

June 2020

[2020 Honorable Mention] The Chinatown of Soledad Street: A Historical Analysis of a Multicultural Ethnic Enclave from early 20th century Salinas

Alfonso Calderon Reyna
California State University, Monterey Bay

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/esa_submissions

Recommended Citation

Calderon Reyna, Alfonso, "[2020 Honorable Mention] The Chinatown of Soledad Street: A Historical Analysis of a Multicultural Ethnic Enclave from early 20th century Salinas" (2020). *Ethnic Studies Award*. 8.

https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/esa_submissions/8

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Ethnic Studies Award at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ethnic Studies Award by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

Social & Behavioral Sciences 402
Senior Capstone Seminar II
Professor Figueroa

Final Capstone Project
Capstone Advisor: Dr. Rebecca Bales

**The Chinatown of Soledad Street:
A Historical Analysis of a Multicultural Ethnic Enclave from early 20th Century Salinas**

By
Alfonso Calderon
California State University, Monterey Bay
Social & Behavioral Sciences, Social History

Spring 2020

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Abstract | 3 |
| Introduction | 3 |
| Literature Review | 4 |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Early Chinese Immigration in the U.S. | 4 |
| Origins of Chinatowns in America | 5 |
| Salinas' Chinatown | 6 |
| Conclusion | 7 |
| Theory | 7 |
| Methodology | 9 |
| Findings: A History of Soledad Street's Chinatown | 9 |
| Introduction | 9 |
| Chinese immigration and the first Chinatown | 9 |
| The Chinatown of Soledad Street | 12 |
| Conclusion & Recommendations | 17 |
| Bibliography | 18 |
| Appendices | 20 |
| Appendix 1 | 21 |
| Appendix 2 | 21 |
| Appendix 3 | 21 |
| Appendix 4 | 21 |
| Appendix 5 | 21 |
| Appendix 6 | 21 |
| Appendix 7 | 21 |

Abstract

The current conditions of the Salinas Chinatown cause many to avoid the area. In recent years, most have become unaware that Chinatown holds a significant part of our local history. The works of Lori A. Flores and Rina Benmayor have served as an influence for engaging in this project. The main intent of this research is to expand on these works, and to support the notion that Chinatown's history must be preserved. This study will provide a cohesive analysis which will look at themes that emerge from scholarly work and raw data. Between 2008 and 2015, Rina Benmayor led a project of collecting oral histories from individuals who interacted with Chinatown in the 20th century. This research will include content from these sources, as well as other materials dedicated to Chinatown's history. The content of the findings will further elaborate on the themes found in the literature review. These themes include, but are not limited to, social barriers and cultural expression. Ultimately, this research will demonstrate that Salinas Chinatown possesses a significant part of our local history.

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to provide a historical account about the Chinatown of Salinas. To be specific, I will demonstrate the ways in which early 20th century Chinatown served as a hub where ethnic minorities (i.e., Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, African, and Mexican Americans) expressed their cultures. Social barriers that led to a concentration of various ethnic minorities in this Chinatown will also require discourse.¹ This will shift the focus to a discussion which will describe the once vibrant multiethnic atmosphere of Salinas' Chinatown. With this research, I hope to demonstrate to others that Salinas' Chinatown possesses a significant part of our local history.

¹Rina Benmayor, "Contested Memories of Place: Representations of Salinas' Chinatown," *Oral History Review* 37, no. 2 (2010): 227-228.; Lori A. Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 57-60.

Literature Review

Contemporary scholarship on the history of Chinatowns in the U.S. outlines a structure of mistreatment. Built by Chinese immigrants, these ethnic enclaves were products of their ill treatment in America. Through an overview of the literature, Chinatowns are defined as small districts in the U.S. which consist of Chinese and non-Chinese populations. In *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change*, Jan I. Lin describes Chinatowns as urban locales or immigrant enclaves where unassimilated newcomers live a segregated life from the American mainstream.² Recently, scholars have revealed that Chinatowns were also safe spaces for other (non-Chinese) minorities. While its residents created a safe space to avoid America's hostile environment, the image of Chinatowns became tainted by derogatory public perceptions.

The history of Chinatowns in the United States first requires an understanding of Chinese exclusion. Becoming familiar with the ill treatment of Chinese immigrants in the late 19th century will provide context to why these safe spaces were formed. Social barriers including discrimination, racialization, and marginalization are present themes throughout the literature.

Early Chinese Immigration in the U.S.

Historical studies pinpoint the discovery of gold in California as the precursor to Chinese immigration of the 19th century. Historians Kenneth M. Holland and Samir Patel state that prior to the Gold Rush, Chinese populations in America were miniscule.³ Railroad construction, the California Gold Rush of 1848, and open trade relations between the U.S. and China attracted waves of Chinese immigrant laborers.⁴ The years between 1851 and 1860 witnessed an entry of

²Jan I. Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 1.

³Kenneth M. Holland, "A History of Chinese Immigration in the United States and Canada," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2007), 150; Samir S. Patel, "America's Chinatowns," *Archaeology* 67, no.3 (2015): 39, 41.

⁴Ibid.

more than 40,000 Chinese immigrants into the U.S.⁵ Early Chinese immigration is often connected with the exclusion laws rampant in the late 19th century. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 is marked as the first legislation that prohibited Chinese immigration into the U.S. Sociologist Jan I. Lin argues, however, that exclusion laws targeting Chinese immigrants were established as early as the 18th century with the Naturalization Act of 1790 (legislation that denied Chinese immigrants citizenship).⁶

Lin and Holland identify unfair job competition as one of the leading factors suspending the flow of Chinese immigrant laborers. Since the Gold Rush in 1848, white working Americans competed for wage labor with a large body of Chinese immigrants.⁷ Consequently, public sentiment in forms of discrimination, racism, and marginalization targeted the Chinese.⁸ Historical studies done by Sang Hea Kil clarify that these sentiments were manifested in media coverage. Discriminatory and stereotypical beliefs spread in the media and depicted Chinese immigrants as a threat to America.⁹ As a result, Chinese immigrants created safe spaces.¹⁰

Lin and Tan Chee-Beng reveal that Chinatowns were constructed from discrimination, racism, and the marginalization of Chinese immigrants.¹¹ Similarly, these systems of domination further affected Chinatowns through economic inequality, political conflict, and unfair government policies.¹² Barbara Berglund shows how Chinatowns not only served as a space for

⁵Holland, "A History of Chinese Immigration," 150.

