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Bakersfield and the Anti-Chinese Pogroms of 1893

By Gilbert P. Gia

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San Francisco had its millionaires in 1878 but almost no middle class.¹ Bakersfield in 1876 was in a similar fix when it was unable to collect taxes and had to disincorporate.² The Long Depression that sickened the country brought 14% unemployment, failure of hundreds of banks, ten state governments and the loss of 20,000 businesses across the country.³ Early in the six-year crisis politicians accused the Chinese of taking jobs from whites and so prolonging the economic malaise.⁴

At the beginning of the decade one-fourth of California's unskilled labor force was Chinese and was valued as efficient and dependable. Said Gen. Edward F. Beale, owner of the Tejon Ranch, "I have known the Chinese intimately as wealthy tenants, and employed them as a working people, and have found them admirable as both. They are, as a rule, a most valuable class of immigrants, and certainly the most industrious and quiet operatives. As to their not coming except as servile laborers, that is absurd. They will come just as other emigrants come, if you will let them, and with this difference, that our other immigration

¹ Los Angeles Evening Express, Jun 17, 1878, p 2, c1. "Depression has pervaded all parts of the country for the last three years."

² See *Marshal Alex Mills and the 1876 Disincorporation of Bakersfield* at <http://www.gilbertgia.com/articlePages/crime1.html>

³ See Appendix

⁴ Failure of banks set off a chain reaction and temporarily closed the New York stock market. As the country slipped into depression, factories laid off workers. The effects of the panic were quickly felt in New York and moved progressively across the country. The New York Stock Exchange closed for ten days in September 1893. By November about 55 of the nation's railroads had failed, and a year later another 60 had gone bankrupt. Construction of new rail lines, formerly one of the backbones of the US economy, plummeted from 7500 miles of new track in 1872 to just 1600 miles in 1875. Building construction halted, wages dropped, real estate values fell, and corporate profits plummeted.

brings us nothing with which we are not already acquainted, whereas they bring with them to us and for our profit, a thousand new and valuable ideas."⁵

By the end of the decade the economy had soured, Chinese were blamed for undercutting white jobs, and in Kern County Dr. Thornton, the director of Haggin lands in Kern County, got death threats for employing Chinese crews.⁶ "*The Chinese Must Go*," wrote county newspapers and urged the public to hire only white workers.⁷ Discrimination was codified in the bi-laws of the Bakersfield Cemetery Association when directors banned Chinese burials.⁸

Prominent Bakersfield businessman Ah Foy told a newspaper that Chinese had done nothing to reduce the price of wages for white laborers. He said that when Chinese could not get a dollar a day and board they would go to work for themselves, hire some land, and raise a crop to sell. A Bakersfield newspaper commented on Foy's words, "He thinks white man too much talkee, no workee."⁹ That reality became clear when whites refused to work in low-pay agricultural jobs.

Eventually the economy improved, but resentment continued. In 1882 an anonymous newspaper reader wrote to the editor of the Record, "The Mongolians are packed in like rats, stacked away on shelves, and in underground apartments all huddling together reeking with filth, disease and rottenness. ...Here in a small American village, more than fifty Chinese prostitutes openly ply their vocation and boast of the amount of coin taken." The editor added the words, "It might be necessary to incorporate the town before the plague can be wiped out..."¹⁰

Nevertheless, whites hired Chinese cooks and washermen, and Kern County and big business also employed Chinese. A newspaper wrote in 1883, "Ah Him, the Chinese interpreter whose marriage, and the ceremony pertaining thereto, was graphically described in the Record last spring, is now a father, a daughter being born to the pair day before yesterday."¹¹ A month later the newspaper wrote, "Captain Anderson has had a large force of Chinese at work for a considerable time clearing the channel of the Panama Slough and removing the brush along its banks for the distance that it passes through the Cotton Ranch. This when complete will be a great improvement and, together with other improvements that have been made on

⁵ Kern County Weekly Courier, Jan 21, 1871, p 3. Quote is from Beale's speech delivered before the National Labor Convention on August 6, 1870.

⁶ Kern County Gazette, Feb 9, 1878

⁷ Southern Californian, Kern County Weekly Courier, Apr 25, 1878, p 2, c 1-2

⁸ Southern Californian, Kern County Weekly Courier, Apr 4, 1878, p 4, c 1. See *What Happened to Chinese Cemetery? 1870-1993* at <http://www.gilbertgia.com/articlePages/civRights1.html>

⁹ Southern Californian, Kern County Weekly Courier, Feb 27, 1879, p 3, c 2

¹⁰ Kern County Weekly Record, Jul 6, 1882, p 2, c 3.

