

“A Most Daring Outrage”

Murders at Chinese Massacre Cove, 1887

WHAT FIRST CATCHES THE EYE is a wide rock and gravel bar that extends for fifty yards or so along the Snake River in Hells Canyon, about forty miles northeast of Enterprise, Oregon. There is also Deep Creek, less impressive than its name, which trickles out of a break in the nearby cliffs, meanders across the uneven ground of a clearing, and nearly disappears amid the rocks of the bar before draining into the river.

Looking closer, one might see a stage set for a tragedy. Sloping cliffs surround the area in a kind of half-circle. The gravel bar, devoid of foliage, is blocked at both ends by man-sized boulders to the south and a rock outcropping that slices across a sandy cove to the north. The river in front of the bar flows fast, deep, and wide, appearing impossible to swim. On the far side are the steep cliffs of Idaho. Back near the Oregon cliffs are two rough rock walls of a shelter, about ten feet by ten feet, of Native American origin. It was once used by a crew of immigrant Chinese miners who found Deep Creek a convenient campsite while they mined gold on the bar.¹ Unknowningly, they had set up their camp in a natural trap.

Nothing at the cove at Deep Creek, now known as Chinese Massacre Cove, suggests the awful events that happened there. Under a cloudless blue sky on a hot August afternoon, with sunlight filtering through the soft green leaves of an occasional hackberry tree, some of the area is even pretty. The rocks, strewn over most of the five-acre site, however, are not, especially when one realizes what happened there.

Next year will mark one hundred and twenty years since as many as thirty-four Chinese miners were massacred by a gang of seven horse thieves in one or more attacks in Hells Canyon, beginning on May 25, 1887. Some of the victims were apparently shot down from the cliffs; others were slaughtered by attackers along the river. The killers threw the bodies



Courtesy of the author

The cove at Deep Creek looks south to the cliffs of Hells Canyon, where as many as thirty-four Chinese miners were massacred in 1887.

into the river and fled with the miners' gold, estimated at between \$4,000 and \$5,000.

Three gang members, one just fifteen years old, were arrested and charged with murder. Three others fled and were never apprehended. In the end, no one was held accountable for the crime, among the worst in Oregon history and, in lives lost, one of the worst against the nearly 150,000 Chinese who immigrated to the American West in search of work in the nineteenth century.²

Several articles have been written about the massacre, some of them highly speculative. The most thorough and accurate is an account in 1983 by historian David H. Stratton, whose study made extensive use of diplomatic exchanges between the American and Chinese governments. Few reliable details about the crime itself, however, were known to Stratton or anyone else. Retellings of the story confused the location, the year of the massacre, the identity of the killers, the amount of gold, even the number of victims.³

The lack of reliable information stemmed partly from a failure by law enforcement agencies to fully investigate the crime and partly because key documents from the investigation were missing, including all records of the 1888 trial. It is hard today to prove a cover-up, but it is also hard to ignore that one may have occurred. Several members of the gang came from prominent families, and leading members of the community rallied to their defense. Local newspapers apparently ignored the trial entirely, even though it was the first murder trial in the newly created Wallowa County.⁴

George Craig, a well-known Wallowa County rancher who attended the trial, was quoted in 1967 as having said, “I guess if they had killed 31 white men, something would have been done about it, but none of the jury knew the Chinamen or cared much about it, so they turned the men loose.”⁵ Still, it would not be fair to say no one cared. One newspaper account reported that the community was outraged, and a former U.S. senator, James H. Slater of Joseph, appealed to Washington, D.C., for help.⁶

The discovery in recent years of long-lost documents and contemporary accounts makes it possible to construct the most accurate picture yet of what actually happened at Chinese Massacre Cove in late May 1887. The first breakthrough occurred in 1995 when Wallowa County Clerk Charlotte McIver chanced to find a packet of misplaced — or hidden — copies of trial documents in an unused safe she was emptying to donate to the county museum. Among them were copies of a grand jury indictment, depositions given by several of the accused, and notes from the trial itself.⁷ It took another ten years to locate the official trial record, which I found under volumes of old tax assessor records in a basement storage vault used by the county planning department.⁸ Additional information came from two relatively unknown histories of Wallowa County, written by early settlers J. Harland Horner and H. Ross Findley. That information allows us a better understanding of the murders of the miners, the men charged with the killings, and the significance of the place’s new name, Chinese Massacre Cove.

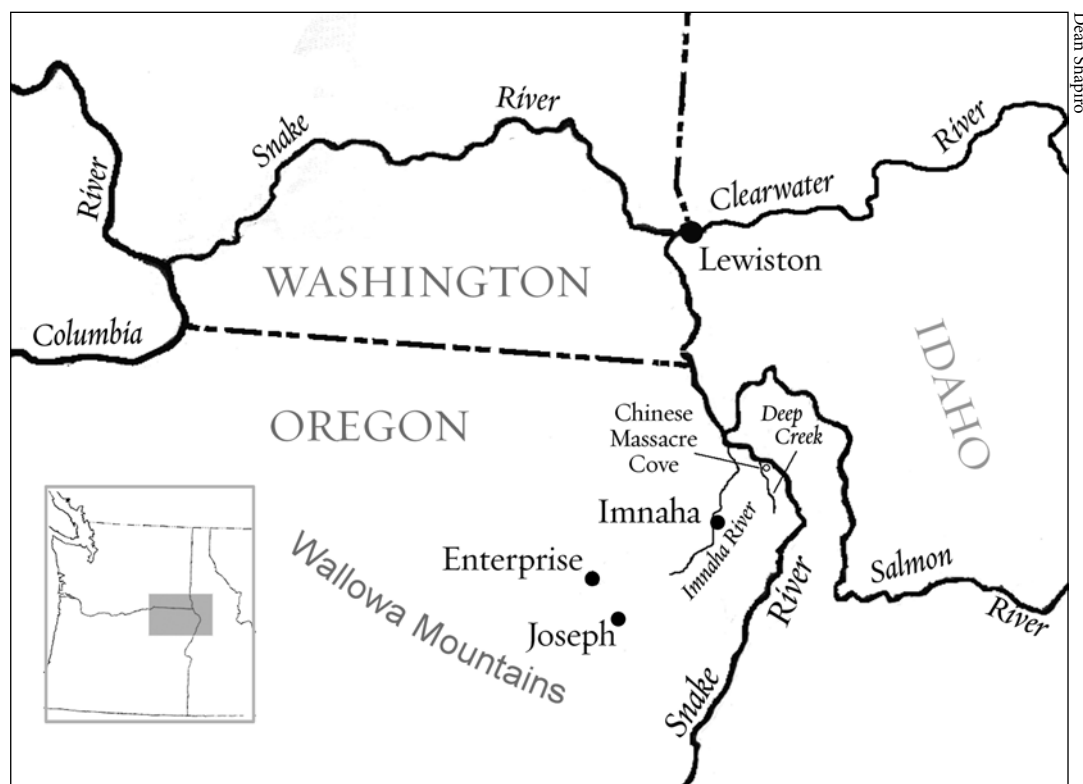
HELLS CANYON, KNOWN in 1887 as the Snake River Canyon, is the deepest in North America, carved over millions of years by the combined effect of river erosion and flooding. Major shaping of the canyon occurred as recently as fifteen thousand years ago, when Lake Bonneville broke through a natural barrier at Red Rock Pass near American Falls in southeastern Idaho, sending floodwaters crashing through the canyon on their rush to the Pacific. Today, basalt cliffs rise a mile and more for forty miles above the river, which marks the northern half of the boundary between Oregon and Idaho. The river itself extends for about a thousand miles from its headwaters in Yellowstone National Park.⁹



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Long-forgotten records of an 1888 trial of two men and one boy who were accused of murdering Chinese miners were found in 1995 in an unused safe in the Wallowa County Courthouse in Enterprise. The three were found innocent, three others escaped and were never caught, and a seventh turned state’s evidence.

