Meyer found out, avoided each other in order to keep peace in the gulch (Meyer 2001:223). The thesis also provides a good compilation of the type of Chinese archaeological sites found in Montana, including a Chinese store.

Butte, Helena, and Virginia City were the towns in the state with the highest populations of Overseas Chinese residents. Smaller towns such as Blackfoot City and Marysville also had Chinese populations and could provide future areas for research (Foster 1992). The CRM firm Western Cultural of Missoula, MT excavated a Chinese laundry in Marysville in the summer of 2003, but the report of this investigation is not yet complete. Unfortunately, in Helena, there is no possibility of future excavations. During the 1970s the Helena Urban Renewal program completely demolished all of the remains of the large Chinatown, leaving no historic trace of Chinese materials left in the city (Bik 1993).

Virginia City still has possibilities for future archaeological research on the Overseas Chinese. As noted above, dredging came all the way up Alder Gulch obliterating towns such as Adobetown, which at one time housed more Chinese

than white residents (Sievert 1993:41). However, Virginia City still remains close to the city it was at the turn of the twentieth century. It is unique in being one of the only historic mining towns in the West that has not been destroyed by fire in its history (Francaviglia 1991:80). Furthermore, because the town's population declined so rapidly, no new buildings were built after 1876 (Ellingsen 1977:2), until the Bovey era reconstructions. Since no ground disturbing activities have been going on in Virginia City for decades, it remains as an excellent place to do archaeology. The potential for its Chinatown's preservation makes it an opportune place to carry out archaeology of the Overseas Chinese, to shed light on this underdeveloped topic in Montana's history and historical archaeology.

Archaeology of Virginia City

The official city limits of Virginia City that were used when nominating the townsite to the National Register of Historic Places lie in T6S, R3W, sections 22, 23, 24, 26, and 27. A record search at the Archeological Records office at the University of Montana found 62 sites that fall within these boundaries. Site 24MA0723 is the actual town of Virginia City, with 24MA1154 designated to include the six last remaining buildings of Central City. Virginia City's oldest and newest cemeteries each have their own site number. The rest remaining sites in the area include mining operations in and around Virginia City. All the land within these boundaries is a mixture of private, State, and Bureau of Land Management property.

The State Historic Preservation Office contracted Dames & Moore in 1989 to do a survey of the Virginia City National Landmark. Paul Friedman, the

principal investigator, surveyed and recorded all the surviving structures in the townsite and all the historical sites around the city that lie within the 1,600 acre National Landmark boundary. This was the first archaeological survey done of Virginia City. In the summers of 2000 and 2001 the University of Montana ran field schools in Virginia City and those excavations will be discussed in further detail below. In 2001 John Boughton and Lynn M. Peterson did a series of excavations in Virginia City and Nevada City. The types of ceramics found are not listed in their report, so this typically strongest indication of Chinese presence cannot be examined. The one distinctive Chinese artifact found in their excavations was a Chinese coin found outside the north wall of the City Bakery building. This is not surprising, as on the 1884 Virginia City Sanborn map this building was a Chinese laundry. Other than this one coin, no Chinese artifacts have been reportedly located in all the archaeological work done in the area, except for the University's field school excavations in 2000 and 2001.

4. University of Montana Excavations

Methods

The 2000 and 2001 field schools in Virginia City, organized by the University of Montana, were a result of a contract with the Montana Heritage Commission. Several buildings in town were slated for preservation work; however, before this could be done, archaeologists were brought in to assess the archaeological resources associated with the preservation work areas. A full report of the excavations, including methods and results, can be found in the report that was prepared for the Montana Heritage Commission (Douglas and Brown 2002). The following summary of this work will therefore be brief.

In the field, students conducted test excavations under the direction of archaeologist, and University of Montana professor, John Douglas. The crew laid out some units near areas slated for ground-disturbing activity associated with building restoration and others were laid out a few places in town to answer specific research questions. One of these being, could the presence of Chinese in town be detected in the archaeological record?

