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Neighbors by Nature: Relationships, Border Crossings, and Transnational Communities in the Chinese Exclusion Era

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At the turn of the twentieth century, everyday relationships between Chinese and Mexican fronterizos (borderlanders) preserved a sense of social fluidity and physical mobility at the Arizona-Sonora borderlands. In the near absence of generational ties on which to draw, Chinese newcomers created vibrant communities from social, economic, and familial-based networks; similar situations occurred in northern Sonora. As Chinese merchants sought to cross legally into the United States, they relied heavily on Mexican neighbors and Mexican and U.S. officials to attest to long-term residential histories, their Mexican citizenship, and their merchant status. On both sides of the border, discreet arrangements and daily interactions, among families and friends and within networks of commerce and community, militated against Sinophobia and harsh exclusion laws. Out of this contested social landscape grew interethnic, transnational communities even as attendant apprehensions weighed heavily on Chinese borderlanders.

Don San Wo was well connected up and down southern Arizona. He had some firm attachments in Tucson, including friendship ties to Don Chun Wo, who was considered the unofficial mayor of Tucson's Chinese community.¹ Connections aside, Don San Wo was in good spirits for what the near future held: The soon-to-be merchant was on the cusp of acquiring a new grocery store for himself and a new home for his family in Tucson during mid-spring of 1902.² Before actually entering into a lease with Dolores Serón, a Mexican resident of the Old Pueblo, Don San Wo was careful to sketch out several provisos. The terms of the agreement would yield a store and a

The author wishes to thank the anonymous readers for the *Pacific Historical Review*, who offered keen insight and encouragement.

1. "Speeches, Chinese Heritage History," MSS 94, folder 1, box 12, Esther Don Tang Collection, Arizona Historical Foundation, Hayden Library, Phoenix.

2. I have used the names of Chinese individuals as they have appeared in primary sources. For the most part, Chinese immigrants maintained the traditional ordering of their names once in the United States: that is, a surname or "family name"

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home for him, a \$400 advance for Serón, and new neighbors in downtown Tucson. And the stakes were high. For all to go well, Serón had to deliver in a little over a month's time a newly constructed, adobe-style building suitable for selling groceries and housing Don San Wo's family. His demands of Serón did not stop there. Before he took possession of the Sixth Avenue property and assumed responsibility for the lease, Serón had to make sure the storefront included two glass doors through which customers could come and go and that each room in the attached house had a window. Still, the payoff for Serón was long-term. After the ten-year lease expired, the downtown building would be Serón's to let again or to occupy as a resident. For Don San Wo, the payoff was both short-term and long-term. He would not pay rent for three years in exchange for having advanced \$400 to Serón for the construction of the dwelling and for building materials. The arrangement at once secured for Don San Wo and his family a place among neighbors and modest standing as a grocery-store-owning family in a predominantly Mexican *barrio*.³

At the turn of the twentieth century the relationship between Don San Wo and Dolores Serón was an ordinary one. When Wo assumed the lease and moved into the new adobe dwelling in downtown Tucson, relationships between Chinese and Mexican neighbors were already twenty years in the making.⁴ In the late 1870s and

and a given name or "first name" (e.g., Lee Ding). It was also common that Chinese immigrants had two given names that followed a surname (e.g., Don San Wo). At times, Chinese immigrants in Mexico and the United States adopted a westernized name by reversing "surname/given-name" order to "given-name/surname" order (e.g., Tim Chong). For the most part, however, the Chinese immigrants in Sonora adopted a westernized-style name more quickly than Chinese immigrants in Arizona, perhaps to be in keeping with Spanish-style names and national culture (e.g., Juan Lung Tain). This was especially common among Chinese merchants in Sonora.

3. Don San Wo and Dolores M. Serón, lease, April 3, 1902, Pima County Recorder's Office: Leases and Mortgages, 1880–1902 (hereafter Leases and Mortgages), subgroup 5, Record Group 110, Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, Phoenix (hereafter Arizona State Library).

4. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Schedules of the Thirteenth Census of the United States* (Washington, D. C., 1913). Table 12, p. 582, and Table I, p. 586. A small number settled in the Arizona Territory, some joining Chinese railroad workers already in Prescott; in Phoenix a family of five (three males and two females) operated a laundry business from their home. Twenty more toiled at the Vulture mines near Wickenburg in 1868, but, upon realizing the grave dangers of placer mining in the middle of the Apacheria, they left the region and did not return. For the family in Phoenix, see *Weekly Arizona Miner*, July 13, 1872; for Wong Tai, see *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, July 15, Nov. 4, 1876. For reports about the Chinese at the Longfellow Mine and Vulture mines, see *San Francisco Post*, July 25, 1878.

early 1880s, as Chinese workers wrapped up their obligations for the Southern Pacific Railroad Company outside Tucson, they began the work of cultivating kith ties, or bonds of friendship, with Mexicans and some European Americans. At times, relations among neighbors were burdened with some apprehension because of Chinese exclusion laws, but discreet arrangements and daily interactions among *fronterizos* (borderlanders) created everyday meaning and helped to militate against virulent Sinophobia.⁵ This was no minor issue. The passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 prohibited Chinese laborers from entering the United States based on race and class qualifications. Skilled and unskilled workers were barred from entry, and, even though 39,579 Chinese rushed to enter the United States before the 1882 law went into effect, by 1887 only ten Chinese immigrants gained legal entry. To strengthen the original exclusion law of 1882, Congress passed another bill in 1884 that sought to protect the West Coast states, particularly California, from “surreptitious arrivals,” while shipmasters whose vessels originated from the English treaty ports in Singapore and Hong Kong risked imprisonment and fines if they landed or intended to land Chinese at U.S. port cities. Furthermore, in 1888 an additional amendment barred any returning Chinese laborer from entry unless he were lawfully married, had a child or parent in the United States, or had property or debts owed to him valued at more than \$1,000. When the original act came up for renewal in 1892, Congress extended

5. Act of May 1882, 22 Stat. 58, sec. 3; for population numbers, see U.S. Department of Labor, *Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of Immigration, 1900–1911* (Washington, D. C., 1912), 32. For the 1884 Amendment, see *Chinese Treaty Stipulations*, 2254 H. rp. 614, particularly sec. 2; for the Scott Act, see Act of Sept. 13, 1888 (25 Stat. 476, sec. 6, at 477); Act of May 5, 1892 (27 Stat. 25); for Hawai‘i, Act of July 7, 1898 (27 Stat. 144), and Act of April 30, 1900 (31 Stat. 141); for the Philippines, Act of April 29, 1902; and for permanency, Act of April 27, 1904 (33 Stat. 428).

For an extensive analysis of Chinese exclusion history, see Sucheng Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860–1910* (Berkeley, 1989); Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley, 1994); Lucy E. Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1995); Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1998); Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850–1943* (Stanford, Calif., 2000); Madeline Yuan-yin Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882–1943* (Stanford, Calif., 2000); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley, 2001); and Erika Lee, *At America’s Gate: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882–1943* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2004).

exclusion another ten years. Immigration from American insular possessions, Hawai'i and later the Philippines, was also barred.⁶ By 1904, just two years after Don San Wo and Dolores Serón agreed to a ten-year business arrangement in downtown Tucson, Chinese exclusion laws were made permanent until their repeal in 1943.⁷

In this period of far-reaching immigration restriction, in which the Immigration Bureau assumed extraordinary legal power to enforce the Chinese exclusion laws, relationships between Chinese and Mexican borderlanders such as Wo and Serón developed in response to transnational forces and local arrangements. From without, transpacific migration networks, which channeled Chinese laborers into the western United States, the Caribbean, South America, and greater Mexico converged with kith and kin networks—that is, connections born of blood, friendship, or business connections—at the U.S.-Mexican borderlands.⁸ In southern

6. In 1882 laborers were permitted to leave the United States, provided that they obtain a certificate of identification prior to their departure. Upon reentering, the laborer had to present this certificate to the same collector to enter legally. See Act of May 1882 (22 Stat. 58, sec. 3). The original Chinese Exclusion Law of 1882 was revised in 1884, 1888, 1892, 1893, and 1894 and made permanent in 1904. For the specific amendments, see "Laws, Treaties and Regulations relating to Chinese Exclusion," Subject Correspondence files, Series A, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Bureau, Record Group 85, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

