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TENSIONS OF TRADE AND MIGRATION: THE ORIGINS OF TRANSOCEANIC STEAMSHIP COMPANIES AND CHINA-U.S. EXCHANGE

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“Tensions of Trade and Migration” examines U.S. relations with China from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. It explores the paradoxical political and economic environment in which the United States fostered diplomatic relations with China. During the nineteenth century, American steamship companies and their owners gained a foothold in the transpacific trade by transporting goods and people from China into the North American Pacific region. The Burlingame-Seward Treaty (1868) advanced positive economic relations with China, yet the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 conveyed a message of exclusion and marginalization. From one point of view, strong U.S.-China relations were necessary to sustain the flow of Chinese labor and raw materials for North American industries and economies, yet white, working-class interests were focused on restricting Chinese migration into the United States and Canada.

In this complex Pacific world, competition for economic dominance between the United States, England, France, and Germany fostered the growth of steamship technology that brought China closer to Western societies. As the flow of Chinese immigrants and goods arrived into the United States and Canada, concerns over the status of white labor prompted both nations to enact exclusionary immigration policy. However, the overwhelming economic benefit from trade with China, particularly for businesses in Canada and the U.S. East Coast, propelled both nations to ensure that immigration restrictionism would not hinder economic relations with China. As a result, immigration laws in both Canada and the United States were class-based, allowing for the admission
of Chinese merchants and the prohibition of laborers. However, these provisions did not effectively prevent Chinese laborers from entering the United States. American responses to illegal Chinese immigration from Canada as well as the 1905 Chinese boycott of American goods, led to an overall deterioration of U.S.-China relations that persisted well into the mid-twentieth century.
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Chapter 1

Subsidized Commerce: The Development of Trade with China

The story of American Steamship companies in China did not begin on the high seas of the Pacific, but rather on the waters of the Yangtze River. It was here that early American companies found their footing in the transpacific trade. Competition was fierce and the struggle for dominance not only stemmed from traditional European powers, but also Chinese owned and operated companies. One of the most successful early American shipping companies was the Shanghai Steam Navigation Company founded by the import broker Russell & Company.¹ In 1862, Russell and Company was a modest trading firm with great ambition. At the horizon of Russell and Company loomed large profits, but not in the exchange of goods. Edward Cunningham, Russell and Company’s managing foreman in Shanghai, China, realized the vast potential of the China market, although his U.S. firm was far from taking advantage of an untapped market. The prospect to do was, however, was extraordinary. Writing to the president of Russell and Company, P.S. Forbes, on February 1, 1861, Cunningham elaborated on the “almost incalculable” business opportunity.² Cunningham, for example, heralded cotton as a profitable commodity. Cotton of the Yangtze region, he declared, was “supposed to be much greater than the whole produce of the United States.”³ At this time, however, Russell and Company was not properly positioned to profit from cotton or any other crop.

What Cunningham realized was that if Russell and Company were to cease participating in the trade of goods and, instead, would launch a major shipping company, they could dominate the China market in both cotton and tea. However, acquiring the funding necessary for the start
of this venture was problematic since Russell and Company was only a commission house and did not have enough capital of its own to purchase steamships. Without the ability to fund their own line, Russell & Company had to find financial backing from other investors.

Cunningham, though, was not alone in his vision. While he assumed that financial backing would come from American investors and the U.S. government, he had no idea at the time that Chinese merchants would eagerly support his steamship project. As it turned out, Chinese merchant would finance one-third of the American foreman’s project while the other portions came from British merchants operating at Chinese treaty ports and Russell and Company. With the generous financial backing of the Chinese merchants, Cunningham was able to purchase three American-made steamships, which were more expensive and vastly superior to European steamers in both quality and speed. Cunningham was certain that these technologically superior steamships would afford the new Shanghai Steam Navigation Company an unparalleled advantage on the Yangtze River. This benefit was further compounded by the fact that Russell and Company’s subsidiary was the first steam line to begin operations in Shanghai; the next would not come until 1867, five years after the Shanghai Steam Navigation Company opened service. With a virtual monopoly on the flow of goods to and from inland China to Shanghai, the company became very profitable and demonstrated to the Chinese, and perhaps more importantly to Europeans, that American shipping businesses were a formidable economic force in China. In fact in 1865, only three years after the SSNC began operations, the commissioner of customs in Shanghai realized that the Americans at Shanghai, and everywhere else in China, were “in the ascendant in regards to shipping.”

The success of these American enterprises can be attributed to various factors, but for the most part, their success can be linked to U.S. advances in shipping technology. Chinese customs
official remarked that “it was impossible to compete with [American] steamers” unless they were opposed with “others of the same kind and built on the same model.” Faster and higher quality American steamships out-competed their European counterparts and not only strengthened the Shanghai Steam Navigation Company’s position in China, but also ushered in the beginning of a mutual economic relationship between Chinese merchants and American businessmen. In the coming years, people living in China would have access to American industrial manufactured goods, while Americans would benefit from an increased labor pool and an influx of raw materials. China and the United States would complement each other by offering what the other lacked.

Image 1.1

Edward Cunningham (1823-1899)


Chinese businessmen had been more than willing to invest in Edward Cunningham’s plan not only because of the potential they saw in trade with the United States, but the confidence they placed in the capability of American technology advantage. Cunningham’s venture was not
a case of westerners exploiting China, as early interactions with China were commonly known to be. In this case, Chinese willingly contributed funds to capitalize on new technology that would radically modify the way trade was conducted. The result was an extremely successful, American-operated, steam line on the Yangtze River. The success of this company was not alone. By 1881, the value of steam technology in China was clear with seven foreign owned lines and one national Chinese line operating on the Yangtze River alone. At this time, no rail lines had been laid in China and there was not even the existence of a machine-driven loom, yet the leading steamship companies were operating over forty-two boats on the rivers of China. This situation underscored the unique position China held at this time; it was virtually an unexploited market, composed of thousands of capable workers and eager consumers, with sudden access to a technology that could carry them quickly to markets. Most importantly, there was a readiness on the part of the Chinese to further interaction with the United States.
Table 1.1 Steamship Companies in Shanghai

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Founder</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Date Established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai Steam Navigation</td>
<td>Russell &amp; Co.</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>1862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Steam Navigation</td>
<td>Glover &amp; Co.</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>1867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North China Steamer</td>
<td>Trautmann &amp; Co.</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>1868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Navigation</td>
<td>Butterfield &amp; Swire</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Coast Steam Navigation</td>
<td>Jardine, Matheson &amp; Co.</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>1873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Merchants’ Steam Navigation</td>
<td>Chinese Government Sponsored</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yangtze Steam Navigation</td>
<td>Jardine, Matheson &amp; Co.</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>1873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indo-China Steam Navigation</td>
<td>Jardine, Matheson &amp; Co.</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>1881</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


To facilitate trade between China and the United States, a transpacific steamship line needed to be established. Merchants were not only content to operate within the rivers of China, but wanted to venture into international markets. While ferrying goods to the Yangtze shore was profitable, shipping merchandise across the Pacific would be immensely lucrative for both merchants and steamship companies. In addition to merchandise, workers in China needed a reliable method of travel where their labor was desired. While some sailing ships and few steamships ran sporadic service to China and the Far East, there was no scheduled service. The lack of a standardized schedule made it incredibly difficult for businessmen in both China and the United States to operate their businesses.\textsuperscript{12} The result was effectively a bottleneck at the mouth of the Yangtze. To facilitate this desire for trade, a bill was proposed in Congress in 1865 to allow for a monthly mail service between the United States and China.\textsuperscript{13} This bill argued that
there were ample profits to be made from trade with China and that if the United States failed to capitalize, other powers, such as the British, would move in and take control. The United States was fearful that it was losing ground to European powers in international commerce. The original bill acknowledged how trade with “China [had] enriched every nation that [had] enjoyed it” and that “it [was] capable of indefinite expansion.” China had been a relatively closed nation for centuries; therefore it was crucial for the United States to quickly take action.

The most formidable competition for dominance in transpacific shipping was from Great Britain. The English operated subsidized steamship lines across every major range of ocean with the exception of the Pacific. The British, for example, ran lines along the coast of South America, from Halifax to Boston, from Liverpool to New York, from Southampton to Alexandria, and from Southampton to New Orleans. With global access to subsidized lines, British merchants could out-compete the Americans in shipping. This resulted in a very few number of Americans operating any kind of shipping service around the world. Senator John Conness of California wanted to prevent a British-owned and operated shipping route from China.

As shown earlier with the accomplishments of the Shanghai Steam Navigation Company, the success of a steam line was based on being the first to begin a novel service. Once the SSNC was operating, it became very difficult for other companies to compete with its foothold in the shipping industry. In fact, it was so hard to gain market share from the SSNC that it took a Royal Act by the Chinese government in 1872 to unseat the SSNC’s virtual monopoly on the Yangtze. This act prohibited foreign competitive steamship companies until 1896 and ultimately resulted in the sale of the SSNC to the new China Merchants Steam Navigation Company. The ability of governments to protect their interests cannot be more clearly
illustrated than by the Royal Act. The Chinese government wanted to help a company organized by its citizens within its borders. As a result, Qing government officials effectively ousted all other competition. Government backing was necessary for cultivating domestic companies. Senator Conness used this principle and argued that unless the United States acted quickly to establish an American subsidized steam service to China, the route would soon be lost to the British. In the realm of international commerce, it was impossible for the United States to expel competition. Unlike the Yangtze River, which was within Chinese territory, no nation enjoyed exclusive right to any ocean, let alone the Pacific. Since expulsion of foreign rivalries was impossible, the only solution to out-compete foreign powers was through commissioning an American subsidized transpacific route.

At this time, it was common for national and imperial governments to subsidize shipping routes that were important to economic interests. The United States, in fact, had engaged in this practice previously by subsidizing the Collins Line in 1851 and later the Havre Line and the Bremen Line. During their times of operation, these lines were fairly successful and ran competitive routes across the Atlantic Ocean, yet for once reason or another, the United States pulled funding from these projects and the lines quickly collapsed. These companies simply could not compete without government aid when the majority of their competition was heavily subsidized. In addition to the British, the French, Spanish, Dutch, German and Japanese governments all provided subsidized shipping services as early as 1862. In 1869, the competition was so fierce that Congress launched an investigation to examine why American companies were not shipping more and subsequently discovered that one of the main causes rested in the fact that many other countries were providing large subsidies to their domestic carriers. The committee revealed that American “business furnished by exports and imports
[was] being transferred to foreign bottoms.” While this certainly was a problem in and of itself, it was not the only matter that concerned the United States. Despite the decline in business, the United States also felt the “most important” loss was its “prestige as a maritime nation” and consequently its “influence in the affairs of the world.” It is evident that the United States was not pleased with its declining importance in the realm of international affairs.