The Chinese who would die at Deep Creek entered Hells Canyon in October 1886 from Lewiston, the jumping-off point for Snake River miners.¹⁰ Miners were not new to the canyon. Both Chinese and Caucasians had placer-mined along the Snake and its tributaries, notably the Salmon River in Idaho, since soon after the region’s first major gold strike on the Clearwater River near present-day Pierce, Idaho, in 1860. The gold they sought was known as flour gold — tiny flakes and nuggets washed by river current into the gravel bars and riverbanks.¹¹ The Chinese would have used ropes and poles to pull flat-bottomed boats loaded with mining gear and other provisions against the swift current of the north-flowing Snake, probably portaging around such major rapids as Wild Goose and Mountain Sheep. We cannot know whether they stopped to mine along the river during the arduous sixty-five-mile journey to Deep Creek or went directly there, anticipating a rich reward. But once at the cove, they set up camp, sleeping in tents or in small caves, walled up with rocks, dug into the base of the cliff. Their mining tools typically would have been rockers and sluices, both of which used water to separate sand and dirt from heavier gold flakes and nuggets, which they hoped to find on the nearby gravel bars.¹² Eight months after entering the canyon, they were dead.



The place now known as Chinese Massacre Cove is located on the Snake River, just upriver from the confluence with the Imnaha River.

The first account of the murders was published in a weekly newspaper, the *Lewiston Teller*, on June 16, 1887:

A boatload of Chinamen came down the Snake River on Saturday last and brought the news that another boatload of Chinese had been murdered about one hundred and fifty miles above here by some unknown parties. They claim that the Chinamen, ten in number, who were murdered, had upwards of \$3,000 on them, having been mining on the river for the past year. They found their boat with blankets and provisions in [sic], and but three of the Chinamen have been found, and these in the river, two of whom were shot and the third could not be captured [sic]. Some think the Chinamen murdered them, while others think Indians or whites, but the mystery may never be solved.¹³

The bodies had been swept downriver from the massacre site, 65 miles south of Lewiston, not the 150 miles reported in the *Teller*. A follow-up article on June 30 provided more information:

J.K. Vincent and a Chinese merchant left here on Monday last in a small boat for Riparia to procure the bodies of the Chinamen that were found in the river. They succeeded

in getting one of the bodies which they brought up on Thursday's boat, and the same was buried in the Chinese cemetery near this city. We are informed that the body was brutally mangled, having two gunshot wounds in the back, one arm partly cut off, and the head nearly severed from the body. Other bodies were seen in the drift, but will be unable to be taken out until the water goes down.¹⁴

Joseph K. Vincent was a Lewiston justice of the peace and a U.S. commissioner who would lead an investigation into the massacre at the behest of the Chinese organization that employed miners. He would report to the Chinese consulate in San Francisco that an inquest revealed that some of the bodies had been chopped with an axe, although it seems reasonable to consider they might instead have been torn apart during their nearly two weeks in the turbulent river.¹⁵

Ten of the dead were identified. A letter sent by the Chinese legation in Washington, D.C., to the State Department on February 16, 1888, gave their names as Chea-po, Chea-Sun, Chea-Yow, Chea-Shun, Chea Cheong, Chea Ling, Chea Chow, Chea Lin Chung, Kong Mun Kow, and Kong Ngan. All ten were from Punju district, part of the greater city of Guangzhou (Canton) in southeastern China's Guangdong (Kwangtung) Province. They worked for the Sam Yup Company, one of six powerful Chinese organizations, known as Chinese Six Companies, headquartered in San Francisco.¹⁶ Chea-po led one of two crews of miners; the second was headed by Lee She, who survived.¹⁷

Little else is known about the victims, including when or how they arrived in Lewiston or in the United States. Still, it is possible to make certain assumptions. The eight with the surname Chea would have been members of a single clan. The miners likely had been on the West Coast at least five years, prior to the 1882 enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Presumably poor, they likely borrowed the forty dollars or so they needed to buy steamer passage from Hong Kong to Portland, or San Francisco, a trip that lasted from forty-five days to three months. They may have first worked on the railroads then being built across the American West. Gold drew the first Chinese immigrants to American shores in the 1850s, following the discoveries at Sutter's Mill in California, but tens of thousands more came during the next three decades to help build the railroads — the Central Pacific, Southern Pacific, Northern Pacific, and Oregon & California and to work for the Oregon Navigation & Railway Company. Fifteen thousand Chinese worked on the Northern Pacific alone.¹⁸

At the time of the murders at Deep Creek, hostility toward Chinese immigrants was rampant throughout the West. They were abused for their skin color and their customs and were charged with depriving white workers of jobs by working for less money — a dollar a day on the railroads,

for example.¹⁹ Just two years earlier, on September 2, 1885, a group of angry whites had slaughtered twenty-eight Chinese coal miners in a labor dispute at Rock Springs in Wyoming Territory, a crime for which no one was held accountable. In city after city, mobs sought to expel the Chinese population, sometimes successfully, as in Tacoma, and sometimes not, as in Portland. Congress had pandered to the prejudice by enacting the Chinese Exclusion Act, barring additional immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years, while allowing those already in the country to remain.²⁰

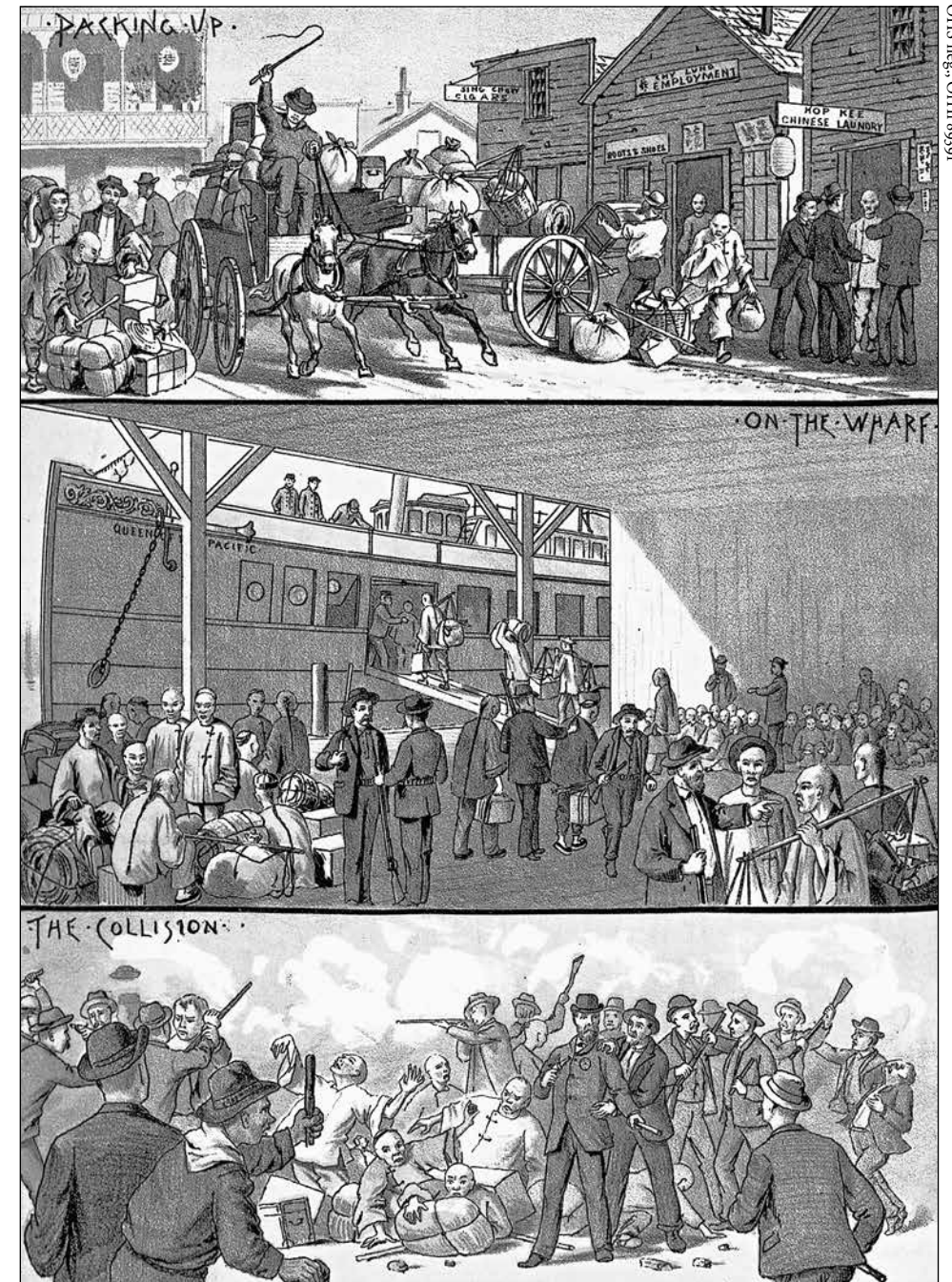
The Chinese differed from other immigrant populations in several important respects. Most of them were men, and many had little or no interest in living permanently in the United States. They sought to maintain the customs of their home villages, wearing the same clothes, eating similar food, winding their hair in queues, and many making little effort to learn English. They wanted only to earn enough money to support their families, who were mired in grinding poverty back home, and eventually return home, as many of them did.²¹

