

## ANTI-CHINESE RIOTS IN WASHINGTON

The first Chinaman to reach and remain upon the Pacific Coast was Chum Wing in 1847, a California gold seeker.<sup>1</sup> Gold mining and railroad building were the chief avenues of the Chinese approach to the Pacific Coast, but they early branched out into other lines of labor such as household service and laundry work.<sup>2</sup> Shortly after their arrival a spirit of hostility to the yellow men developed especially among the white laboring men based primarily on the economic status of the Mongolian, though other elements enter into the opposition. Without question one important element was race prejudice.

In Washington we find the Territorial Legislature placed a tax of \$24 per year on each Chinaman as early as January 1864. In 1866 the tax was reduced to \$16 per head. Without question this was an attempt to discourage the coming of the Mongolians to the Territory but as such it was a failure. Large numbers of the Chinese continued to arrive, making a total of 3,276 in the census of the Territory for 1885.<sup>3</sup>

The coming of the Northern Pacific Railroad into Tacoma brought the yellow men with it. By the time of the riots in the fall of 1885 it is estimated that there were around 700 in Tacoma and something over 1,000 in Pierce County.<sup>4</sup> While opposition existed at an early date, it did not reach serious proportions until the early eighties. Due to financial distress of the period, there was considerable unemployment and consequently very much unrest among the white laboring men of the Northwest. Upon the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, a number of men were thrown out of employment. Large numbers of these men drifted southward to the towns and cities on the Sound, thus increasing the number of unemployed whites and adding to the agitation against the Mongolians. It was felt among certain classes that the recent Chinese Exclusion Act was not as strictly enforced by our Government as it should have been and the hostility to the Chinese was one expression of this feeling.

There was no outbreak or violence used against the Chinese until early in the fall of 1885. But during the two or three years

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1 Hunt, *History of Tacoma*, I, p. 356.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Snowden, *History of Washington*, IV, p. 319.

4 Hunt, *History of Tacoma*, I, p. 357.

previous to this time hostility to the Orientals increased at a very rapid rate. The "Chinese Question" was discussed in numerous meetings of all kinds and of all classes. Large parades and demonstrations were held in Seattle and Tacoma while lesser ones took place in the smaller cities and towns. Labor was definitely hostile to the Chinese remaining on the Coast and the financial conditions of the times urged them to action. The Northwest was not alone in this unfriendly spirit to the strangers within their midst. Conditions in parts of California, Colorado and various points west of the Mississippi where the Chinese had located parallel to quite an extent the situation in Washington Territory. This was a situation too good for the radicals and agitators to overlook as the events of late 1885 and early 1886 will prove.

On September 4, 1885, the coal miners of Rock Springs, Wyoming, drove five hundred Chinese out of the coal mines, killing<sup>5</sup> eleven of them. September 7th five white men and two Indians attacked a camp of thirty-five Chinese at the hop yard of the Wold Brothers in Squak, or Issaquah, Valley. They fired into the tents, killing three Chinamen and wounding three others. The remainder of the group escaped to the shelter of the woods for the remainder of the night. Next day they left the valley. This was but three days after the tragedy in Wyoming and probably was inspired by that event. Public sentiment against the yellow race was such that though these men were arrested and tried for murder, they could not be convicted.<sup>6</sup>

The Rock Springs, Wyoming, outrage intensified the situation in the coal mines of Washington Territory. On the night of September 11th the Chinese coal miners at Coal Creek were raided by a small band of masked men, ten or fifteen in number. While there was no loss of life in this incident, one Chinaman was assaulted and the Chinese quarters and clothing were burned.<sup>7</sup> Guns were fired to frighten them and they were told to leave the country. On September 19th the white miners drove the Chinese out of Black Diamond, injuring nine men. Through the towns and villages north of the Columbia and west of the Cascades, public meetings were held to discuss the Chinese situation and applaud the violence perpetrated on the Orientals without due regard to the laws of the land or the treaty rights of the attacked. The Chinese thus driven out elsewhere began flocking through the port cities, adding to the difficulties brew-

5 Bagley, *History of Seattle*, II, p. 457.

6 Kinnear, *Anti-Chinese Riots in Seattle*, p. 3.

7 Snowden, *History of Washington*, IV, pp. 520-521.

ing in those cities. Already numbers of them had left by train and by boat for British Columbia and San Francisco.

It would seem that at least a fair majority of the people of the Pacific Northwest were united on the proposition that the Mongolians should leave their section of the country. This group includes quite a number of influential and prominent men as well as officials of certain cities and counties. No doubt the method for accomplishing this end was a real live issue with the agitators and radicals advocating force, where no other means than peaceful persuasion were advocated.