Congress began to search for solutions. The loss of business at sea was damaging to not only the country’s presence on the oceans, but also to the labor force at home. Congress realized that the business of shipbuilding in the United States was “at a complete standstill” and as a result “the workmen [were] out of employment.” Businesses simply could not compete effectively. It was this issue that caused Congress to consider backing another subsidized service. Within the context of the bill, Congress could also stipulate that American ships must be utilized by the service, which would therefore help out shipbuilders domestically, thereby solving both of the major concerns unearthed by the committee. The general purpose of a subsidy is to provide aid to a service that normally would not produce a return or a profit sizeable enough to continue providing the service. While this may have been the original motivation for providing shipping company’s subsidies, it did not remain the main reason. The U.S. government needed to provide this aid in order to help protect its domestic business against foreign competition. As a general business rule, customers will generally choose one company over another, if the services are similar, in favor of a cheaper cost. When governments began to provide subsidies to their domestic shipping companies or began opening up nationalized lines, they were able to artificially drive the cost of shipping down. This left companies that were not being subsidized by their governments virtually unable to compete with national or subsidized shipping lines.
The United States was one of the few world powers to not be highly engaged in this practice. Aside from the Collins, Havre, and Bremen Lines mentioned earlier, the United States really had not participated in subsidizing domestic mail or shipping companies. As a direct result of this, its maritime fleet suffered. Some of this suffering may have been attributable to complications brought on by Civil War government. In fact, the Havre Line had to end its commercial service and entered into a contract with the North as a troop transport company. While this is only one small example, there were certainly more companies that were affected in this capacity as the North and the South struggled to build up fighting navies rather than commercial fleets. Ultimately however, the reason lies in the fact that there was a general unwillingness on the part of the United States government to invest in commercial interests. This hesitation was largely absent throughout European governments. France, for example, was just as heavily invested than the British. The French government paid one million dollars per year to run multiple routes to its various colonies; first paying a direct subsidy and then more money depending upon the postage for all of the mail that the lines carried. Furthermore, French lines were further backed with a direct loan of five million dollars for a period of ten years. These practices set the precedent that the United States needed to follow if it was going to allow its maritime fleet to stay competitive and help merchants profit from trade. In the case of China, there was the possibility for a nearly unlimited expansion of trade. This was possible due to China’s extremely dense population and the particular willingness of that population to engage in trade. The funding supplied for Russell & Company’s steam line by Chinese merchants, as stated earlier, clearly demonstrated this eagerness.

The excitement and dedication of this population to work hard was not lost on the Congress of 1865. Congress acknowledged the Chinese as intelligent, ingenious, and particularly
well civilized. The legislation goes so far as to specifically counter any argument that the Chinese people are “outside barbarians” or “heathen” and responds by explaining the high enlightenment level China’s centuries old society. Addressing Congress in 1865 Cornelius Cole, who would go on to become a Senator from California, expressed his support for the “five hundred million people” of China, “distinguished for industry and general education.” Cole understood the need to partner with such a colossal population because, while they “must of necessity produce an unlimited quantity of valuable commodities,” the Chinese people were also capable of producing “everything that ingenuity can invent or want suggest.” Cole knew that if the United States began a steam line service to China that American business would not only find a market for their goods, but would gain an earnest and viable trading partner in the United States. In his address to Congress, Senator Cole took care to not limit the Chinese to being simply civilized enough to exploit and acknowledged that the care they dedicated to their work excelled “all other people.” This statement is exceptionally powerful coming from an American; it allowed Congress to view China as more than a nation with five hundred million people and therefore a large marketplace and rather as an incredibly sincere and viable trading partner. These unique qualities of the Chinese were used to validate the pending subsidized steamship legislation and the bill met very little resistance in Congress. Throughout the United States, general sentiment towards the Chinese seemed to be fairly positive at this point in time and extraordinarily little detail was paid to the possibility that some of those five hundred million people would come to the United States. With the forestalling of this detail, the final bill was passed with an overwhelming seventy-seven ayes compared to only nineteen nays, helping to illustrate this consensus.
With the passage of the bill, a bidding war was held and the lowest bidding company was to receive the subsidy. The winner of this bid was the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, which received $500,000 and was therefore expected to carry out twelve roundtrips each year between Japan, China, and the United States, with the main ports of call being Yokohama and Hong Kong. It was shocking that there was no inclusion of Shanghai as one of the main ports of call. As previously mentioned, the use of steamships in China originated on the Yangtze River and bottlenecked where the river met the Pacific. All of the trade on this waterway caused a large port city to be developed at the mouth where the river met the ocean; this city was Shanghai. It developed much as New Orleans had in connection with the Mississippi River and therefore became a natural stop for goods both entering and exiting China. Many claimed that the exclusion of Shanghai was a detriment to American business interests and encouraged Congress to include it as a stop. These same businessmen argued that an American company was already operating the Yangtze River quite successfully and if the United States did not pick up service to Shanghai, an English mail carrier was prepared to do so. For the United States, the threat of Britain gaining a foothold was enough to cause them to add a minimal connection route to Shanghai. However, Hong Kong and Yokohama would remain the main ports of call.

News of the government backing the Pacific Mail Steamship Company (PMSC) was initially very well received amongst the public. The company had already established itself as a highly competitive and successful company due to its previous ventures in Central America, which caused it to be worth around thirty million dollars. This feat was no easy task at this time period considering that almost all of U.S. international shipping was being handled by foreign operated companies. In fact, foreign steamship lines monopolized almost all trade with Europe and the East; even mail was sent under the protection of foreign powers. This caused
the success of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company to become a great source of pride for Americans, particularly those involved with maritime trade. As a result of the Civil War, the American maritime fleet was extremely depleted, yet extremely vital to the recovery of the U.S. economy. Many saw this venture as one of the first steps to rebuilding a maritime fleet and subsequently a major boost to the economy. For the past several years, American shipbuilding had suffered years of decline and was at a historical low. With the passing of this subsidy, there was hope that new life could be breathed into the American dockyards on the East Coast.

In this manner, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company was in a position unlike any other shipping firm. Its immense capital allowed it to have new ships commissioned and maintain one of the best steam fleets in the world. To fulfill its new agreement with the government, the PMSC would also be in need of more ships. American Naval Engineer A.C. Stimers was certain that if there were to be a demand for new ships, the American workforce could quickly produce them with more efficiency and quality than the English. This would mean that many jobs would be created for American workers on the East Coast. Additionally, American supplies would be used to construct these ships. It would not make sense for steel or lumber to be shipped from England when New York already had plenty of both. The construction of large steamships would be extremely beneficial to the economy of the East Coast. Stimers was not wrong when he said that if the demand was there, the country could produce the required steamers. America was ready to build ships.

Upon reception of the contract for the China line, the company commissioned four new steamers, the SS China, the SS Japan, the SS America, and the SS Great Republic. George Steers and Company would complete the work for these ships at a cost of over one million dollars apiece and they were to be some of the largest steamships ever commissioned. This was a long-
term investment on a part of the company. Having only been awarded five hundred thousand
dollars per year, the PMSC had already spent eight times that amount within one year of
receiving their contract. Clearly, the company would not have done this if it did not believe that
there were substantial gains to be made through trade with China over the long term.
Furthermore, the names that these ships carried suggested that the route to China was a great
source of pride for the PMSC. If it were not, names such as SS China would not have been
chosen alongside that of SS America. There was great excitement surrounding the opening of this
route. Service to China was also poised to become the flagship route of the PMSC and therefore
the company utilized the best seamen, fastest ships, and utmost levels of comfort onboard. All
of this contributed to the excitement and eagerness of Americans to become involved with
China.
San Franciscans were among those most excited by the upcoming venture. Locals were certain that since all of the trade from China was meant to go through San Francisco, the small city would rapidly grow and become one of the most dominant markets in the world, rivaling those of both New York and London. However, San Francisco could not, and would not, be the end of the line for the goods or people arriving from China and the East. As in Shanghai, there needed to be a means for effectively distributing goods across the rest of the continent. For San Francisco, the transcontinental railroad would serve as its Yangtze. With service to China via the Pacific Mail Steamship Company officially beginning on January 1, 1867, it became even more important to finish the railroad in a timely manner in the eyes of San Franciscans. Upon completion of the railroad, Americans would control the shortest method of passage from China to New York, and even from China to London.
American policymakers hoped to utilize this time advantage to shift the center of international commerce from London to New York City.\textsuperscript{51} This distinct time advantage was certainly alluring for merchants who had been using foreign carriers that did not have access to the transcontinental railroad. These foreign companies had to transport their goods across Panama, through the Suez Canal, or around the Cape of Good Hope, which were all considerably more time consuming. Merchants immediately recognized this circumstance when the PMSC commissioned its new lines to the East. A group of merchants commented on the great benefit that such a quick and unbroken line of communication added to their businesses and stated that the PMSC should “steadily develop its capabilities and secure such firm possession as will defy opposition.”\textsuperscript{52} These businessmen in China further suggested that while the new steamers were faster than sailing vessels, they were more expensive and a 5\% reduction in price would help to secure the PMSC an even larger portion of the trade.\textsuperscript{53} Unlike before, the regularity of the PMSC’s trips allowed merchants to plan ahead and conduct their businesses much more efficiently. Furthermore, much like Congress stated during the passage of the bill approving the subsidy, the group also noted that there was substantial room for continued growth and that the abundance of labor from China will help to fulfill a labor gap that the United States was facing following the Civil War.\textsuperscript{54} Ironically, the labor issue would grow to become the source of much conflict over the next ten years.

Originally, this impending influx of Chinese labor was not seen as a detriment, but rather a positive aspect of the new relationship the U.S. was forging with China. In May of 1868, the Minister to China, Anson Burlingame, arrived in China on the Pacific Mail Steamship Company’s steamer \textit{SS Arizona}.\textsuperscript{55} The goal of Minister Burlingame’s presence in China was to achieve progress on negotiations with the Chinese government. Upon his arrival, the Chinese
were fairly receptive and both nations agreed that “commerce, peace, and unification” was in the best interests of both countries.\textsuperscript{56} The finalization of any agreement took over a year however. While Washington signed the treaty in late 1868, the Chinese Dynasty would not ratify the treaty until 1869.\textsuperscript{57} The final passing of this accord ushered in the beginning of a new era for China-U.S relations. This period resulted in a boom of commerce between the two countries and an influx of Chinese immigrants to the United States. The Burlingame-Seward Treaty, as it came to be known, was responsible for a large portion of this, particularly increased immigration. Through the treaty, China and the United States granted each other favored nation status, which granted many privileges to citizens of each country while they were in the other and also protected them from discrimination on the basis of religion.\textsuperscript{58} The protection and encouragement that this treaty offered resulted in many Chinese workers coming to the United States to fulfill labor shortages and several Christian ministers going to China.