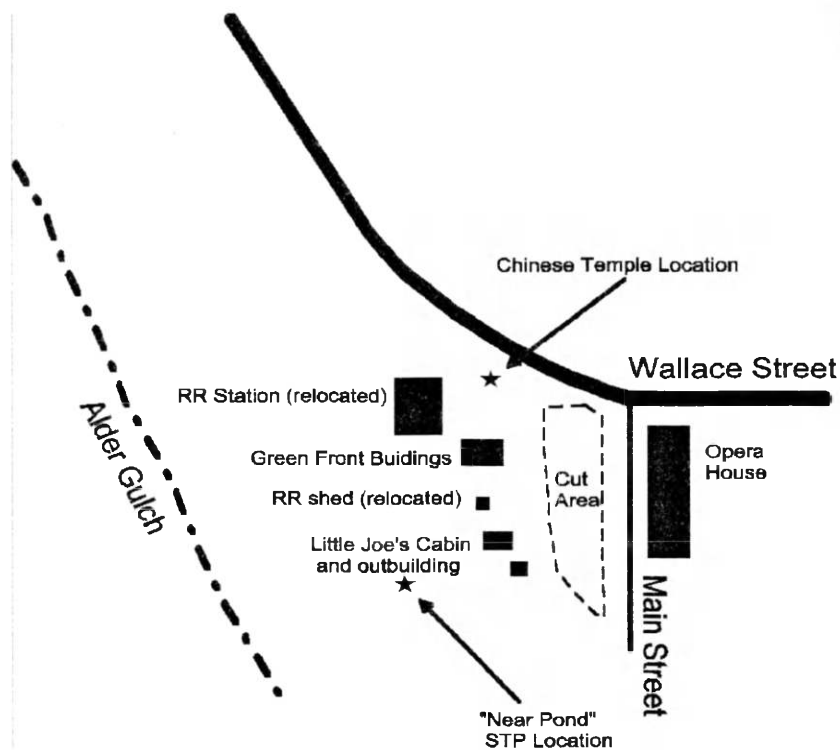
Students then opened 2 1/2 foot square units, and began excavating them in stratigraphic and arbitrary levels. If soil changes appeared levels switched to stratigraphic layers; however if no changes were visible each level would be taken down to an arbitrary level of four inches. Units were taken down to culturally sterile layers, with the dirt being removed and screened through 1/4 inch screens. The crew recovered artifacts in the units or from the screened soil, and then bagged them and sent them to the lab for the initial sorting process. At the lab,

students washed artifacts and let them air-dry overnight. The initial sort was then done in which artifacts were identified, counted, weighed, and measured, then placed into categories. Students then filled out lot forms recording the contents of each lot along with all the weight and measurements. After these analyses were completed, artifacts were placed in plastic bags along with a label card, and put away for storage. At the end of the excavations, the artifacts were taken to the lab at the University of Montana. Here Linda Brown did an in-depth analysis of the ceramics, and over the next two years Master's students, as well as undergraduates in Artifact Analysis classes, further examined them. The artifacts are currently being curated at the McFarland Curatorial Center, in Virginia City, Montana.

Results

Below is a summary of the results of the UM field school excavations at areas that yielded artifacts indicative of Chinese presence. All the information has been taken from John Douglas and Linda Brown's (2002) report, unless cited otherwise. I took all the photographs of artifacts as well as identified the Chinese ceramics type based on the most common terms used in archaeological literature (e.g. Sando and Felton 1993).

Figure 8- Map taken from Douglas and Brown report, 2000.



Chinese Temple

In 2000, an excavation took place on the south side of Highway 287, near the Chinese temple location (see Figure 8). The temple was constructed in the 1860s and remained intact until 1939 when the state highway department demolished the building in order to change the angle of the turn where the highway enters town. The university crew excavated one unit (Unit 28) trying to find features or artifacts related to the temple, knowing that this could be problematic because of the past highway construction. No identifiable Chinese related artifacts were found, but the old boardwalk that can be seen in historical photographs running in front of the Chinese Temple (see Figure 4), was located.

Main and Wallace

The crew dug a shovel test pit (STP) on the corner of Wallace and Main Streets, and this yielded a high percentage of Chinese ceramics. Ceramic artifacts

from Lot 171 were all from Chinese vessels, including the only remains found so far of the Double Happiness style (see Figure 9), a ceramic style which is found in Overseas Chinese sites prior to 1870, and very rare after that (Sando and Felton 1993: 160). Archaeologists concluded that this could have been a Chinese residence due to the high percentage of Chinese ceramics and glass found here.