The radical element desired immediate action and were disposed to get this by any method available, lawful or otherwise. This group met in Seattle at the so called "Anti-Chinese Congress" on September 28th. The Mayor of Tacoma presided over this meeting. Delegates from all directions were in attendance. All the labor organizations and several fraternal orders were well represented. "Every socialist and anarchist who could walk or steal a ride was a self-elected but none the less welcome delegate. Long-haired men and short-haired women were noticeable by their numbers and their noise."<sup>8</sup> This body, after hearing a number of speeches, put forth a series of resolutions on the Chinese situation and proclaimed that the Chinese must leave Western Washington by November 1st 1885. It condemned the employment of the Chinese in households and factories. They planned that "ouster Committees" should be selected in mass meetings in Tacoma and Seattle to notify the Chinese of these cities that they were to leave by the date set. These committees were to be fifteen in number in each case.

In Tacoma the sentiment against the Orientals was quite strong. The lawless element had the advantage of the support of the Mayor of the City and a "laissez faire" attitude on the part of the officials of Pierce County. The Sheriff of Pierce County believed and so expressed himself to Governor Squire that there would be no lawlessness or violence perpetrated on the Chinese in Tacoma. By this it can be inferred that he did not consider unlawful what the Anti-Chinese Congress proposed to do. On the night of October third, after a torch light procession, a mass meeting was held where the Tacoma "committee of fifteen" was selected. On November third, in spite of the Pierce County Sheriff's assurance to Governor Squire that law and order would<sup>9</sup> be preserved, Tacoma citizens numbering

<sup>8</sup> Hunt, *History of Tacoma*, I, p. 365. Bagley, *History of Seattle*, II, p. 458.

<sup>9</sup> Snowden, *History of Washington*, IV, pp. 326-7. Kinnear, *Anti-Chinese Riots in Seattle*, p. 5.

about three hundred went to the Chinese quarters and demanded that the Orientals leave the city and began routing them out of the quarters. Wagons were brought and Chinese goods together with some sick and aged were loaded into the wagons. It is claimed that no violence was used on any of the Chinese, that the latter did what they were told, but numbers of the Tacoma citizens were armed with clubs. The weather was cold and rainy. Regardless of this the Chinese, some carrying large bundles of belongings on their backs, were marched to a place south of town on the prairie. Here the goods were dumped from the wagons and the evicted foreigners were left all night to find what shelter they could from the rain and cold. From here they eventually found their way to Portland, Oregon, by rail. On the fourth and sixth the buildings and stores of the Chinese standing on the Northern Pacific right of way were burned. The removal of the Orientals from Tacoma has been called by sponsors of the movement "peaceable expulsion." Following this action in Tacoma "peaceable expulsions" were continued in the smaller towns of Pierce, King, Kitsap, Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties.<sup>10</sup>

Unknown to the "Committee of Fifteen" some dissatisfied men had formed a "Committee of Nine." Each one of the nine members of this committee formed a secret circle of nine men and these, in turn, formed circles of nine on an endless chain plan. Oaths were taken and secrecy maintained. The circles did not meet and none of the circle knew who the other members of his circle were but knew only the leader. The organization was extensive but the exact extent of the membership never became known.

The "Committee of Fifteen" had notified the Chinese to leave Tacoma by November first as instructed by the "Anti-Chinese Congress" in October. Apparently this warning was not taken seriously by the foreigners. On the night of November second this committee met at the Tacoma Hotel and after long discussion concluded to send another warning to the Orientals. The "Committee of Nine" was also in session that night and decided on immediate action. Each member notified the men of his circle that night to be prepared at the sound of a given signal next morning. It was in reality this "Committee of Nine" that is responsible for the moving of the Chinese from Tacoma instead of the "Committee of Fifteen."<sup>11</sup>

During the last three months Governor Squire had been in cor-

<sup>10</sup> Snowden, IV, p. 328.