Despite the apparent desire for the immigration of laborers, the United States was coming off the heels of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery. American abolitionists were concerned with the slave-like conditions that many of these Chinese laborers or “coolies” were subjected to. Any laborer would no longer do in the United States; a worker must be free. Coolies did not fit into any exact category however. They were supposed to be paid wages, although this was usually small and sometimes never came at all; technically, a coolie was even less than an indentured servant because the coolie could rarely gain their freedom.\textsuperscript{59} Despite this, coolies had been previously used to supplant labor shortages in territories where slavery was outlawed. The English, for example, utilized coolies after slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire in 1833.\textsuperscript{60} The perception of free labor was vital in allowing the trade to flourish. Usage of coolies alleviated both the concerns of British abolitionists whom were opposed to
slave labor and plantation owners who wanted to maintain a similar level of profitability that slavery had afforded them. Presumably, it was hoped that this same system would work within the United States. Harsh conditions endured by coolies such as rampant abuse, improper nutrition, lack of pay, and an overall inability to flee their servitude, solidified coolies as slaves. However, Republicans in the United States did not overlook this image and connection as hoped.

A staunchly Republican Congress, with the backing of the Lincoln Administration, acknowledged the true horror of the conditions coolies endured and passed the Anti-Coolie Act of 1862 which forbade anyone living in the United States from importing Chinese citizens for the purpose of coolie labor. This exclusion of a particular group of people was unlike anything the United States had undertaken before. This practice directly contradicted the prevailing American philosophy of free labor and an open immigration policy and therefore the Burlingame-Seward Treaty aimed to extend that inclusion to China and its citizens. There was no real enforcement however and an 1877 investigation into Chinese Immigration would reveal that the Pacific Mail Steamship Company had been very much involved with the immigration of contract laborers at a price of $350-$400 a piece. This cost illustrated why the importation of contract laborers was so profitable. While the average cost of tea was less than one dollar per pound, assuming that the average laborer weighed roughly 150lbs, each immigrant was worth over $2.50 per pound. This gave the PMSC a huge incentive to cheat the system and to continue facilitating the immigration of contract laborers. Since these profits would also be illegal, they would not need to be disclosed in any of their public records and would lend much higher profits to the owners.

Additionally, there was a vacancy in cheap labor throughout the United States, particularly the South, following the abolition of slavery. If done correctly, the immigration of laborers from China had the potential to fill this sudden void.
Nevertheless, with this Burlingame-Seward Treaty in place, the Chinese government was under the distinct impression that the United States would do whatever it could to protect the rights of its citizens abroad, regardless of class. In fact, in the same dispatch to Mr. Burlingame where it announced acceptance of the treaty, the Chinese government also asked the United States to intercede on behalf of Chinese laborers who were being badly mistreated in mines by the Peruvian government.\(^{68}\) For the Chinese to take have taken this step, there must have been a mutual understanding between the two countries that there was to be no difference in treatment amongst the various classes; this was something that the United States would develop largely on its own terms in the coming years.\(^{69}\)

There were however, quiet rumblings within some working class communities in the United States that hinted that immigration could become an issue in the near future. For example, even while San Franciscans were celebrating the departure of the PMSC’s first official trip to China, they were also nervous as to the abundance of Chinese that would soon come to the United States. They argued that at this point, the few that were in America had already been “Americanized” and the “idea of having any more of the raw material on [their] hands [was] perfectly awful.”\(^{70}\) What American policymakers did not realize was that they could not have both an increase in commerce without an increase in immigration. From 1863 through 1867 however, relatively small numbers of Chinese were coming into San Francisco with the most in any given year being 5,407 in 1862 and the lowest being 1,495 in 1865.\(^{71}\) These numbers were evidently small enough to “Americanize.” Nevertheless, China would not continue to willingly open its doors for exploitation by American companies if the United States would not open its doors for China’s eager workers. However, this issue would not come to fruition quite yet. Americans were still much too enthralled with the possibility of profits to be overwhelmingly
concerned with the potential of a mass immigration. For the time being, American nativists seemed content to simply ‘Americanize’ Chinese as they landed in the United States and reap the benefits of trade.

Perhaps fittingly, the first profitable cargo that the Pacific Mail Steamship Company was designated to transport was not mail, wheat, or machinery, but the bodies of dead Chinese. While this may have initially seemed bizarre, it was not an uncommon practice for Chinese, no matter where they died, to be returned home for burial. In the case of the United States, these laborers would enter into specific contracts with their employers that stated, upon their death, they should be returned home for burial. In this case, it is most likely that these Chinese had been employed for the construction transcontinental railroad as contract laborers. It was not quite so simple though for live contract laborers to exit the country, at least on the Pacific Mail Steamship Company steamers. The PMSC, along with other lines, engaged in contracts with the Chinese Six Companies and agreed that laborers would not be allowed to return to China unless they had paid all of their debts back to the companies for their original passage. Obviously with their meager pay, it was very rare that coolies were ever able to save up enough money for their return trip and as a result were stuck in the United States whether they wanted to be there or not. This interdependent relationship between American steamship companies and Chinese organizations, such as the Six Companies, was beneficial to everyone involved, except the laborers. The steamship company would continue to profit off the new laborers the Chinese organizers would give them in China, and then once landed in the United States, the companies could exploit them as virtual slave labor. It was a vicious cycle that would eventually lead to the buildup of many Chinese laborers in the United States.
However, many Chinese were also willing to leave China as a result of many internal conditions. Some regions of China had recently experienced food shortages, natural disasters, large tax burdens and civil unrest such as the Taiping Rebellion. This social instability drove some Chinese to seek out passage to the United States. These factors when coupled with the connectivity facilitated through contracts, like those between steam companies, merchants, and laborers, insured that immigration of this kind was profitable for everyone involved over the next several years.

In addition to the healthy profits acquired from immigration, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company also transported many other goods. It was responsible for exporting wheat, flour, salted fish, lumber, metals, clothing and machinery while importing many luxuries such as tea and silk. Tea grew to be a very profitable venture for the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. In 1865, 1,621,216 pounds of tea was imported to San Francisco. By 1871 this same commodity had more than doubled in tonnage to 3,914,863 pounds at an increased profit of nearly four million dollars. This large expansion of the tea trade alone was enough to cover the cost of the four new steamships commissioned by the PMSC in 1867. The company and the merchants responsible for the products were not the only ones to profit; the United States government was making millions off of import duties and tariffs. Between 1865 and 1871, the United States made over eleven million dollars on duties alone. This figure does not account for any of the money made off of many other goods. Furthermore, the U.S. government more than made back its investment on the original mail subsidy. According to figures of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, the government profited nearly nine million dollars “made by increased revenue over and above the subsidy paid under” the original act. Granted, these profits were accumulated over a seven-year period, but they are nonetheless very impressive. It is entirely possible as well
that none of this increased traffic would have occurred had the U. S. government not taken the initiative to spur the venture back in 1865.

The success of the line was so great in fact that some began to wonder if the frequency of trips could even be increased. In 1870, an article appeared in the *Hartford Daily Courant* suggesting that the Pacific Mail Steamship Company would soon begin a “semi-monthly service of steamers between San Francisco and Shanghai.”82 This suggestion came just as the company reported that its Panama route was no longer profitable, but its China line had progressively grown and was now producing a large yield.83 In light of this growth, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company attempted to gain an even larger subsidy from Congress in 1870. They hoped to receive a one million dollar per year subsidy and in return, operate a twice a month service to China and Japan.84 At this time however, attitude towards the Chinese had begun to shift in America. Americans on the West Coast, particularly of the working class, grew more concerned with the thousands of workers that the Pacific Mail Steamship Company was bringing over.
Over the next years, this line would continue to bring many laborers to the United States and would consequently grow to become quite controversial. This is despite the contributions that the Pacific Mail Steamship Company was making to the economies of both the United States and China. Its request for an increased subsidy would gain fierce resistance in Congress. Nativists had decided that they were no longer content with “Americanizing” the Chinese as they immigrated. Supposed profits and potential growth were no longer blinding the working and middle class to what they viewed as a threat to their American values. The Chinese, it was believed, had to be excluded.
Chapter 2
Mounting Pressure: Finding Ground for Exclusion

The Pacific Mail Steamship Company grew substantially after its initial years of subsidization, but so did its recklessness. Less than three years after the first steamer left for China as part of the subsidized line, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company was already lobbying Congress for a doubling of its initial subsidy.\textsuperscript{85} It seems imprudent that the company would make such a large request so suddenly into its first contract. Its original contract was still guaranteed for another seven years and there was no threat of this amount being reduced.\textsuperscript{86} The mere three years that the line had been operating for were surely not enough to adequately judge the long-term impacts of a brand new market, nor was this enough time to judge the impact of increased Chinese immigration particularly following the passage of the Burlingame-Seward Treaty. This then leaves one to question why the PMSC would request a doubling of its government subsidy so suddenly. The obvious answer would be that the gains of the company in the previous three years were so great that company leaders and boosters truly believed that there would be a larger return on a service that ran twice as often. The other answer however was that the company was not doing as well as it had been suggesting and was seeking to make more money from the government.

An article that appeared in the \textit{New York Herald Tribune} in June 1869 suggested that something unusual was going on with the company’s assets. The article explained how the stock value of the company had been steadily decreasing, despite the fact that it was the only American steamship company that possessed the “requisite energy and enterprise” to run the route between
America and Asia and was “constantly increasing business.” If the company was increasing business as this article suggests, then it gives credence to the argument that the increase in subsidy was truly an attempt to increase already large profits. Disturbingly, however, the stock value was decreasing even as its business grew. This was dismissed and attributed to the fact that the PMSC was simply undervaluing its own assets in order to allow investors on Wall Street to make money by shorting the stock. One such example of this was the company claiming that its real estate investments depreciated $678,941 between 1868 and 1869, despite the fact that the property actually appreciated. The leadership of the PMSC was clearly interested in making money through many different means, even if it meant manipulating the stock market. Despite this, the same New York Herald Tribune article argues that the company “could not well be more prosperous, nor in any way better deserving of public confidence and support.” It is worth noting that this unethical practice of manipulating the value of the company is so casually dismissed. Clearly Americans with an interest in Wall Street were fully supportive of the PMSC if they were able to profit from it.

If the company were not actually performing poorly, then the only reason for an increase in service would have been an attempt to secure more profits. This however, does not explain the reasoning behind requesting an increase so soon into the original contract. For an answer to this, it is best to look at one of the original motives for establishing the subsidy, fending off foreign competition. Speaking in 1870, the Postmaster General, John A.J. Creswell, made precisely this point as to why the service with China needed to be increased. He argued that unless the service was increased, it was going to be necessary to abandon the venture entirely in the face of certain foreign competition, an idea that was later echoed by George Boutwell, the Secretary of the Treasury in 1871. Since the PMSC had such high level members of the government supporting
it, there certainly must have been merit to the fears of the company being surpassed by foreign carriers. As previously discussed, the United States was not willing to miss out on profits to be made with China and found a great source of pride in having an American company run the Asian route. The matter was so important that President Grant made the following statement to Congress in 1871:

I would also recommend liberal measures for the purpose of supporting the American lines of steamers now plying between San Francisco and Japan and China, and the Australian Line--almost our only remaining lines of ocean steamers--and of increasing their services.  