7. Over the last ten years, scholars have explored the impact of Chinese exclusion laws at the U.S.-Mexican border. See Grace Peña Delgado, "In the Age of Exclusion: Race, Region, and Chinese Identity in the Making of the Arizona-Sonora Borderlands: 1882–1943" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2000); Erika Lee, "Enforcing the Borders: Chinese Exclusion along the U.S. Borders with Canada and Mexico, 1882–1924," *Journal of American History*, 89 (2002), 54–86; Lee, *At America's Gate*; Grace Peña Delgado, "At Exclusion's Southern Gate: Changing Categories of Race and Class Among Chinese Fronterizos, 1882–1904," in Samuel Truett and Elliott Young, eds., *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History* (Durham, N.C., 2004), 183–207; Erika Lee, "Orientalisms in the Americas: A Hemispheric Approach to Asian American History," *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 8 (2005), 235–256; Robert Chao Romero, "The Dragon in Big Lusong: Chinese Immigration and Settlement in Mexico, 1882–1940" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2003); Romero, "Transnational Chinese Immigrant Smuggling to the United States via Mexico and Cuba, 1882–1916," *Amerasia Journal*, 30 (no. 3, 2004/2005), 1–16; Lawrence Douglas Taylor Hansen, "The Chinese Six Companies of San Francisco and the Smuggling of Chinese Immigrants across the U.S.-Mexico Border, 1882–1930," *Journal of the Southwest*, 48 (2006), 37–61; Patrick Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines: Border Enforcement and the Origins of Undocumented Immigration, 1882–1930* (Austin, Tex., 2009); and Anna Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America: Photography and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy* (Berkeley, 2009).

8. For a broader discussion on Chinese transpacific networks, see Adam M. McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842 to 1949," *Journal of Asian*

Arizona, with networks between Chinese and Mexicans, and the relationships they fostered, gave value to a type of civic belonging that had to do less with formal mechanisms (e.g., voting, holding elected office) than with leasing land, peddling vegetables, and cultivating personal bonds with neighbors and friends. By establishing everyday connections from relationships that were fundamentally economic but profoundly social in nature, Chinese in Tucson first imagined and then made the southern Arizona borderlands into a place of permanence.

Relationship dynamics between Chinese and Mexicans were decidedly different just across the border in Sonora. While Chinese in Tucson created close bonds with their Mexican neighbors, Sonoran Chinese drew on more formal relationships with Mexicans to facilitate their movement both within and without Mexico. The conventions prevailing on interactions between Chinese and Mexicans in Sonora were based primarily in diplomatic relations and a concern for political rights, rather than in everyday interactions among friends and neighbors. Those who could not prove Mexican citizenship or merchant status drew on institutionally arranged relationships with U.S. consuls and Mexican officials. These relationships sustained legal cross-border movements and prevented deportation to China. Yet even though the dimensions of border life in northern Sonora were neither equivalent to nor synonymous with that in southern Arizona, the most human of all inclinations—to make, maintain, and draw upon relationships—organized borderlands communities as fluid and transnational in a time of harsh exclusion laws.

Studies, 58 (1999), 306–337, and McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York, 2008). For my analysis of kinship in Tucson, I draw on Adam McKeown's ideas on Chinese transpacific networks and P. Steven Sangren's work on Chinese patrilineal. For literature addressing the establishment of Chinese relationships other than agnatic, see P. Steven Sangren, "Traditional Chinese Corporations: Beyond Kinship," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 43 (1984), 391–415; Lawrence W. Crissman, "The Segmentary Structure of Urban Overseas Chinese Communities," *Man*, 1 (1967), 185–204; and David M. Schneider, "Kinship and Biology," in Ansley J. Coale, ed., *Aspects of Analysis of Family Structure* (Princeton, N.J., 1965), 83–101. For an exploration of Chinese kinship systems and their relationship to recreating so-called bachelor communities abroad, see Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home*, 10–11, 13, 60–61, 109–112, 177–178; G. William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1957); and Andrew R. Wilson, *Ambition and Identity: Chinese Merchant Elites in Colonial Manila, 1880–1916* (Honolulu, 2004).

Farming the land and residential ties

Tucson was a critical place for Chinese newcomers. In the context of the American Southwest during the 1880s, the Old Pueblo was a large town with neither the trappings of big cities like San Francisco or Los Angeles nor the drawbacks of mining camps like Bisbee or Tombstone.⁹ Tucson's population was comprised of an admixture of ethnic groups that "could not be well gotten together anywhere else—Jews, Swedes, Irish, English, Germans, Chinese, French, Yankes [*sic*], Spaniards, [and] Indians."¹⁰ Among the 7,007 residents, Mexicans made up the majority population, making up 64 percent of all Tucsonans, while Chinese residents numbered just over 180.¹¹ For Chinese immigrants, establishing a sense of social belonging and residential permanency was initially tethered to relationships mostly with Mexicans and, after 1900, to Chinese kin, generally. In the absence of generational ties on which to draw, Chinese immigrants, then, were compelled to create alternative mechanisms to establish connections to their new home and neighbors. Truck farming and small-scale commerce structured relations among Chinese and Mexican neighbors and fostered *guanxi* relations (關係, pronounced "kuan-hsi") among Chinese in particular. Bonds of kinship through *guanxi* inextricably linked Chinese to one another through the expectation of *bao* (reciprocity) and *ganqing* (affection).¹² Yet, in the initial years of settlement,

9. This work builds on previous scholarship on Tucson Chinese. See Lawrence M. Fong, "Sojourners and Settlers: The Chinese Experience in Arizona," *Journal of Arizona History*, 21 (1980), 1–30; Heather S. Hatch, "The Chinese in the Southwest: A Photographic Record," in *ibid.*, 257–274; Florence Lister and Robert Lister, *The Chinese of Early Tucson: Historic Archaeology from the Tucson Urban Renewal Project* (Tucson, 1989); J. Homer Thiel, *Archaeological Investigations of a Chinese Gardener's Household, Tucson, Arizona* (Tucson, 1997); Wengsheng Wang, "The First Chinese in Tucson: New Evidence on a Puzzling Question," *Journal of Arizona History*, 43 (2002), 369–380.

10. "Arizona," *Californian*, 1 (1880), 369.

11. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. 1890 Population Census, Sex, General Nativity, and Color: Chinese Population by Counties, 1870–1890* (Washington, D. C., 1896), 564. Not until the dismantling of the Chinese Exclusion Laws in 1943 would the Chinese in Arizona reach equal numerical peaks on par with the population of the 1880s. See report of Michael L. Fong, "The Chinese in Arizona, 1870–1950," for a complete analysis of demographics of Chinese in Arizona (Phoenix, 1992), 14, available in Special Collections, University of Arizona, Tucson.

12. For modern-day parallels, see Thomas Gold, Doug Guthrie, and David Wank, eds., *Social Connections in China. Institutions, Culture, and the Changing Nature of Guanxi* (Cambridge, U.K., 2002), 5.

there were moments in the making of friendship when Chinese felt bonds with Mexican neighbors more deeply than those with kin. These relations would be made and remade in no small part against the imposition of exclusion laws that assigned great importance to the mundane routines of truck farmers, grocers, and merchants. Visibility, everyday interaction, and reliance on neighbors for fresh produce and dry goods sustained and brought *tucsonenses* together through friendship and familial ties.

Farming was the keystone of kith and kin bonds. In the 1880s leasing land from Mexicans helped to re-establish community and familial life in the Old Pueblo. In several cases, the web of kith relations between Mexicans and Chinese extended through generations, with women as the principal agents. In 1881 Gertrudís Pacheco and Wing Mow Yun chartered the earliest recorded lease between Chinese and Mexicans in Tucson.¹³ Doña Gertrudís, the fifty-five-year-old wife of Ramón Pacheco, leased to Yun approximately eleven acres in El Barrio for six years at \$150 a year. While the agreement listed no other tenants, Yun almost certainly cultivated the plot with other Chinese, who would have helped him with the steady daily routines of plowing fields and laying smooth furrows by hand.¹⁴

Four years later, Mateo Pacheco, the twenty-two-year-old great-grandson of Gertrudís and Ramón, leased ten acres of land to Lee Ding for five years. The agreement included provisions for building a one-room house sufficient to shelter four Chinese men and a two-horse stable. Under the oddly configured terms of the lease, Ding would pay Mateo Pacheco \$50 upon signing the agreement in March, followed by \$62.50 on the first day of June and October. Thereafter, Mateo Pacheco fixed Ding's rent at \$58.33 each March, June, and October.¹⁵ Even as kith ties with Chinese persisted in the Pacheco family, Yun's six-year commitment to farm Pacheco land suggested that he followed the practice of *guanxi* and eventually hired other Chinese men to help grow and harvest crops. More to the point, Lee Ding's lease contained explicit stipulations for

13. Lease 496-7, in *Leases and Mortgages*. An earlier lease between kinsmen Wong Ty and Wong Chi was chartered in Tombstone in 1879. See Lease 242, in *ibid.*

14. Lease 496-7, in *ibid.* In 1881 Haw Wang leased from Cornelius Ryan a parcel of land on his 320-acre property. The exact acreage leased was not clear, but Haw Wang was free to cut timber from Ryan's property, provided that the timber was used to improve Ryan's property or Haw Wang's home. See Lease 428, in *ibid.*

15. Lease 186-7, in *ibid.*

housing additional Chinese farmers. Together, Ding and Yun established the bases of mutual interest, shared benefit, and affection—the cornerstones of Chinese society in Tucson—by leasing land from Mexican neighbors.