¹¹ Kern County Weekly Record, Jan 12, 1883

this valuable property the present season, will materially improve the sanitary conditions of the town and surrounding country." ¹²

The country again fell into recession. In 1884 the Daily Evening Gazette accused Haggin ranch managers of hiring Chinese to displace white laborers.¹³ It concluded that big business was almost always antagonistic to labor and that ranch managers preferred low wages and high unemployment to high wages and low unemployment. ¹⁴

Low wages trumped the hiring of any race; Haggin would have been just as willing to replace white workers with Blacks or Native Americans. That in fact happened in summer 1884 when Haggin headquarters alerted ranch manager C.L. Connor, "Indians who are experienced hay hands are coming from Arizona. Will be better than the Chinamen. Work the Indians if you can. The Chinese are always striking for wages."¹⁵ General manager William "Billy" Carr also recruited Black workers from the south.¹⁶ The Gazette demanded, "Why does Haggin employ 1,000 non-whites? Why not white families that will improve the area?"¹⁷

Carr wrote a ranch boss, "See if your men will stand for wages of \$.75 cents for White, and \$.70 for Chinese, or \$.90 for no Chinese board."¹⁸ Chinese workers were obviously important to profitability at Haggin ranches, but with spiking anti-Chinese rhetoric Carr told his ranch managers to fire all Chinese. Carr, however, soon discovered that ranches could not operate without skilled Chinese workers. On September 22, 1885 he wrote, "You can keep the Chinese cook, I accept that labor."¹⁹ In January 1886 when San Francisco restaurants complained to Carr about a cheese product, the manager wrote to Conner telling him to expect a Chinese they had hired who could make better cheese than the white man they fired from that position.²⁰

By 1886 the Californian was unreservedly anti-Chinese. It wrote, "The Burlingame Treaty²¹ should be amended so as to entirely prohibit Chinamen from landing on our shores except those traveling as students, for pleasure, for diplomatic relations, or who are in transit

¹² Kern County Californian, Feb 24, 1883. The Cotton Ranch lay generally along today's 24th St west to the river.

¹³ Daily Evening Gazette, Sep 3, 1884. p 3

¹⁴ Kern County Californian, Jun 21, 1884, p 3, c 2-3

¹⁵ Conner Letters, Jun 23, 1884. Beale Library, McGuire Local History Room Vault. Daily Evening Gazette, Jul 9, 1884

¹⁶ Diane Ogden, *History of Blacks in Bakersfield*, mimeographed paper, 1973. McGuire Local History Room, Beale Library, Bakersfield. The first group, 56 in number, arrived for cotton work in March 1884 by train from Memphis, Tennessee. Other arrived three months later. (Kern County Californian, Jun 7, 1884, p 3, c-2-3 and Jun 21, 1884, p 3, 2-3)

¹⁷ Daily Evening Gazette, Jul 9, 1884

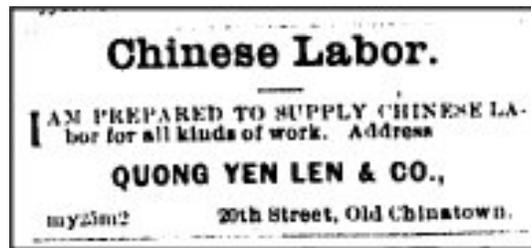
¹⁸ Conner letters, Sep 10, 1885. Beale Library, McGuire Local History Room, Vault

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Burlingame Treaty, also known as the Burlingame-Seward Treaty of 1868, amended the Treaty of Tientsin of 1858 and established formal, friendly relations between the United States and China. The US granted China most favored nation status. The Burlingame Treaty was signed at Washington in 1868 and ratified at Beijing in 1869. (Wikipedia)

to other countries. All citizens should replace Chinese labor with Caucasian labor as soon as possible. A club should be formed by the citizens of Kern County to forward these ends. It is the duty of every good citizen to use his utmost efforts to prevent violence on the part of anyone toward the Chinese or to exercise any but the legal right of every one to employ those whom he prefers." ²² An anti-Chinese league formed at Bakersfield on February 20, 1886.



For four months the Daily Californian promoted a boycott of Chinese business,²³ but that newspaper had not checked with the man on the street. In June, after several months of anti-Chinese editorials, the editor wrote, "The boycott against the Chinese and those who employ them appears to have fallen into disfavor." As clear that was, his editorial devolved into a labyrinth of reasoning: (1) the public knew how to solve a problem if given enough time, (2) The paper's support for a boycott was a failure-- the public had economized by patronizing Chinese business, (3) The editor was relieved that Bakersfield ignored the boycott, (4) If the boycott had succeeded the Chinese would have taken up lives of crime, (5) If the boycott had succeeded it would have been an infringement on white rights, (6) Without the Chinese labor white households would have suffered great personal discomfort. The editor concluded that law would someday "triumph over the Chinese evil." ²⁴

In February 1888 the Kern County Board of Supervisors payroll had Chinese cooks, washermen, two interpreters -- Ah Yoc and Ah Truck -- and a Chinese farmer named Ah Yu. The county probably also bought produce from the Fook Wah store, which that month advertised "800 sacks of good potatoes."²⁵ Eight miles east of Bakersfield at Kern River Canyon, Chinese crews blasted for a canal project.²⁶ In the spring when Judge N.R. Wilkinson officiated a Chinese wedding, a newspaper wrote, "It is beginning evidently to dawn upon the astute Celestial mind of this country that it is a good thing to be married American fashion."

