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A Thousand Cuts: Or, How Soo Hoo Doo Got Run Out of Town

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Police whistles broke the peace of a quiet Sunday morning in the summer of 1887. Customers collecting their finished bundles from the Chinese laundries along Philadelphia's Race Street jumped aside as police rushed from door to door charging Yee Hop, John Lee, Hop Lee, and Kim Wah with Sunday Closing violations and slapping each with a \$4 fine. When the laundrymen refused to pay, the police marched them to Magistrate Eisenbrown who threatened them with jail if they did not comply by the end of the week.

Word spread quickly. The next evening over 60 men – nearly every Chinese laundryman in downtown Philadelphia – met to plan a course of action. For more than two hours, one after another shared stories of police harassment. In the end, they retained a lawyer to petition Judge Bregy for an appeal. Bregy granted the appeal but postponed arguments until the Fall.

The next Sunday the men opened their laundries as usual. Soon afterwards a customer entered the shop of Sam Chung, 16, begging Chung to finish a shirt so he could take his best girl to the park. Chung didn't work Sundays but eventually he yielded to the man's persistent pleas. The moment Chung picked up his iron the police came and arrested him.

Chung's Sunday school teacher, Mrs. Downing, was visiting and witnessed the entire episode. Short, stout, black-haired, and determined, she erupted in fury at the policemen and accompanied Chung and the arresting officer to Magistrate Eisenbrown's office. When Eisenbrown imposed a fine, Downing exploded. "That's right! That's right!

Persecute the poor Chinamen. You can only see on one side of the street. You can see the poor Chinese with their laundries open, but you can't see the white groceries and grog shops and cigar stores and candy stores!"

Eisenbrown tried to calm her but she would not calm. She denounced the magistrate, the lieutenant and the entire police force. When Eisenbrown insisted he would fine Chung \$4 and costs, Downing cried, "Don't pay them a cent. It's downright robbery." "I won't pay no fine," replied a resolute Chung.¹ Chung was determined to stay and fight but Soo Hoo Doo (aka Mon Yuen Soo, 1865 - 1914), another Philadelphia laundryman and manager of a prosperous oriental bazar, decided it was time to move on. This is his story.

Doo moved to the rapidly-growing community of Scranton in northeastern Pennsylvania where he founded another laundry and import store. In the early 1890s he brought his wife from China.² The couple soon had four children, all born in America. They established close ties with prominent members of the Scranton community and they prospered. Then, in the violence surrounding the Great Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902, Doo became the target of incessant police harassment. To safeguard his family, he removed them to China and returned alone to manage his business interests. The harassment intensified. He moved to nearby Wilkes-Barre, but after a few peaceful years, police harassment commenced there as well. Doo hired lawyers, assembled witnesses, and fought extortion efforts of crooks, the Black Hand, and the police. His exertions proved futile. He was tried three times and thrown in jail before charges against him were finally dropped. In despair he returned to Philadelphia and died at the young age of 49.

I tell Doo's story--parts of it anyway--in Doo's own voice. This fact alone makes it a valuable addition to the history of nineteenth-century Chinese Americans as few of them left personal records. Most were illiterate immigrants without the time or resources for journal-keeping or extensive letter-writing. They were men whose families were

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¹ PT, Aug. 30, 1887.

² Ancestry.com. *New York Chinese Exclusion Index* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 1998. Original data: United States, National Archives and Records Administration. *Index to 'Chinese Exclusion' Case Files of the New York District Office of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, ca. 1882-1960*. New York, USA. National Archives and Records Administration--Northeast Region (New York), [April 1998], Chinese Exclusion Case file 14, 1100. Doo was consistent in giving 1865 as his birth year but he varied his reporting of his year of immigration. When interviewed by immigration officers he gave his year of entry as 1877. To 1900 census takers he reported 1888. To 1910 census takers he reported 1878. Doo, Soo Hoo, Enumerator's manuscript, 1900; Census, Scranton Ward 8, Lackawanna, Pennsylvania; Roll: 1420; Page: 11A; Enumeration District: 0071; FHL microfilm: 1241420 and Doo, Soo Hoo [Goo, Mon Y (sic)], Enumerator's manuscript, 1910 Census Scranton Ward 8, Lackawanna, Pennsylvania; Roll: T624_1359; Page: 11A; Enumeration District: 0084; FHL microfilm: 1375372.