Economic arrangements, however, did not portend romantic relationships between Mexican women and Chinese men. Close living arrangements underscored the personal-legal descriptions of landlord and tenant and guarded against miscegenation. Leases drawn up between Mexican women and Chinese men always noted the marital and racial status of both parties. The Pacheco-Yun lease, like the subsequent 1888 agreement between Angela de López and Yuen Lee, left little room for ambiguity: Doña Pacheco was recorded as the wife of Don Ramón, while the 1887 lease between Angela de López and Yuen Lee described Doña Angela as “*casada* [married] and of age” and Lee as a “(Chinaman) single and of age.”¹⁶ For \$10 a month, Yuen Lee rented a room on the southwest section of López’s house at North Meyer and Telles streets. The two parties agreed that Lee would have access to the back house, where he was allowed to draw water for his personal hygiene and where he could wash and iron his clothes. De López further stipulated that Lee “not have washing and ironing going on in his room.” Before Lee agreed to these terms, he requested that de López repair the front door of the back house. Such stipulations against romantic involvement were understood to apply to relations between Chinese and Mexican men. Nearby on Meyer Street, the incentive to live together was as practical for Jesús Munguía and Tim Chong as it was between de López and Lee, although the arrangement did not suggest anything beyond two men sharing a living space. Tim Chong’s three upstairs rooms in Munguía’s home reflected what was probably an affable relationship between the two men. Their housing arrangement implied that living together would be sensible but no less friendly for its practicality.¹⁷

Anti-miscegenation laws prohibited marriage between Chinese and Mexicans, whom territorial law and regional custom recognized as racially white.¹⁸ In 1865 Arizonans hastened an anti-miscegenation bill through the territorial legislature that voided all

16. Lease 332, in *ibid.*

17. Lease 688, in *ibid.*

18. Similarly, marriages between whites and blacks, Hindus, mulattos, and Indians (American Indians) were banned. See *Acts, Resolutions, and Memorials Adopted by the*

marriages between whites and blacks, Hindus, mulattos, Indians, or Chinese.¹⁹ Designing its marriage laws to mirror those in the American South, Arizona officials privileged matrimony among whites as a social and economic unit by attaching conjugality to respectability, legitimacy for children, and financial benefit. In 1901 Arizona lawmakers passed a second and harsher anti-miscegenation law prohibiting marriage between whites and “negroes, [*sic*] Mongolians, or Indians, and their descendants.”²⁰ All marriages of such nature were nullified, and those solemnizing racially mixed marriages were subject to fines up to \$300 and imprisonment for up to six months.²¹ In the face of legal prohibition, marriages between Chinese men and Mexican women remained infrequent.²² In 1900 two Mexican women married two Chinese men, and the families begat three children of mixed heritage.²³ The territorial census, ten years later,

Second Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Arizona (Prescott, Ariz., 1866), chapter 30, sec. 3, p. 58.

19. *Ibid.*

20. In 1901 chairman George P. Blair introduced this harsher anti-miscegenation law titled “An Act to Revise and Codify the Laws of the Territory of Arizona, with reference to Marriage and Divorce,” in *The Revised Statutes of Arizona Territory: Containing also the Laws Passed by the Twenty-First Legislative Assembly, the Constitution of the United States, the Organic Law of Arizona and the Amendments of Congress Relating Thereto* (Columbia, Mo., 1901), sec. 6, p. 3092; available at the Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

21. *Ibid.*, sec. 11, p. 3097. By stipulating marriage laws in this way, legislators placed a person of mixed heritage in an untenable situation. If the individual was descended from a Chinese father and a Mexican mother, the individual, by extension of the law, was prevented from marrying a white person or another Mexican or another person of mixed heritage. In effect, such a person could not legally marry any Arizonan. For a similar discussion about the implications of this marriage law, see Roger D. Hardaway, “Unlawful Love: A History of Arizona’s Miscegenation Law,” *Journal of Arizona History*, 27 (1986), 377–390.

22. Lister and Lister, *The Chinese of Early Tucson*, 5. Arizona’s miscegenation laws did provoke court challenges, especially from individuals with Indian and African ancestry. See Hardaway, “Unlawful Love,” 382–385. The extent of legislators’ actions to keep the white race pure was captured in the following quote by Justice Henry D. Ross who advocated that a percentage of blood be stipulated to gauge the validity of marriage: “In trying to prevent the white race from interbreeding with Indians, Negroes, Mongolians, etc., it has made it unlawful for a person with 99% Indian blood and 1% Caucasian blood to marry an Indian, or a person of 99% Caucasian blood and 1% Indian blood to marry a Caucasian. We mention this and the absurd situations it creates believing and hoping that the legislature will correct it by naming the percentage of Indian and other tabooed blood that will invalidate marriage” (emphasis added). See Hardaway, “Unlawful Love,” 384, for quote. Anti-miscegenation laws were lifted on April 28, 1942.

23. As early as 1891 Chinese men married Mexican women but fled into New Mexico to validate their unions. By evading the initial anti-miscegenation law passed in 1865 by Arizona pioneers, Sing King and Ah Song evaded the Arizona law and

listed three women—two Mexican and one French—living with Chinese men. These three families had produced eleven children of mixed parentage. Even though there was an increase in the number of Chinese children, the two Mexicans originally listed in the 1900 census were probably the same women listed in the 1910 census.²⁴

The relationships that mattered most between Mexicans and Chinese were those fixed in place by everyday interactions. When Jesús and Gertrudis Montejó leased plots in Fort Lowell to Lee Gin Kuan's Wing Fat Company in 1898, the Chinese had already established a foothold in farming throughout Tucson. Kuan's neighbors—Chinese laborers of the Sun Sing Company to the south and those of the Wah Hop Company to the north—had mastered the arduous routine of truck farming: long hours cultivating surplus crops for market, transporting vegetables to town by early dawn to avoid the sun's withering power, and selling door-to-door. Truck farming filled out most seasons with heavy work, but during the summer the routines were especially arduous. Beginning at dawn, farmhands pushed steadily behind the plow, sometimes stopping to smooth over the furrows by hand. There was no time for slacking. Farmhands loaded "strong, but shabby wagons" with fresh vegetables kept cool on ice for town. Selling house-to-house required at least two men, one who had some knowledge of both Spanish and English doing the peddling and the other reshuffling the produce into freed-up cart space. Special customers—usually those who paid on time—received first pick of tomatoes, watermelons, and artichokes in the summer, and carrots, turnips, cabbage, and lettuce during the winter.²⁵ At day's end, truck farmers tallied their bills and recorded the day's proceeds on the wagon's

"married two pretty Tucson Mexican girls." See *Prescott Courier*, Sept. 9, 1891. One incident of a Chinese woman marrying a white man is recorded in the *Prescott Courier*: "wife of Tucson's first citizens a Chinese barber, stole \$5000 from her 'hub' and lit out with a white man."

24. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census, 1900*, "Population of Tucson, Pima County" (Washington, D.C., 1978), microfilm T-1032, rolls 18–20; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census, 1910*, "1910—Population of Tucson, Pima County" (Washington, D.C., 1982), microfilm 7096, rolls 1–5. In 1900 the total number of children born into Chinese families, including those with Mexican mothers, was six. There was a significant increase in the number of children ten years later, as the census enumerated twenty-five children of Chinese descent living in Tucson.