²² Daily Californian, Feb 20, 1886. This article was signed A.O. Collins, J. W. Mahon, Paul Galtes, P. O'Hare, and C.J. Crocker. In 1880 A.O. Collins was a Tehachapi stock raiser. Attorney Jackson W. Mahon later became a county superior court judge. Paul Galtes (Pablo Galtes) owned the Bakersfield Opera House and built the Grand Hotel. Peter O'Hare farmed six miles south of Bakersfield. Crocker (probably J.C. Crocker) was a rancher.

²³ Bakersfield Daily Californian, Feb 20, 1886

²⁴ Kern County Californian, Jun 10, 1886

²⁵ Kern County Californian, Feb 26, 1888, p 2; Mar 10, 1888

What was the advantage to the couple? The newspaper explained that the county's record would assure the husband that high-binders would not steal his wife.²⁷

In March 1888 the Kern County Californian reprinted a harangue from San Francisco Judge Ross accusing the Chinese of "debas[ing] our white laboring classes to the level of brutes."²⁸ At Bakersfield, business transactions between whites and Chinese continued in spite of state-wide agitation against the Chinese and particularly in spite of continued criticism from the Kern County Californian, however the anti-Chinese movement in California was metastasizing.

The Chinese diaspora of decades had kept pace with appalling conditions in China, but the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 did little to stop immigration.²⁹ Chinese were surreptitiously landed at Victoria, British Columbia and at Guaymas, Mexico and crossed over to the US. By the mid-1880s, Chinese were about six percent of the California population, but they were not US citizens, and in many cases there were here illegally. The 51st US Congress debated a national census of Chinese and the issue of residence certificates. Although the bill passed in the House, it lost in the Senate, but California passed radical, anti-Chinese legislation.³⁰

In summer 1889 at Bakersfield, a two-story, 36 x 30-ft church mission was established for Chinese at 23rd and L Streets on property donated by W.B. Carr and L.C. McAfee of the land company.³¹ But by this date, Chinese owned property, and some of them leased to whites.³² The permanence of Chinese ownership was demonstrated in summer 1889 when a fire burned out the south half of Chinatown, and the Bakersfield city council met with property owners to discuss buying their land. When the Chinese owners demanded 20% more than what the council thought the property was worth, the meeting ended. The council commented it would seek "other ways to make them move."³³ That did not happen.

Bakersfield jobs remained scarce.³⁴ Anti-Chinese articles continued. "Such of our people as have had occasion recently to visit San Francisco and return," wrote a newspaper,

³⁰ Elmer Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, U of Illinois Press, 1991, p 102

³¹ *Weekly California*, Jun 22, 1889. L. C. McAfee was manager, with C. Brower, of the J. B. Haggin Kern County land department. (Wallace Melvin Morgan, *History of Kern County, California*. Los Angeles, California. Historic Record Company, 1914). The purpose of the mission was to Christianize Chinese.

³² Kern County Hall of Records, Lease Book 0002-0040, Aug 28, 1889. Owner Chun Yung leased property on Lot 8, Block 232 for \$50 a month to Anselmo Herrera and Charlie A. Gay. Chun Yung's name appears on document in both English and Chinese. The lot was a prominent commercial location at the NE corner of 19th and K St. A. Herrera, saloon owner, was father of boxer Aurelio Herrera.

³³ *Kern County Californian*, Jul 13, 1889. The asking price was \$87,000 or about \$2M in 2011 dollars.

³⁴ In early Oct 1891, 14 men were sent from Delano to jail in Bakersfield. "Some of the party look to be tramps, others are evidently only men out of work but seeking work and in no wise burdens upon society. This promiscuous gathering

"complain of the discomfort of traveling because of the crowded conditions of the cars. They allege that they have found them crowded far beyond their seating capacity and that to this is added the nuisance of the Chinese who are not put in a car by themselves, as they should be, but are permitted to mix with the other passengers and to crowd themselves into seats with ladies with the apparent approval of the conductors and brakeman. There is no relief against their disgusting contact except the force that passengers occasionally exert."³⁵

Were those train-riding Chinese parts of a mobile work force? C. A. Schmiedte, superintendent the Delta Fruit Company employed 50 men, 30 of whom were Chinese but who would be soon released.³⁶ Six months later, in October 1891, Delano Chinese were also on the move. They had been working for the railroad but left their jobs to go north where they could earn higher wages. The railroad hired whites to fill the jobs, but when the Chinese returned to Delano the railroad fired the whites and signed up the Chinese.³⁷ Backlash was brutal.

"Last night at 11:30 about 20 men gathered all the frightened Mongolians together and when the northbound passenger came along put them aboard with the polite request to never be seen in Delano again. The committee then visited the other Chinamen of the town and informed them that they would have ten days time in which to make a disappearance from the community. This was all done in a very quiet manner and no violence was used. The Chinamen were simply informed that they were no longer wanted here and the determined looks of about 20 men so strongly emphasized this that the heathens concluded they no longer cared to dwell in Delano. It is thought by the railroad men that the company will now employ white men on this section."³⁸

Reports did not mention physical injury, but news of that roundup surely added fuel to what transpired some months later at Bakersfield. Meanwhile, Bakersfield newspapers continued negative reports about Chinese. In February 1892 Ah Toy, an employee of the Southern Hotel, was standing near the Hip Fong Wah store when a man stepped in front of him and fired. Toy ran and the assailant fired again, but Toy escaped unharmed into the Southern where he begged for protection. The Daily Californian said the shooting was the result of an ongoing, internecine war between Chinese high-binders: "If the Chinese would restrict their killing to their own people and to their shooting in private, no serious complaint

in of people who are accounted tramps by the officers, just because they are on foot, should be put a stop to." (Daily Californian, Oct 16, 1891)

³⁵ Kern County Californian , Oct 4, 1890

³⁶ Weekly Californian, Apr 18, 1891. The ranch was about two miles east of today's Wasco, California.