With that assertion, it is evident that the United States was still desperately interested in continuing the service to the East via a company based out of the United States. Clearly there was sufficient profit coming from the China route or else it would have simply been cancelled or reduced. Conclusively, high-level members of the government would have advocated ending, or at the very least not supported, the service if it were not profitable. Clearly this was not the case, and on June 1, 1872, Congress once again offered up a contract for an additional monthly route between San Francisco, China, and Japan for “the lowest responsible bidder.” Since the Pacific Mail Steamship Company was already running a service on this route, it had a clear advantage in this bid. Furthermore, there was no real competition from other American companies and unsurprisingly, the PMSC was awarded the contract on August 16, 1872. In accordance with this new contract, which required the PMSC to use American steel and labor for ship production, two new steamers were ordered, the City of Peking and the City of Tokio (sic). As with the previous contract, the purpose of this provision was to help maintain American ship building
interests and thereby gain the support of both capitalists and white laborers on the East coast. As a result of this, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company would operate its services without much interference or criticism for roughly the next two years.

This would abruptly come to an end in 1873 when it was revealed that the company’s board of directors had solicited bribes from politicians in order to ensure that Congress would approve the increased subsidy.\textsuperscript{96} On the surface, there seems to have been no need to bribe anyone to pass this bill. A subsidized Pacific Mail Steamship Company was something that would benefit every American and even many Chinese, particularly after the passage of the Burlingame-Seward Treaty made immigration easier. Ship builders on the East Coast would make money and, thanks to the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, merchants and laborers would have access to many new markets throughout the United States. A story appeared in the \textit{Chicago Tribune} on April 17, 1874 speculating that the managers of the PMSC were fearful of losing money to a British company that was scheduled to run a competing service beginning in 1872 and that they could make up for the lost money from the government.\textsuperscript{97} While this fear was certainly plausible, and well warranted, it would not have been a motive for the bribes given to Congressmen. As already explained, the United States wanted to ensure that it maintained the control of the route from San Francisco to the Far East. If anything, the threat of a foreign company, particularly the British, would have pushed Congress to pass the bill, without the need for any bribes. What possibly could have caused such a well-respected company to stoop to such low levels?

The answer may lie in the fact that many Americans were growing wary of the increased number of Chinese in the United States. From 1862 through 1872, 62,008 male Chinese came to the United States along with 2,827 female Chinese.\textsuperscript{98} These large numbers could have pushed the
president of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, Alden B. Stockwell, to engage in bribery. He may have been fearful that Representatives would begin to be pressured by their constituents to not support the passage of any increased subsidy. Furthermore, as the United States Congressional “Investigation on Chinese Immigration” would reveal in 1877, the PMSC had been deeply involved in the transportation of contract laborers. This practice was of course illegal, as a result of the Anti-Coolie Act of 1862 that forbade anyone living in the United States from importing Chinese citizens for the purpose of coolie labor. President Stockwell and other executives of the PMSC would not want the information of their role in the coolie trade to become common knowledge. Even though both the mail and shipping services being provided by the company were successful in their own right, the shipment of illegal Chinese immigrants could have been enough to ruin the company if the secret got out. This money could have been to ensure that Congress looked the other way in this matter. Additionally, any further subsidy provided by the government to the PMSC would further validate the legitimate services offered by the company and help to elevate them above any speculation.

To ensure the increased subsidy passed Congress, The President of the PMSC, Alden Stockwell, sent a former member of the company, Richard Irwin, to Washington D.C. with a number of personal checks totaling up to $600,000 ($11,334,508 in 2012). With this money, Irwin distributed funds to twenty-five different influential people in D.C, most notably Senator William S. King, who was the Postmaster of the House, and Senator John G. Schumaker. The goals of these payments were to ensure support once the bill came to the floor and obviously, various members’ votes, which it successfully accomplished. As Congress began to investigate the corruption, King and Stockwell “could not be found within the jurisdiction of the United States” in order to give their testimony. Irwin had previously testified that Stockwell had
employed him through the company however, and Stockwell was the only person capable of corroborating his testimony.\textsuperscript{104} If Irwin had been operating as an employee of the company, the subsidy contract with the Pacific Mail Steamship Company would have to have been immediately voided. However, if Stockwell and Irwin were simply working as private citizens and not as members of the company, the PMSC could not be legally held accountable for their actions. This important distinction helped the PMSC keep its subsidy rather than having it revoked. Rufus Hatch, Stockwell’s successor, voiced this distinction and swore “positively that no such authority was given by the company.”\textsuperscript{105} At this point, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company desperately tried to distance itself from the scandal and its previous president. Hatch further alleged that Stockwell had in fact stolen funds from the company treasury that “exceeded the sum of $2,500,000” and doctored the entries to cover the theft.\textsuperscript{106} These stolen company assets would have been the source of Irwin’s bribe money. If Hatch’s testimony was accepted as truthful, then one must question why Stockwell would attempt to secure passage of the bill for the company rather than keep the $2,500,000 for himself. The only logical answer was that the company in fact supported the plan and Stockwell merely took the fall. Previous actions engaged in by the company, such as manipulating its stock value and the transportation of illegal contract workers, established a precedent of poor ethics and a readiness to break the law within the PMSC.\textsuperscript{107}
Table 2.1 Bribery Payments by Pacific Mail Steamship Company Through Richard Irwin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charles Abert</td>
<td>$7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.J. Averill</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James G. Berret</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Boyd</td>
<td>$4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. H. Carmick</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amos B. Corwine</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. E. Chittenden</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. H. Cheever</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton G. Fant</td>
<td>$12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John W. Forney</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel A. Hatch</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. H. Hersey</td>
<td>$11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. R. Ingham</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William S. King</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Moran</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. M. Morris</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. C. Parsons</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donn Platt</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander W. Randall</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander W. Randall (special)</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John H. Rice</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William B. Shaw</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles H. Sherrill</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John G. Schumaker</td>
<td>$275,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John G. Schumaker</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug H. Whiting</td>
<td>$56,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$703,100</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained By Irwin or used for expenses</td>
<td><strong>$186,900</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 43rd Congress, 2d session, Report. No. 268. Published February 27, 1875.*

Although these efforts were successful in preserving the subsidy, when the public discovered the bribes, the company was met with civic outrage. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* accused “The Ways and Means Committee” of making “a slight and inefficient investigation,” which resulted in the dismissal of the matter.108 The *Tribune* further went on to claim that the “company dishonored itself and its directors were morally responsible for the general bribery.”109
Such statements were in stark contrast to the paper’s previous remarks regarding the PMSC. For example, prior to the scandal, the Tribune deemed the Pacific Mail Steamship Company as “an energetic and honored corporation.” The scandal had directly cost the PMSC its sterling reputation among the American people. No longer was its presence on the seas a source of pride for Americans, but rather a cause of shame and disgust. Publicly, the PMSC was from then on viewed as a corporation with “a past legislation history” of “crime” and ultimately “a dishonest and insolvent company.”

The state of the City of Peking and the City of Tokio (sic) exacerbated these feelings of disgust. The City of Peking had been initially utilized in New York harbor for the purpose of entertaining “politicians and lobbyists” and had also been regarded as “a floating palace,” the likes of which had not been seen “since Cleopatra’s barge.” This opulence was merely a farce played out for publicity purposes designed to win the support of government officials and ultimately the American people. Once the City of Peking entered into service on the China-San Francisco route, the charade quickly collapsed. With “worn and rusting rivets,” “gaping seams,” and “straining planks,” the City of Peking and her sister ship, the City of Tokio (sic), were accused of “representing the very essence of high-tariff robbery, of subsidy steals, of commercial dishonesty.” Sentiment such as this signaled the beginning of the end for what had been relatively widespread support for the PMSC.
Image 2.1 “Any Thing But a ‘Pacific Mail’”

Political cartoon from Harper’s Weekly illustrating the PMSC (Child on forward right) being scolded for taking more subsidies from the U.S. treasury.

Rhetoric used by those advocating for the repeal of the subsidy, or those against increasing it, largely focused on accusations of the subsidy either being unnecessary or
monopolizing the American trade to the east. Even the legislature of California, which had previously supported the PMSC, was wary of providing the company with further financial support. In 1874, the California legislature petitioned the U.S. Senate to not renew, or provide additional, subsidies to the PMSC. In its appeal, the legislature argued that there was “ample communication with China by other lines of steamers” and that trade could be sufficiently completed “without subsidy.” Furthermore, the legislature assured the Senate that if the practice was continued, it would “crush out fair competition on the Pacific Coast” and serve only to “further the interest of Wall Street stock-jobbers and speculators.” If these arguments were to be believed, it would mean that the subsidy had caused the exact opposite of its intended affect. Instead of fostering competition, it was snuffing rivalry.

However, these statements by the legislature of California did not enjoy unanimous support within the state. Many of the businessmen that dealt directly with China were fiercely disappointed with the actions taken by their representatives. For example, the bankers, merchants, and other distinguished citizens of San Francisco united in support of the subsidy provided by the PMSC. They directly responded to the actions taken by the legislature arguing that they were “suicidal” and simply the “result of temporary infatuation.” This coalition of capitalists contended that without further subsidy, the PMSC “could not compete” with the “subsidized English Lines” such as the Pacific and Oriental English Company. Further arguments of monopoly, alleged by the legislature of California, were also discounted by this business coalition. They argued that the “the Pacific Mail Steamship Company [were] the pioneers in the direct trade,” therefore they had “no American competition” and as a result were “entitled to aid.”
The difference in the idea of monopolization between these two groups lies in the perspective of what exactly constitutes a ‘monopoly.’ For example, the legislature seemed less concerned with the nationality of the enterprise and was willing to engage in services with English or American lines as long as there was some form of competition taking place. The businessmen, however, continued to argue that the subsidy for the PMSC was necessary to prevent foreign competition, even if it was at the expense of domestic competition. They warned Congress that a refusal of the subsidy would constitute a “violation of the American principle of protection to home interests” and that Congress’s unwillingness to engage further in subsidized commerce had “crippled and almost destroyed the efficiency of [America’s] merchant marine.” The coalition further urged Congress to “adopt the more liberal and wise policy” employed by England, which proved the essentialness of subsidies in the expansion of commerce. These aspects argued for in the memorial of bankers, merchants, and others of San Francisco, suggest that the most contentious point surrounding the PMSC dealt with the effectiveness of the subsidies and whether or not an American steam line to China was worth the government expenditure. This was not the case however; there was a much more subtle reason that many American’s did not want the PMSC voyages to continue receiving government support.

As previously noted, while the Pacific Mail Steamship Company was heavily involved in the shipping of goods, such as cotton and tea, it also carried a much more valuable cargo, human beings. Although the designed intention of the subsidy was to provide a means of carrying mail between the East and the United States, the PMSC’s ships naturally had plenty of additional cargo space on board and the government was not going to instruct the company that it must leave that space empty. This extra cargo space helped to facilitate the expansion of trade as more
goods could be carried in addition to the mail. While the profit made off of cotton and tea was not insignificant, the PMSC discovered that the transportation of humans was much more lucrative and consequently seemed to shift some of its focus to importing Chinese. Chinese passengers had become so valuable that the PMSC was more than willing to take on an expanded role in immigration at the expense of transporting more traditional goods. In fact, the company was found in violation of the Passenger Act of 1855 on more than one occasion as early as 1869.\textsuperscript{122} This legislation, passed on March 3, 1855, was designed to ensure that passengers were transported comfortably and safely on steamships and that Africans were to be afforded the same provisions as other passengers.\textsuperscript{123} The willingness of Congress to include Africans in this legislation, who at this time were still considered slaves and even enslaved within the Americas, demonstrated that there was a clear difference between people and cargo, even those considered property. Therefore, the stipulation that ships may only carry one passenger for every two tons of vessel and the provision for safety, would consequently apply to Chinese coolies as well.\textsuperscript{124} These requirements would not prevent the PMSC from overcrowding its holds as the company was willingly pay numerous fines to the government to have its violations dropped rather than simply abiding by the law.\textsuperscript{125} There was simply too much money to be made from transporting human beings.