25. Interview with Lillian Grossetta Barry, Tucson Oral History Project (AV-0358-05), Arizona Historical Society.

casement. As an adolescent growing up in the El Barrio neighborhood of Tucson, Clera Ferrin observed the painstaking routine of Chinese truck farming in the Santa Cruz River region. The reward for a hard day's work, she observed, was time spent having breakfast with "one of their city 'cousins' in a grocery store."²⁶

For Tucson Chinese, unlike other Chinese in southern Arizona, truck farming proved to be a stabilizing business. In the late 1890s Chinese produce peddlers did not suffer from the volatility of the laundry business and small-scale commercial pursuits. Unlike elsewhere in the United States, commerce and the laundry business did not anchor the Chinese community in Tucson. In fact, more than half of the Chinese merchants who had lived in Tucson in 1890 (forty) left the Old Pueblo by 1900.²⁷ The twenty-one who headed out may have been drawn elsewhere—for example, across the border to Sonora, where opportunities for large-scale commercial projects were more favorable, or to China, where families reunited. There may have been other reasons as well. Unlike laundresses, cooks, storekeepers, or engine cleaners who often worked in isolation or in pairs, the rigors of truck farming drew on several Chinese individuals that sustained collective financial pursuits and developed bonds of reciprocity and trust. Once a lease was secure, a single Chinese farmer cultivated the land until his profits yielded enough cash to hire other Chinese farmhands; in another common scenario, a group of Chinese farmers, who were previously linked by kinship ties in China, harvested crops together soon after their arrival in Tucson. Throughout the 1890s and early 1900s partnerships among truck farmers grew through solidifying bonds of *guanxi*, affording the Chinese an occupational "safety net" in times of vulnerability. Kith relations with Mexicans meant that *guanxi* relations could, and did, secure bonds among the Chinese themselves. By extension, the essential basis of settlement was laid.

Chinese migrants also settled in downtown Tucson in the residential neighborhood along Main, Pennington, Pearl, Congress,

26. Clera Ferrin Bloom, Biographical File, June 5, 1897; also cited in "The Orientation of Tucson's Chinese," ephemeral file entitled, "Chinese in Tucson," Arizona Historical Society.

27. Lister and Lister, *The Chinese of Early Tucson*, 5; the data in Table 1.2 on that page derive from the federal censuses of 1880, 1900, and 1910. During the 1880s and 1890s the Chinese ran many of the laundries in Bisbee and Tombstone as well. See "Arizona Album," *Tucson Citizen*, Nov. 11, 1955.

and Alameda streets. Considered Tucson's first area of Chinese residential concentration, the neighborhood was also home to many Mexicans. By 1883 Tucson Chinese were most heavily concentrated in this district west and south of the presidio gate, known as the "Walled City." Chinese railroad workers occupied the original buildings of the neighborhood, which were constructed of wood and adobe. Mexican tenants occupied stone dwellings next to those of the Chinese railroad workers.²⁸ The Mexican Chinese portion of the neighborhood was comprised of four large buildings, two wash-houses, three stores, two opium dens, and a block-long adobe structure that "lost all its Spanish-American attributes, and [became] wholly oriental."²⁹ Residents in this area also included young, male Chinese migrants who sought refuge alongside poor Mexican families in rundown buildings.³⁰

Commerce in the Geary Act era

The formalities of kinship through *guanxi* relations made living in Tucson among Chinese residents a bond all its own. Visibility, everyday interaction, and reliance on neighbors for fresh produce and dry goods sustained and brought *tucsonenses* together. For truck farmers, who enjoyed the freedom to traverse the town at large, solidifying friendships and family ties and sustaining businesses proved to be an easier task than it was for merchants. After the passage of the Geary Act in 1892, Chinese merchants with few or no *guanxi* relations on which to rely had to consider their choices carefully because drawing on relatives from great distances was a colossal risk. The Geary Act required all Chinese laborers currently living in the United States to register within one year with the federal collector of internal revenue and obtain a certificate of residence.³¹ Each certificate contained a photograph of its holder and recorded that

28. *Ibid.*, 15–17.

29. *Tucson Citizen*, Feb. 22, 1935; *Arizona Daily Star*, Feb. 20, 1937. Another building that made up Tucson's first "Chinatown" was a wooden structure, formerly the town's zoo. The building was located on North Main between Pennington and Ott streets. See *Tucson Citizen*, Feb. 18, 1925.

30. Lister and Lister, *The Chinese of Early Tucson*, 3. Also see Thomas Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854–1941* (Tucson, 1986), 80.

31. The definition of laborer was specified in the Geary Act of 1893. "All classes of skilled and unskilled manual laborers, including Chinese persons employed in mining, fishing, huckstering, peddling, laundry men, or those engaged in taking, drying, or otherwise preserving shell or other fish for home consumption, shall be claimed as

person's residential and work histories, name, age, address, and occupation. The certificate also documented any distinguishing physical characteristic (e.g., mole on right ear) that would set laborers apart from one another. If the laborer did not obtain a certificate of residence, he risked immediate arrest and a deportation hearing with a U.S. judge or, in the case of Arizona before statehood, a district commissioner. Although merchants were exempt from registering with the federal government, they were frequently mistaken as laborers without certificates, especially when they were away from home or when they were working in their stores.³² Considering the potential consequences of detainment, relations with neighbors proved crucial in the Geary Act era. Establishing residency and long-standing social ties meant the difference between remaining in the United States and receiving an order of deportation. The passage of the Geary Act reinforced the importance of established residential histories and relations with neighbors in Tucson.

Chin Tin Wo enjoyed considerable success selling groceries in the Old Pueblo. But when the enterprising merchant decided to return to Hong Kong in 1895, Chin Tin Wo—who had no sons or Chinese neighbors on whom to rely—faced the challenge of finding a suitable heir to take over and maintain his Tucson businesses. Safeguarding and adding to his reputation and substantial ventures, which included holdings from the fishing and mining industries, was no small order.³³ For years, he had managed without kin, drawing on relationships with Mexican and Jewish suppliers to stock his store, and he accumulated most of his wealth by striking deals with middlemen like Julius Goldbaum, a Jewish immigrant who made sure that plenty of whisky, cigars, and vinegar

laborers." MS 0183, folder 370, box 42, First Judicial District Court, Manuscript Collection, Pima County Collection: Court Records, Arizona Historical Society.

32. The law distinguished a merchant from a laborer. A merchant was one "engaged in buying and selling merchandise at a fixed place of business which business is conducted in his name, and who, during the time he claims to be engaged as a merchant, does not engage in the performance of any manual labor, except such as is necessary in the conduct of his business as such merchant." Cited from *U.S. v. Sim Lee*, in *ibid*.

33. In this instance, Chin Tin Wo took out a three-year lease from Allison and Son to invest in the carp industry. It was reported that Chin Tin Wo's intention was to "furnish Tucson with fresh carp at all times." For a reference to Chin Tin Wo's entrepreneurial ventures, see *Arizona Daily Star*, Dec. 7, 1889, and Lister and Lister, *The Chinese of Early Tucson*, Table 1.2.

lined the shelves of Chin Tin Wo's grocery store.³⁴ He also drew on Mexican neighbors, especially when jealousies arose between rival Chinese businessmen. Manuel Vasavelbaso, a friend of Chin Tin Wo and business school teacher, foiled Chan Beet's plot to burn down Chin Tin Wo's store. Seeking revenge for a past dispute, Beet interrupted Vasavelbaso at his home in Tucson while the teacher was instructing his Chinese pupil, Charly Long, in English lessons. Beet, who had known Vasavelbaso from previous business dealings, requested a private conversation with the teacher. Once out of Long's earshot, Beet disclosed his plot to burn down Chin Tin Wo's store. "He put his hand in his pocketbook and showed me some gold and greenbacks," recounted Vasavelbaso. "He [Beet] told me this money is to pay the men to set fire to Chin Tin Wo's store, and if it is not innuf [*sic*], I [Beet] will get some more from my friends."³⁵ By notifying local law enforcement of Beet's scheme, Vasavelbaso saved his friend's store from fire. Given the stakes, it was clear that Chin Tin Wo's heir would need to be equally astute in developing not only *guanxi* relations but cultivating those kith connections that had saved his uncle's store.

In his imperative need to pass down his store and secure an overseer for his other holdings, Chin Tin Wo requested that his brother, Don Doan Yook, a goldsmith and jeweler, and his son relocate from San Francisco to Tucson to take up the task.³⁶ This reunion transformed two brothers, long separated by hundreds of miles, into kin linked by *guanxi* relations.³⁷ The risks of reconnecting

34. Julius Goldbaum Manuscript Collection, MS 0289, folder 3, box 3, Arizona Historical Society.

35. Justice Dockets, 1873–1919, "Justice's Court, Precinct No. One, County of Pima, A.T.," Sept. 26, 1884, Pima County, Justice of the Peace, subgroup 4, roll 12, Record Group 110, Arizona State Library.