⁶Jan I. Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown*, 26.

⁷ Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown*, 23; Holland, "A History of Chinese Immigration in the United States and Canada," 152.

⁸Patel, "America's Chinatowns," 39-40.

⁹Sang Hea Kil, "Fearing Yellow, Imagining White: Media Analysis of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882," *Social Identities* 18, no. 6 (2012), 666, 670.

¹⁰Patel, "America's Chinatowns," 39-40.

¹¹Lin, *Reconstructing Chinatown*, 23; Chee-Beng, "Chinatowns: A Reflection," in *Chinatowns around the World: Gilded Ghetto, Ethnopolis, and Cultural Diaspora*, Wong, Bernard P., and Chee-Beng Tan, (Boston: Brill, 2013), 263.

¹²Ibid.

comfortable congregation, they also provided access to institutions, goods, and services to marginalized Chinese communities.¹³ In essence, Chinatowns became spaces where Chinese communities survived America's hostile environment.¹⁴

The borders of Chinatowns, however, could not withstand negative public sentiment. Historical scholarship written on San Jose and San Francisco's Chinatowns illustrate views of white American towards these spaces. Berglund explains that perceptions of San Francisco's Chinatown was molded by racist tourist literature that reinforced Chinese stereotypes.¹⁵ Similarly, Los Angeles' Chinatowns were seen as places plagued by vice and moral decay. Lin states that these sentiments influenced urban development in Chinatown locations, thus further displacing the enclaves.¹⁶ In addition, Lum reveals how San Jose's Helenville Chinatown was labeled "Heinlein's Hell Hole" by derogatory public opinions.¹⁷

Past studies on Chinatowns contain assumptions that Chinatowns are ethnic enclaves consisting of only Chinese communities. Chiu Luk and Mai B. Phan contradict these assumptions. They prove that several non-Chinese groups have transitioned and resided in Chinatowns.¹⁸ The Chinatown of Salinas is one of several Chinatowns that experienced a multi-ethnic atmosphere. Rina Benmayor and Lori A. Flores identify the multi-ethnic residents of Salinas' Chinatown as: Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, African Americans, and Mexicans.¹⁹ Like other Chinatowns in America, Salinas' Chinatown was perceived as a malicious setting. The

¹³Barbara Berglund, "Chinatown's Tourist Terrain: Representation and Racialization in Nineteenth-century San Francisco." *American Studies* 46, no. 2 (2005), 5.

¹⁴Chee-Beng, "Chinatowns: A Reflection," 263, 281.

¹⁵Berglund, "Chinatown's Tourist Terrain," 5, 6, 9, 16-17.

¹⁶Jan I. Lin, "Los Angeles Chinatown: Tourism, gentrification, and the rise of an ethnic growth machine." *Amerasia Journal* 34, no. 3 (2008), 111.

¹⁷Lum, "Finding Home Again," 126.

¹⁸Chiu Luk, and Mai B. Phan, "Ethnic Enclave Reconfiguration: A 'new' Chinatown in the Making." *GeoJournal* 64, no. 1 (2005), 17-19.

¹⁹Benmayor, "Contested Memories," 227-228; Flores, "Racial Meeting Grounds," 57-62.

elites of Salinas frowned upon the multi-ethnic community of Chinatown. They portrayed it as a place where non-white residents indulged in exotic activities.²⁰ Beyond negative public perceptions, Flores states how a multicultural atmosphere remained present in this Chinatown. Although originally created to house Chinese laborers in the 19th century, in the following century Salinas' Chinatown transformed into a culturally diverse setting.²¹ Benmayor points out that businesses in this Chinatown were owned by different ethnic groups.²² These businesses drew a respectable crowd of other ethnic residents throughout Salinas, including soldiers stationed in Marina's then operating Fort Ord military base.²³ This level of activity and involvement sustained a multi-ethnic atmosphere in the Chinatown of Salinas.²⁴

It is evident that social barriers influenced the culture of American Chinatowns. However, Chinese tradition and American mistreatment should not be portrayed as the main contributors to Chinatown culture. It must be noted that other minority groups also influenced and crafted the cultural atmosphere of Chinatowns.

Theory

Discourse on Chinatowns is often explained through ethnic enclave theory and adaptation theory. Ethnic enclave theory explains immigration, and the emergence of enclaves in the U.S., while adaptation theory analyzes the established inhabitants of enclaves. Furthermore, other scholars modify the theoretical approaches of ethnic enclaves by applying them directly to Chinatowns.

²⁰Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh, "John Steinbeck on the Political Capacities of Everyday Folk: Moms, Reds, and Ma Joad's Revolt," *Polity* 36, no. 4 (2004), 601.

²¹Flores, "Racial Meeting Grounds," 61.

²²Benmayor, "Contested Memories," 229, 230, 232.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

Some scholars view ethnic enclaves as products of assimilation. Ethnic enclave theory outlines the patterns which bring immigrants to other societies, as well as their adaptation process into new societies. Robert D. Manning and Alejandro Portes argue that immigrants arrive as workers to alleviate labor shortages, as refugees, or as entrepreneurs.²⁵ Unfortunately, when adapting to the host society, they experience economic hardship, segregation, and discrimination.²⁶

Douglass Massey utilizes adaptation theory to explain that the survival of immigrants in a new society depends on immigrant networks. Massey explains that these networks are formed by enclaves with a high immigrant concentration. Moreover, migrant networks provide minorities with social capital they can use in host societies.²⁷ Similarly, Chinatowns in America provided marginalized communities with social capital in forms of familiar goods and services. These forms of social capital were necessary for Chinese communities to adapt and survive in American society.²⁸ Tan Chee-Beng expands on this theoretical approach when discussing enclaves like Chinatowns. Chee-Beng's theoretical model describes enclaves as an ideological construct, and self-sustaining communities.²⁹ Despite being created from harsh conditions and racial hostility, Chee-Beng's theoretical approach portrays Chinatowns as complex and highly organized enclaves (instead of ghettos).³⁰

²⁵Manning and Portes, "The Immigrant Enclave," 47.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Douglass S. Massey, "The Social & Economic Origins of Immigration," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 510, (1990), 60-72.