The influx of immigration brought about in 1868, as a result of the Burlingame-Seward Treaty, exacerbated this financial incentive and helped push the PMSC to engage in the transportation of coolies. As previously noted, this welcoming and inclusive legislation made it easier for Chinese to enter the United States as long as they were coming on their own free will. This led to thousands of Chinese coming to San Francisco each year and the business reached its peak at 15,433 male immigrants in 1874.\textsuperscript{126} While there were other steamships and companies
providing transportation to China, the PMSC was one of the front-runners in the immigration business. Just one of the lines’ ships, the SS Great Republic, was noted as having carried 976 Chinese in a single trip to San Francisco. This rapid and sudden influx of lower class Chinese workers was the cause for much of the backlash that the company felt although the racial argument was thinly veiled with talks of monopoly and other less grievous complaints.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1865-1866</td>
<td>1,495</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866-1867</td>
<td>3,362</td>
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<td>3,362</td>
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<tr>
<td>1867-1868</td>
<td>6,607</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6,650</td>
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<tr>
<td>1868-1869</td>
<td>11,124</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>12,075</td>
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<td>1869-1870</td>
<td>13,023</td>
<td>1,085</td>
<td>14,108</td>
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<td>1870-1871</td>
<td>6,068</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>6,407</td>
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<td>1871-1872</td>
<td>6,422</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>6,568</td>
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<tr>
<td>1872-1873</td>
<td>18,529</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>19,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873-1874</td>
<td>12,941</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>13,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874-1875</td>
<td>15,433</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>15,807</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.2 Chinese Immigration into San Francisco: 1865-1874**

**Source:** New York Times. “Immigrants From China. One Hundred and Thirteen Thousand Received in Thirteen Years- Large Increase Expected This Year.” July 26, 1875.

The principal arguments against the Chinese were that they were taking the jobs of white laborers and that they were largely coming against their will in slave-like conditions. In the California legislature’s argument to Congress to remove the subsidy, they alleged “the Pacific Mail Steamship Company steamers [were] engaged in importing Chinese coolies to the State of California.” Having just fought a war over slavery, anti-abolitionists would have been very sensitive to the notion that a company, supported by the U.S. government, could be participating in the trade of unfree laborers. The legislature further asserted that the “notorious and flagrant” business was occurring all along the Pacific Coast “in great numbers” and the Chinese were
“under contract for labor which [reduced] them to absolute vassalage.”

The growth and expansion of this practice was seen as a validation of the reservations that Americans held toward the expansion of trade with China when the subsidy was first announced in 1867. Americans had been afraid of the influx of Chinese immigrants, particularly those that belonged to “a system of slavery” and did not want to see the practice “grow and strengthen in [their] midst.” Nevertheless, the coolie trade had expanded and some Americans wanted to push back against the practice by targeting the PMSC for its role in that business.

Those Americans that resented the increase in Chinese immigration were largely middle- or working-class workers from the West Coast and they also accounted for a majority of the population, such as those represented by the legislature of California through its appeal to Congress. These blue collar workers believed “their labor” was “gradually undermined and [went] to pieces as a result of the introduction of the coolie system.” They argued that the loss of labor could be attributed to the low wages that the Chinese were willing to work for compared to those of white workers. Following the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, there was a sudden need for cheap labor to fill the void left by the absence of African-descent slaves. Coolies, seemingly, were perfect for this task and the abundance of them in California, Oregon, and Nevada presumably contributed to driving the price of labor down and forcing many white people out of jobs. In fact, one journalist believed that if “the Six Companies would only dump three or four hundred thousand of their criminals and tramps into Boston, New York, and Philadelphia” it would “knock the wages of the white workingmen down to starvation rates” and then Americans “might expect a speedy cure” for the climbing Chinese populations.

Evidently, those suffering on the West Coast held the Chinese responsible for their situation and believed that if the population of Chinese grew on the East coast, then that section of the country...
would be able to grasp the problem. What these people failed to realize, however, was that this was not a simple and clearly-defined racial issue. It was true that there were many Chinese willing to work for lower wages in the United States and that the Six Companies was involved in organizing them, but by in large coolie laborers were being employed by other white Americans, not Chinese.

Wealthier Americans and many residents of the West Coast were not necessarily as opposed to the continued immigration of the Chinese. The wealthier American businessmen and merchants undoubtedly saw an advantage in employing Chinese coolies. Even the PMSC’s ships were known for being “almost wholly manned by Mongolians” even at “the almost entire exclusion of free white labor.”\textsuperscript{134} While this aspect angered many white Americans who perhaps fancied those jobs for themselves, the companies and businesses really cannot be blamed for their decisions. They had an abundance of Chinese laborers who needed some form of employment and because of many of them being under contract with the Six Companies, they could not simply leave. As a result, companies, such as the PMSC, were able to employ them at much lower wages than they could employ white workers. Furthermore, many capitalists viewed the Chinese coolies as high quality workers. The PMSC was once such company who believed in the ability of their Chinese workers, arguing that they “[did] their duty very well.”\textsuperscript{135} Additionally, when the group of wealthy San Franciscans petitioned Congress to maintain the subsidy for the PMSC, they made no mention whatsoever of immigration in any form.\textsuperscript{136} A failure to address any immigration concerns represents a tacit acceptance of the increased migration from China. Capitalists and others benefitting from the strengthening Chinese presence clearly wanted to focus on the other positive aspects of the subsidy that they believed would not be nearly as contentious to Congressmen or their constituents. San Francisco-based businessmen
believed that by avoiding an acknowledgement of the immigration issue, which was arguably hurting more people than helping, they could keep profiting from all aspects of trade with China, even the coolie trade.

Americans, however, were not content to let the issue wither away. Working-class Americans could not purely advocate for the expulsion of a group of people due to their willingness to work for a cheaper wage. This would have contradicted the idea of American capitalism and the concept of an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay. In order to shape their argument, they needed to define it along racial lines. By turning the immigration issue into a matter of race, nativists and working-class Americans could define the argument in an ‘us versus them’ sense. This alone would not do either however. The value of trade with China could not be denied and an expulsion of all Chinese people would unarguably hurt the economy. In order to further break down the population of Chinese immigrants, the argument would be crafted around not only a racial line, but class line as well. This would then allow for trade to continue while preserving the jobs of working-class Americans.

Nativists and working-class Americans still needed the subsidy to fail to reduce the influx of Chinese laborers. According to the “Congressional Investigation on Chinese Immigration of 1877,” PMSC was actively and illegally involved with bringing coolie laborers to San Francisco under contract long after the ban on the coolie trade was enacted in 1862.\textsuperscript{137} This influx of laborers could not easily be discouraged because the Pacific Mail Steamship Company was able to charge between $350 and $400 for the passage of the laborer, which, as previously noted, was much more lucrative than transporting traditional goods.\textsuperscript{138} These laborers were the exact kind of people that many Americans did not want allowed into the United States. In the investigation on immigration, they were painted as “dirty,” “ignorant and stupid, thieves,” and ultimately “a bad
class of men” that are “the most inferior race that there [was] existing.” In the hearing however, a clear distinction was made as Congress noted that this did not reflect upon the “more respectable class of people among [the Chinese].” These coolies were seen as starkly different from the merchants and upper class members of Chinese society who were respectable and also came to the United States “of their own will.” Since merchants enjoyed free choice, Americans had a less difficult time respecting them and contrasting them from coolies.

The coolies, on the other hand, did not have much of a choice in their lives. Coolies endured conditions that began “to exceed the horrors of the African slave-trade” and the practice was seen as “slavery, nothing more, nothing less.” The process began in China where agents of the Six Companies would “pick up a gang of tramps, loafers, criminals, or debtors” and then they would make “a contract with a steamship company, with or without the coolies’ consent,” to send them to the United States, namely California. Once these coolies were brought into the United States, it was not the end of the agreement. These workers would then be assigned a job and have a portion of their earnings go to the Six Companies for a set period of time until they were allowed, by the Six Companies, to return to China. This was one of the aspects that Americans could latch onto and utilize as a reason to exclude the Chinese and to argue for the end of the subsidy. The Pacific Mail Steamship Company was actually one of the companies that was directly involved with the Six Companies and regularly entered into contracts with them. In fact, the PMSC enabled the Six Companies to maintain their practice by barring passage for any Chinese person whom still owed a debt to the Six Companies. In order for a laborer to leave the United States on a PMSC ship, they would have to present a document from the Six Companies stating that they were free from all debt; without this card, their boarding would be denied.
As previously mentioned, the PMSC was more than willing to circumvent laws and had been found to often violate the Passenger Act, which required a certain proportion of people to cargo. In addition to this violation, the PMSC also regularly utilized all three decks of their ships for carrying passengers, even though legally they were only allowed to use two decks; the third was supposed to remain open for cargo. This action by the PMSC illustrated their active role in exploiting the immigration of contract laborers and contributed to growing distrust of the line among American people. This facet was also coupled with the fact that large numbers of Chinese worked PMSC ships and the company sometimes charged Chinese an exit tax, but not white passengers. These revelations caused Americans to see the line as one of the primary causes for increased Chinese populations in the United States. This association of the subsidy with immigration caused all interaction with China to be viewed as a detriment by working-class Americans who believed that Chinese immigrants threatened their jobs. At the same time however, the “Congressional Investigation on Immigration” revealed that many of the steamship lines, one being the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, might not be able to operate for a profit without Chinese immigration. The fact that the steamship companies were profiting off of the very people that were held responsible for driving down labor wages infuriated many Americans and they then sought an avenue to let out their frustration. This unfortunately usually took the form of racist actions and immigration restriction.

Open animosity and racism against Chinese was a common sight in San Francisco during the mid to late 1870’s. Usually, it was a group of young men whom would “get together, and if a Chinaman [passed] by them, they may [have done] something to him,” usually this only consisted of verbal insults, but it was not rare for these taunts to escalate to physical violence, even killings. Shockingly, blame for these assaults was not placed on the perpetrators, the
young white males, but rather on the Chinese laborer. During testimony in front of Congress, a San Francisco official alleged that if the American “boys had employment, they would not be out at that hour of the night; they would be in their beds.” ¹⁵² This official continued by expressing his belief that “if they were employed in factories” they would not have to “work off their steam on the Chinamen.” ¹⁵³ Victim blaming, such as this, pushed the culpability back onto the Chinese rather than the perpetrators of the attacks. This in turn allowed nativists to hold the working Chinese responsible for the increased levels of violence. The situation with Chinese immigrants was quickly escalating. The United States decided it needed to act to salvage the situation. In order to help maintain its economic relations with China and also placate working-class Americans, it had to exclude the Chinese that were threatening American laborers, while still allowing for economic interaction. An attempt at finding this middle ground resulted with the Chinese Exclusion Act that was to be passed in 1882.