36. Biographical File, Don Chun Wo, "Biographical Sketch of Don Chun Wo," 3, Arizona Historical Society. Don Chun Wo himself filled out the information in this biographical sketch but did not state his birth name anywhere in this document. His father's name was Don Doan Yook, his mother, Chew Shee. He had one older brother, Don Hong Chuen, and two older sisters, Don Doo Bow and Don Song Bow who were born in China, which is also where they died. It seems probable that Don Chun Wo was not the only sibling in his family to come to the United States. He was, nonetheless, the only surviving male sibling living after 1895.

37. It is notable that Chin Tin Wo's family name was different from "Don," the family name of his brother, Don Doak Yook. When the nephew of Chin Tin Wo's changed his name to honor his uncle, the nephew maintained what was probably Chin Tin Wo's original family name, which was "Don." However, there is no existing documentation that verifies a name change by Chin Tin Wo.

California-area and Tucson-based kin in the Geary Act era were great, but the reward of firming up *guanxi* relations was worth the peril. The two San Francisco residents arrived in Tucson by rail in early 1895, and over a period of seven months Chin Tin Wo familiarized his brother and twenty-two-year-old nephew with their soon-to-be grocery store. Chin Tin Wo granted partial ownership to his brother, but responsibility for daily operations fell into the hands of his nephew. Perhaps because of his U.S. citizenship, his fluency in English, and his education in the United States, Don Doan Yook's American-born son was more likely to excel at managing the day-to-day operations of the grocery store.³⁸ Bonds of kinship were linked when the nephew and heir of Chin Tin Wo changed his name to Don Chun Wo.³⁹

Like many Tucson Chinese, Don Chun Wo had numerous significant connections in China, not the least of whom was his uncle Chin Tin Wo after his return there. Sustaining such connections necessitated frequent trips abroad. International travel in the Geary Act era, however, was perilous and had potential dire consequences. Without proper documentation proving his merchant status, Don Chun Wo faced the possibility of being denied reentry into the United States. His first trip abroad involved taking his young family of five to China in 1904. With his wife Leung Duan Goat, whom he married in Tucson in 1896, and his three sons, Jack Sam, Jack Fong and Jack Han, the family visited China for lengthy stays, while Don Chun Wo also made several trips by himself from Tucson during that time.⁴⁰ The travel of Don Chun Wo began with seeking and acquiring permission from a local customs inspector, who at the time doubled as an immigration inspector. In Tucson, gaining this permission was crucial, especially if one continuously traveled, had a business, and expected one's family members to gain unquestioned reentry into the United States after long stretches of time in China. At the time of Don Chun Wo's travel, 177 Chinese residents had roots in Tucson. The vast majority (155) were adult males, in addition to seven adult females and fifteen children.⁴¹ The married couples

38. "Biographical Sketch of Don Chun Wo," with heading of "Arizona Pioneer Historical Society," in *ibid.*

39. For more on the life of Don Chun Wo, see Wang, "The First Chinese in Tucson," 369–380.

40. "Biographical Sketch of Don Chun Wo," 2.

41. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census, 1900*, "Population of Tucson, Pima County," microfilm T-1032, rolls 18–20.

among them collectively raised nine sons and three daughters as well as cared for a pair of grandparents and one adopted son. Again, when Don Chun Wo courted his new bride in China after the death of his first wife, successful travel from the United States abroad was a constitutive bond of the Chinese community in Tucson.

These comings and goings were critical dimensions of the community. At the turn of the twentieth century, Chinese began to pool their resources to finance businesses. These were mostly groceries, but some laundries still thrived.⁴² Few businesses had the fortunate beginnings of Don Chun Wo, but some could and did draw from San Francisco and China-based sources to stock inventory with canned goods, some staple items, and silks. Still others, like Don San Wo, relied on securing a lease for a newly built grocery store in the center of El Barrio from Dolores Serón. Charley Lee's store fronts advertised *mantequilla de tempe, fruta, huevos frescas, pasteles, pan, and quequis* (room-temperature butter, fruit, fresh eggs, pies, bread, and cake). In 1893 two new joss houses and more Chinese gardens prompted some locals to call for the establishment of a Chinatown to keep those "wily Mongolians . . . in as small an area as possible." But entrenched business interests, as well as the affable relationships between most *tucsonenses* and their Chinese neighbors, made it easy to anticipate that the locals' petition would be categorically rejected by the Tucson City Council as unconstitutional.⁴³ There was never a legally mandated Chinatown in Tucson.

Even as Tucson Chinese enjoyed a less hostile environment than that faced by Chinese elsewhere in the United States, the restrictions of the Geary Act nonetheless tightened around them. Urged not to comply with the Geary Act, the Chinese resisted. A well-organized national boycott was spearheaded by the Chinese Six Companies, prompting a majority of Chinese laborers to refuse to register with the federal government during the time allotted. According to historian Lucy Salyer, out of an estimated 85,000 Chinese laborers in the United States, only 13,242 initially complied with the Geary Act.⁴⁴ The national boycott of non-compliance was a

42. 1899–1900 *Tucson City Directory* (Tucson, 1900); *Tucson City Directory* (Tucson, 1901); 1902 *Tucson City Directory* (Tucson, n.d.), available at Arizona Historical Society.

43. *Arizona Citizen*, March 7, 1893. Also see minutes, Tucson City Council, March 6, April 3, 1893, in Drachman Papers, MS 0226, available at Arizona Historical Society.

44. Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers*, 43.

remarkable success, and Tucson was no exception. The Chinese Six Companies' campaign for non-compliance garnered considerable support, and the territories of Arizona and New Mexico issued only 429 certificates among their 1,610 combined Chinese residents.⁴⁵

Efforts to get the Chinese to comply with the Geary Act failed miserably, although one Tucson resident became a visible exception to the political activity of the Six Companies. Long Kee, described as a "fat, good-natured looking chap" who owned a grocery store off Simpson and Convent streets in Tucson, was the first individual in the Arizona and New Mexico territories to register for a certificate of residence. Although lauded by the local press for his willingness to register under the terms of the Geary Act, Kee ardently "refused to agree with any denunciation of [the Six Companies'] methods."⁴⁶ The merchant's immediate enrollment indicated a particular set of circumstances at play. Kee registered to avoid the consequences of being mistaken as an unregistered laborer and therefore subject to immediate deportation. Kee also obtained a certificate of residence to ensure his unobstructed re-entry into the United States should he visit China in the future. Laborers, after the passage of the Scott Act in 1888, could not return to the United States if they left, even those who were born in the United States. Other Chinese laborers in Tucson wondered how and when immigration sweeps would take place and when the process of deportation would begin. Judge W. Wetford of San Francisco, puzzled as to why most Chinese refused to register, believed the mandates placed upon the Chinese were justified:

There is no reason why the Chinese could not have registered as required by the Geary Act. . . . American citizens are compelled to register in order to vote. Every ten years a census taker comes around [and] asks personal questions that people have to answer or pay a penalty for refusal. The Mongolians could easily have obeyed the law.⁴⁷

In *Fong Yue Ting v. the United States*, in which the Supreme Court case upheld the Geary Act, Congress affirmed the right to deport Chinese laborers not in possession of a certificate of residence.

45. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census, 1910*, "Foreign-Born Population by Country of Birth, for the United States and Divisions, 1890–1910," p. 207.

46. *Arizona Daily Citizen*, May 16, 1893.

47. *Ibid.*, May 18, 1893.

More importantly, the act created the impression that all persons of Chinese ancestry living in the United States did so illegally, thereby compelling them to document lawful residency. When coupled with earlier court decisions, which had yoked matters of immigration and entry of aliens to Congress's undisputed authority over matters of national self-defense, the repercussions of *Fong Yue Ting* were clear: Chinese citizens and non-citizens alike were at risk for immediate deportation. Chinese laborers had a six-month extension from the time of the amendment in 1894 to obtain a certificate.⁴⁸ Without one, an arrest was imminent and deportation probable. In southern Arizona, as elsewhere, Chinese residents had to meet the burden of proof of residency or needed to summon two white witnesses to confirm legal residency.⁴⁹

Frequent immigration sweeps in southern Arizona apprehended several Chinese in Nogales, Yuma, Marana, Douglas, and Tucson.⁵⁰ No accurate figure exists for the total number of Chinese who made their way into the United States during this time, but the vast majority of criminal cases brought before territorial courts of Nogales, Yuma, and Tucson were suits filed against Chinese for violating the exclusion laws.⁵¹ Lee King was one of several Chinese falsely arrested for violating the Geary Act in Tucson. His neighbors,

48. Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers*, 54; Daniel Kanstroom, *Deportation Nation: Outsiders in American History* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007), 118–130.