Lewiston was one of several cities in the interior Pacific Northwest where Chinese established what became known as Chinatowns. Those in Oregon included sections of Baker City, Canyon City, John Day, and Pendleton. While little of the history of Chinese residents has survived in these cities, there are exceptions: an exhibit of a temple altar and furnishings in Lewiston, a renovated Chinese cemetery in Baker City, and the marvelous Kam Wah Chung Museum, an intact Chinese-owned store, in John Day.²²

The separation of the Chinese from other communities, whether voluntary or compelled by racial prejudice, became an excuse for others to demean and mistreat them. U.S. Secretary of State Thomas F. Bayard cynically responded to a complaint from the Chinese government about the 1885 Rock Springs massacre by suggesting that the Chinese encouraged such atrocities through their refusal to assimilate. In a letter to the minister of China's Washington legation, Cheng Tsao Ju, on February 18, 1886, Bayard wrote:

Causes growing out of the peculiar characteristics and habits of the Chinese immigrants have induced them to segregate themselves from the rest of the residents and citizens of the United States and to refuse to mingle with the mass of population, as do the members of the other nationalities. As a consequence, race prejudice has been more excited against them, notably among aliens of other nationalities who are more directly brought into competition with the Chinese in those [illegible word] fields of merely manual toil where our skilled native labor finds it unprofitable to engage.²³

MUCH MORE IS KNOWN about the gang of horse thieves — six who were accused of the murders and a seventh who turned state's evidence against the others: Bruce "Blue" Evans, J. Titus "Tighty" Canfield, Frank



Chinese suffered widespread abuse in the American West. These drawings, published in the March 1886 issue of *The West Shore*, illustrate a campaign by agitators to drive the Chinese population from Seattle in 1885.

Vaughan, Robert McMillan, Hezekiah “Carl” Hughes, Hiram Maynard, and Homer “Omar” LaRue.

Evans was the leader. Then thirty-one, his gang of horse thieves had been stealing horses in Oregon for at least a year, swimming them across the Snake to sell in what was then the Idaho Territory. Born in West Virginia, the fourth of nine children in a farming family, Evans arrived in northeastern Oregon in 1879, traveling on the Oregon Trail with Tom Hughes, who guided a wagon train from Wyoming. In 1881, Evans married Hughes’s daughter Josephine; they homesteaded on Pine Creek, a prime grazing area north of the Wallowa Valley. He ran his own herd of horses, but he also had an arrangement with another rancher, Fred Nodine, to graze a thousand of his horses, of which about 150 were stolen by the gang.²⁴

Evans already was suspected of one slaying. Years earlier, according to Horner’s history, rancher-outlaw T.J. Douglas had robbed a stagecoach in Montana Territory. There was a shoot-out; his partner was killed and the stage messenger wounded. Douglas escaped with an iron strongbox containing three gold bars, which Horner estimated were collectively worth as much as \$75,000 — a possibly exaggerated sum, as the official price of gold was then \$20.67 per ounce. Douglas fled to Oregon and hid out near what is now Dug Bar — named for the outlaw — a mile and a half north of Deep Creek. Horner wrote that Evans, acting alone or with the help of Canfield, killed Douglas for the gold.²⁵

Canfield, twenty-one years old, was Evans’s chief sidekick. He was born in Indiana, and his father Hiram and mother Mary were among the first settlers in the former Nez Perce lands that would become Wallowa County, arriving with their four children in 1878. At the time of the massacre, they lived near Evans on Pine Creek.

Frank Vaughan, whose age was given variously as eighteen and twenty-one, was born in Wisconsin and arrived in Oregon with his parents and other relatives from Nebraska. They settled in 1882 along the Imnaha River in the Imnaha Valley, about thirty miles east of the Wallowa Valley. Frank’s father, Enoch, donated land for the first Imnaha school, and Frank’s cousin, Cora, taught there. Vaughan was so much considered a respectable member of the community that two weeks before the massacre he was deputized to serve a subpoena on Evans on May 11, 1887, ordering Evans to testify in a rustling case against Canfield. Vaughan reported he was unable to find Evans, although he claimed mileage for one hundred miles of riding.²⁶

McMillan, just fifteen, was the youngest. His father, Hugh McMillan, a blacksmith, had settled along the Imnaha River in 1886.²⁷ Hughes, thirty-seven, came from Kentucky; his sister, Josephine, married Evans. Maynard, the oldest at thirty-eight, homesteaded on Pine Creek and apparently worked

for Evans. LaRue, whose age and origins are unknown, was by one account raised by Frank Vaughan’s uncle, Benjamin Vaughan. Horner said LaRue and Canfield had reputations as “good riders and ropers.”²⁸

Amateur historians Horner and Findley were schoolboys at the time of the massacre and knew some of the accused; in later years, they separately wrote histories that included the massacre. Horner arrived in the Imnaha Valley with family in 1884. His history, written during the 1930s and 1940s, is a remarkably detailed 1,600-page typewritten manuscript, recently turned over to the Oregon Historical Society Research Library by a family member. The Findley family arrived in the Wallowa Valley in 1872 and settled along the Imnaha River in 1879. Ross Findley wrote his history as a series of newspaper articles that appeared in the now-defunct weekly, the *Chief Joseph Herald*, from 1957 to 1959. They record his recollections and those of his father and mother, Alexander and Sarah Jane Findley.

The Findley and Horner accounts of the massacre differ in some respects, including the location and the motive for the massacre, but there are enough similarities to believe they are closer to the truth than later accounts. Horner put the location at Deep Creek, also known at the time as Dead Line Creek. Both Deep Creek and Dead Line Creek are used interchangeably in the depositions found in the courthouse safe, leaving no doubt that it is the correct location, although Findley placed the crime at China Bar, a mile or so north of Deep Creek.²⁹

Findley wrote that the plot to ambush the Chinese was hatched at a dance at the Imnaha school, where several gang members were students. He suggested that the idea originated with Canfield, although he did not identify him, and said his motive went beyond stealing gold.

The young outlaw who was attending the school at Imnaha knew all about the movements of the Chinese and as they had been panning for gold for over six months, he anticipated that they would have about \$5,000 in dust panned out so he proposed to his classmates that they do their country a favor and go down and kill off this band of Chinese miners and get their gold for their trouble. . . .

To induce them to join with him, he even offered to let them have a cut of the Douglas gold. Four of the boys being of an adventurous type agreed to go in with him. . . . The young outlaw then persuaded the leader and one other member of the cattle rustlers [*sic*] band to join them, making seven altogether who were plotting to go down and murder the Chinese miners.³⁰

According to Findley, the gang gathered at the unoccupied cabin once used by Douglas, which at the time belonged to rancher George Craig.

The next morning they left one of their number at the cabin to prepare breakfast and the others went down to murder the Chinese miners. They left one of their number to

hold the horses, another was posted as a lookout above the camp to warn them of anyone coming down the river and another one was sent to a point below the camp so he could warn them of anyone approaching from below. Then the other three took a position on the hillside above the camp and with high powered rifles began the slaughter of thirty-one innocent and defenseless Chinese whose only weapon of defense was a .22-caliber rifle. The rifles barked and one by one the Chinamen were shot down like sheep killing dogs. All but one was killed before their ammunition gave out and he started to get into a boat and they had to run after him and finish him off with rocks.³¹

Findley said the killers threw the bodies in the river and burned tools, tents, and other camp supplies. He said they entrusted both the Chinese and Douglas gold to “the young outlaw who planned the crime” with instructions to have it minted and to “give each one his share when he returned.” He did not identify the gang members by name, probably because he counted some as friends. He wrote that in later years he ran cattle and hunted grizzly bears with Frank Vaughan, with whom he “became well-acquainted.”³²

In his version, Horner suggested the massacre was a spur-of-the-moment decision. He said the gang was having difficulty swimming stolen horses across the Snake River. After several drowned, he said Evans and his men sought to borrow a boat from the Chinese who were mining nearby. The Chinese refused them. It was at that point, Horner said, that Evans proposed to kill the Chinese.