This Act of 1882 barred the immigration of all laborers, contract or otherwise, yet explicitly allowed for provisions so that “merchants, teachers, students, diplomats, and travelers were exempt from exclusion.” ¹⁵⁴ By excluding all laborers, the United States sought to please the majority of its citizens who felt economically and culturally threatened by the influx of Chinese laborers. At the same time, by allowing for the entry of merchant-class Chinese, wealthier Americans would still be able to benefit from continued economic interaction with China. These merchants and other upper class Chinese, that were permitted entry into the United States, were of no threat to the jobs of most Americans. It was believed that this compromise, between inclusion and exclusion, could alleviate some of the racial tensions within the U.S., particularly on the West Coast, and thereby allow the United States to engage in a unique relationship with China.
This belief however would prove to be false. Inaction of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 only exacerbated racial tensions and angered the Chinese government and its citizens. The act, for practical purposes, represented the United States government acknowledging the racial inferiority of an entire class of people. As shown however, the United States had no real choice in the matter. Too many were growing concerned with the large amount of Chinese immigrants and the government’s role in subsidizing the PMSC. Therefore, it had to react to the pressure of its citizens. This would not quell the concerns of Chinese, neither those in the United States or China. Chinese, disappointment over the Exclusion Act and its future amendments, would continue to mount over the coming years and lead to a boycott of all American goods in China during 1905.\(^{155}\) Ironically, the Act designed to protect the United States economic relationship with China, would destroy it. The following chapter will illustrate the difficulties Chinese already living in the United States would face, regardless of their class, due to the Act of 1882 and how they managed to develop a home in America by overcoming racial pressures.
Chapter 3

The Price of Inclusion: How Economic Incentives Facilitated Chinese Immigration
Over Racial Boundaries

Before even beginning their journey, Chinese immigrants needed to contend with immigration law. The racist nature of the immigration laws from both Canada and the United States was striking. Even more surprising was that despite legislative and border control methods, many Chinese continued to enter both countries under legal, and more commonly, illegal means. This chapter will attempt to demonstrate how racial bias was overlooked in both countries when economic benefit was to be gained. This history begins with the construction of the transcontinental railroads in Canada and the United States, and continues with the strengthening of exclusionary laws following their completions. Much like the development of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company’s subsidy, the immigration of Chinese was driven by economic benefit for U.S. industrial capital. While the Chinese laborers were being excluded from United States, other countries, such as Canada, were determined to see how they could profit from unrestricted Chinese immigration. Immigration restrictionism in the United States positioned Canada to facilitate transnational immigration networks that stretched from China to Canada.

Construction on the transcontinental railroad in the United States began in 1863. With the vastness of this project came a large demand for labor. At this time, with the exception of the Burlingame-Seward Treaty, there were few legal obstacles to Chinese immigration. This allowed for railroad companies to look at Chinese laborers as a solution to their labor problems. The beginning of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company’s service to China could not have been better
timed. Reliable and timely service from China allowed U.S. railroad companies to secure many laborers from China thereby fulfilling their labor shortage. By late 1867, of the 2,300 total workers on the California section of the railroad, at least 1,500 were of Chinese descent. While this demonstrates how economically important to the railroad companies the Chinese were, this also angered many Anglo Americans who viewed them as impeding white labor while believing the railroad companies sought out the Chinese only to save money because they would work for lower wages.

This view of Chinese labor was persistent and lasted long after the railroad was finished and sustained by the PMSC’s role in the coolie trade. Before its completion however, railroad companies attempted to dispel the rumor that they turned away white labor for Chinese. A column that appeared in the *San Francisco Bulletin* during 1867 in fact argued that that the railroads had been “forced” to use Chinese labor because not enough white workers showed up to do the job. The author goes so far as to argue that the use of Chinese labor was a last resort because construction needed to be done quickly and that any white worker who showed up would have been gladly given a job. This evidence demonstrates how racism towards Chinese immigrants outweighed common sense in many areas. Here was a large group of people willing to work, yet they were receiving animosity because of their race, on unfounded grounds. The rail companies recognized the merits of using a virtually untapped labor pool and therefore were able to set aside racist beliefs and utilize Chinese labor. Furthermore, due to the importance of the railroad project on a national level, it was possible that no strong anti-Chinese immigration laws were passed until the completion of the railroad.

The first truly stringent immigration law did not come until 1875, five years after the completion of the major rail project and, coincidently, two years after the PMSC’s reputation
was destroyed in the Congressional bribery scandal. This act was the Page Law, which sought to ban both contract laborers, which had been used on the railroad, and prostitutes.\textsuperscript{159} This legislation set the stage for future restrictionist immigration law. The United States could not simply outlaw an entire group of people based upon race alone and this was an attempt to slowly begin the exclusion process under a veil of excuses, beginning with labor and morality. This would lead to a process of escalating exclusion laws until virtually Chinese immigration into the United States was halted.

At about the same time as the Page Act was passed Canada set its sights on building a national railroad line. The goal of this project was to connect eastern Canada and British Columbia and, much like the transcontinental railroad in the United States, it would require a large amount of labor. Seeing the success of projects in the United States with using Chinese labor, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) decided to take a similar route. And as was the case in the United States, the use of Chinese labor was met with resistance by white workers.

The main against the use of Chinese labor was nearly identical to the one used in the United States, in that the CPR was passing over white labor for cheap Chinese. Once again, this was not exactly the case. Instead, the contract company had originally hired a group of white laborers who worked on the railroad in the United States who proved to be “the most useless lot of broken down gamblers, barkeepers, etc. ever collected in one place.”\textsuperscript{160} With groups like this and no other sources of white labor, Chinese labor was employed. By early June of 1881, the first ships had left Hong Kong for British Columbia with railroad laborers.\textsuperscript{161} This is certainly not surprising given that accounts note how unreliable the small amount of white labor was that had shown up and also given the good work that Chinese had preformed on the American railroad. One account from the United States suggests, “there are not on the line, better general
workers than the Chinamen.” Reports like this surely made the way to Canadian businessmen in charge of hiring labor and they therefore set aside any racist beliefs they, or their community, held in the interests of accomplishing the railroad well and quickly.

During this time period, Canada had no anti-Chinese immigration policies. This coupled with the demand for labor, resulted in nearly 17,000 Chinese immigrants during the years of railroad construction. It was no easy task to facilitate the transportation of people to Canada from China. Not only was the immense distance a problem, but also there was a language barrier for Canadians to surmount. To accomplish this, the CPR used either Chinese contract companies or companies would have to resort to using translators. In total, the CPR imported approximately 10,000 Chinese directly from China to Canada. Inevitably, this made the men who transported these laborers large profits and created some very important connections between white and Chinese businessmen.

Despite the merits of the work Chinese laborers had accomplished on the railroad, concerns in Canada about the ability of Chinese to assimilate and blend with the Anglo-Canadians began to increase. Many politicians ran on anti-Chinese platforms, one notable slogan was “Canada for Canadians,” fearing that the 33,000 whites in British Columbia would be outnumbered by Chinese soon. Not many people seemed to consider that some, if not most of the Chinese were only coming for work, not to settle. Many of the men who came to work on the railroad did not come with family and the proportion of men to women was highly skewed towards men. If men willingly came in this manner, then, it stood to reason that they had no intention of settling permanently in Canada.

Nonetheless, with the completion of the Canadian Railroad project in 1885, and the resulting sharp decrease in demand for manual labor, Canadian lawmakers went to work
excluding the Chinese from the country. That very same year the Canadian Government passed the Chinese Immigration Act, which levied a fifty-dollar, head-tax fee on all Chinese laborers entering the country.\textsuperscript{168} At the time, this was a substantial amount of money. The obvious purpose of it was to hope to reduce the entry of the Chinese laborers and to make money from fining the Chinese who did enter into Canada.

Still, some question arose about full exclusion of Chinese immigration into Canada. An 1886 an article from the Trenton Daily Times suggested treaty complications would possibly result in a stoppage of trade between Great Britain and China.\textsuperscript{169} Economic concerns were at the forefront of immigration policy and law, although public discourse about barring Chinese immigration occurred after the “necessity [of] Chinese into [to develop] British Columbia [was] removed.”\textsuperscript{170} The timing for this legislation was impeccable and it cannot be denied that it coincides directly with the conclusion of the CPR railroad project. This timing, and the emergence of the head-tax system, demonstrated that, while racism towards the Chinese made them unwanted, intolerance could be set aside should there be economic benefits for the host country.

There was perhaps no stronger evidence for this than the manner in which the United States dealt with its so-called Chinese problem. In 1882, the United States approved the Chinese Exclusion Act, which outlawed the immigration of Chinese laborers, but still allowed for merchants, students, diplomats, and teachers.\textsuperscript{171} This act blatantly excluded those whom the United States believed could not help the economy, while allowing for those who seemed to have skill or capital for which the US stood to benefit. Merchants, for example, could open markets for American products in China, while students represented the potential to become learned and
well-educated professionals. Again, racism has its limits and those limits were reached when there was potential economic benefit to be gained.

Canadian immigration policy only continued to demonstrate this policy of economic benefit before racism. In 1900, the head-tax fine was doubled from fifty dollars to one-hundred-dollars per head; in 1903 it jumped to five-hundred-dollars per head. These rapid and sporadic jumps in fines were not the result of inflation or any other reasonable measure; they were simply aimed at preventing Chinese laborers from coming into Canada. Head-tax increases continued because the government controlled one of the few pathways for Chinese entry into the United States. The fact that Chinese continued to come and pay attests to how badly they wanted to work in the United States and Canada. Coincidently, if someone were willing to pay high prices to enter a country, surely they would work hard once they were there. This logic was still missed by many, however.

This head-tax policy instituted by Canada infuriated American legislators and immigration authorities alike. Lawmakers were furious at the idea that, despite America’s strict inspections at ports like San Francisco, Chinese could enter Canada simply by paying a fee and then make the trek across the largely unguarded northern border of the United States. These concerns arose early on as noted in an article published in the Chicago Herald in 1891. The author exclaimed how American exclusion laws are essentially nullified by the fact that a Chinese can become a resident of Canada, become a Canadian citizen, and cross the border as a Canadian rather than Chinese citizen. Loopholes like this caused Canada to become an ever-increasing alternative to Chinese who wanted to go to the United States, but could not legally enter through a port in America. As a result, several shipping companies began shifting their main ports from the south like San Francisco to more northern ports. In fact, in 1881, all major
news from China came through Vancouver rather than San Francisco as had previously been the case, and there was speculation that passenger lines would follow similar paths.\textsuperscript{174} It was reasonable to suggest that these companies were trading American ports for Canadian ports because that a majority of their Chinese passengers wanted to enter the United States via Canada rather than risk long detention at the hands of U.S. immigration officials.