49. The Scott Act of 1888 prevented all laborers who had left the country from returning and caused all valid certificates to become invalid. As a result, over 20,000 Chinese laborers were prevented from returning to the United States. This decision was reversed in 1894 when China and the United States signed a treaty granting Chinese laborers entry with certificates of return entry into the United States. In 1904, however, China ended the treaty because of the poor treatment of its countrymen in the United States. Upon notification of China's decision, Congress extended, reenacted, and continued all previous exclusion laws that did not require special legislation for renewal. The exclusion act of 1904, fixing the Chinese quota of admissions at 105 a year, remained in effect until its repeal in 1943.

50. The first statistic derives from a database of over 600 Chinese exclusion and criminal case files from the Arizona Territory and the Southern District Court of California. Compiled by the author, the database highlights twenty-three fields of information, such as place of arrest, Chinese interpreter, deportation destination, and commissioner. The database draws from the following files of Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21, held at the National Archives and Records Administration, Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel, California: Records of the District Court of the United States for the Territory of Arizona, First Judicial District, Chinese Criminal Case Files, 1882–1912; Chinese Exclusion Cases, 1886–1906; Commissioners' Early Case Files; Commissioners' Dockets; and Commissioners' Case Files, 1882–1912. The database is referred to hereafter as the Chinese Exclusion Case File Database.

51. Chinese cases D1–D88, boxes 1 and 2, Chinese Exclusion Case File Database.

Lee Foo and Lee Tan, posted the required \$500 bond, freeing their friend from jail while he awaited trial. Tucsonans Kim Lee and Leo King, acting through interpreter Don Chun Wo, managed to convince territorial commissioner W. H. Culver that their friend was a legal resident, even though Lee King, at the time of his arrest, possessed no certificate of residence.⁵² This was extraordinary. Often the territorial courts of Nogales and Tucson deported or at least harassed Chinese based on scant evidence from the Chinese inspector or “dutiful citizens.” From 1894 to 1903 the Tucson territorial court ordered the deportation of over 100 Chinese who had recently crossed the Mexican border.⁵³ Several Chinese claimed to possess certificates of residence but could not produce them in the period mandated by the court; they were also unable to find two white witnesses. In 1904 alone, the Chinese Division at the Arizona border reported arresting a total of 123 Chinese who had originated from the interior of Sonora. Of these cases, 84 individuals faced deportation, 23 awaited judgments, and the remaining 16 were discharged.⁵⁴ Almost inevitably, the vast majority of Chinese arrested on the suspicion of illegal entry in the United States faced deportation.⁵⁵

The battlefield of the Geary Act all but guaranteed that Chinese such as Joe Con would clash with territorial courts over citizen and alien status. In 1902 Joe Con made a visit to Nogales, Sonora, without a certificate of residence. Upon his return but before his arrest, Con was asked for a certificate that he did not possess. He affirmed, nonetheless, the right to reenter the United States because of his American citizenship. After Con had spent more than three weeks in jail awaiting trial, the territorial court in Nogales finally adjudicated his case. Louis Levin and W. R. Mannsfield, two white witnesses on behalf of the Nogales court, testified to Con’s presence in Mexico. Levin claimed he saw Con at a “wedding on the Mexican side of Nogales,” while Mannsfield, a cattle inspector, also noticed Con approaching him from the Mexican side of the border.⁵⁶ Mannsfield and James Shaw, the owner of the cattle, spoke

52. Case 295, *U.S. v. Lee King*, in *ibid.*

53. Cases from 1894 to 1903, in *ibid.*

54. Statistics compiled from Chinese cases D1–D88, boxes 1 and 2, in *ibid.*

55. George Webb to Morris Hunter Jones, Oct. 9, 1906, Morris Hunter Jones Collection, MS 0393, Arizona Historical Society.

56. Cases D1 and D5, folder 13, box 1, Chinese Exclusion Case File Database. Joe Con was arrested on August 2, 1902. Con’s name is also spelled as “Coun” and “Conn.”

to Con as he passed through the cow field to Nogales, Arizona. “We spoke to him and recognized him as Joe Con. We rode to the monument to take observation and found out that he was inside of Mexico about 1,000 feet.”⁵⁷ But Con’s fortune turned after Mannsfield’s testimony. Con’s attorney pointed out to the court that the conversation held between Con, Mannsfield, and Shaw was in English. Con’s fluent English held sway in light of the charges against him, and the territorial court found in favor of Con’s claims.⁵⁸

When the Geary Act was enforced and Chinese laborers were compelled to obtain certificates of residence, Tucson Chinese would find that *guanxi* relations and connections to established borderlands residents became even more crucial. Business, kith, and family relations, the strongest ties binding Tucson Chinese together, encouraged more immigrants to settle in El Barrio, even though it would be four decades before the Chinese community numbered beyond 300 residents. Lim Bow’s 1902 lease with Jesús Montejo, Jr., suggested one reason that Tucson’s Chinese population remained stable. The agreement made clear that the seven Chinese men of Bow’s Sun Sing Company “were all residents of Pima County.”⁵⁹ This distinction had never been made in previous lease agreements. With growing pressure to enforce Chinese exclusion laws, residential and work histories proved critical for those who were suspected of illegal residency in the United States.

Tucson’s new Chinese inspector, Charles Connell, came to symbolize an aggressive and uncompromising approach of the U.S. immigration regime to apprehend and deport Chinese at the Arizona border. Appointed to the post in late 1903, the same year the Bureau of Immigration was placed under the authority of the Department of Commerce and Labor to tighten the grip of enforcing the exclusion laws at the U.S. southern border, Connell was no stranger to the Chinese communities in southern Arizona. While on surveillance duty in Tucson, Connell apprehended Ng Jan and Chan Cheong and charged them with violating the Geary Act because neither had a certificate of residence. The two laborers

57. Testimony of W. F. Mannsfield, Sept. 12, 1902, in *ibid.*

58. Compare the cases of Ah Tin and Jim Lee as they relate to Chinese crossing into Sonora, Mexico, and then being detained in southern Arizona. Civil and Chinese Exclusion Cases, 1–13, folder 2, box 1, Records of the District Court of the United States for the Territory of Arizona, Second Judicial District, 1886–1911.

59. Lease 794–795, in Leases and Mortgages.

CHINESE RESIDENCY IN TUCSON: 1883; 1909; 1919

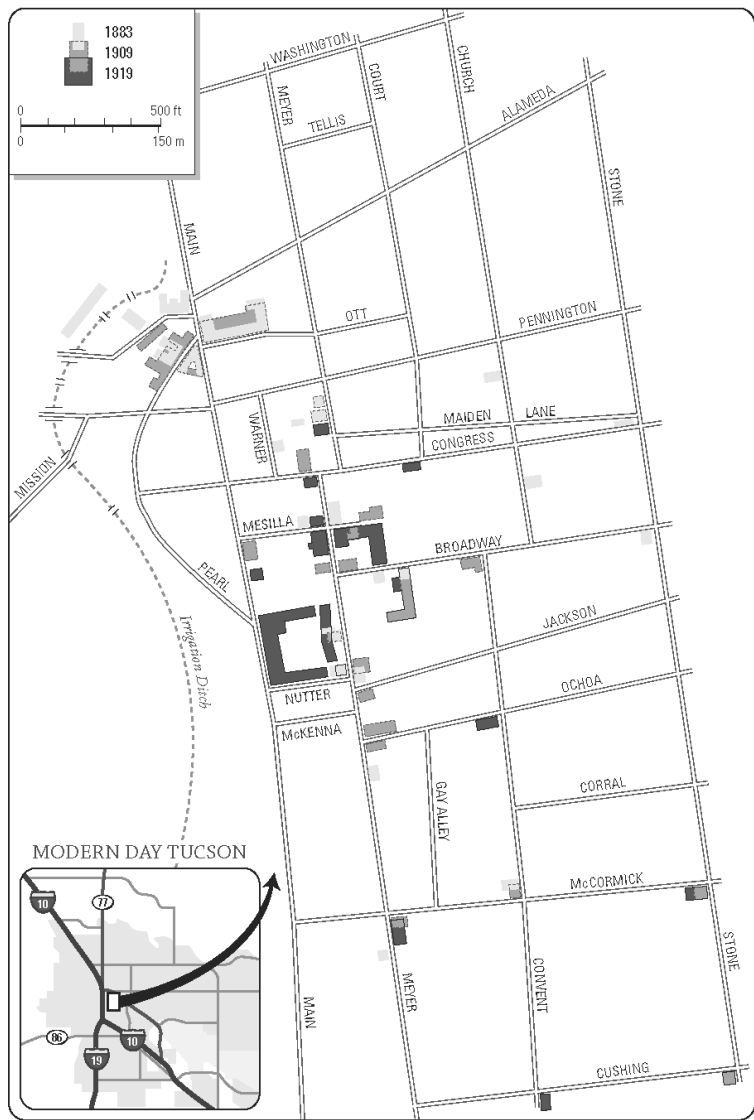


Figure 1. Map of Chinese residency in Tucson, 1883, 1904, and 1909; derived from Sanborn Insurance Map, based on the U.S. Census, Arizona, 1900, and from Florence Lister and Robert Lister, *The Chinese of Early Tucson: Historic Archaeology from the Tucson Urban Renewal Project* (Tucson, 1989). Map drawn by Erin Greb and used with permission.