³⁷ presumably at lower wages

³⁸ Daily Californian, Oct 20, 1891, p 1

would be made, but the streets of Bakersfield will be like those of San Francisco pretty soon, and in the latter place no less than six innocent white men have fallen victims to highbinder bullets in the past four months... Let the officers use stringent measures at once to stop this wholesale shooting at night in the streets."³⁹ A few months later the Californian wrote about a Chinese woman who had been stabbed multiple times by Quia Toy, whom the newspaper identified as a member of Sue Tong Company that had its joss house and general headquarters on the east side of L near 22nd.⁴⁰ Crime continued in Chinatown, and in August a stray shot from a shoot-out between rival Chinese companies killed Charles Diez.⁴¹

The nation-wide panic of 1893 brought unemployment that exceeded 10% and in 1894 peaked between 12% and 18%. Not until 1899 did employment return.⁴² The federal Geary Act was passed during this depression, and California led the way in its passage.⁴³ New York newspapers predicted that when the law went into effect there would be violent outbreaks against the Chinese, and although the Californian belittled those predictions, it was wrong. Brutal anti-Chinese violence exploded in San Bernardino County and on ranches around Fresno, Madera, and Hollister.⁴⁴

Growers worried that deportations under the act would depress profits, which already were in decline, but the Geary Act was not immediately enforced. White response varied from community to community: Selma expelled Chinese fruit packers, while Stockton protected Chinese labor. In August 1893 Fresno ordered Chinese laundrymen and vegetable peddlers to leave town in five days, and its packinghouses demanded deportation of all Chinese employees.

³⁹ Daily Californian, Feb 20, 1892

⁴⁰ Bakersfield Californian, May 6, 1892

⁴¹ The Californian, Aug 18, 1892

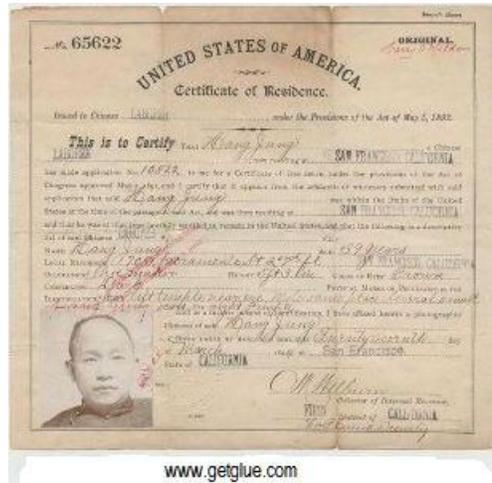
⁴² Douglas W Steeples; David O Whitten, *Democracy in Desperation: the Depression of 1893*. Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1998

⁴³ In 1892 Democratic Congressman from California Thomas J. Geary introduced a bill to extend for 10 years all laws related to Chinese immigration. It also established an internal passport system for Chinese residing in the United States and required them to obtain and carry the certificate of residence. It was the first internal passport system in US history. People found without certificates were subject to deportation or imprisonment for a year. The act denied Chinese the right of habeas corpus: Chinese under arrest did not have to be brought before a judge or into court. Chinese witnesses were prohibited from appearing in court. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Geary Act in 1893.

<http://immigrants.harpweek.com/ChineseAmericans/2KeyIssues/TheGearyAct.htm> .

Earlier legislation had been introduced: "Washington, Jan. 18 – Among the bills introduced in the House today for reference was one by E.R. Loud of California prohibiting the immigration of Chinese into the U.S." (Daily Californian, Jan 18, 1892)

⁴⁴ The Californian, May 15, 1893; Apr 12, 1893: "J.W. Conger of Fresno, collector of internal revenue for the sixth division of the First district of California, arrived here Tuesday for the purpose of registering such Chinese as apply."