So then they discussed what was then the best thing to do. And Evans said, Boys, lets [sic] kill the Damn Chinamen throw them in the river and get these horses across. And Canfield said, Yes Lets [sic] get the Damn Chinamen out of the way. and get what Gold they have. And Evans agreed.³³

Horner, who offered no attribution for this quote, said others were reluctant, so the gang returned to the cabin where Evans and Canfield persuaded them. They reportedly left Hughes behind as a lookout.

So the six went down wher the Chinamen were working or near, they slipped around clos, where they had a good view of them, And began pouring the lead into them. Surprising them completely and killing them all. In their sworn evidence, they said there was [sic] only 10. But the report at the time, was there were 34. They threw all the bodies into Snake River and one Chinaman not being dead, managed to get ashore. And they saw him And LaRue grabbed up a piece of Drift wood and knocked him in the head and kicked him back in the river The Chinamen had only one small Revolver which he emptied at them. One bullet hitting Vaughan in the leg. which made him quite lame. And later, when asked what made him limp, he would say his horse fell on him.³⁴

Horner was alone in reporting that Vaughan was shot by Chinese defenders. In a rare instance of attribution, a handwritten notation in the margins



Courtesy of the author

This photograph looks north on the Oregon side of the Snake River from the north end of Chinese Massacre Cove, where the Chinese miners were massacred.

of Horner’s history said the information on Vaughan’s wound came from his cousin Harry. Horner also wrote of a related killing not mentioned elsewhere. He said the victim was Tommy Harmon, an orphan boy who Evans had taken under his wing. According to Horner, Harmon was with the gang at their hideout but remained behind when the others went to the Chinese camp. Learning of the killing, Harmon ran away. Fearing the boy would talk, Evans tracked him down and probably killed him.³⁵

In a bizarre coincidence, sheriff’s deputies arrested Evans within a week — not for the murders, which were not yet discovered, but on a rustling charge, specifically altering a brand on stolen horses belonging to Fred Nodine. Because the county lacked its own jail, Evans was placed under a twenty-four-hour guard on the second floor of the Fine Hotel — a poor choice, as it turned out. He escaped two weeks later from an outhouse where an accomplice had stashed a gun. Horner said Hughes may have stashed the gun and Vaughan may have provided a horse.³⁶ Documents from the courthouse safe included Deputy Sheriff Thomas H. Humphreys’s explanation of what happened:

On or about 15th of June while I was acting as guard of Bruce Evans he requested to go to the privy. After he got there, he came to the door presented a six-shooter and told me to take a walk. This I was obliged to do. The door partly protecting him from me. He then left.³⁷

THERE WERE TWO INVESTIGATIONS into the murders, with little coordination between them. Justice of the Peace Joseph K. Vincent began with his investigation within days of the discovery of the bodies near Lewiston. The miners' employer, the Sam Yup Company, working with the Chinese consulate in San Francisco, dispatched a Chinese named Lee Loi to investigate the murders, and he hired Vincent. Almost nothing is known about Lee Loi's background. The consulate described him as an interpreter living near Log Cabin Bar in Washington Territory near where one of the bodies was found.³⁸

Even in a region of colorful characters, Vincent, then sixty-five years old, had already led a life more varied than most. Born in Salem, Massachusetts, he had been a seaman, soldier, gold miner, saloon-keeper, and politician and had held several public offices in Lewiston, including town marshal, Nez Perce County sheriff, tax assessor, town auctioneer, and, at the time of the massacre, a justice of the peace and U.S. commissioner. Although his duties and authority as a commissioner are unclear, it may have been this position that drew Lee Loi to his door.

The second investigation, started months later, was led by authorities in Wallowa County after Craig discovered the decomposed remains of several victims while trailing cattle into the canyon during the fall of 1887.³⁹ The discovery apparently failed to incite much immediate interest, and the *Wallowa County Chieftain* did not inform its readers of the crime until the following April, after the suspects were arrested.⁴⁰

There is nothing to indicate that the State of Oregon took much interest in the case. The governor, Sylvester Pennoyer, had been a leading force in anti-Chinese agitation in Oregon. He had been elected in 1887, a year after chairing an assembly of agitators who, in March 1886, demanded the expulsion of Portland's Chinese population. The demand was frustrated by Portland Mayor John Gates and then-Governor Zenas Moody, who helped organize seven hundred armed citizens and two hundred special deputies to forestall violence.⁴¹

From the outset, the Chinese focused on ten dead, the number reported by the *Lewiston Teller*. It is not clear when, if ever, they learned the full scope of the killings. Vincent and other authorities in Lewiston may not have known either, although the much larger number of victims — thirty-one (reported by Findley) or thirty-four (reported by Horner) — eventually

became known in Wallowa County. Appearing before Vincent in his judicial capacity on June 18, 1887, Lee Loi swore out a John Doe complaint against the unknown killers:

Lee Loi, first being duly sworn, complains and accuses Richard Doe, John Doe and others, names unknown, of the crime of murder by feloniously willfully and with malice aforethought cut with an axe, shot with a gun or pistol loaded with powder and ball, which they, the said Richard Roe [sic] and John Roe [sic] and others, names unknown, did hold in their hands, kill and murder ten Chinamen, belonging to what is known as the Sam Yup Co. Said murders having been committed on Snake River in the State of Oregon, Wallowa County, about 120 miles from Lewiston, Nez Perce County, Idaho Territory, on or about May 25th 1887 to the best of his knowledge and belief. . . .⁴²

On the same day, Lee Loi also swore out an arrest warrant for the unknown killers. Vincent forwarded the first detailed account of his investigation, along with descriptions of three of the bodies, to the San Francisco consul-general, Liang Ting-Tsan, on July 19.

. . . I have been in Lee Loi's employ, have been up Snake River above where the murder was committed. Water so high, impossible to find out what was done. Since have made a trip to the Salmon River, from which I returned yesterday. Today, I had a little talk with a Chinaman who saw provisions on bar after men were gone.

I have been and am still in the employ of the Chinese company, ferreting out the matter. From what I have so far found things seem to show that white men were the murderers, as some of the provisions "flour" I have traced directly to them. I have been following up, for six days, a white man who was at their camp and one who is the last one known to have been there. He has told some very curious stories about the matter, and some circumstances look very suspicious. But there is in that vicinity some twenty or thirty bad men and I was watched very closely for nine days. I expect to start again up Snake River on the east side and will get into their camp by some means and know what has been done with their property, if the agent [Lee Loi?] here thinks best. . . .⁴³

It was not until February 16, 1888, nine months after the slayings, that the minister in charge of China's legation in Washington, D.C., Chang Yen Hoon, officially notified Secretary of State Bayard of the massacre. Written in English, Chang's five-page letter enclosed copies of Vincent's report to the San Francisco consulate, along with Lee Loi's formal complaint and the warrant. Chang also provided the names of the ten known victims. Lee She had discovered some of the bodies:

. . . when Lee She and his party came out of the bar in their boat they found three bodies of Chea-po's party floating down the river and some provisions and bedding lying profusely at the entrance of the bar, and upon a search being made further found Chea-po's boat stranded on some rocks in the bar, with holes in the bottom, bearing



Frank Vaughan is second from the right in this photograph, probably taken in the town of Wallowa during the years following the massacre.

indications of having been chopped with an axe, and its tie-rope cut and drifting in the water; that Mr. J. Vincent, commissioner of Nez Perce County, Idaho, visited the scene of the murder, and on examining the three bodies found a number of wounds inflicted by an axe and bullets; that the bodies of the others that had been murdered have not yet been found. . . .⁴⁴

Chang may have erred in saying Vincent visited the massacre site, as Vincent's description of the bodies, to which Chang referred, was of the bodies that surfaced near Lewiston. Vincent made no claim in the official correspondence of actually visiting the Deep Creek camp. Chang also wrote that while Vincent aided in the investigation initially, he had recently failed to respond to the consulate's queries.