Figure 9- Double Happiness fragments from Lot 171, Main and Wallace.

Little Joe's Cabin

The crew dug STP's in the ground around Little Joe's Cabin, which sits in the area west of Main Street, trying to further the testing of the Chinese presence in Virginia City (see Figure 8). A crewmember found a Fan Tan marker in a STP; therefore units were laid out for further investigation. Four continuous units were opened, in which Chinese ceramics, including a sherd from a Celadon vessel, a sherd from a bowl with a Bamboo design, and numerous brown glaze

utilitarian stonewares, were found amongst soil and cobbles. It was determined that the artifact-rich soil here had probably been transported from the cut area that lies between the building and main street. The soil had been taken from there to level the ground for the lumberyard construction and used to smooth over old placer piles in this location. The cut area had been a Chinese occupation area, which explains all the Chinese related artifacts found at Little Joe's (Douglas and Brown 2000: 26-27).

Dance and Stuart

The crew excavated three units (Units 58, 59, 61) behind the Dance and Stuart Store on Wallace Street; the current building is a Bovey era reconstruction, but the original building was used from around 1884-1890 (and possibly longer) as a Chinese laundry and residence. The units were placed where the back walls of the original buildings would have been. Chinese presence of this site was confirmed by large amounts of Asian ceramics. The majority of ceramics were utilitarian wares, but there were also fragments of bowls with Bamboo, and Four Seasons designs (see Figures 10 and 11). Three of the Four Seasons fragments fit together and form the base of a vessel that displays decorations on the interior, and a stylized reign mark on the exterior (see Figure 12). This Chinese mark is unique in the Pacific Northwest region, and as of yet still has not been identified (Priscilla Wegars 2003, pers. comm.).



Figure 10- Bamboo rice bowl fragment from Lot 339, Dance and Stuart.

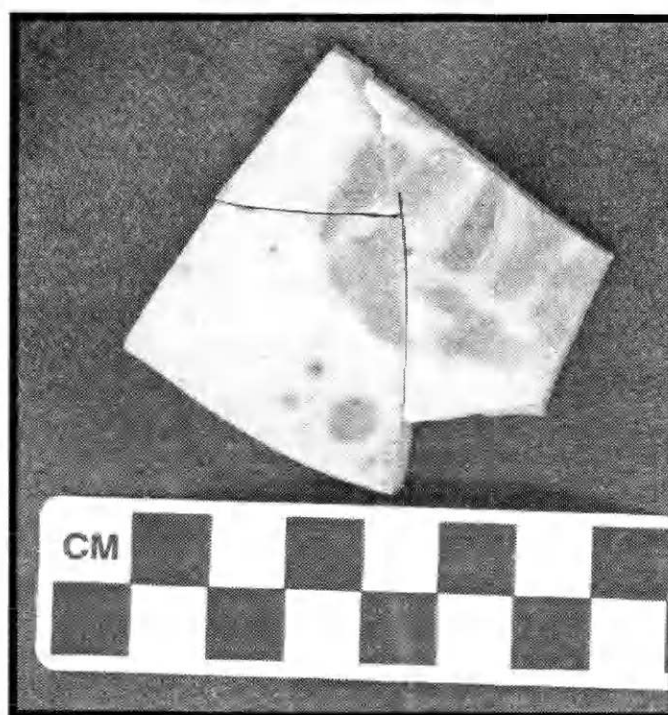


Figure 11- Four Seasons refit from Lot 328, Dance and Stuart.