About 9 PM on August 16, a gang of about 200 whites converged on Tulare's Chinatown and rounded up people lacking Geary certificates of registration. Thirty Chinese were loaded on a northbound night train for Fresno, and when that was happening, thugs at Chinatown and stole what they could. Win Lung was forced to open his safe and was robbed of \$2,100. Lin Jo's home was invaded and two watches and a quantity of jewelry and cash stolen. Dr. Lee was robbed of \$1,200 and others reported from \$100 to \$1,100 taken.⁴⁵ "Peace officers made absolutely no attempt to protect the Chinese," wrote the Daily Californian. More Chinese left Tulare the next day, and merchants remaining were informed they would have to leave in two weeks.⁴⁶ With the chaos, a newspaper estimated that the expulsion of Chinese fruit packers would cost the community from \$30,000 to \$50,000.⁴⁷ The Daily Bakersfield Californian wrote,

"The people of Bakersfield must see to it that nothing of the kind takes place here. The Californian would be more than pleased if there were not a Chinese man in the State, but it insists that no violence shall be used in any way. They are here under our laws and are entitled to the protection of those laws. The first movement toward violence against them ought to be met with the sternest repression, and if the officers fail as they did in Tulare, then the law abiding citizen should see to it that no such disgrace falls upon this place."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Daily Californian, Aug 17, 1893

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Following Selma's forcible removal of Chinese, white crowds milled about on Fresno streets⁴⁹ mindful of the words of M.W. Wilkins, editor of the Fresno Spectator. "These pig-tail heathens never came here with the intention of making this country their home."⁵⁰ Fresnoans were prepared to do battle, but the Stockton Daily Independent cautioned its town about radical action. This was, after all, late summer and the start of the grape harvest. Were there enough hands to bring it in? The Crown Flour Mill and the Sperry Flour Mill at Stockton were then completing a 400-ton wheat deal with China, and the expected influx of money to Stockton was important.⁵¹ The Stockton Independent recalled the town's economic loss after its anti-Chinese protest of seven years earlier, and, it noted, "Just why it was done is not known as none of the whites would work in the places where coolies vacated."⁵²

However, the ardently anti-Chinese Daily Californian condemned the northern towns; they had "covered themselves with disgrace," it wrote.⁵³ The mobs at Tulare had attacked workers, "but worse still," wrote the Californian, "they drove out the Chinese who had been packing fresh fruit for shipment to the east, and as a result the companies engaged ...have suspended operations and will ship no more this season. The people of Bakersfield must see to it that nothing of the kind takes place here."⁵⁴ The potential of loss to Kern County was clear, but that did not stop the Daily Californian from called for yet another boycott of Chinese business.

⁴⁹ Similar events occurred at Tulare and Lindsay. See Daily Californian, Aug 15, 1893

⁵⁰ Daily Californian, Aug 15, 1893

⁵¹ The Mountain Democrat wrote in August, "It is stated with reference to China's attitude in respect to the Geary act that the Viceroy, Li Hung-chang, has told Dr. McGowan that the Chinese Government should have retaliated promptly on the United States, but that he now approves the arrangement of a new treaty on terms of reciprocity." (Mountain Democrat of Placerville, Calif. , Aug 12, 1893)

⁵² Stockton Daily Independent, Aug 18, 19, 1893: "Hearing that there is to be an anti-Chinese meeting of a violent nature tonight, we desire it understood that the various labor organizations of the city of Stockton are opposed to any and all violent measures of ridding the State of Chinese, believing that by intelligent, peaceful means we can accomplish the desired end and cannot bring discredit on the union laboring men of the city."

⁵³ Bakersfield Californian, Aug 18, 1893

⁵⁴ Ibid. The Californian, Aug 18, 1893, "A 'Peaceable Affair'" : "A mob, each man armed with a six-shooter and a club, went through Chinatown, smashed in doors, ransacked houses, drove the Chinese out, herded them in the street, fired off pistols and intimidated the Mongolians in every way, and finally forced them to take the train and leave."

ATTENTION!

Every law-abiding citizen of Bakersfield should turn out at the mass meeting this evening.

Let it be distinctly enunciated that no act of intimidation or violence will be tolerated against the Chinese residents of this place.

Let the first man who proposes such steps, be most summarily squelched.

Let the first man who attempts violence, be even more summarily convinced of the fact that the people of Bakersfield do not propose to allow anything of the kind.

No good citizen, with the best interests of the town at heart, can afford to be absent to-night. The situation is critical. Half-hearted measures will not avail.

Turn out, then, and see that the law is not violated in any way, shape or manner.

At Fresno self-constituted prowlers paid nightly visits to ranches, rousted Chinese, and marched them to town, but on the night of August 18 the marauders crossed paths with the Fresno sheriff. About midnight he and a posse of 12 confronted armed men that had just raided Fancher Creek Nursery and were channeling 32 Chinese and Japanese workers back to town. The Sheriff parleyed with the raiders, told the workers to go back to the nursery, and read the riot act to the attackers. The next day the sheriff proclaimed he would arrest all persons unlawfully interfering with Chinese.⁵⁵

Meanwhile at Bakersfield, the Californian cautioned the people at Tulare City, which was incorporated town, which they might be responsible for damages suffered by the Chinese. "The forcible expulsion of Chinese is contrary to treaty obligations," wrote the Californian, "and consequently becomes an international affair, in which the question of pecuniary damages is most prominent. It is better to observe the law and go slow, than to follow the lead of hot-heads, no matter how well meaning, and eventually be made to pay roundly for destruction and pillage."⁵⁶

Without Chinese field hands, California harvests were jeopardized. In May 1893 the Californian wrote, "In a short time at most, 100,000 menial workers will be withdrawn from

⁵⁵ Daily Californian, Aug 19, 1893

⁵⁶ Ibid.