were visiting Tucson at the financial expense of Chun Kee, a San Francisco merchant who employed them. Kee, whose store dealt in Chinese and Japanese goods, testified at their hearing that he purchased the train tickets for Jan and Cheong. Despite the testimony of Kee, William Watson, teamster Chun Jay, and merchants Ng' Sin Fa and Chan Yang, Cheong and Jan were deported because they failed to prove legal residency in the United States and possessed no certificate of residence.⁶⁰

Chinese migrants were often deported based solely on the eyewitness testimony of one or two individuals. Wong Poy, arrested in Tombstone in February 1907, experienced such a fate. Connell, when visiting Cananea, Sonora, in January saw Poy in Mexico. Concurring with Connell's testimony, Cananea resident and barber Frank Malone stated that he noticed Poy "in December and January at a wedding . . . and saw him [in Cananea] on several occasions."⁶¹ Poy, a laborer who possessed a certificate of residence, challenged the claims of Malone and Connell that he had visited Cananea, Mexico. Although the witnesses for Poy convincingly traced his residential history back sixteen years to Los Angeles and his recent associations with truck farmers in Fairbank, Arizona, they were unable to overturn the claims of Malone and Connell. Chinese such as Poy, without an extensive residential history in southern Arizona and ties to long-standing Chinese in Tucson, were especially vulnerable to politically expedient deportation hearings. The travel of Chinese from places other than Tucson or southern Arizona proved risky. In the next few decades, when the Chinese Division enforced the political border between Arizona and Sonora, those more established Chinese in Tucson were often shielded from the harsh reality of exclusion laws.

Immigration surveillance of the southern Arizona line in the Geary Act persisted well into the twentieth century. As the machinery of the U.S. Immigration Service grew in manpower and became more efficient at stopping Chinese from entering the United States at the southern border, bonds of neighborhood and kinship that connected Chinese to other *fronterizos* shielded Chinese from being summarily deported. The most enduring accomplishments

60. Connell Family Scrapbook, MS 0166, folder 7, box 1, Connell Papers, Arizona Historical Society. For the final order of deportation, see "Appendix B: Chinese Exclusion Violations and Deportations, Arizona Territory," p. 4, First Judicial District, 1907–1922, Record Group 21.

61. Case 0111, *U.S. v. Wong Poy*, Chinese Exclusion Case File Database.

of the Chinese were the kith bonds created between them and their Mexican neighbors in Tucson. For Tucson Chinese, kith bonds were based in everyday relations of farming, commerce, and companionship. Chinese cultivated ties with Mexicans, formed families, and socialized. Kith bonds meant that *guanxi* relations could, and did, secure bonds among the Chinese themselves, and, by extension, the essential foundation of settlement was laid. The cultivation of kith and kin relations was made in the struggle with harsh immigration laws and the efforts of Tucson Chinese to fend off the enforcement of exclusion. These were largely unintended consequences of Chinese exclusion laws at the U.S.-Mexican border.

Some ten miles south in Mexico, different types of relationships between Chinese residents and Mexicans would have similar implications for long-term settlement in Sonora. By the mid-to-late 1890s, when amendments to the original exclusion laws were designed to stop illegal Chinese immigration from the northern and southern U.S. borders, relationships between Chinese merchants and Mexican and American officials acted in tandem to maintain cross-border travel, although the path to open borders was often fraught with uncertainty and confusion. After the Geary Act and its corollary, the McCreary Amendment (1893), were passed, exclusionists and lawmakers looked toward the Mexican border to stop illegal Chinese immigration, an influx of prohibited transnational movement believed to “threaten the good order” of the United States.⁶²

But when it came to Mexico, the approach to exclude Chinese immigration ultimately proved more of a challenge to U.S. policymakers than initially anticipated. Unlike with Canada, American politicians did not enjoy the diplomatic agreements with Mexico necessary to impede cross-border movements nor were Mexican officials inclined to discourage the temporary travel of Chinese Mexican merchants into the United States. Many factors were at play here, most of which originated from the contradiction between Mexico’s open immigration policies and U.S. exclusion laws. Mexico’s development projects—railroads in the south, mines in the north—relied on liberal immigration policies, which had long

62. Civil Cases 1–13, folder 4, box 2, Second Judicial District, Record Group 21. The quotation comes from [Benjamin Harrison], “Presidential message transmitting correspondence between Governments of United States and China on Chinese immigration,” Feb. 6, 1893, in U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, S.exdoc.54 (1892–1893), vol. 2, p. 11.

sought to attract immigrants and colonists, including the Chinese, to the farthest corners of that nation. Moreover, prohibiting the movement of any Mexican residents or citizens—whether domestically or internationally—ran counter to the tenets of the Mexican Constitution, a fact that Mexican officials reiterated to American exclusionists. Forces on the U.S. side also contributed to the complexity of enforcing the Chinese exclusion laws at the southern border. Policymakers in Washington, D.C., although fully aware of Chinese communities in northern Mexico and the U.S. Southwest, had yet to rework exclusion laws to make them suitable for the Mexican borderlands context. Yet, despite the attempt to close the U.S. border to Chinese immigration, transnational movements persisted. Local arrangements with Mexican consular officials and U.S. customs authorities worked in partnership to maintain open borders for Chinese merchants in Mexico, who frequently relied on American-based Chinese firms to supply their stores south of the border.

Before the harsh amendments to the Chinese exclusion laws were made, reports about large numbers of Chinese disembarking in the port city of Guaymas prompted only slight concern among U.S. consular officials throughout Sonora. Reports of cattle driven illegally from southern Arizona ranches occupied the immediate attention of consulates.⁶³ Indeed, Mexican and American officials often seemed more preoccupied with stray livestock than with the activities of Chinese border crossers. Expressing some consternation over large groups of Chinese migrants traversing near Quitabaquita, Nogales consul Delos H. Smith “hardly [knew] whether or not [he] was right in reporting this matter” to his superiors. Smith proclaimed in a rather indifferent manner that the passage of the “Exclusion Acts seems to justify reporting the information.”⁶⁴ The Nogales consul’s reluctance to convey to U.S. government officials the northward

63. There are several exchanges between Delos H. Smith, William F. Wharton, and Alonso Aspe, collector of customs for Nogales, Mexico, that illustrate the priorities of officials negotiating the political borderlands. Of particular interest are exchanges between the consulates and government officials that typified the struggle to obtain stray cattle—either of originally Mexican or American ownership. See the correspondence dated and entitled “Cattle Crossing Line into Mexico,” Sept. 5, Dec. 9, 1890; Smith to James G. Blaine, and Smith to Wharton, Dec. 9, 1890; “Live Stock,” Feb. 5, 1890, all in Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Nogales, 1889–1906, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

64. Smith to Wharton, on “Chinamen Crossing into the United States,” Jan. 28, 1890, reel 1, in *ibid.*

movement of Chinese migrants combined with a curious advocacy for Chinese residents, in particular of the merchant class. Smith petitioned U.S. government authorities on behalf of Chinese in Sonora who requested permission to enter the United States to conduct business. Reasonably confident about the right of temporary entry into the United States, Smith conveyed the following to Washington officials:

It occasionally happens that Chinamen come to the consulate here for permission to visit the United States on business or pleasure and I desire to know if under the Treaties and Laws now in force, a Consul can issue such a permit? I find no forms here, or in the Regulations for such permit, and enclose one for the consideration of the Department.⁶⁵

Smith's resourcefulness proved tenable, at least in the short term, and Chinese businessmen crossed into the United States with relative ease for nearly two years. Smith, convinced that his petition would quickly remedy the policy oversight, created an affidavit for official adoption. While Smith's blueprint may have served well as a stop-gap measure, it did not afford a long-term solution, especially after 1892. Lau Chy was one of several Chinese merchants in Mexico who enjoyed the benefits of transnational travel in the years prior to the Geary Act. The resident of Magdalena, Sonora, frequently ventured north to stock his store with materials and tools for shoe manufacturing. Chy, like many Chinese Mexican merchants with business and social connections in the United States, established a durable record of permitted visits, mostly to Tucson, El Paso, San Diego, and San Francisco—cities with relatively large and vibrant Chinese communities. At this time, to cross legally into the United States required that a merchant prove that he was "a person other than a laborer" who was engaged in commerce. A merchant was also required to submit a photograph and document his "reliable and trusty" character.⁶⁶ Chy, in keeping with Smith's solution, provided such documentation and passed through the border without incident.