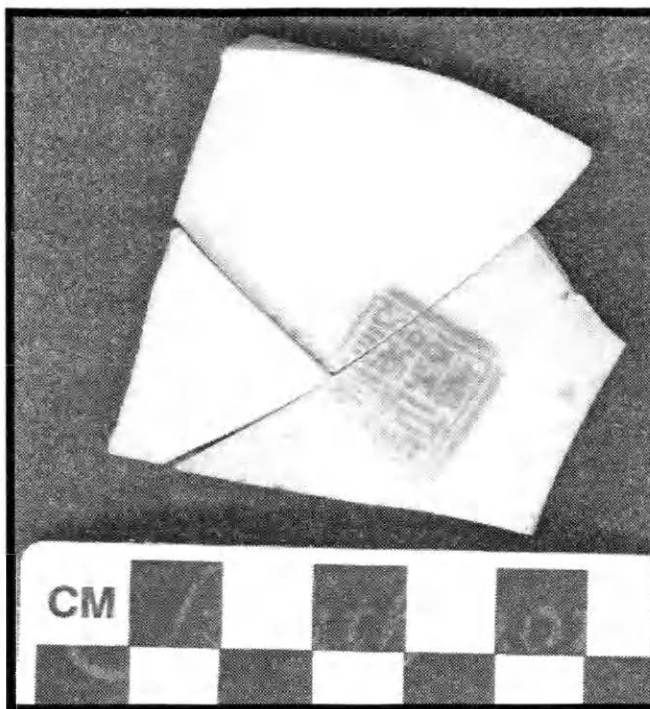


Figure 12- Reign mark on refit from Lot 328, Dance and Stuart.

Archaeologists also unearthed orange earthenware opium pipe bowl fragments, similar to those classified by Etter (1980), with the fingerprints left in the clay (see Figure 13). Such artifacts, when combined with information from the Sanborn Maps (1884, 1890), strongly suggest that this location was occupied by Chinese people. Additionally, laundry bluing and galvanized bucket fragments were found confirming that this building most likely served as a laundry at one time, as indicated by the 1890 Sanborn Map.



Figure 13- Opium pipe bowl fragments from Lot 328, Dance and Stuart.

Artifacts indicative of gambling were also found at this local. A black glass marker, as well as an ovoid bone object were collected, and are thought to have been used as gaming pieces. Excavators also found the second Fan Tan marker of the excavations here (see Figure 14). The marker resembles those found by Lister and Lister (1989:75) in Tucson, Arizona's Chinatown. Fan Tan is known to be the most widely played gambling game by the Overseas Chinese (e.g. Barth 1964).



Figure 14- Fan Tan marker from Lot 330, Dance and Stuart.

These above localities yielded artifacts that, along with historical records, indicated Chinese presence in the western end of Virginia City. Asian ceramics turned up in other localities in town, but this was most likely due to reasons other than Chinese occupation. For instance, other areas in town turned up Asian porcelains however those represent porcelains made for EuroAmerican markets. EuroAmericans used these fancier porcelains, while the Chinese had ceramic styles that were specifically imported for them for everyday uses.

5. A Plan for the Future

Research Questions

Historical archaeology has undergone many critiques, from those in the field as well as those from the outside. For example, Schuyler (1988) calls it internally successful, and externally unsuccessful; this goes back to that idea that we as historic archaeologists do not produce anything that is of value to general scholarship outside the discipline. Additionally CRM work is criticized for focusing on specific events and not being theoretically driven (Greenwood 2001). Cleland (1988) sees this as historical archaeology's major fault, and stresses that we need theoretical bases for research that go beyond artifactual indications of ethnicity, sex, and class. Whether the work of archaeologists is academically-driven or CRM-driven, archaeologists have responded to such critiques and attempt to identify relevant, theory-informed research questions.

Research topics go through phases of popularity in historical archaeology, as well as its parent discipline, anthropology, just as is the case with any other field. While historical archaeologists tend to grab onto research topics that interest them and that are influenced by what is popular at the time, some historic archaeologists have tried to define "questions that count." Many agree that pertinent questions are those that will help us understand general cultural phenomena that transcend specific times and places; these would link historical archaeology with broad anthropological issues, such as acculturation. Some think that the most important topic of study in these times is capitalism (Orser 2001). Mrozowski (1988) stresses cross-cultural comparisons, and finds

questions regarding world urbanization and environmental history to be important. Deagan (1988) gives the examples of slavery, class formation, economic inequality among classes, and environmental degradation, as topics that are relevant in our world today that historical archaeologists can address. There are many other topics that can and should be examined, because as these archaeologists are stressing, we should not be doing archaeology just for the sake of digging. We need a theoretical basis and some valid questions we want answered fueling the excavations.