²⁸Berglund, "Chinatown's Tourist Terrain," 5.

²⁹Chee-Beng, "Chinatowns: A Reflection," 19.

³⁰Ibid.

Methodology

This research required the application of historical methods to gather and interpret sources. Archival research was the main method of data acquisition. The main forms of data acquired were primary sources such as oral histories, photographs, and self-published works. In addition, secondary sources were used as a point of reference.

After concluding the data search, the focus was to identify different and similar themes within the sources collected. The main intent was to provide a comparison between themes that emerged from the literature review, theory sections, and the findings. These themes included social barriers, ethnic enclaves, immigrant networks, safe space, and cultural expression. Aside from making these connections, the main purpose was to provide a brief cohesive analysis.

Findings: A History of Soledad Street's Chinatown

Introduction

The story of Salinas Chinatown lies recorded in scholarly work, memoirs, old newspapers, photographs, and to some extent in the memories of certain individuals. The results below will discuss the social barriers ethnic minorities encountered, the multi-cultural atmosphere of Salinas' Chinatown in the 20th century, and how this enclave was a safe space for many who were continually marginalized by American society.

Chinese Immigration and the First Chinatown

In 1852, over 20,000 Chinese immigrants arrived in America from overseas to San Francisco's ports.³¹ During this period, Chinese labor primarily centralized around California's

³¹Melissa Woodrow, "Chinatown: Oral Histories - Salinas, CA (PART 1)." Vimeo, July 4, 2010, video, 14:09, <https://vimeo.com/12102715>.

Gold Rush and railroad industries.³² As a result, the first and largest Chinatowns developed and became a home, a place to shop, work, and socialize for groups of Chinese immigrants.³³

Before the 1870's, the few Chinese residing in Salinas were laundrymen or cooks.³⁴ As the 19th century ended, Chinese transitioned to agricultural work. In *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region*, Sandy Lydon states that early Chinese inhabitants of the Salinas Valley mostly consisted of agricultural workers.³⁵ Lydon explains that Chinese labor transformed the Salinas Valley.³⁶ Between the 1870's and 1880's, Chinese Labor was used to clear and drain the swamps of Salinas to create fertile land for farming.³⁷

The first mention of the first Chinatown in Salinas appeared in 1874 in the *Salinas Index*, a local newspaper and precursor to the *Salinas Californian*.³⁸ The heading reads, "Serious Chinese Fight," and it recounts the events of a deadly brawl, "...that occurred in Chinatown between the Chinese."³⁹ (See Appendix 1: "Local Intelligence," for the full report from the *Salinas Index*.)

The cultural life of Salinas' first Chinatown began to flourish in the early 1880's.⁴⁰ The Chee Kong Tong, described by Lydon as the Chinese Freemasons, built the first Chinese temple in November of 1882.⁴¹ According to Lydon, Chinatown residents held celebrations at the temple every Sunday.⁴² The *Salinas Index* described the scene at Chinatown during one of these

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Sandy Lydon, *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region* (Capitola, CA: Capitola Book Company, 1985), 291.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Lydon, *Chinese Gold*, 287.

³⁷Woodrow, "Chinatown."

³⁸Lydon, *Chinese Gold*, 294.

³⁹Joe H. McDougall, "Local Intelligence." *Salinas City Index*, April 2, 1874, 3.

⁴⁰Lydon, *Chinese Gold*, 296.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

festivities.⁴³ The report declared that neighboring locals complained about, “...the ceaseless beatings of drums and gongs at the Chinese Joss House from early morning to late at night” during festivities held in December of 1882.⁴⁴

Despite some individuals' complaints, some whites still ventured into Chinatown once a year for a specific occasion, the Chinese Lunar New Year celebrations.⁴⁵ The Chinese of Salinas Chinatown held an open celebration where the community was able to partake in the celebrations.⁴⁶ Besides festivities, visitors could also find a variety of Chinese-owned businesses. These included merchant stores, barber shops, boarding houses, and most notably a restaurant operated by Ah Kit where one could find a variety of Chinese desserts and vegetables.⁴⁷ Places of worship such as temples were also erected by the Chinese. One article from the local newspaper describes a temple located in the central alley of Chinatown⁴⁸ (see Appendix 2: The Confucius Temple, for a full description of the temple). Lydon notes that this account is significant to Chinatown's history, because it demonstrates Chinese culture in extensive detail.

During the early night of June 13, 1893 a fire broke out in Chinatown.⁴⁹ In less than an hour, the flames had engulfed most of the structures, and by 10:00 p.m. the first Chinatown of Salinas was destroyed.⁵⁰ Within four days of the fire, Eugene Sherwood, co-founder of Salinas and owner of a great portion of land, leased a number of lots near Soledad Street to victims of the

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Lydon, *Chinese Gold*, 297.

⁴⁸Ibid, 287.

⁴⁹Ibid, 300.

⁵⁰Ibid.

fire.⁵¹ This marked the beginnings of Salinas' second Chinatown, or as it is known today, the Chinatown of Soledad Street.