<sup>11</sup> Hunt, I, pp. 372-4.

respondence with the Chinese Consul at San Francisco, with Washington, D.C., and with the Sheriffs of King and Pierce Counties. On November fourth Governor Squire issued a proclamation of warning against riot, breach of the peace, or inciting others to riot, and appealed to all good citizens "to array yourselves on the side of the law. If you do not protect yourselves, you have only to look to the step beyond; which is, simply, the fate of Wyoming and the speedy interference of the United States Troops."<sup>12</sup>

During October a large parade and demonstration took place in Seattle followed by a mass meeting where the Seattle "Committee of Fifteen" were named. The situation in the City became more serious and on November 6th Governor Squire called for United States troops for the protection of the Chinese in the city. These arrived under the command of General John Gibbon from Fort Vancouver on the 8th, remaining in the city until the 17th.<sup>13</sup> This served to make the agitators and radicals more wary of their actions and to warn them that the government intended to enforce the laws and preserve order. The fact that a number of prominent influential men of the City were opposed to intimidation of the Orientals and forceful expulsion and that the Sheriff of King County, John H. McGraw, was determined to do his duty and had greatly increased his force of deputies created a situation entirely different from the situation in Tacoma.

During the month of November the Seattle "Committee of Fifteen" were placed on trial in Judge Roger S. Greene's court with C. H. Hanford as the United States Attorney for the prosecution under the Civil Rights Act. The trial lasted until the middle of January, 1886, but they could not be convicted. But this trial helped to keep the City quiet during this period though the Anti-Chinese faction were not satisfied<sup>14</sup>

Early in February a meeting of the radicals in South Seattle was held in the Bijou Theatre in which the "Committee of Fifteen" was instructed to inspect Chinatown for violations of the sanitary laws of the city. The Chief of Police was present with the committee when the inspection was made, the real purpose of which was the expulsion of the Orientals. The steamer, *Queen of the Pacific*, was in the harbor due to sail for San Francisco on the afternoon of February 7th. The radicals planned to put the Chinese on this boat by

12 Snowden, *History of Washington*, IV, p. 329.

13 Bagley, *History of Seattle*, II, p. 466.

14 Kinnear, *Anti-Chinese Riots*, pp. 4-6.

force.<sup>15</sup> Before they could be stopped by the Sheriff's forces and one company of the militia called for the occasion, between three and four hundred Chinese had been marched by the radicals to the dock for the forced embarkment. Captain Alexander of the *Queen* refused to allow any Chinese aboard his ship unless the fare was paid. Eventually about one hundred were sent aboard after a collection among the crowd had been taken to pay the fare. Governor Squire, who was in Seattle at the time, issued a proclamation ordering the people to desist from lawlessness and acts of violence, but the City was in control of the mob aided and encouraged by Acting Chief-of-Police, Murphy.<sup>16</sup> The officers of the law under Sheriff McGraw now had the Home Guards, numbering eighty men, one company of militia, the Seattle Rifles, and the University Cadets at their command. Also the fire department under Chief Gardner Kellogg was on constant duty and watch to prevent fire and do what they could to protect the property of the City. The Seattle Police force was in sympathy with the mob and was non-effective as a law enforcement body.<sup>17</sup> To reenforce these forces of the law Governor Squire called for Federal troops.

During the night of the 7th the mob were on guard at the dock containing the Chinese, but about midnight they attempted to put some of the Orientals on the train. The Home Guards took advantage of their absence to gain control of the dock with the Chinese which they held with the aid of the Seattle Rifles and the University Cadets throughout the remainder of the disturbance.

Early the morning of the 8th the leading agitators and leaders of the mob were arrested and locked in jail. At eight o'clock the Chinese were marched to Judge Greene's court where they were told of their rights under the laws of the land and were asked, if they wished to leave the City. All but fifteen wished to leave. They were all taken back to the dock under guard for protection. By this time the leaders of the mob were out of the jail on bail.

After the *Queen* left it was determined to return the remaining Chinese back to Chinatown to await the next steamer to California. This proved to be a dangerous and difficult order to carry out as the mob had been constantly increasing in numbers and in boldness. It was impossible to inform the radicals that most of the Mongolians were to leave on the next boat in a few days and the march of the foreigners through the streets was misunderstood by the anti-Chi-

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Bagley, *History of Seattle*, II, p. 467. Kinnear, *Anti-Chinese Riots*, p. 7.

nese forces. In addition to those living in Seattle, radicals and anti-Chinese sympathisers had collected from all parts of the Northwest to see the Chinese sent out of Seattle and were taking part in the actions of the mob.