He (the consul-general) is therefore fully convinced that the murders must be white men (Americans), and further says that the commissioner [Vincent] promised to write again to him if he should thereafter have secured more definite information regarding the stolen property; but several months have elapsed and he has not heard from him again, although he (the consul-general) has repeatedly written to him. . . .⁴⁵

The legation's delay in reporting the crime to Washington might be explained by the difficulty of obtaining accurate information from a remote

crime scene and the challenge of working with two languages, but it could also be the case that Washington's tepid response to previous complaints discouraged legation officials from informing the secretary of state earlier. The Chinese had complained for years of other crimes, seeking protection under provisions of two treaties, the Burlingame Treaty of 1868 and an immigration treaty signed in 1880. The Burlingame Treaty cleared the way for an exchange of diplomats between China and the United States and was hailed as portending a significant opening of Chinese markets to American exports. The hope was that it would also help attract more Chinese immigrants to the United States, then much in demand to help build the nation's railroads. Importantly for the Chinese, the treaty also included security guarantees for their emigrants, although it denied them the right to become American citizens.⁴⁶ Similarly, the immigration treaty, which authorized the United States to restrict Chinese immigration, included a specific pledge of protection for Chinese who remained on American soil.

If Chang expected the secretary of state to offer more sympathy than he had previously, then he was disappointed. Bayard replied on February 23, 1888, that the information in Chang's letter was "confusing and even contradictory" and "afford very little basis for the successful operation of the law." Bayard promised only to relay the information to the governors of Idaho and Oregon. Coincidentally, Chang submitted a comprehensive claim to Bayard a week later, on March 3, 1888, seeking compensation for earlier crimes against the Chinese in California and in the Washington, Idaho, Alaska, and Montana territories. The claim was for \$346,619.75, of which \$100,000 would be indemnification for forty deaths — or \$2,500 per death. Chang mentioned the slayings in Hells Canyon, but did not request compensation, reporting that "no accurate information is yet received."⁴⁷

Meanwhile, a major break in the case occurred in Wallowa County that March. Frank Vaughan confessed to knowing about the massacre and turned state's evidence against the other gang members. We do not know whether Vaughan stepped forward on his own or after being confronted. A lengthy magazine article by Gerald J. Tucker in 1967 gave the credit to Vincent. Tucker, a Forest Service employee, said the Lewiston judge traveled to Wallowa County to persuade Vaughan to confess and give evidence against the others. A letter from Vincent to Idaho Territorial Governor E.A. Stevenson, however, revealed Vincent was in Lewiston at the time of Vaughan's confession, with no knowledge of the confession, the arrests, or the subsequent indictments. In the letter, Vincent appealed for more money to pursue his investigation. He said the Chinese had already paid him \$200.⁴⁸

Although a record of Vaughan's confession has not been found, the *New York Times* carried a front-page summary of it on April 29, 1888, under the

headline “Murdered for Their Gold Dust.” Written under a Walla Walla, Washington Territory, dateline, the *Times* said the seven members of the gang, including Vaughan,

entered into an agreement nearly a year ago to murder these Chinese miners for the gold dust, which it was thought they possessed, and the men agreed that if any of the party divulged the plot, the rest should kill him. Hughes did not like the idea of committing the deed and would have no hand in the matter, but at this time he was stopping with the parties who committed the deed. A short time after that all the men but Hughes went down to the Chinese camp and opened fire on the Chinamen, killing them all, 10 in number, and then put the bodies of all except 2 into the boat which the Chinamen had

and scuttled it. They then secured all the money and gold dust they could find, amounting to between \$4,000 and \$5,000, which was given to Canfield to sell for coin, and after he got possession of it, he left the country and the rest of the party got nothing.⁴⁹

Based on Vaughan’s testimony, a Circuit Court grand jury on March 23 indicted Evans and five other gang members — Canfield, Hughes, LaRue, Maynard, and McMillan — for the murder of ten Chinese. The indictment listed names for the victims, much different from the identities in the diplomatic correspondence. Nevertheless, they quite possibly were the same, as whoever prepared the indictment conceded the names were contrived. Whether Wallowa County authorities attempted to learn the victims’ true

STATEMENT OF CLAIMS SENT BY CHANG YEN HOON
TO THOMAS F. BAYARD, MARCH 3, 1888*

1. Property Losses

In note of April 5, 1886:

Squak Valley, Washington Territory \$535.65
Coal Creek Mine, Washington Territory 4,054.88
Almy, Wyoming Territory 6,064.70

In note of August 11, 1886:

Anaconda, Montana Territory. 3,000.00

In note of February 19, 1887:

Tacoma, Washington Territory—

Losses in the town 106,919.60
Losses in the vicinity 7,530.65

In note of February 19, 1887:

Seattle, Washington Territory—

Losses as stated in inclosure [*sic*] accompanying note ... \$143,851.87
Deducting claims based upon uncollected debts,
per statement attached hereto 35,337.60
There remains in the Seattle claim 108,514.27

In note of February 25, 1887:

Juneau, Alaska Territory. No detailed estimate of losses yet filed.
About 100 Chinese were expelled. Estimating \$100 each for property losses and expenses of journey to San Francisco and elsewhere would amount to. 10,000.00

*Reprinted from House Executive Documents, pp. 390–2, transcribed by the author

In note of February 15, 1886:

A statement of riots at Bloomfield, Redding, Boulder Creek, Eureka, and other towns in California, involving murder, arson, robbery, and expulsion, but no estimates. Also a statement that near 100,000 Chinese had been driven from their homes.

Total of property losses, as estimated246,619.75

II.—Loss of lives

In note of November 30, 1885:

Rock Springs, Wyoming Territory. Number of lives lost in riot, besides 16 wounded 28

In note of April 5, 1886:

Squak Valley, Washington Territory. Number of lives lost (and 4 wounded. 3
Orofino, Idaho Territory. Number of lives lost. 5

In note of August 11, 1886:

Anaconda, Montana Territory. Number of lives lost 4

In note of February 16, 1888:

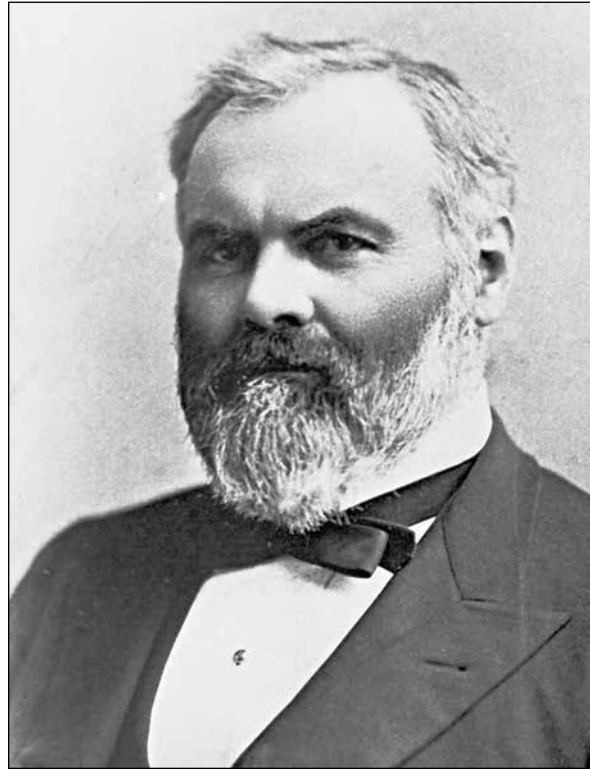
Snake River, Oregon. Number of lives reported lost 10

If the Snake River murders are omitted, of which no accurate information is yet received, there remain 40 lives of Chinese by riots and violence for which no compensation has yet been made. If the indemnity paid by Spain to the United States in the Virginius case is accepted, \$2,500 as the lowest sum, there would result a claim for \$100,000. Add as above, property losses, \$246,619.75; grand total, \$346,619.75.