The Chinatown of Soledad Street

Oral histories describe the Chinatown of Soledad street as a “once vibrant community with beautiful restaurants, gambling houses, & Chinese stores.”⁵² Chinatown was home to Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, African American, and Anglo communities.⁵³ It was a place for “family, friends, and culture.”⁵⁴ Audrey Boutte, an African American resident of Salinas, describes early Chinatown as the community’s Cannery Row.⁵⁵ Boutte further adds that Chinatown drew crowds from surrounding areas, and even servicemen from Monterey Bay’s then operational Fort Ord.⁵⁶ Cathy Chavez Miller, a Mexican American Salinas resident, states, “Chinatown looked like Old Town Salinas looks now, very vibrant. All of the buildings were being used as businesses.”⁵⁷ In its early years many Japanese and Chinese owned stores and businesses.⁵⁸ As the century transitioned and progressed, other immigrant groups (i.e. Filipinos and Mexicans) populated Chinatown and also became business owners.⁵⁹ Famed author of Salinas John Steinbeck also interacted with the early Chinatown of Soledad Street. He immortalized his memories of Chinatown in *East of Eden*, “where he described easterly breezes

⁵¹Ibid, 301.

⁵²Airion Ringor, “Filipino Experience in Salinas Chinatown.” Vimeo, January 25, 2016, video, 27:14, <https://vimeo.com/153044602>

⁵³Woodrow, “Chinatown.”

⁵⁴Seth Pollack, “A Neighborhood Forgotten.” Vimeo, 2013, video, 15:28, <https://vimeo.com/49033620>

⁵⁵Audrey Boutte and Agnes Tebo, personal interview by Sean Chase and Michael Silva, December 2009, HCOM 350S F09.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Cathy C. Miller, personal interview by Jessica Grijalva and Greg Tomascheski, October 2009, HCOM 350S F09.

⁵⁸“Introduction,” in *The Issei of the Salinas Valley: Japanese Pioneer Families*, ed. Mae Sakasegawa (n.p: Salinas Valley JACL Seniors, 2010), xii.

⁵⁹Benmayor, “Contested Memories,” 226, 228.

with ‘odors in from Chinatown, roasting pork & punk, and black tobacco, and gem shi’ and ‘the deep blating stroke of the great gong in the Joss House,’ whose tone hangs in the air.’⁶⁰

In *Salinas Chinatown Memories*, Wellington Lee describes the business district of Soledad Chinatown as “Chinatown International.”⁶¹ Lee writes, “I remember the Soledad St. Chinatown of the 1950’s and early 1960’s as a truly international district of cafes, bars, pool halls, and hotels operated mostly by Chinese, Filipinos, Mexicans, and African Americans” (see Appendix 3: “Chinatown International,” for images of businesses in Chinatown).⁶² Lee’s account captures how businesses were owned by various ethnic groups, but more importantly, it demonstrates Chinatown’s multi-ethnic atmosphere. Guillermo Olea, the first Mexican policeman stationed in Chinatown, recalls Leon’s Club.⁶³ Owned by a Filipino, “That club alone made a big draw of all kinds of people to Chinatown. His music was mostly Mexican style music and depends who the customers were at the time.”⁶⁴ (See Appendix 4: Leon’s Club, for a photograph of the club).

Perhaps one of the most iconic landmarks in Chinatown was the Republic Cafe.⁶⁵ Popular for its chop suey, several individuals share memories of this particular Chinese restaurant. Gerald Cheang, a Chinese American, asserts that the Republic Cafe served the best Chinese cuisine in town.⁶⁶ He further reveals, “The Japanese loved the food so much, they cut a hole in the fence behind the restaurant so they can go anytime!”⁶⁷ Gertrude Imperial, a Filipino woman who visited Chinatown as a child, recalls that when her family ate at the Republic Cafe,

⁶⁰Rignor, “Filipino Experience.”

⁶¹Wellington Lee, *Salinas Chinatown Memories* (self-pub., 2009), 34.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Benmayor, “Contested Memories,” 232.

⁶⁴Woodrow, “Chinatown.”

⁶⁵Benmayor, “Contested Memories,” 230.

⁶⁶Gerald Cheang, personal interview by Kaydi Barrus, October 2008, HCOM 350S F08.

⁶⁷Ibid.

“...the waitresses dressed so beautifully in the Chinese costume,” and that “...the Republic was a very good restaurant.”⁶⁸ (See Appendix 5: The Republic Cafe, for images of the Chinese restaurant). Mama’s, another Chinatown restaurant, was popular among the Filipinos for serving traditional Filipino food.⁶⁹ These, and more ethnic foods, could be found in Soledad Street’s Chinatown. Douglas Iwamoto, a member of Chinatown’s Japanese community, states “My parents used to make tofu. They would sell tofu [in Chinatown], and would pick up seaweed to make sushi and soups.”⁷⁰

In the early 50’s, Cathy C. Miller’s grandmother opened Mexican bar and restaurant El Faro on Soledad Street.⁷¹ Miller remembers most when her grandmother hired bands to play at the restaurant, because some sang Beatles music in Spanish!⁷² Whether there were bands or not, Miller clarifies that, “There was often time music. Whether there was mariachi music, or any kind of Mexican rock.”⁷³ El Faro even allowed its clients to indulge in African American music from artists such as James Brown, and the vocal quartet Four Tops.⁷⁴ (See Appendix 6: El Faro, for photographs of the bar and restaurant.)

Soledad Street’s Chinatown was not limited to restaurants, cafes, and bars. Social clubs were also present. Audrey Boutte’s father and other “African American men started a group called the Esquire Club [on Soledad St.]. It was a social club where African American men held parties.”⁷⁵ Boutte even recalls winning a dance contest hosted at the Esquire Club. She won for

⁶⁸Benmayor, “Contested Memories,” 230.

⁶⁹Rignor, “Filipino Experience.”