The Chinese were formed in column with their belongings. The Home Guards were placed in front, the University Cadets and the Seattle Rifles in the rear with the Orientals in between the two groups of guards. The march began up Main Street with Sheriff McGraw at the head. The lawless group gathered on the streets in large numbers and at the intersection of Commercial Street (First Avenue) and Main Street succeeded in blocking the progress of the marchers. Several men attempted to seize the guns from the hands of the Home Guards. Several of the guns were discharged wounding five men, one of whom died the next day. Shots were fired by the mob but none of the Chinese or guards were injured, although one shot passed through Sheriff McGraw's coat.<sup>18</sup>

Amid the confusion, shouting and excitement of the mob, who were taken completely by surprise in finding the guns loaded, a square of the guards was formed about the foreigners, who by this time were very badly frightened. The guards stood in this formation for about an hour unable to proceed through the mob, awaiting the arrival of Company D from the courthouse. The militia appeared from the north under the command of Captain John C. Haines and opened the ranks of the rioters. The Chinese were then returned to their former quarters in Chinatown without further incidents. The city still seemed to be in the hands of the mob as up to that time the forces organized for law and order seemed too small in numbers to effect the control of the entire city.

Early in the afternoon of the 8th, or on the day of the mob attack, Governor Squire declared the City to be under martial law, thus suspending the courts and all civil law enforcement bodies. The saloons were ordered to be closed, all business houses were to be closed between the hours of 7 P.M. and 6 A.M. All persons found on the streets without the written consent of the Provost Marshall between the hours of 7 P.M. and 5 A.M.<sup>19</sup> were to be arrested. Volunteers were called for military duty and were enlisted. President Cleveland confirmed Governor Squire's proclamation the next day<sup>20</sup> and ordered Federal troops to be sent from Fort Vancouver. Major A. Alden was appointed Provost Marshal. The 14th

18 Kinnear, *Anti-Chinese Riots*, p. 8.

19 Snowden, *History of Washington*, IV, p. 343.

20 Kinnear, *Anti-Chinese Riots*, pp. 9-10.

Infantry under the command of Colonel de Russey arrived on the 10th to the great relief of the local organizations, who had been on constant duty for three days and nights without sleep. Guards from these volunteer groups had been placed in all important places in the city from the 8th to the 10th.

Seattle remained under martial law until February 22nd, a period of two weeks. The radicals from outside quickly left the city and those from within became quiet. During this period the police force was put under the control of the Provost Marshal and additional men added to the force. Others including Chief Murphy were dismissed from the force. The next step was the recruiting of the various military volunteer units up to full strength, one hundred men per company. On the site of an old skating rink on Second Avenue these companies were drilled into excellent shape for service.<sup>21</sup>

The steamer *Queen* on the 7th took away nearly two hundred of the Chinese; the steamer *George W. Elder* took one hundred and ten on the 14th. About fifty could not be taken. "These gradually departed by train and steamer until but a handful remained."<sup>22</sup> Thus the Orientals for a time left the Territory of Washington, largely under compulsion and at the hands of lawless men bent on accomplishing this end regardless of treaty rights of the Chinese or the laws of the land under which they lived, while officials, who should have been enforcing law and order, either openly aided the mob or refused to interfere or suppress the rioters. Credit is due the small band of earnest citizens of Seattle, who were determined to grant justice to the strangers of foreign race and blood within their city, regardless of the cost. One wonders what the outcome would have been just three years later than these events, when the Territory of Washington applied for admission to the Union, if Seattle citizens had not taken a decided stand for law and order.

The local military forces were as follows:<sup>23</sup>

*University Cadets*

Organized February 22, 1884.  
Charles A. Kinnear, Captain  
E. T. Powell, First Lieutenant  
T. R. Berry, Second Lieutenant

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<sup>21</sup> Kinnear, *Anti-Chinese Riots*, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> Bagley, *History of Seattle*, II, p. 476.

<sup>23</sup> Bagley, *History of Seattle*, II, pp. 433-5.



*Seattle Rifles*

Organized May, 1884.  
 Joseph Green, Captain  
 C. L. F. Kellogg, First Lieutenant  
 L. R. Dawson, Second Lieutenant

*Company D, Washington National Guards*

John C. Haines, Captain  
 E. E. Hunt, First Lieutenant  
 J. B. Metcalf, Second Lieutenant  
 Organized September, 1884.

*Home Guards—First Company*

This group were deputies under Sheriff McGraw.  
 Organized November, 1885.  
 George Kinnear, Captain.  
 J. A. Hatfield, First Lieutenant  
 William G. Latimer, Second Lieutenant

*Home Guards—Second Company*

Organized February 19, 1886.  
 E. M. Carr, Captain  
 W. T. Sharpe, First Lieutenant  
 Joseph F. McNaught, Second Lieutenant

*Seattle Cadet Corps*

Organized March 1, 1886 at Sixth Street School Building.  
 All officers in the above organizations the ones acting in February, 1886, and not in all cases the first officers of the group.

B. P. WILCOX.