While there are many topics available for archaeological research and for research questions, it is becoming more and more of a trend to choose topics that can help gain insight on our world today, that is the “modern world” (e.g. Orser 1996). Below is a list of research topics, related questions, and some examples I developed, which could guide future excavations in Virginia City, Montana, and that should allow insight into broad anthropological issues and the modern world. Cooperative research between the University of Montana and the Montana Heritage Commission is among the expected future archaeological research in Virginia City that could possibly consider these questions.

Questions about social issues, those dealing with the life of the Chinese in Virginia City, are perhaps the most important to be asked. Many issues, such as socioeconomic status, hinge on the public perception and treatment of the Chinese by the rest of the population. Because Chinese people did not always pack up and leave town, archaeologists have the opportunity to try and examine how the Chinese dealt with such issues. Studies from several different locations

in the West as noted above could be used for comparative studies (e.g. Greenwood 1980 and Diehl et al. 1998).

Socio-economic Status

1. Can the socioeconomic status of the Chinese in Virginia City be determined by the artifacts (ceramics, faunal and plant remains) they left behind? If so, how do they compare with Chinese in other Western towns? Does the socioeconomic status hinge on public attitudes towards the Chinese in these different towns? For example comparisons can be made on the percentage of the more expensive Celadon and Four Seasons ceramics, to the cheaper Bamboo and Double Happiness, to identify the living style of the Overseas Chinese. This most likely can be traced back to the attitudes towards the Chinese, and the factors that caused them.
2. Can the ceramic and food remains of the different Chinese sites in town be used to differentiate levels of socioeconomic status between the Overseas Chinese living in Virginia City? Were the material differences just a function of formation processes and individual variation, or do they indicate separate “class-like” levels of the Chinese?

Resistance to Racism

1. Are there really Chinese tunnels in Virginia City, or is this merely folklore? If they are there, can it be shown whether they were intended as escape routes if riots ever broke out or did they serve as other purposes? This could be indicated by the presence of weaponry, or likely items such as

food remains may be found indicating these were merely underground storage areas that got the reputation of being tunnels.

Acculturation

1. What can food choices, butchering patterns, and other archaeological evidence show about the level of acculturation of the Chinese in Virginia City? For example, were they still following their traditional eating patterns and cooking styles in Virginia City, or were they introducing EuroAmerican foods, such as bread, into their diet? Were they maintaining their cultural identity, using Chinese products, in spite of the readily available EuroAmerican products? This can be shown through the presence of tin cans, bottles in relation to the brown glazed utilitarian stonewares that Chinese products such as soy sauce, preserved and pickled foods, and liquor came in (e.g. Praetzellis and Praetzellis 1997: 178-195).
2. Can the levels of acculturation be traced through time using material culture?

Land Use Patterns

1. Can domestic versus industrial space be identified in the material remains?
2. Can occupations of the Overseas Chinese (besides those that are known to be in Virginia City; miner and laundryman) be identified through the material remains? Were the Chinese participating in other occupations within their homes, sharing work and domestic space?

Historical Documentation

One of the most fascinating aspects of Historical Archaeology is that it gives people a chance to check the validity of historical documents. The majority of the history of the United States has been written by “rich, white men,” and is frequently biased towards them and their views. As discussed above, newspaper reports as well as Census documents were not completely accurate when dealing with the Overseas Chinese. Future excavations in Virginia City give the chance to further look at the discrepancies.

1. What can the artifacts tell us to disprove beliefs set forth in the newspapers, for example that all the Chinese women in Virginia City were prostitutes? Can the presence of Chinese women be found in the archaeological record? Can other occupations of the Chinese women be found in the archaeological record?
2. Is there a basis to the belief that all the Chinese smoked opium? Are opium remains found in domestic areas, or only in opium dens? Can any opium dens be found in Virginia City?
3. Where gambling dens as prevalent in Chinatown as the newspapers recorded them to be? Can any other pastimes of the Chinese in Virginia City be indicated other than gambling?



Figure 15- West end of Wallace Street, Chinese section of Virginia City.

Potential Areas for Excavation

Several different buildings in town are shown on the Sanborn maps to have housed Chinese residence, as well as Chinese laundries over the years (Sanborn 1884, 1890, 1904). Below is a list of these building, starting at the building furthest east on Wallace (see figure 15, for map reference).