⁷⁰Melissa Woodrow, “Chinatown: Oral Histories - Salinas, CA (PART 2).” Vimeo, February 17, 2015, 42:18, <https://vimeo.com/61866614>

⁷¹Miller, interview.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Boutte and Tebo, interview.

her “mashed potatoes,”⁷⁶ a dance move popularized by James Brown in the late 50’s. Al Baguio, a Filipino gentleman, reveals the presence of another club. He states, “At the far end of Soledad Street, there was another social club that was patronized by a lot of Filipinos; where they would gather and speak in their own dialect.”⁷⁷ Baguio further states, “It [the social club] was something that they felt comfortable in. Where they didn’t have any outside social pressure, they could just be themselves.”⁷⁸ Gerald Cheang explains that Chinatown remained active in the early 60’s when he moved to Salinas.⁷⁹ Besides having dinner there, he also belonged to the Chinese American Citizens Alliance.⁸⁰

Chinatown in the 20th century was not only a place for family, friends, and culture. It was also a safe space where ethnic minorities could, to some extent, avoid the full aggression (i.e. racism, discrimination, and marginalization) of American society. However, the people of Chinatown were not fully shielded from social injustices. Wellington Lee recalls the forms of discrimination and racialization that Chinatown’s inhabitants encountered. He states, “In the 1920’s and 30’s it [Chinatown] was going strong. They were illegal [immigrant residents of Chinatown] and they had raids by the police; but it was a raid to appease the citizenries. Once they were raided and paid their fines, they were raided again.”⁸¹ Ray Villanueva explains that his Filipino father experienced prejudice and racism while working as a farmworker in the early 20th century.⁸² For these reasons, Villanueva states that Chinatown “...was the nucleus place for Filipinos; because some of their social ways of living wasn’t accepted by other people. So when

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Rignor, “Filipino Experience.”

⁷⁸Rignor, “Filipino Experience.”

⁷⁹Cheang, interview.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Woodrow, “Chinatown.”

⁸²Rignor, “Filipino Experience.”

you're among your own people, you feel more comfortable.”⁸³ Audrey Boutte further clarifies that Chinatown was a social center for many minorities since they “were not really accepted in some of the other social venues of Salinas.”⁸⁴ Similarly, Sandy and Fumiko Urabe, two Japanese women whose father owned a business in Chinatown, state, “It [Chinatown] was sort of a neutral zone back then, even though there was still a lot of racism.”⁸⁵ Cathy C. Miller notes that Chinatown was an area the Chinese needed to find in earlier centuries “...to build their community, because Salinas like other parts of the U.S. were very racist.”⁸⁶ Miller explains that ethnic minorities “...were looking for an area where they could be themselves, with some dignity.”⁸⁷

Despite the injustices they faced, many felt a sense of safety, security, and community in Chinatown. Grace Encallado, a Filipino woman who frequented Chinatown, states, “There was so many businesses in Chinatown, that we knew people that owned them. We’d go there and nobody would ever bother us. We were safe.”⁸⁸ Moreover, Al Baguio and Audrey Boutte remember Chinatown as a good place to grow up in.⁸⁹ Boutte mentions that she particularly enjoyed the multicultural experience.⁹⁰ Similarly, Cathy C. Miller states that Chinatown was “...a vibrant place. I thought I had lots of Filipino & Chinese uncles and aunties.”⁹¹ Miller further expands on the sense of community when she states that Chinatown was a place where

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Boutte and Tebo, interview.

⁸⁵Woodrow, “Chinatown-(PART 2).”

⁸⁶Miller, interview.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Rignor, “Filipino Experience.”

⁸⁹Ibid; Boutte and Tebo, interview.

⁹⁰Boutte and Tebo, interview.

⁹¹Miller, interview.

people understood what it meant to be an immigrant.”⁹² (See Appendix 7: Soledad Street’s Chinatown, for images of Chinatown throughout the 20th century).

The historic Chinatown of Soledad Street that was once home to Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Mexican, African American, and Anglo-American communities became gradually abandoned after the 1950’s.⁹³ As Chinatown’s residents were moved elsewhere, the once vibrant Chinatown converted into a haven for the homeless.⁹⁴

Conclusion & Recommendations

The 20th century witnessed the birth and development of one of the most significant multicultural settings in Salinas. While memories and experiences remain contested, Chinatown served several purposes for several individuals. Seen as a safe space or a home to some, the communities of Chinatown constructed one of the most beautiful multi-cultural atmospheres. In addition to creating a culturally diverse enclave, Chinatown’s communities formed immigrant networks. As mentioned in the theory section, newcomers to the U.S. faced economic hardship, segregation, and discrimination, among other social barriers. The creation of immigrant networks, such as those found in Chinatown, facilitated the process of adapting to the U.S. for incoming immigrants.

As mentioned before, the Chinatown of Salinas possesses a significant part of our local history. Chinatown is one of the few settings in Salinas that witnessed the integration of different ethnic groups in the 20th century. It is crucial that we preserve the history of Salinas Chinatown, because it shows the roots of the multicultural, rich community Salinas has become.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Benmayor, “Contested Memories,” 227.

⁹⁴Ibid.