identities is not known. It seems unlikely, given the lack of communication and concern among the several jurisdictions.⁵⁰

One prominent member of the community who voiced outrage was James H. Slater, a Democrat who had served in the U.S. Senate from 1879 to 1885. In a letter to the U.S. Attorney for Oregon, L.L. McArthur, on April 24, 1888, Slater appealed for federal assistance to help investigate “a most daring outrage on a camp of unoffending Chinamen who were mining on Snake River.” He wrote about the murders as if McArthur might not have heard of them—and he may not have. Slater said two Chinese were killed and probably “many more” (his mention of two bodies apparently referred to the remains Craig had found in Hells Canyon). Slater made no mention of the bodies found at Lewiston, and the connection of those bodies to the massacre still may not have been known in Wallowa County. Slater identified Evans, Canfield, and LaRue as “the ringleaders” of a gang that robbed the Chinese of “\$5,000 or \$10,000 in gold dust.” They “are at large and out of the state,” he continued, and he urged McArthur to seek federal help in tracking them down because Wallowa County authorities lacked the resources. The others, he wrote, were in jail, except for Vaughan.⁵¹

Slater sent his letter a few days after a Wallowa County newspaper carried its first account of the massacre—nearly eleven months after it occurred. The *Wallowa County Chieftain* reported the arrests and grand jury indictments on April 19, 1888. Readers were told the newspaper knew of the massacre much earlier but chose not to report it, “knowing that efforts were being made to apprehend the guilty parties.” In addition to the ten



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Former U.S. Senator James Slater, then living in Joseph, appealed for federal help in tracking down the ringleaders of the people who had murdered the Chinese.

known killed, the paper reported, there was “another rumor” that LaRue had murdered an additional eight Chinese.⁵²

Slater had no more success in getting government help than had the Chinese. U.S. Attorney McArthur figuratively threw up his hands and sent Slater’s letter to Secretary of State Bayard on April 28, “in the hope that you may be able to devise some means of assisting the local authorities . . . in bringing the guilty men to justice.”⁵³ Bayard’s office, in turn, forwarded Slater’s letter to the Chinese legation in Washington, D.C., on May 15, informing Minister Chang Yen Hoon that the federal government was powerless to intervene in a state matter. He suggested the Chinese might themselves provide the assistance Slater sought for local authorities.⁵⁴

How the Chinese might provide the resources and under what authority were not addressed. The Sam Yup Company had already dispatched Lee Loi, who had hired Vincent, who proved of modest help. The letter did contain significant new information for the Chinese, however. It was apparently the first they heard of the arrests. Chang replied to Bayard on May 20, offering his “hearty thanks” and saying he would forward the information to the San Francisco consulate for follow-up.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, Vaughan had apparently changed his story from what he had told the grand jury. While the grand jury indictment said the six accused were “acting together,” on April 16, 1888, Vaughan told County Judge Peter O’Sullivan in a deposition that he had not meant to leave that impression. He shifted all the blame to Evans, Canfield, and LaRue. He had played no role in the killings, he claimed, and neither had Hughes, Maynard, or McMillan. He did acknowledge that he and McMillan were nearby. O’Sullivan questioned him on this point:

Q. How far were you from the Chinese camp when this shooting took place?

A. About two or three hundred yards.

Q. How far was Robert McMillan?

A. Near me.

Q. Was anyone else near you?

A. Bruce Evans was near, but not so close as McMillan.

Q. Were Canfield and LaRue near you?

A. No, they were not.

Q. After the killing, did you and McMillan go down to the boat?

A. We went to the Chinese camp, but not to the boat.

Q. What did you see when you got down to this Chinese camp?

A. Four or five dead Chinamen.

Q. Were you a witness before the grand jury that indicted these persons?

A. Yes sir.

Q. Why did you implicate Maynard, Hughes and McMillan then, and not now?

A. I didn't implicate them then any more than I have now. . . .⁵⁶

Maynard, McMillan, and Hughes also gave depositions and denied any role in the killings. While O'Sullivan indicated that he thought Vaughan had changed his story, he did not press the point when Vaughan denied it. O'Sullivan's questions throughout suggest he was not eager to make any of the four reveal anything beyond their claim of innocence. Not a single question was asked about the gold taken from the Chinese. One might conclude that neither the prosecutors nor the defense wanted to open up what may have been a Pandora's Box of questions about the whereabouts of the gold.

The sole purpose of the depositions seemed aimed at winning the release of Maynard, McMillan, and Hughes from jail. Within a week, thirty-four leading citizens — all men, all property owners — successfully petitioned Circuit Court Judge Luther Isom, on vacation in Baker City, to set bail for the defendants, who they claimed were being "illegally held."⁵⁷ Among those signing the petition were James Perry Gardner, foreman of the grand jury, and Seymour Horner, father of Harland Horner.

The murder trial for Maynard, McMillan, and Hughes opened in Enterprise, the new county seat, on August 30 and concluded on September 1. No record survives of any of the testimony, but it seems safe to presume that Vaughan, whose name appeared on a list of witnesses, echoed the statements from his deposition, assigning full blame for the murders to Evans, Canfield, and LaRue while absolving the others of guilt. The jury returned its verdict on September 1:

In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon County of Wallowa

The State of Oregon versus Hiram Maynard and Robert McMillan and Hezekiah Hughes indicted under the name of Carl Hughes implicated with T. J. [sic] Canfield, Bruce Evans and C. O. Larue [sic], defendants.

We the jury in the above entitled action find the said defendants Hiram Maynard, Robert McMillan and Hezekiah Hughes not guilty.⁵⁸

Horner only briefly cited the trial, saying those arrested were found innocent. Findley made no mention of a trial. The Chinese government may never have learned the verdict — at least, no document has been located to indicate the outcome was officially communicated. The Chinese legation appeared to have lost interest in the case. The exchange of letters following Slater's appeal for help on April 24, 1888, appears to have been the last mention of the massacre in the diplomatic correspondence on file in the National Archives.

The Chinese were informed on October 19, 1888, however, that Congress had approved a compensation package of \$276,619.75 "as full indemnity for all losses and injuries sustained by Chinese subjects within the United States and the lands of residents thereof."⁵⁹ This figure seems to include the victims in Hells Canyon, although the Chinese had sought compensation for earlier crimes, not for the victims of the massacre. While it left in dispute whether compensation was paid, the Chinese did not make an issue of it and offered profuse thanks for what they received, although it was less than requested.⁶⁰

EVANS, CANFIELD, AND LARUE were never apprehended, and there are no reliable reports of what happened to Evans or LaRue. Still, rumors abounded. LaRue supposedly was killed years later in a dispute over a card game, and Evans reportedly was in Montana but disappeared again. There is no way of knowing whether he ever contacted his two children and his wife, who remarried. Evans's name is improbably engraved with others on a memorial arch on Enterprise's courthouse square, erected in 1936 to honor the county's early pioneers.

Of Canfield, more is known. Horner said Canfield served a prison sentence in Kansas for stealing mules, after which he returned to Wallowa County to search for the gold — at least some of which he and Evans apparently buried before fleeing. On July 20, 1888, the *Oregon Scout*, a newspaper in nearby Union, reported that Canfield was back in Wallowa County before the trial. He may have been looking for the gold.

J.T. Canfield was seen a few days ago on the Imnaha. He is one of the Chinese murderers. He was armed with two six shooters and a Winchester rifle. He is one of the horse thieves that Nodine caught and bound over and who afterward went and shot some of the Nodine horses. It is believed that those Chinese murderers will come clear [sic] although they do not deny doing the deed.⁶¹

Horner said that after prison and the trip back to Oregon, Canfield went to Texas where he married and raised a family. He said Canfield next relocated to Idaho where, under the name of Charley Canfield, he operated a blacksmith shop near Glenns Ferry, seventy miles east of Boise.⁶²

McMillan died two years after the massacre in Walla Walla, possibly from diphtheria.⁶³ Vaughan stayed in Wallowa County, became a rancher, married and raised a family, and later moved to California. Nothing reliable is known about Maynard or Hughes.