the labor market of our state. Can we replace them with white laborers who will be willing to perform the same class of work? ...What shall we do?"⁵⁷

By mid-August the problem was solved by doing nothing. "So far as Bakersfield is concerned, the fact must not be lost sight of that in a few days the largest raisin crop ever harvested will be ready for picking. There is not a vineyardist here who will not employ white labor if he can obtain it," said the anti-Chinese committee, "but so far it has been necessary to hire more or less Chinese in order to save the crop. Bakersfield must act reasonably in this anti-Chinese agitation. We don't want to be included with the 'California hoodlum methods.' The question of labor in the vineyards is a serious one, and it will not answer to take any steps that will lead to loss of any portion of the crop . . . Hence the community should not tolerate any action that will tend to bring either loss or disgrace upon it."⁵⁸ The committee called for appointment of Federal deputy marshals and the arrest of unregistered Chinese.⁵⁹

Non-enforcement of the Geary Act, scarcity of money, and shortage of work provoked 30 whites one night in mid-August to move against the Paige Fruit Farm where Chinese and Japanese workers slept in tents next to the farm's packing sheds. Once the marauders got to the ranch they riddled the the tops of the tents with bullets. The next night the group had swelled to 60 men, many masked. They set out again for Paige's, but this time Tulare officers Murray and Carlisle confronted them. It did not help the workers: "Murray asked them to destroy nothing and said the Japs were discharged and would leave immediately, but the crowd demanded to see Superintendent Montgomery. Within hours the Chinese and Japanese had been moved to the train for Fresno and Hanford."⁶⁰

That summer the Federal government still had not enforced deportation directives of the Geary Act.⁶¹ On the evening of Aug 14, 1893, 150 men attended an anti-Chinese meeting at Druid's Hall in Kern City.⁶² All knew about the violence three days earlier at Paige fruit farm, and the Californian noted later that there were "some pretty pointed sentiments."⁶³

Some insisted they march to nearby SP shops and lay in wait for Chinese workers who were about to start their shifts. Amongst the shouting, E.J. Emmons rose. From the very start,

⁵⁷ Californian, May 18, 1893

⁵⁸ Daily Californian, Aug 15, 1893

⁵⁹ Daily Californian, Aug 17, 1893

⁶⁰ Daily Californian, Aug 15, 1893; Aug 16, 1893: "One of the leading reasons for the hiring of Chinese is that there is never any trouble in getting one, or a dozen, or a hundred of them at a moment's notice."

⁶¹ Daily Californian, Aug 16, 1893. The Chinese companies resorted to the courts in order to test the constitutionality of the Geary registration act. "Up to the present time but few have taken out certificates of registration, and they only at the commencement of the work by the officers detailed to attend to that business." (Weekly Californian, Dec 24, 1892)

⁶² East Bakersfield. Organizers were Jack Scoville, Bert Marion, E.J. Emmons, Ben Leet, A. Thronsen, and W.D. Young. Captain Rogers reluctantly accepted the job of president. These men do not appear to have a common connection other than their opposition to Chinese immigration.

⁶³ The Californian, Aug 16, 1893

the speaker, until only recently Assistant District Attorney of Kern County, captured the crowd's attention and for nearly half an hour handled his theme of law-and-order with power and reason. Next to mount the podium was Captain Rogers who concluded, "Don't be radical. Think well and then act understandingly."⁶⁴ The group voted to appoint a committee of eight to communicate with the United States District Attorney at Los Angeles and obtain forms necessary to start registrations under the Geary Act.

Local authorities next turned their attention to another mass meeting set three days hence at Niederaur's Hall. Mutterings of trouble spread for the next 36 hours. Learning of that, the Five Companies at San Francisco⁶⁵ advised Chinese at Bakersfield to make no resistance to mob action and if attacked leave quietly. The question of compensation for lost goods could be addressed later.⁶⁶

Bakersfield was not an incorporated town; police protection depended on a constable and perhaps two other officers. Kern County Sheriff William R. Bower, however, had more resources. Niederaur's Hall was in Bakersfield, and it was also in the Fifth Supervisorial District. Henry A. Jastro was not only Fifth District Supervisor, but he was also the new manager of Kern County Land Company sheep operations, a partner in the Building & Loan Association, and a major stockholder in the California Electric Light Company.⁶⁷ Jastro understood how to protect business.⁶⁸ On Friday night Sheriff Bower telegraphed California Governor Henry H. Markham, then at Pasadena, and requested that he activate Company G, Sixth Infantry of the California Guard at Bakersfield to suppress anticipated violence on Saturday.⁶⁹

Bakersfield had no Sunday newspapers so it was not until Monday August 20 that Kern County, and the state, learned of the events of Saturday night. The Californian wrote, "Several speeches were made calling for the enforcement of the Geary Act but denouncing any violence or infraction of the law. We are, as a people, unalterably opposed to any measures in violation of the law and will frown upon any such action upon the part of any person whatsoever."⁷⁰ It explained that the Chinese would be protected in their rights. And with that assurance, the Chinese "changed their policy and decided to fight, if need be. Accordingly, they armed