Bibliography

- Benmayor, Rina. "Contested Memories of Place: Representations of Salinas' Chinatown." *Oral History Review* 37, no. 2 (2010): 225-34.
- Berglund, Barbara. "Chinatown's Tourist Terrain: Representation and Racialization in Nineteenth-century San Francisco." *American Studies* 46, no. 2 (2005): 5-36.
- Boutte, Audrey and Tebo, Agnes, personal interview by Sean Chase and Michael Silva, December 2009. CSUMB Oral History and Community Memory Archive (HCOM 350S F09).
- Cheang, Gerald, personal interview by Kaydi Barrus, October 2008. CSUMB Oral History and Community Memory Archive (HCOM 350S F08).
- Chee-Beng, Tan. "Chinatowns: A Reflection." In *Chinatowns around the World: Gilded Ghetto, Ethnopolis, and Cultural Diaspora*, Wong, Bernard P., and Chee-Beng Tan, Boston: Brill, 2013, 263-83.
- Flores, Lori A. *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement*. Yale University Press, 2016, 39-74.
- Holland, Kenneth M. "A History of Chinese Immigration in the United States and Canada." *American Review of Canadian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2007): 150-60.
- "Introduction." In *The Issei of the Salinas Valley: Japanese Pioneer Families*, edited by Mae Sakasegawa, xii. n.p: Salinas Valley JACL Seniors, 2010.
- Kil, Sang Hea. "Fearing Yellow, Imagining White: Media Analysis of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882." *Social Identities* 18, no. 6 (November 2012): 663-77.
- Lee, Wellington. *Salinas Chinatown Memories*. 34. Self-published, 2009.
- Lin, Jan I. *Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change*. Globalization and Community; v. 2. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: (1998), 23-56.
- Lin, Jan I. "Los Angeles Chinatown: Tourism, Gentrification, and the Rise of an Ethnic Growth Machine." *Amerasia Journal* 34, no. 3 (2008): 110-125.
- Luk, Chiu, and M. Phan. "Ethnic Enclave Reconfiguration: A 'new' Chinatown in the Making." *GeoJournal* 64, no. 1 (2005): 17-30.
- Lum, Rodney M. "Finding Home Again: The Story of the Chinese Historical and Cultural Project (CHCP) and its Efforts to Reclaim the Forgotten Historic Chinatowns of San Jose, California." *Chinese America: History and Perspectives* (2007): 125-129.

- Lydon, Sandy. *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region*. 283-303. Capitola Book Company, 1985.
- Manning, Robert D. & Portes, Alejandro "The Immigrant Enclave: Theory and Empirical Examples." In Susan Olzak and Joane Nagel, eds., *Competitive Ethnic Relations*. Orlando: Academic Press, 1986, 47-68.
- Marcus, Kenneth H., and Yong Chen. "Inside and Outside Chinatown: Chinese Elites in Exclusion Era California." *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no. 3 (2011): 369-400.
- Massey, Douglas S. "The Social and Economic Origins of Immigration." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 510 (1990): 60-72.
www.jstor.org/stable/1046794.
- McDougall, Joe H. "Local Intelligence." *Salinas City Index*, Vol.3, April 2, 1874.
- Miller, Cathy C., personal interview by Jessica Grijalva and Greg Tomascheski, October 2009. CSUMB Oral History and Community Memory Archive (HCOM 350S F09).
- Patel, Samir S. "America's Chinatowns." *Archaeology* 67, no. 3 (2014): 38-43.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24364060>.
- Pollack, Seth. "A Neighborhood Forgotten." Vimeo, 2013. <https://vimeo.com/49033620>
- Ringor, Airrion. "Filipino Experience in Salinas Chinatown." Vimeo, January 25, 2016.
<https://vimeo.com/153044602>
- Woodrow, Melissa. "Chinatown: Oral Histories - Salinas, CA (PART 1)." Vimeo, July 4, 2010.
<https://vimeo.com/12102715>.
- Woodrow, Melissa. "Chinatown: Oral Histories - Salinas, CA (PART 2)." Vimeo, February 17, 2015. <https://vimeo.com/61866614>
- Yip, Christopher L. "California Chinatowns: Built Environments Expressing the Hybridized Culture of Chinese Americans." In *Hybrid Urbanism: On the Identity Discourse and the Built Environment*, edited by Nezar Al Sayyad, 67-89. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001.
- Zirakzadeh, Cyrus Ernesto. "John Steinbeck on the Political Capacities of Everyday Folk: Moms, Reds, and Ma Joad's Revolt." *Polity* 36, no. 4 (2004): 595-618.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3235404>.