As for the gold — the Chinese gold and the Douglas gold — its disposition is not known and probably never will be. Did Canfield escape with it



Frank Vaughan, pictured second from the right in the top row, was a member of the group accused of murdering Chinese gold miners in Hells Canyon in 1887. This photograph was taken in 1898, during an outing of the Joseph Bachelors' Club.

and use it to start a new life? Does it remain buried somewhere in Wallowa County? Horner wrote that some of the gold, including the Douglas gold bars, was buried near Imnaha and that although many looked for it he did not think anyone ever found it. But, then, who would tell?

THE ACTIVE INVESTIGATION into the massacre ended with the 1888 trial, but a surprise development three years later provided a great deal more detail about the crime, although not all of it necessarily accurate. On September 30, 1891, the *Walla Walla Statesman* published a confession attributed to Robert McMillan by his father Hugh. It ran under the headline "The Mystery Solved":

I make this statement from the statement made me by my son Robert, aged sixteen, just prior to his death, and by me then reduced to writing. In the latter part of April 1887 my son and Bruce Evans, J.T. Canfield, Mat Larue [*sic*], Frank Vaughn [*sic*], Hiram Maynard and Carl [*sic*] Hughes were stopping in a cattle camp four miles from Snake river. My son and Evans, Canfield, Larue and Vaughn went to the Chinese camp on Snake River. Canfield and Larue went above the camp and Evans and Vaughn remained below. There were thirteen Chinese in the camp and they were fired on. Twelve Chinese were instantly killed and one other caught afterwards and his brains beaten out. The party got that evening five thousand five hundred dollars in gold dust. Next day, eight more Chinese came to the camp in a boat. They were all killed and their bodies with the others

thrown into the river. The party then took a boat and went to another Chinese camp four miles distance where thirteen Chinese were working on a river bar. These were all killed and their bodies thrown into the river. The camp was robbed and fifty thousand dollars in gold secured. My son was present only the first day, but was acquainted with the facts as they were talked over by the parties in his presence. The circumstances here detailed occurred on the Oregon side of the Snake river in Wallowa County near the northeast corner of the state.⁶⁴

There is no known report elsewhere that the gang seized anywhere near \$50,000 in gold from the Chinese. It may be that McMillan's father confused the gold bars from the Montana stagecoach robbery with the gold from Deep Creek.

Given the contradictory facts in many of the accounts, including those in the McMillan confession, it will never be possible to know precisely what happened at Deep Creek in Hells Canyon in 1887. A sign once marked the site where the crime was committed, but it has been gone for nearly twenty years.⁶⁵ The fact of the massacre existed only in occasional speculative articles, fragmented newspaper accounts, and a handful of incomplete public records.

In 2005, however, the Oregon Board of Geographic Names took an important step in marking the place for posterity by approving the name Chinese Massacre Cove for a five-acre site at the mouth of Deep Creek. The decision was ratified in October by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, so the name will appear on future maps as part of the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, administered by the U.S. Forest Service. As Jeff Ford, the chief petitioner seeking the designation, wrote in his application to the OGNB, the name would "give permanence to one of the West's most heinous, egregious acts based upon ethnocentric attitudes toward Chinese."⁶⁶ The designation ensures that the massacre at Deep Creek is remembered as a tragedy in Oregon's history and a sad reminder of the nation's mistreatment of its minority populations. The death of almost three dozen miners and the efforts made to discover the truth of that day in May are now less likely to disappear into the fog of time.

NOTES

1. I was unable to locate the rock walls during a visit to the site in 1998. An inventory conducted in 1960 by the U.S. Forest Service's Wallowa Whitman National Forest office (then in Baker, Oregon) described the shelter in part: "A rock shelter is located against a cliff face about 30 feet above the creek bed. Two rough rock walls extend from the cliff face to form a 10 x 10 foot space. Evidence of water diversion ditches exist on creek

sides where water was run for placer mining." It also said the back wall of the shelter featured "numerous Indian paintings." The survey said a small U.S. Forest Service sign "identifies the site," although the sign is no longer there. A copy of the inventory is in the author's possession.

2. The precise number of Chinese immigrants during this period is unknown because an untold number returned to China as others arrived. Moreover, immigration records were destroyed in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. The largest number of Chinese during that period was estimated at 132,000 in 1882, of which 110,000 were in California. Thomas W. Chinn et al., ed., *A History of the Chinese in California, a Syllabus* (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1969), 22. The 1880 U.S. Census put Oregon's population of Chinese at 9,510.

3. Stratton is among several authors who have concluded that thirty-one Chinese were killed, which may indeed be the correct number. David H. Stratton, "The Snake River Massacre of Chinese Miners, 1887," in *A Taste of the West: Essays in Honor of Robert G. Athearn*, ed. Duane A. Smith (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett, 1983), 117. Stratton graciously shared his research with the author.

4. Wallowa County was formed out of Union County on February 11, 1887. Joseph was briefly the county seat, which voters moved to Enterprise that same year.

5. Gerald J. Tucker, "Massacre for Gold," *Old West* (Fall 1967), 4. The Craig quote appears in several other articles, including Stratton, "Snake River Massacre," 125.

6. *Wallowa County Chieftain* — a weekly then published in Joseph, published today in Enterprise, Oregon — referred to the crime as "cowardly and brutal" and said the escaped killers, who were also rustlers, should be "hunted down like the wild beasts they are." The original article, dated April 19, 1888, was missing from newspaper files, but a typewritten copy was made available to the author by former Wallowa County Clerk Marjorie Martin. See also Letter from former U.S. Senator James Slater to U.S. At-

torney for Oregon L.L. McArthur, April 25, 1888, Miscellaneous Letters of Department of State, 1789-1906, Microfilm M98, Record Group 59, National Archives Annex, College Park, Md. [hereafter Miscellaneous Letters of State Department, RG 59 NAA], also House Executive Documents, 2d Sess., 50th Cong., 1888-89, Vol. 1, 402 [hereafter House Executive Documents].

7. Charlotte McIver, interviewed by the author, July 12, 1995. The contents of the safe were reported by the author. *Oregonian*, August 15, 1995. The contents of the safe were first reported by Bill Rautenstrauch in the *Wallowa County Chieftain* (Enterprise) on February 16, 1995.

8. Wallowa County Circuit Court Journal, Vol. A, 1887-1893. Found by the author, restored to the Wallowa County Clerk's office, Wallowa County Courthouse, Enterprise, Oregon [hereafter Circuit Court Journal].

9. U.S. Forest Service, *Geology of Hells Canyon* (www.fs.fed.us/hellscanyon/life_and_the_land/geology, accessed September 1, 2006). For additional information, see William Ashworth, *Hells Canyon: the Deepest Gorge on Earth* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1977); John Carrey, et. al, *Snake River of Hells Canyon* (Cambridge, Idaho: Backeddy Books, 1978); David D. Alt and Donald W. Hyndman, *Roadside Geology of Oregon* (Missoula, Mont.: Mountain Press, 2001).

10. Letter from Chang Yen Hoon, minister of the Chinese Legation in Washington, D.C., to Secretary of State Thomas F. Bayard, February 16, 1888, notes from the Chinese Legation to the United States, Department of State, 1868-1906, Microfilm M98, Record Group 59, National Archives Annex, College Park, Md., [hereafter Notes from the Chinese Legation, RG 59, NAA]; also House Executive Documents, 383-4.

11. For an account of the discovery of gold in the interior Pacific Northwest, see Margaret Day Allen, *Lewiston Country: An Armchair History* (Lewiston, Idaho: Nez Perce County Historical Society, 1990).

12. Details on Chinese mining along the Snake River are from Ronald James, *Ruins of a*

World: Chinese Gold Mining at the Mon-tung Site in the Snake River Canyon (M.A. thesis, University of Idaho, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management), published as Idaho Cultural Resource Series, Number 4, 1995.

13. *Lewiston (Idaho Territory) Teller*, June 16, 1887.

14. *Ibid.*, June 30, 1887.

15. Autopsy reports enclosed in letter dated July 19, 1887, from J.K. Vincent to Liang Ting Tsan, enclosed in Chang Yen Hoon to Thomas Bayard, February 16, 1888, Notes from Chinese Legation, RG 59, NAA, also House Executive Documents, 385.