1. City Bakery- Chinese Laundry on the 1884 Sanborn.
2. Vacant Lot (original location of Brindlinger's Tobacco Shop)- held a Chinese washhouse in the 1870's (Ellingsen1977: 28).
3. Vacant Lot (on the west side of the Dress Shop)- held a Chinese laundry in the late 1870's (Firemans's Fund 1878).
4. Dance and Stuart- as discussed above was originally two buildings that served as Chinese laundries and residences (Sanborn 1884, 1890). Douglas and Brown (2002) identify the area behind the store as the best-known deposits relating to the Chinese occupation of Virginia City.
5. Vacant Lot (west of Aunt Julia's house)- Three buildings show up on the Sanborn maps that from the 1880's to 1900's were Chinese. The most eastern building was the Chinese mercantile up until 1905 or 1906 (Sanborn 1904, 1907). The other two buildings are merely listed as residences, but more may have gone on in this area (Sanborn 1884, 1890,1904, 1907). Ellingsen (1977: 24) adds that they also served as "houses of ill repute," and there was another Chinese mercantile in town, with an unknown location, that possibly could have been in one of these buildings.

Each of these locations has the potential for the recovery of artifacts that can shed more light on the Chinese in Virginia City. As noted above, the University team's excavation units yielded rich archaeological information around the Dance and Stuart building. This building was torn down then reconstructed thirty years later; yet it still had undisturbed deposits of Chinese artifacts.

6. One location that was indicative of being a possible Chinese residence during the UM field schools was the corner of Main and Wallace streets (Douglas and Brown 2000:24). A controlled excavation unit should be placed in this location to be able to answer questions dealing with Chinese residences and daily life of the Chinese in Virginia City.

7. Excavations should also be placed near where the UM team's Unit 28, "the Chinese Temple unit" was excavated by the UM team. Douglas and Brown (2000:25) note that there is not much space to do so, due to the placement of the highway, but another unit should use whatever space is possible in this area. If the unit were taken down below the level of the previously found boardwalk, results could give further information on the Chinese and what the real functions of this building were.

8. Douglas and Brown (2002) have identified the railroad depot to be a prime place for excavations of undisturbed ground. The railroad depot is constructed on posts, and butchered bone and other household artifacts are visible on the ground underneath the depot. Ellingsen (1977:24) thinks the area where the depot was placed was originally the "heart of Chinatown," home to many log cabins and sheds.

Public Archaeology

The twentieth century marks a time in the history of archaeology in which archaeologists have realized the necessity of being able to effectively communicate archaeological information to the public (Jameson 1997:11). The most effective way of making archaeology known and relevant to the public is through public archaeology. Public archaeology was started in the 1960s and was first associated with government mandated salvage operations. By the 1980s however, it has a broader meaning of any archaeological research that has an engagement with the public. Site tours, educational programs, exhibits, volunteer programs, and cooperative work with descendant communities, are all part of public archaeology today. Archaeologists have an ethical responsibility to spread their knowledge to the public. In doing effective public archaeology, the archaeologists can accomplish this as well as gathering more knowledge by working with local peoples and descendant communities (McKee 2002).

Public archaeology is the quickest way possible to introduce people to what archaeology is all about, and therefore making it relevant to people who are not in the field. Virginia City, being the tourist town that it is, is the perfect place to do this. A public archaeology plan should be vital to any proposed future archaeology there. The plan should include developing communication strategies between archaeologists and others. Ideas include sending out press releases to the local media. A media day could be planned and television crews could come take footage of the excavations. Field trips should be planned with the local schools. Each of these ideas could spread the news of what is going on in Virginia City and gather interest in seeing it. Regularly scheduled site tours can be set up;

the media will attract interested people, and the tourist flux in Virginia City is constant throughout the summertime. The crew should take turns guiding public tours because many times curious visitors are just as interested in the archaeologists themselves as well as what the excavations are yielding. Community volunteers could be used in excavations; the community in Virginia City is very interested in the city's history and can add useful information on the town.

The overall point of all this is to give the public a chance to see and talk to real archaeologists who can inform them as to what historic archaeology really is, and why it is important. This helps give voice to Montana's Chinese and gets the word out to a wider public; this will help make further research relevant and useful archaeology.

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