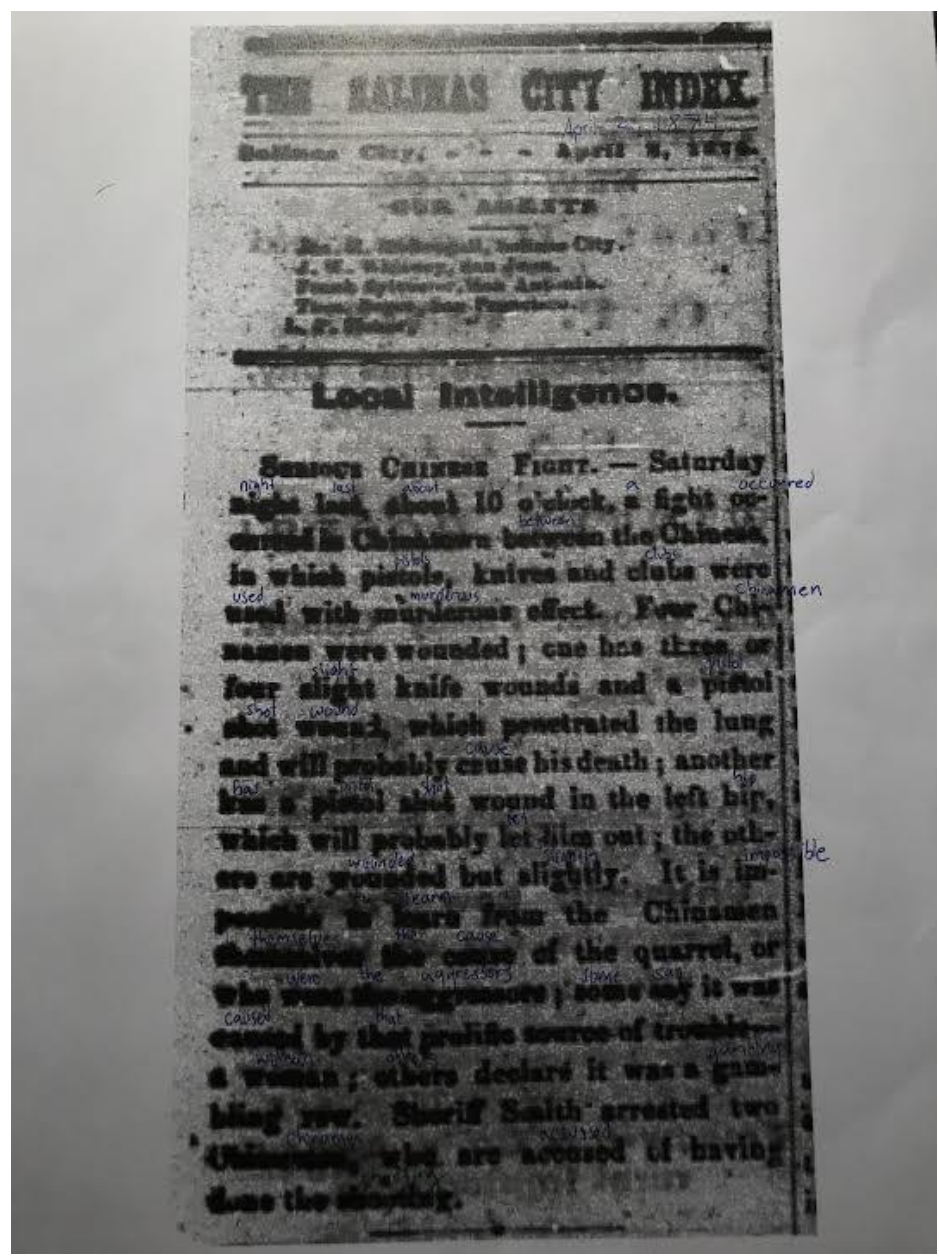
Appendices

The purpose of this section is to provide further reference and visual material from the findings of this research. The following appendices are included: Appendix 1: “Local Intelligence”; Appendix 2: The Confucius Temple; Appendix 3: “Chinatown International”; Appendix 4: Leon’s Club; Appendix 5: The Republic Cafe; Appendix 6: El Faro; and Appendix 7: Soledad Street’s Chinatown.

Appendix 1

“Local Intelligence”

The full report by John H. McDougall from the *Salinas City Index* which dates back to April 2, 1874. This column was retrieved from the microfilms located at John Steinbeck Library in Salinas, CA.



Appendix 2

The Confucius Temple

Below is the description of the Confucius Temple from the first Chinatown which captivates Chinese culture in extensive detail. The original document from which this excerpt derives from is the *Salinas Democrat*, and dates back to February 14, 1891. However, the excerpt included in this capstone is found in the chapter “The Chinatowns,” from Sandy Lydon’s *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region*.

Here Confucius lies enthroned in regal splendor. He is surrounded by a large and beautiful frame of wood, curiously carved... Two brazen lions at the foot of the frame guard their kindly charge. In front of this god is a large stand holding five large vases. The front of the stand bears a wealth of carving, protected by a glass cover and strong wire screen. The carvings are illustrations of great men, like Washington, Foo explained, and also scenes in Chinese life, while the center is occupied by an illustration, showing Confucius dispensing justice. Here the faithful come and pray and make their offering of food and also money which is symbolized by the burning of a certain kind of paper. After each prayer the God is given a napkin in the shape of paper, as proper and necessary in connection with the food they gave him.

Appendix 3

“Chinatown International”

The images below are retrieved from *The Issei of the Salinas Valley: Japanese Pioneer Families*, and two oral history videos: “Filipino Experience in Salinas Chinatown,” and “A Neighborhood Forgotten.” Not only do they show the many businesses of Chinatown, they also capture the presence of various ethnic communities.