To facilitate all of this transportation, once again as during railroad construction, Chinese translators were needed. Chinese merchants, who had worked as contract labor brokers during railroad construction, had enjoyed high status in overseas communities.\textsuperscript{175} One such man was Yip On who became a powerful interpreter in Vancouver. Yip On and his family were able to control the interpreter business for twenty three years in Vancouver due to maintaining good relationships with ruling political parties in Canada.\textsuperscript{176} The importance of maintaining good relationships with politically-connected whites cannot be overstressed. Since Chinese could not hold political office and had no real way to voice their vote, they strongly relied on their white connections.

Once in power however, interpreters had virtually unbridled authority. As noted earlier, since almost no Canadians (or Americans for that matter) spoke Chinese, interpreters could translate whatever they wanted from newly arrived immigrants while also being able to distort the numbers. To get immigrants across the border interpreters had essentially two major options, they could lie classify a laborer as a merchant or they could arrange for laborers to be smuggled into the United States.

As this became an increasing problem, the United States worked out an agreement with the Canadian government. Under the Canadian Agreement, which went into effect in 1883, American immigration inspectors were allowed into Canadian ports for the sole purpose of
Inspecting those immigrants bound for the United States.\textsuperscript{177} Obviously, problems arose with this rather quickly. As Chinese brokers became aware of the process, they would simply instruct passengers to say, or translate for them, that they were staying in Canada and not going to the United States.\textsuperscript{178} With this one slight change in their statements, Chinese laborers would then be able to land in Canada as long as they paid the head tax to Canadian immigration authorities and then simply cross into the United States at a later time. The American government could not pursue this matter any further because they had to respect Canadian sovereignty and were therefore lucky to even have been granted presence in Canadian ports as officials of the United States. As a result of this, the program ultimately proved to be futile and really did nothing to stem the flow.

Since the border continued to be relatively easy to cross, Canadian steamship and railroad companies worked with Chinese brokers to get laborers and other undocumented Chinese into the United States. Evidence for this appears in 1902 from an article printed in the \textit{Philadelphia Inquirer}, which noted how the U. S. Congress was considering a new immigration bill because Canadian agencies would guarantee passengers that they would be “safely delivered into the United States and no questions asked if they [would] only take passage via Canada.”\textsuperscript{179} To accomplish this, the companies would take their passenger trains and stop them just short of the American border, where smugglers would meet them with specially-made wagons to take the undocumented Chinese across.\textsuperscript{180} To accomplish this, intense transnational networks were needed and lucrative profits were available for those who joined in. The fact that Canadian rail and steamship companies openly participated in illegal activity goes to demonstrate how profitable the trade was. This again attests to the fact that racist sentiment only goes so far when there was money to make. The precision and the timing necessary to accomplish coordination
with so many people across such a far distance is astonishing, particularly when accounting for the technology available at the time.

The porous Canadian border was also very convenient for brokers and translators. Since communication was slow, it was impractical if not impossible to account for every single Chinese immigrant’s story and verify it with ports of entry. This would have been an excruciatingly slow process and therefore certificates issued at someone’s port of exit from China were largely trusted on their arrival into Canada. To further complicate this matter, brokers would write certificates in only Chinese to prevent Anglo Canadians from reading them, allowing Chinese translators to smooth over any discrepancies once in Canada.181 As this became more of a problem, the Canadian government realized something had to be done. In 1910, the Canadian Department of Trade and Commerce issued an order that all certificates of identification must be written in either English or French, and that all Chinese would be photographed upon their departure from Canada.182 With this new legislation, the Canadian government hoped to restrict some of the unchecked power that translators held, but it could not destroy the networks already in place.

Up until this point, Chinese power brokers in cities such as Vancouver had been extremely successful in working around laws and negotiating entry into Canada and eventually into the United States for thousands of Chinese. Yip On, the lead interpreter of Vancouver, was able to defraud the Canadian government out of one million dollars in head taxes while allowing 2,000 Chinese entrances based upon false papers.183 Yip On, it is worth noting, was only one interpreter who operated as a smuggler from 1906 to 1910.184 The system of illegal migration from Canada into the United States was made possible through a network which stretched back to China where potential immigrants were able to purchase a ship ticket, forged entry certificates,
and other fraudulent documents necessary to facilitate posing as a merchant.\textsuperscript{185} Although the Canadian government continued to pass legislation under the pretense of stopping these practices, Anglo-Canadian immigration officials often colluded with Chinese immigration brokers in these efforts.

As noted earlier, Chinese immigration brokers and merchants relied heavily on white counterparts and politicians to stay in power since Chinese did not really have a vote in Canada. Personal friendship only went so far in keeping oneself in power. Ultimately, a bribe of some form was needed to help secure a position. Chinese would pay anything to gain these political appointments and interpreter positions could be brokered as different political parties came into power.\textsuperscript{186} The men maintaining these Chinese interpreters’ positions also held a great deal of influence when it came to determining immigration law. Their inclusion in the profits of unlawful immigration can help account for the fact that Canada did not pass any truly stringent form of Chinese exclusion law until 1923. As long as there was money to be made, racism could be set aside.

At this time however, the Canadian government passed the Chinese Immigration Act, which sought to bar entry to all Chinese people, who were not merchants, students, or diplomats.\textsuperscript{187} This law has a striking resemblance to the American law passed some forty years prior. The likely reasoning behind this was that the Canadian Government could no longer resist pressure from the United States to close the gaps in immigration afforded by the head tax policy. For years prior to this, there had been mounting pressure against Canada, from the United States, to enact new and more stringent immigration laws. In 1909, the Canadian government attempted to do this earlier by consolidating all inspections of Chinese coming from China into the United States at Vancouver.\textsuperscript{188} This, however, proved to be more beneficial than anything for power
brokers. This consolidated all of the Chinese immigration in one location, turning Vancouver into a very efficient way station for those destined for the United States. This caused Vancouver’s Chinese community to develop under a very different situation than those in the United States, such as San Francisco.

In Canada, the Chinese community was considerably smaller and wealthier than their San Franciscan counterpart. In Canada, unlike in San Francisco, Chinese immigration brokers were supported by prominent white politicians and businessmen. Yip On, for example, was not only backed by politicians, but also had the Canadian Pacific Railroad supporting him and knowingly accepting his false documentations. This helped to concentrate the majority of the wealth in Vancouver, while poorer Chinese laborers headed south into the United States. In both the United States and Canada, though, Chinese continued to bear the brunt of harsh racism from the majority of whites whom did not interact with them directly. In order to protect against bigotry, Chinese began to settle in concentrated areas. This led to the development of distinct Chinatowns in various cities across America and Canada, the largest in San Francisco and New York. What had been intended as a way of protecting themselves from prejudice, ironically, turned into a symbol of their defiance to assimilate.
In the United States, these ethnic enclaves drew intense interest from white, middle-class Americans who wanted to see what the Chinese were like. This led to the creation of a tourism industry based around the perception of what Americans wanted to see as Chinese culture. In San Francisco, tour guides (white and Chinese) were more than happy to oblige their patrons and showed off depravity and filth. This only served to confirm what Americans read...
in papers and perpetuated the ideas that Chinese were unclean and immoral. At the same time however, white men facilitated this tourism industry, because there was an economic incentive involved.

For nativists in the United States and Canada, this issue of morality resonated deeply. They had no personal economic benefit gained through the immigration of Chinese and therefore there was no motivation for them to set aside their racist beliefs. Articles regularly appeared in newspapers chastising the Chinese for their immoral behavior. It was thought that the isolation and secrecy of Chinatowns allowed for acts to occur on Sundays such as drinking, gambling, and smoking and other vices that “desecrate the Sabbath.” Furthermore, many Chinese were not Christians as the majority of desirable European immigrants were. The abundance of joss houses in Chinatowns served as a reminder of cultural differences between Chinese and whites. Tourists were welcomed into these joss houses where they were allowed to make offerings and interact with the priests. For exclusionists, this only solidified the greed inherent in the Chinese because the priests would accept the offerings left by tourists and one man was noted as saying how for the right price one could buy a joss house and run it for profit. This statement also suggests that there may have been some jealousy with the fact that the Chinese were able to make a profit and this author was left out of it. Regardless, there was no tolerance for that the fact that many Chinese chose not to accept Christianity. An article in the San Francisco Bulletin published in 1887 expresses these feelings in regards to New York’s Chinatown.

The churches of this city have made a desperate effort to obtain converts in Chinatown. As a matter of fact they have failed…The Chinaman is just as fond of his snub-nosed gods as before he breathed the air of Christian New York.
Therein that statement contains the grievance of most nativists--that the United States by design was a Christian nation. Therefore, everyone who came to the United States must abide by Christianity. Surely similar comments were made in San Francisco and other cities around the United States. There is irony in the fact that American tourists were seeking out the unique culture of the Chinese that they were being chastised for having and not relinquishing. Furthermore, joss houses were one of the most favored tourist stops. Ultimately, Americans could not understand the concept of Chinatowns or why they existed. For most they amounted to a novelty that was too be enjoyed through sightseeing, or abhorred due to their poor sanitation. Either way, it seems as though those who could not receive the economic benefits from these Chinatowns, sought out reasons to exclude the Chinese, while those who could reap the benefits willingly cooperated.

Like most reports surrounding Chinatown, those regarding sanitation were usually overblown, but to a certain degree, Chinatowns were usually unsanitary. In San Francisco one of the main factors was because Chinatown was only composed of twelve city blocks. This had not change since the first immigrants settled in the area, and racist real estate patterns helped to keep the size stagnate so as the population grew, conditions only worsened. When tourists would visit Chinatown in San Francisco, they would only see the horrid living conditions and not think about the reasoning behind them. This undoubtedly led some to judge that the Chinese really did enjoy being unclean and filthy as nativists would have them believe.

These sanitation problems within Chinatowns created a multitude of problems for the Chinese. First of all, in San Francisco nearly every epidemic that occurred was blamed upon the conditions within Chinatown. This resulted in hostilities and more anti-Chinese sentiment. White Americans living near Chinatowns would become sick and the blame was placed back
upon the alleged source. Finally, the problem grew to such a degree that in 1880 the Board of Health condemned San Francisco’s Chinatown as a nuisance.\textsuperscript{201} Despite this condemnation, the City of San Francisco did little to nothing to improve the conditions. Additionally this hint of danger did little to dissuade tourists from venturing into the forbidden area.

Image 3.2 “Declared a Nuisance!”

Pamphlet distributed by the “Workingmen’s Party of California”

In order to combat these ideas, the wealthier members of Chinatown in San Francisco chose to display an image that they wanted America and the rest of the world to see. Many of the reforms that took place were directed by the Six Companies and supported by the wealthier
merchants. One such development was the formation of a local Chinese healthcare system in 1900 called the Tung Wah Dispensary. This system employed both Western and Chinese medicines and eventually developed into a full-size hospital. Moves like this show that the Chinese upper class was aware of the dangers possessed by unsanitary living and wanted to do something about it. In reforming the sanitation of Chinatown, the Chinese hopped to combat the negative images and portray Chinatown in a more favorable light.