16. Sam Yup — literally "three districts" — represented workers from the Shuntak, Punju, and Namhoi, the last two districts constituting the port city of Canton. The largest of the six companies was Sze Yup, representing four districts south of Canton, among them Toishan, home to as many as 60 percent of the immigrants, who spoke their own Toishanese dialect. Chinese Six Companies is now the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, with chapters in major cities, including Portland.

17. Letter from Chang to Bayard, February 16, 1888, Notes from the Chinese Legation, RG 59, NAA, also House Executive Documents, 383-4.

18. Chinn, Lai, and Choy, *Chinese in California*, 15-16, 47. See also Peter J. Lewty, *To the Columbia Gateway: The Oregon Railway and the Northern Pacific, 1879-1884* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1987), 150-1.

19. Lewty, *Oregon Railway*, 150.

20. Shih-shan Henry Tsai wrote: "For Chinese-Americans, the Exclusion Act of 1882 has become their ethnic Pearl Harbor." *China and the Overseas Chinese in the United States, 1868-1911* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1983), 15-16. The prohibition against Chinese laborers was repeatedly extended and not formally repealed until 1943 under President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

21. Tsai, *Overseas Chinese*, 14.

22. See Rose Marie Wong, *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), Chapter 2, "The Chinese Presence in Oregon."

23. Letter from Bayard to Cheng Tsao Ju, February 18, 1886, Microfilm M99, Notes to Foreign Legations in the United States from the Department of State, 1834-1906, China, National Archives Annex, College Park, Md. [hereafter Notes to Foreign Legations, RG 59, NAA].

24. J. Harland Horner, "History of Wallowa County," Oregon Historical Society Research Library, Portland, 255, 307.

25. *Ibid.*, 415. Douglas is also spelled Douglass in Horner's account.

26. Subpoena, May 11, 1888, signed

by Wallowa County Sheriff Robert Coshaw, and Vaughan's response, both found in Wallowa County safe with trial record of *State of Oregon vs J.T. Canfield, Bruce Evans, L.O. LaRue, Hiram Maynard, Hezekiah Hughes and Robert McMillan*, Wallowa County Clerk, Wallowa County Courthouse, Enterprise, Oregon [hereafter Trial Record].

27. Robert McMillan gave his age as



“about 15 years old” in a deposition before Judge Peter O’Sullivan, April 16, 1888, Trial Record. McMillan’s father said in a newspaper article documenting his son’s confession that Robert McMillan was sixteen when he died sometime after the trial. Confession, *Walla Walla Statesman*, September 30, 1891, 3.

28. Horner, “History,” 256.

29. Ibid., 270. Horner said Douglas named the stream Dead Line Creek to underscore a warning to the Nez Perce against grazing their cattle on property he claimed downriver from the creek.

30. H.R. Findley, *Memoirs of Alexander B. and Sarah Jane Findley*, Book 2, first published as a series in the *Chief Joseph Herald*, Joseph, Oregon, 1957-1959, 130. Used with permission of the family.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., 224.

33. Horner, “History,” 1, 210.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., 256.

36. Ibid., 257.

37. Deposition dated August 24, 1887, Trial Record.

38. Chang to Bayard, February 16, 1888; Notes from the Chinese Legation, RG 59, NAA, also H. Exec. Docs., 384.

39. Craig said he buried several of the bodies himself. See Tucker, *Massacre*, 4.

40. *Wallowa County Chieftain*, April 19, 1888. See note 6 above.

41. Chia-lin Chin, “A Gold Dream in the Blue Mountains: A Study of the Chinese Emigration in the John Day area, 1870-1910” (M.A. thesis, Portland State University, 1972), 41. According to Nelson Chia-Chi Ho, Portland was afterward seen elsewhere as “a refuge for persecuted Chinese.” Nelson Chia-Chi Ho, *Portland’s Chinatown: The History of an Urban Ethnic District* (Portland: Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978), 10.

42. Complaint signed by Lee Loi and sent by J.K. Vincent to Liang Ting-Tsan, San Francisco, July 19, 1887, enclosed with Chang to Bayard, February 16, 1888, Notes from Chinese Legation, RG59, NAA, also House Executive Documents, 385.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., H. Ex. Docs., 383-4.

45. Ibid.

46. The Burlingame Treaty was ratified in 1868. The Treaty Regulating Immigration from China was ratified in 1880.

47. Letter from Bayard to Chang, February 23, 1888, Notes to Foreign Legations, RG 59, NAA, also H. Ex. Docs., 387-8; Letter

from Chang to Bayard, March 3, 1888, H. Ex. Docs., 390-2. Enclosed with Chang’s letter is a two-page list of crimes and incidents for which compensation is sought.

48. Tucker, *Massacre for Gold*, 28; Letter from J.K. Vincent to Gov. E.A. Stevenson, April 14, 1888, Miscellaneous Letters of the State Department, RG 59, NAA.

49. *New York Times*, April 29, 1888, 1. The article was probably a pickup from the *Walla Walla Weekly Union*, which carried a nearly identical article on April 28, 1888.

50. The grand jury indictment of March 23, 1888, listed contrived names for the ten victims: Ah Jim, Ye Lee, Wy See, Heop Sing, Hee Lee, La Bate, Heim Lim, Hee Gee, Sing Heim, and Heop Gee. See Trial Record.

51. Letter from James H. Slater to L.L. McArthur, April 24, 1888, enclosed in McArthur to Bayard, April 28, 1888, Miscellaneous Letters of State Department, RG 59, NAA, also House Executive Documents, 402.

52. The April 19, 1888, article was missing from *Wallowa County Chieftain* files, but a typewritten copy was given the author from the personal files of Marjorie Martin, a former Wallowa County clerk. A similar account, attributed to the *Chieftain*, appeared in the *Morning Oregonian*, April 27, 1888.

53. McArthur to Bayard, April 28, 1888, Miscellaneous Letters of State Department, RG 59, NAA.

54. Ibid.; Bayard’s office to Chang, May 15, 1888, signed by G.L. Rives, acting secretary of state; Notes to Foreign Legations, RG 59, NAA.

55. Letter from Chang to Bayard, May 20, 1888, H. Ex. Docs., 403

56. Trial Record in County safe. The petition was undated but would have been submitted on or before May 15, 1888, when Judge Isom responded, setting bond for the three defendants.

57. Ibid.

58. Circuit Court Journal, entry for September 1, 1888.

59. Letter from Rives to Chang, October 19, 1888, Notes to Foreign Legations RG 59, NAA.

60. Tsai, *Overseas Chinese*, 82. Unfortunately for Chang, the compensation package won him few plaudits. Accused of corruption, including mishandling of the indemnification money, his standing with the Qing rulers went from bad to worse. He was imprisoned on an accusation that he fraudulently dealt with foreigners on a railroad concession. His property was confiscated, and he was banished to Xinjiang Province. Chang’s career came to a bloody end in 1900, when he was beheaded on the orders of the Empress Dowager Cixi.

61. *Oregon Scout*, July 20, 1888, from the files of Grace Bartlett, Wallowa County historian.

62. Horner, “History,” 1213. A Chas. Canfield is buried with his wife Jennie in Glenss Ferry under what Mrs. Donna Carnahan of Glenss Ferry described as the largest headstone in the Glenss Rest Cemetery. Donna Canfield died in 1929 at age sixty-three. Mrs. Carnahan, whose grandmother’s sister married into the Canfield family, said she had not been aware Chas. Canfield and J. Titus Canfield were the same person. The birth date of April 5, 1866, recorded on Chas. Canfield’s death certificate, is the same as recorded in U.S. Census records for J. Titus Canfield. In the Canfield burial plot are the graves of Hiram and Mary E. Canfield, with “Father” and “Mother” inscribed on their headstones. An obituary for Mary Canfield in the Glenss Ferry newspaper, dated June 14, 1914, said the elder Canfields moved to Glenss Ferry from Oregon in 1887. The family kept its secret. Donna Carnahan, interviewed by the author, October 5, 2004.

63. Stratton, “Snake River Massacre,” 124.

64. *Walla Walla Statesman*, September 30, 1891, 3. See also Stratton, “Snake River Massacre,” 124.

65. The sign was already gone when I first viewed Deep Creek nearly twenty years ago. See note 1.

66. Jeff Ford to Oregon Geographic Names Board, January 22, 2004, OGNB files, Oregon Historical Society, Portland.



Courtesy of the author