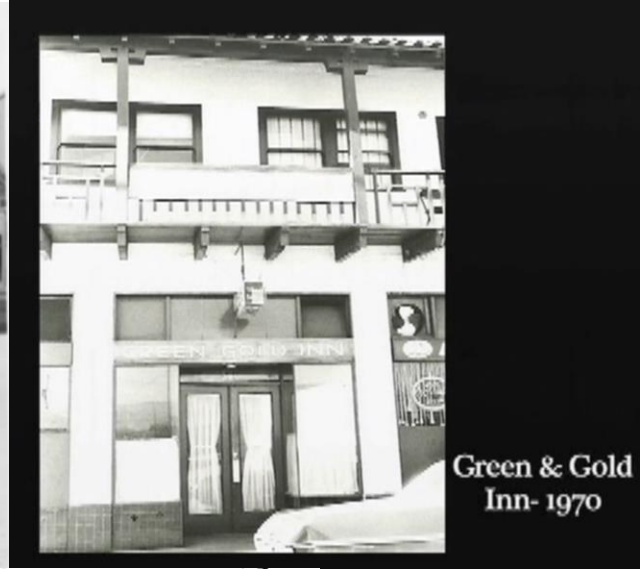
| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>LAKE STREET</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Japanese Association (upstairs) 2. Dr. J.Y. Nakahara (upstairs) 3. Dr. Heishi Takao (upstairs) 4. Chikara Iwamoto Shoe Repair 5. Lake Hotel – John Urabe (upstairs) 6. Pool Hall 7. Watanabe Restaurant 8. Taka Urabe residence 9. Lake Barber Shop – Lloyd Urabe 10. S&O Grocery – Tar Shirachi & George Okamoto 11. Fuji Drugs – Lincoln Tokunaga 12. Ryusuke Tazumi Dry Goods Store 13. John Kanemura Pool Hall & Fountain 14. Kikuo Endo & John Nakamura Drug Store 15. Masato Fujino Grocery Store 16. Tomezo Onitsuka Grocery & Dry Goods 17. Yuen Ton Law Chinese Restaurant 18. Tom Kazaoka Pool Hall & Fountain 19. Dr. Ito (upstairs) 20. John Noguchi Appliance, Radio & Magazines 21. Alice Hirabayashi Beauty Shop 22. Isami Hirabayashi Fish Market 23. Nizo Imai Bath House 24. F.J. Jimura Photo Studio 25. Aki Toya Tofu, Senbei & Confections 26. G. Horibe Barber Shop 27. Toya Garage 28. Sumo Dojo (back of store) 29. Asahi Insurance 30. OK Garage – Arthur Yamada 31. Honji Nagasaki Pool Hall | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 32. Chinese Suey Sing Assn. (upstairs) 33. Kotaro Fukuda Barber Shop 34. N.B. Calvina Dry Cleaners 35. Filipino Mission 36. M. Gyotoku Boarding House <p>CALIFORNIA STREET</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 37. George Ono Gas Station 38. Buddhist Temple 39. California Hotel 40. Chinese Confucius School 41. Kumataro Osugi Garage 42. Filipino Mission 43. John Urabe Courts 44. Ord Hotel <p>SOLEDAD STREET</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 45. Moises Ponce Barber 46. Kakuzo Endo businesses 47. Takahashi Nanking Restaurant 48. Sunset Chinese Merchants 49. Club House 50. Hop Ling Chinese Store 51. Wing Sang Produce 52. Padilla Restaurant 53. Yosekichi Kita Billiards 54. Bo Hang Chinese Restaurant 55. Marchesan Tailor 56. Washington Shoe Repair 57. NRA Café 58. New International Café 59. Canton Low Restaurant 60. Deguchi-Yamamoto Café 61. New England Cigar 62. Hang Yick Chinese Merchandise 63. Ahtye Shell Station 64. Chinese Joss House 65. Medina Restaurant 66. Mexico City Hotel 67. King Tong Company | <p>SOLEDAD STREET (continued)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 68. Chinese Merchandise & Herbs 69. Hop Yick Merchandise 70. Yee Employment Agency 71. Kondo Dry Cleaners 72. Callado Men's Merchandise 73. Kerling Tailor 74. Yee American Meat Market 75. Mishima Lucky Star Cleaners 76. Sato Center Café 77. Sakuzo Inagi Candies & Soda Fountain 78. Shiba Tokyo Low Restaurant 79. Saba's Restaurant 80. Philippine Trading Company 81. Quon Fung Chinese Merchandise 82. Costello Restaurant 83. Lotus Inn 84. Jalisco Café 85. Tamargo Restaurant 86. Peterson Shoeshine 87. Matsushita Restaurant 88. Silver Moon Bar 89. Kawanabe Pool Hall 90. Magistrada Barber 91. King Lung Chinese Merchandise 92. New Canton Company 93. Republic Restaurant & Hotel 94. Ahtye Gambling House <p>MARKET STREET</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 95. Fukumura Dry Goods 96. Toyoshima Barber & Cyclery 97. Komura Restaurant 98. Matsumura Togo Laundry 99. Pool Hall 100. Yuki Fish Market 101. Ohta Grocery | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 102. Terao Café 103. Barber Shop 104. Pool Hall (in back) 105. Yamashita Flying A Gas Station 106. Takejiro Shimotsuka Grocery 107. Takejiro Department Store 108. Philippino Community Center 109. Yokoyama Market Dry Cleaners 110. Dr. Pepper Bottling Company 111. Buckaroo Club 112. A.J. Stasinaki Restaurant 113. Jikichi Iwashige Toggery & Shoes 114. Rodeo Drug Store 115. Sausal Market 116. Plaza Hotel 117. Yohei Masatani Clothing 118. Futamase Pool Hall 119. Futamase Barber Shop 120. Takeshita Optometry 121. Takeshita Beauty Shop 122. Takeshita Tailor & Insurance 123. American Meat Market 124. Dr. Sasaki (upstairs) 125. Dr. Murakami (upstairs) 126. Dr. Harry Kita (upstairs) 127. Dr. Kyoichi Iwasa (upstairs) 128. Yagi-Sapako Cash & Carry 129. Nakamura Drug Store 130. Sugawara NY Life Insurance (upstairs) 131. Shintaku Grocery 132. Barber Shop 133. Wings Café <p>MAIN STREET</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 134. Kobayashi Gift Shop |
|---|--|---|--|

xii

From the introduction of *The Issei of the Salinas Valley*, this list includes the shops, restaurants, places of worship, etc., found on the streets of Chinatown and others nearby.



The pool halls and pool players of Chinatown. These photographs were compiled from the oral history video, "Filipino Experience in Salinas Chinatown."



Also gathered from “Filipino Experience in Salinas Chinatown,” these images show the business district of Chinatown. Businesses such as the Market Dry Cleaners, Depot Cash Groceries (upper left image), the Green & Gold inn (upper right), the Lotus Inn, and in the distance the Republic Cafe sign (below).

Appendix 4

Leon's Club

The image below shows the Leon's Club described by former policeman Guillermo Olea in "Chinatown: Oral Histories - Salinas, CA (PART 1)." Olea explained that the club attracted large crowds of people, and that its Filipino owner played music depending on the clients. One can only ponder how the owner catered music to all the different ethnic groups who frequented his club.



Appendix 5

The Republic Cafe

These photographs are of the popular Republic Cafe, the Chinese restaurant famous for its chop suey and favored by many. These images were gathered from the oral history video, “Filipino Experience in Salinas Chinatown.”



Left: A neon light sign reading, “Chop Suey” from the iconic Republic Cafe.
Right: Waitresses inside the cafe.



Above: Well-dressed clients enjoying a meal at the Republic Cafe.

Appendix 6

El Faro

Images of El Faro from the latter half of the 20th century found in “Chinatown: Oral Histories - Salinas, CA (PART 1).” This bar and restaurant was opened by Cathy C. Miller’s grandmother, and it indulged in significant cultural expression.



Left: Two women emerging from the entrance to the bar and restaurant.
Right: What appears to be a joyful celebration occurring inside El Faro.

Appendix 7

Soledad Street's Chinatown

These last images are retrieved from oral history videos “Chinatown: Oral Histories - Salinas, CA (PART 1),” and “Filipino Experience in Salinas Chinatown.” They illustrate Chinatown during the 20th century, and also capture a beautiful moment.



These three images gathered from “Chinatown: Oral Histories - Salinas, CA (PART 1),” show a progression of Chinatown from 1940 to 1950.



This photo captures a crowd gathered for an unknown spectacle on one of the streets that make up Chinatown. Most importantly, the image captures the ethnic community happily and peacefully congregating.