The Chinese upper-class’s awareness of the dangers posed by sanitation problems can help account for why Vancouver’s Chinatown was never portrayed to be nearly as filthy as San Francisco’s. Since the majority of the Chinese in Vancouver were of the upper class, they were much more aware and maintained cleaner living styles as a result. Stories still arose early on though about Chinese in Canada spreading diseases to white communities. The majority of these reports however came during, and immediately following, the era of railroad construction. It was therefore reasonable to assume that men working and living in close quarters would develop various diseases. Also, this would have been before wealthy merchants had solidified their control. Unquestionably, some of their first movements would be to clean up any sanitation problems, which accounts for the low number of diseases following the late 1800’s. San Francisco continued to receive numerous complaints past this time period however.

Despite Chinese efforts like these to clean up sanitation, by and large, most Americans who were not benefiting from the Chinese presence continued to be very racist. When the earthquake stuck San Francisco in 1906, much of the city was destroyed by fire and Chinatown was not spared. This left the Chinese with an interesting opportunity to redesign their entire twelve-block area. One advantage was that they could redesign the sewage system to handle the number of people that had been placed in the area. Originally, the area had been confined to
twelve blocks and the district was handling far more people than it had been designed for. The prospect of rebuilding Chinatown was met with hostility however from white San Franciscans. One article that appeared in the *Beaumont Enterprise* a month after the earthquake, celebrated the passing of the district. The author was convinced that Chinatown would never be restored in the same location and rather it would be moved further away from expensive real estate. The Chinese, however, had no intention of moving their district and were intent on rebuilding.

Previously in San Jose, a mass meeting had been called in 1887 to protest the reconstruction of a Chinatown there after a fire destroyed it. The citizens of this community had employed every legal means possible and discussed how unsightly and dirty the district had been and explained that the few Chinese stores could find new locations mixed in with the white community.

Twenty years later, these same arguments were used against the reconstruction of San Francisco’s Chinatown. Despite this and due to funding from white property owners and wealthy Chinese merchants, Chinatown rose from the ashes. Once again this shows how those who were making money from or with the Chinese wanted to help facilitate their existence. Landlords ultimately were not concerned with the skin color or ethnicity of the people who were using their property, as long as rent came in on time; they were content with profits regardless.

When writing on the subject in 1902, William Lloyd Garrison explained how the “misrepresentation and abuse…showered upon the colored race [had] been transferred to the Chinese.” At this point in time, the memory of slavery was not forgotten and the stereotypes of African Americans as lazy, unclean, and ultimately unwanted, compared with the situation the Chinese found themselves in. Garrison defends the Chinese on all of the counts against them and wonders how love of family can be a crime when sending remittances home, how they can be blamed for not assimilating when no chance had been afforded to them, and how the poor health
conditions within Chinatown was the result of the city’s unwillingness to do anything. Garrison, the son of an abolitionist and a progressive himself, was obviously mindful and empathetic towards what African Americans had gone through on a level that most Americans were not. This allowed for him to see the parallels between their struggles and the Chinese, which accounts for why he stood up and defended them despite not having any personal connection himself.

Another story of countering the racist arguments against the Chinese derived from a white laborer. Joaquin Miller, a small time farmer in California explained in 1907 how Chinese exclusion was actually hurting the economy, and while wages were increasing, so were the costs of living and prices of commodities. The problem was that there was simply not enough labor to harvest crops even as crop yields were the highest in twenty years. Unfortunately, contended Miller, much of the harvest was wasted, left to rot in the fields. Miller paints a picture of a West rocked by labor shortages desperate for repeal of the exclusion laws in order to alleviate the labor problem. He explained that the myth of white labor shortages was perpetuated by labor union leaders in San Francisco. Stories like this suggest that truly racism was the reason for the Chinese exclusion laws. Fronts of morality or the loss of white labor were merely covers. Was it truly possible that leaders of huge labor unions honestly believed that the Chinese were replacing all of the jobs of white workers? Possibly. But these men did not listen to voices such as Joaquin Miller who pleaded for the Exclusion Laws to be repealed.

In fact, just a few years after Miller’s letter, politicians passed legislation that extended the period of Chinese Exclusion indefinitely. Truly something was missing in America. The public was voting these politicians into power. The power to change policy ultimately lies with the people. So what was going on? Anti-Chinese rhetoric continued to be included in political
platforms for both parties, depending upon location, and strong exclusion promises almost always resulted in a successful election.\textsuperscript{211} The fact was that politicians had realized that a uniformed public was very responsive to fear. If the public were afraid for their livelihood and their way of life, they would vote to protect themselves. Politicians used this to garner votes playing off of fears of unemployment, loss of Christian identity, and ultimately the browning of America at the hands of the Chinese. Resulting from their elections, politicians would either gain or continue to hold their elected offices. For them, this was their livelihood. Whereas this chapter has already demonstration how some people benefited from excluding the Chinese, these exclusionist politicians were making their money off of exclusion and racism.

The only real way that these irrational fears could be countered was through firsthand experiences with the Chinese and due to their small number and isolation in the United States, few Americans were afforded this opportunity. Those that did, or felt the effects of exclusion firsthand such as Miller, often came around to understand the Chinese and dispel these fears. One such group was Bohemians, whom along with members of society’s other marginalized groups, had celebrated Chinatown from early on in its existence.\textsuperscript{212} A few groups of Chinese elites were also able to cross the racial lines earlier than the average Chinese.

These were Chinese herbalists and Christian ministers. Herbalists had many white patrons from when they first opened their shops in San Francisco many of which were white women who did not like the invasive practices used by western doctors.\textsuperscript{213} The herbalists were favored here because the only looked at the tongues of their patients and would not actually touch them. They would them brew a tea for whatever their ailment was and their patrons found the brews quite delicious.\textsuperscript{214} This working relationship between white women and Chinese men represented an interesting and unusual aspect of race relations. One of the greatest fears for
nativists were conjugal relationships between Chinese men and white women. Therefore it is interesting that this was allowed and that women sought out these business-service relationships. One aspect that may have helped these relationships to foster was that these herbalists operated most of their shops outside of Chinatown proper.\textsuperscript{215} This would allow whites to frequent their offices without having to venture into Chinatown when it was dirty and allowed herbalists to get a head start in interracial interactions.

Christian Chinese ministers were also given an introduction into white culture ahead of their lower class counterparts. Chinese ministers sought to disprove the idea that they were unable to assimilate into American culture and clear up the image of the Chinese as a whole by fighting to reduce the levels of opium addiction.\textsuperscript{216} The threat of opium had been championed as a large reason for the need to exclude the Chinese. By reducing the presence of this drug, the Chinese convert hoped to reduce some of the criticism the Chinese faced as a whole. Despite these efforts, the missionaries were largely unsuccessful in reducing the presence of opium and instead were viewed as a success story on an individual level without much regard for the race as a whole.\textsuperscript{217} Similar views were held towards merchants and other upper-class Chinese due to their successful business tactics that elicited respect from their white counterparts.\textsuperscript{218} Members of the lower class were allowed no such respect.

This preference for wealthier Chinese was evident in the exclusion laws that blatantly excluded members of those of lower social status, laborers. These laws exclusively allowed for the entrance of people whom had already proven themselves financially capable and gave no opportunity for those who had not. Even merchants however were not allowed into the country without passing rigorous and humiliating tests aimed at proving that they were not in fact whom they claimed to be.\textsuperscript{219} This unsystematic and self-serving method of limited inclusion showed
that the American government was only going to risk allowing in members of the Chinese race who were deemed to be undeniably beneficial to the American economy. They were unwilling to take the risk on Chinese lower class unlike they had on European immigrants simply because of their race and intense feelings of nativism spurred by an American national identity that was believed to be white, Christian, and ultimately Anglo-Saxon. Alfred Lloyd Garrison summed up his opinion of the American exclusion of the Chinese by saying that “personal dislike of foreign and strange immigrants is no excuse of maltreatment or barring out.”\(^{220}\) However, it seems as if that was exactly why the Chinese were excluded from the United States and various social, political and economic reasons were manufactured to cover for the blatant racism inherent in Chinese Exclusion Laws.

Altogether, this chapter hopes to make more sense of the United States’ and Canada’s exclusion of the Chinese, while exposing how Chinese immigrants created their niche. The legislative record along with personal accounts and experiences demonstrate how racial bias was clearly overlooked in both countries when profits were to be had. In scenarios when people did not stand to make money, racism was used nearly unbridled as an excuse for the Chinese exclusion. Perhaps this reveals something about human nature in itself. That people are naturally opposed to those that are different, unless they can be used to benefit themselves. This history began with the construction of the transcontinental railroads in Canada and the United States, yet its effects continue to this day. The effect was that thriving Chinese diasporic communities have been created across the United States and Canada, particularly San Francisco and Vancouver. These communities have each worked in their own unique ways to fend off racism and thrive in their new homelands, existing behind a once forbidden boundary.
American interaction with China began as a result of a desire for expansion and growth. Chinese and American visionaries, such as Edward Cunningham, saw that a mutual relationship between China and the United States held great potential. As a result of inventive merchants, reciprocal Chinese-U.S. trade on the Yangtze River flourished. The benefits of this trade caused the United States to begin looking for more ways to profit from an affiliation with China. The result of this was a regular steam service between China and San Francisco, provided by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, backed by a subsidy from the U.S. government. The United States wanted to not only protect this route from European competition, but also foster its budding friendship with China. The Burlingame-Seward Treaty passed in 1868, helped to further encourage a bond with China and its citizens. While some within the United States, namely business elites, supported the increased immigration brought about by the 1868 treaty, many more were opposed. Those opposed felt that Chinese immigrants threatened their jobs and drove down the price of labor.

In response to these internal pressures, the United States enacted a series of laws aimed at limiting the influx of Chinese labor, culminating in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This push was originally sparked and strengthened by the scandal that engulfed the Pacific Mail Steamship Company in late 1873. The legislation aimed to allow the wealthier Chinese merchants that facilitated trade, while removing the laboring class whom were viewed as the source of tension. This hopefully would allow the United States to maintain trade relations with China, while eliminating immigration. Despite these efforts, Chinese continued to pour into the United States from the Canadian border. While illegal, the Canadian government tacitly allowed
this form of immigration. Canada’s head tax policy was an attempt to further profit off of Chinese immigrants and the companies that desired their cheap labor. The complex system of bribery and trickery allowed Chinese to continually enter the United States throughout the Exclusion Era.

The Chinese exclusion era should not be viewed as belonging to the past; doing so would obscure the true purpose of studying history. Was the immigration of Chinese, legal or illegal, truly harmful to the United States and Canada? Should white North America attempt to prevent the admission of eager and willing immigrants? If these questions could be asked and answered in the present time, the current immigration issues at the U.S. southern border may be solved. Is the United States ready to reap the rewards of free trade and receive “the huddled masses yearning to breathe free” from Latin America?²²¹

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

-Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus”

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