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Owing to economic and social discrimination Chinese immigrants at San Francisco organized into protective associations based on family, business, or home district in China. By the late 1850s five district associations formed the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, called the Five Companies in English-language newspapers. In 1862, a sixth association was added. (Wikipedia)

⁶⁶ Daily Californian, Aug 21, 1893

⁶⁷ Dr. George F. Thornton general manger of Haggin interests died Aug 15, 1893. (Kern County Californian, Aug 21, 1893)

⁶⁸ See *Henry Jastro, Commodore of Kern County, 1848-1925* at <http://www.gilbertgia.com/articlePages/crime1.html>

⁶⁹ Los Angeles Times, Aug 19, 1893

⁷⁰ Daily Californian, Aug 21, 1893

themselves and were prepared by Saturday to give a warm reception to any who should molest them." ⁷¹

Sheriff Bower deputized a well-armed citizen force and on Saturday evening, stationed it in Chinatown, and told them to put down the first attempt at violence. Members of the state militia also stood by, and the newspaper concluded that that, too, was a wise precaution considering that a few days earlier an arsonist had burned down Visalia's Chinatown.⁷²

When the Saturday night meeting started, an individual named Bristo, who introduced himself as the "King of the Weed Patch," climbed the platform and demanded that the Chinese be run out of town. But, wrote the Californian, "The temper of the evening was shown by the fact that he was simply laughed down. If he had any sympathizers in the audience, they kept very quiet. The 'King' and several others of his ilk found secure but comfortable quarters in the county jail." ⁷³ The Californian summarized, "Several suspicious characters were arrested by



the officers, who were on hand just where they were wanted, and the Chinese were not disturbed, nor will they be. Bakersfield has set the seal of disapproval upon all lawlessness, and it will go hard with any who shall attempt violence."⁷⁴ The following day it added, "The average agitator is very brave when it comes to attacking a defenseless Chinaman, but when that Chinaman has a 44-caliber Colt up his sleeve and there is a white man handy with a double-barreled shotgun, which he knows how and is ready to use, the aforesaid agitator...becomes very quiet." ⁷⁵

Kern County's harvests proceeded on schedule. The town's power structure influenced the people, called-up man power and weapons, and preserved the peace. Although the Californian helped suppress violence, it remained steadfastly anti-Chinese. It wrote, "There are several restaurants in this city run solely by white labor where good meals may be had for 25 cents each. There are also several others owned and operated by Chinese. Strange to say, these latter obtain the bulk of the workingmen's patronage, and the white restaurants are

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Californian, Aug 21, 1893. When the Riverside Chinese business district was burned out on Jul 30, 1893, property owners Gin Duey and Wong Men of San Bernardino rebuilt their 164-ft x 32-ft wooden storefront in brick at a cost of \$4,000, approx. \$150,000 in 2011 dollars. (South Riverside Bee, Aug 5, 1893)

⁷³ The Californian, Aug 21, 1893

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

given the go-by. Gentlemen, you should be at least consistent. If you don't patronize the Chinese they will leave quick enough." But things were much worse at Selma. Chinese there who refused to close their restaurants were forced to, and proprietors were given tickets and sent to Fresno. Laundrymen were told to leave by the end of September.⁷⁶

Later in August, at Bakersfield, the *Californian* wrote, "Same Old Story. Notwithstanding, all that has been said, a survey of the town does not show any appreciable diminution in the patronage bestowed upon the Chinese. The washhouses are running full force, the vegetable peddlers continue to supply the farmers, the restaurants owned and operated by Mongolians continue to feed large numbers of laboring men, and none of the resorts in China town have yet closed their doors for lack of Caucasian customers.⁷⁷ Of a verity, great is humbug."⁷⁸ In September it continued, "There are seven restaurants owned and operated by Chinese in Bakersfield, and they are all liberally patronized by the anti-Chinese howlers. Their charges are the same as those of the white restaurants, and their food is not nearly so good. Yet they all do a 'land-office business."⁷⁹

Whites generally favored the Geary Act, but anti-Chinese hiring did not extend to boxing. Wrote the *Californian*, "Lovers of the manly art will have a chance sometime this week to see a match between a Caucasian and a Mongolian. Jim Daley has signified his willingness to meet Woo Sing with the gloves, and both men are in training for the event. Sing is a little the lighter in weight, but is taller and longer in the reach. He is quick and active, and will give Daley a hard fight. A lively contest is expected, as Sing is a man who 'doesn't know when he is whipped,' while Daley is a good all-around athlete."⁸⁰

Although sports continued as usual, conflict in business showed itself on other pages of the newspaper. The ad for New York Bakery and Restaurant read, "Don't eat any more Chinese cooking. Patronize a white restaurant. None but white labor employed in any way. "The White Star Steam Laundry advertised, "No Chinese are employed... Every dollar invested here is expended in Bakersfield. We do not send it to China." The *Californian* wrote, "We know of one man who discharged his Chinese cook immediately after the public expression of opinion on last Saturday night, and we admire his consistency." Days later the *Californian*

⁷⁶ Daily *Californian*, Aug 22, 1893

⁷⁷ Resorts were gambling houses and/or house of ill-repute. See *Mme. Brignaudy in the Bakersfield Tenderloin, 1905-33* at <http://www.gilbertgia.com/articlePages/crime1.html>