65. Smith to Wharton, Assistant Secretary of State, on "Chinamen Visiting the US," Feb. 8, 1890, reel 1, in *ibid.*

66. Smith to Wharton, on "Form for Permit," Feb. 8, 1890, in *ibid.* It is important to note that before 1892 the Chinese merchant community of Sonora applied the same provisions of travel extended to the Chinese living in the United States who wished to go abroad.

This is to certify that the bearer hereof
whose photograph is
herewith attached is a
at Nogales Sonora Mexico and is
known by of Nogales
to be a reliable, trustworthy man.
He being desirous of visiting the
United States on has
applied to me for permit to do so
and I hereby grant the same and
request all whom it may concern
to permit him safely and freely
to pass to and
return to this place, and in case
of need to give him all lawful
aid and protection limited to days.
Given under my hand and
seal of the Consulate at Nogales
Mexico, this day of
A.D. 189 and
of the Independence of the
United States the one hundred
and
U.S. Consul

Figure 2. "Form for Permit," enclosure with letter from Delos H. Smith to William F. Wharton, Assistant Secretary of State, Feb. 8, 1890, in Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Nogales, 1889–1906, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Around the time the Geary Act was passed, crossing into the United States assumed greater complexity and greater peril for the Chinese. Despite his status as a Mexican citizen and his long record of legal travel into the United States, Chy could no longer pass through the southern U.S. border to conduct business matters after 1892. Southern Arizona customs officials ceased to recognize American consular and Mexican officials' entreaty of Chy's status as a merchant and a Mexican resident.⁶⁷ Regardless of Chy's travel and business record, Nogales collector Willis P. Hayes, who himself admitted his own ignorance about any policy that applied to the admission of foreign Chinese merchants into the United States, thought it wise to "err on the side of exclusion than toward freedom" and rejected Chy's petition to enter the United States.⁶⁸

Appeals that challenged the denial of Chy's entry spurred a considerable correspondence between Mexican and American businessmen and government officials concerned about the implications of enforcing exclusion laws in this new fashion. Prominent Mexican citizens testified to Chy's long-standing contributions as a merchant to Sonoran society. Alexander J. Clark, president of the *ayunatamiento* (municipality) of Magdalena, confirmed Chy's "good reputation," his substantial business acumen, and his ability to speak Spanish "well enough."⁶⁹ Chy's business wealth, as estimated by Clark, amounted to \$2,000 a year, while his personal stock was valued at \$5,000. Ignacio Bonillas, prefect of Magdalena, also gave written testimony of Chy's business history.⁷⁰ Regardless of Chy's wealth in Mexico and his intention of conducting short-term business transactions in the United States, American officials remained entirely unconvinced that the merchant intended to return to Sonora. After this initial denial, when Chy once again returned to the Nogales customs office to make his case, the Magdalena merchant submitted what he believed to be proper and sufficient documentation to enter the United States. Chy guessed wrong. Instead, he provided immigration authorities

67. Vice Consul Josiah Stone to Wharton, on "Case of Chinese Merchant Lau Chy," Feb. 11, 1892, in *ibid.*

68. Willis P. Hayes, acting collector, to Stone, Jan. 15, 1892, enclosure 5, in *ibid.*

69. Testimony on behalf of Lau Chy from Alexander J. Clark, enclosures 1 and 2, Feb. 11, 1892, in *ibid.*

70. Testimony on behalf of Lau Chy from Ignacio Bonillas, enclosure 3, Feb. 11, 1892, in *ibid.* Also included in the enclosures is Stone's verification of Chy's status as a shoe merchant previously noted by Chinese authorities.

with paperwork that met the requirements of a Chinese merchant formerly residing in the United States, returning to his home after a temporary visit abroad. Chy's credentials were wholly inadequate for a Chinese person residing in Mexico who wanted to gain temporary entry into the United States.⁷¹ For all of Chy's efforts, however mistaken, there existed no clear guidelines in U.S. immigration law or in the exclusion laws themselves for Chinese merchants living in Mexico to travel legally and temporarily into the United States.

As the drive to enforce Chinese exclusion grew in strength, government officials came under increasing pressure to act against freedom and close the border between the United States and Mexico. For a short historical moment, Chy's failed attempt at legal entry into the United States seemed to usher in a period of enduring and absolute exclusionary practice at the Mexican border. Yet American consular officials in Nogales—and later, U.S. immigration officials at the Arizona border—acted against exclusion, and in favor of openness. Those Sonoran Chinese who faced the fewest obstacles to crossing the Mexican-U.S. border were, for the most part, middle-class merchants who had achieved or attained Mexican ethnic identity and reputation. In this respect, Mexican ethnicity not only required achieving a large degree of material success and acquiring proficiency in the Spanish language but also entailed that Mexicans themselves perceive the Sonoran Chinese as legitimate citizens of their country. This dynamic worked in Lau Chy's favor six years later; in 1898 the Magdalena businessman entered the United States without incident when Chinese businessmen in Mexico were routinely issued visas as merchants—and not as Chinese nationals. As a member of the prominent Sonoran firm of Juan Lung Tain, Chy, along with fellow business partners Lau Chan and Chin Chan Jin, successfully obtained travel visas to enter the United States from the American consul in Nogales, J. F. Darnell.⁷²

In the Geary Act era, Mexican and American officials in Sonora continued to advocate for the entry of Chinese merchants into the United States. The result of this advocacy was a border

71. Hayes to Stone, Jan. 15, 1892, enclosure 5, in *ibid.*

72. Nogales consul J. F. Darnell to J. B. Moore, Assistant Secretary of State, on "Visaing Chinese Papers," Oct. 31, 1898, in *ibid.* Lau Chi was one of the first organizers of the firm of Juan Lung Tain. In 1892 Lau Chan and Chin Chan Jin joined the business by investing over \$4,000.

that remained more fluid than might have been anticipated. Social class set the limits of transnational travel for Chinese in Mexico. Merchants, as an exempt class by virtue of the original Chinese exclusion law, were privileged over Chinese laborers in Mexico who had no recourse other than to cross illegally into the United States. Laborers, despite their status, initially enjoyed some measure of control if caught attempting to enter the United States illegally. As Mexican citizens, they could request that they be returned to Mexico—and not deported to China. After 1904, however, this request was seldom met.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the most enduring accomplishment of Chinese borderland communities was the creation of relationships and everyday bonds. In Sonora, these ties were born out of diplomatic advocacy, local arrangements, and Mexican identity. In southern Arizona, the Chinese community, however small in number, drew on connections with Mexicans to farm and establish businesses. Meanwhile, friendships with Mexicans, although at times fraught with tension because of the far-reaching power of immigration restrictionism, served to create close neighborhood and familial ties between Chinese and *hispano* neighbors. On both sides of the border, these myriad relationships—occurring in the privacy of households, among families and friends, and within networks of commerce and community—were tenable ways to counter the power of exclusion laws. Patterns of transnational travel, social ties, and economic activity persisted and were not easily broken, even though the undertones and overtones of exclusion—scrutiny, surveillance, Sinophobia, and deportation—collided with forces of openness and fluidity. Out of this complex social landscape grew interethnic communities even as attendant apprehensions weighed heavily on Chinese borderlanders. While proponents of immigration restrictionism would have neither anticipated nor desired it, kith, kin, business, and diplomatic bonds were the most significant legacies of Chinese exclusion laws at the Arizona-Sonora borderlands.