⁷⁸ *Californian*, Aug 23, 1893. Chinese were selling produce to white farmers. (*The Californian*, Jul 21, 1893)

⁷⁹ *Californian*, Sep 4, 1893

⁸⁰ Boxing seemed unaffected by anti-Chinese rhetoric. On Aug 18, Bakersfield's Billy Woods of the Athletic Club was looking for a boxer to meet Woo Sing, a 125-lb. lightweight who fought out of San Francisco. Jim Daly was chosen, but he was a no-show, and, instead, Woo fought 130-lb Aurelio Herrera at Reich's Hall, Woo lost but was scheduled to fight "another white man" in the first week of September. See *Californian*, Aug 18, 19, 23, 28, 31, 1893. See also *First Mexican-American Boxing Champ, Aurelio Herrera, 1873-1927* at <http://www.gilbertgia.com/articlePages/sports1.html>

noted that the Free Labor Committee had a list of 100 whites who were looking for work. They were honest people, said the newspaper, "not slackers."

Chinese store owners continued newspaper advertising. George F. Tou & Company's ad read, "Nicest and prettiest goods in town. Chinese and Japanese fancy goods. Genuine Chinese silk, lady's silk dressing gowns, gents' smoking coats, fine crockery, birthday and wedding presents. Gents shoes, dry goods and jewelry, lady's underwear."⁸¹ That same day Yee Hop Key & Coy advertised, "Chinese and Japanese silk goods. Ladies and gents underwear to order and in stock. Shirts in store and factory order. Baker Street between H and I in Kern City." On August 31 the Californian, following the lead of a newspaper at Tulare, offered free

No Lady with a care for economy and thrift will miss attending this sale.

The Great Money-saving Sale of 1893.

Finkelspiel Bros.
THE UNIVERSAL PROVIDERS

CHINESE AND JAPANESE
FANCY GOODS.

Nicest and Prettiest Goods in Town.

We are not boasting. You can come and see. It don't cost you anything to see, but take your time to look over them and money to buy. The only place in town where you can get genuine China Silk, Canton Crapes, Ladies' Silk Dressing Gowns, Gents' Smoking Coats, Silk Embroidered Scarves, Embroidered Silk Handkerchiefs, Fine Crockery, Real China Tea Sets, Lacquered Ware, Children's Toys and pretty things for decorating your homes. Birthday and Wedding Presents. Also remember where to get your Christmas Presents. I am sure you will be satisfied. We also have a variety of Dry Goods and Jewelry, Ladies' Underwear, Gents' Shoes, Boots, etc. Fine Teas a specialty.

Nineteenth and K Streets,
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA

GEORGE F. TOU & Co.

W. H. WALKER,
Custom Tailor.

New Suits, English Worsted, Scotch Plaids, French Tricou and Diagonals. Business Dress Suits a specialty. Perfect fit guaranteed. San Francisco Prices.

THE BEST CUTTER IN THE CITY.

WALL STREET,
ODD FELLOWS' BUILDING

BAKERSFIELD, CAL.

ads "For all white or colored washerwomen who will do washing at their own homes, or at the homes of their patrons; all persons of either sex who will serve as cooks on ranches, or as domestics in private families; all persons who will regularly furnish fruits and vegetables to customers at their doors in place of the Chinese vegetable peddlers; and all persons who will

⁸¹ Californian, Aug 30, 1893

serve in any other capacity now filled by either Chinese or Japanese." On September 1, a hundred whites were hired for ranch jobs north of Kern County, but they soon quit. Reason? Wealthy "vineyardists" were paying \$.75 per day, and whites refused to work for those wages. After they quit, the labor supply shifted from too many workers to not enough. A Chinese field crew that had been asking \$1.25 a day per man saw the white workers walk off, and the Chinese labor contractor struck his crew for \$1.35 a man. With uncharacteristic insight, the Californian grasped an economic reality, "This is taken as an indication that these people will not underbid white men for work."

In the months that followed, violence continued to flare in agricultural California, but at Bakersfield business continued uninterrupted, and the public maintained the peace.⁸²

Appendix

**Estimates of
unemployment during
the 1890s (Source:
Romer, 1984)**

Year	Lebergott	Romer
1890	4.0	4.0
1891	5.4	4.8
1892	3.0	3.7
1893	11.7	8.1
1894	18.4	12.3
1895	13.7	11.1
1896	14.5	12.0
1897	14.5	12.4
1898	12.4	11.6
1899	6.5	8.7
1900	5.0	5.0

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⁸² "Anti-Chinese excitement is rampant in the vicinity of Redlands. Chinese in different parts of the valley were driven from the ranches Tuesday night. One was robbed of \$200 and several of smaller sums. An open-air meeting was held at Redlands Wednesday night, led by imported agitators." (Woodland Daily Democrat, Sep 2, 1893) At Grant's Pass, Wing Lee's washhouse and store was bombed on Oct. 18. "A gang of roughs have been agitation the Chinese deportation question lately and they are suspected of the crime." (Mountain Democrat of Placerville, Calif., Oct 28, 1893)