largely forbidden from joining them, so few had American-born children to tell their tales.³ As targets of harsh laws limiting their entry and conduct, many understandably avoided the spotlight. Even census takers appear to have seriously undercounted them.⁴

Although Doo was able to read and write, he does not appear to have left a diary. Doo's children were born in the United States, yet his offspring did not leave written records. In place of these traditional sources, what we have instead are stories Doo placed in the local newspapers. Perhaps hoping to distance himself from ugly stereotypes in wide-circulation at the time, Doo invited the press to meet his family and to observe his business and cultural practices. Doo and his family were upstanding members of the Scranton community. He wanted his neighbors to know it and the newspapers to tell it. The recent digitization of historical newspapers together with census records, city directories, wills, ship manifests, and similar documents makes it possible for the first time to reconstruct and verify the story he told of himself.

Doo offers an inspiring example of Chinese assimilation as early as the nineteenth century and of one man's heroic efforts to defend himself and his family against racial violence. Doo's story is also a powerful reminder of the sometimes deadly, but always caustic, effects of hate speech, especially hate speech encouraged and legitimated by powerful public figures.

Policing Becomes Political

Police harassment was hardly the most intense form of hostility directed against the Chinese. Anti-Chinese riots, massacres, raids, and roundups murdered many hundreds and injured and uprooted many thousands. Union rules barred the Chinese from virtually all branches of manufacturing. The California constitution prohibited corporations and governmental agencies from employing Chinese workers. Municipal statutes directed against the Chinese outlawed laundries in wood frame buildings, excluded persons carrying bundles on shoulder poles, and limited residential density.⁵

³ K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, eds., *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities during the Exclusion Era* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), vii. For a son's delightful account of his Chinese immigrant parents see Pardee Lowe's *Father and Glorious Descendant* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1943).

⁴ For studies noting large discrepancies between census counts and contemporaries' estimates of the Chinese population see Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 59; Bernard P. Wong, *A Chinese American Community: Ethnicity and Survival Strategies* (Singapore: Chopmen Enterprises, 1979), 18; and David B. Holmes and Wenbin Yuan, *Chinese Milwaukee* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing Co., 2008), 11.

⁵ Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1971); Sucheng Chan, *This Bitter-Sweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1986), 40-41; Stanford M. Lyman, *Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 1974); Ivan Light, "From Vice District to Tourist Attraction: The Moral Career of American Chinatowns, 1880-1940," *Pacific Historical Review* XLIII (1974): 367-394; Sandy Lydon, *Chinese Gold: The History of the Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region* (Capitola, CA: Capitola Book Co., 1985), 222; Shirley Sui-Ling Tam, "Police Round-Up of Chinese in Cleveland in 1925: A Case Study in a Racist Measure and the Chinese Response," M.A. Thesis, Case Western Reserve University, 1988; K. Scott Wong, "The Eagle Seeks a Helpless Quarry: Chinatown, the Police, and the Press. The 1903 Boston Chinatown Raid Revisited," *Amerasia Journal*, 22:3 (1996): 81-103; Victor Jew, "Exploring New Frontiers in Chinese American History: The Anti-Chinese Riot in Milwaukee, 1889," in Susie Lan Cassel, ed., *The Chinese in America: A*

Banned from most legitimate work, some enterprising Chinese opened whore-houses, gambling joints, and opium dens, exposing themselves to violence in different forms. Whites who frequented these vice spots were often drunk and disorderly. Fights were frequent. The rival syndicates who operated them hired armed thugs to protect their turf. Their rivalries periodically erupted into wars that left Chinatown streets red with blood.⁶

Solitary laundrymen living outside of Chinatowns were subject to random attacks by ruffians emboldened by the vitriolic anti-Chinese rhetoric of the day. In Kaukauna, Wisconsin, Wing Lee was sitting in his laundry when someone threw a stone through his window. The stone upset the stove, broke Lee's lamp, and ignited a blaze that set the laundry on fire. Lee was forced to flee for his life and lost almost \$1,500 in bills, equipment, and structure.⁷ In Green Bay, Wisconsin, a stranger came into Sam Wing's laundry, swept clothing onto the floor, overturned the starch pail, knocked down the stove, and crashed a chair down over Wing's head, leaving him bloodied and dazed.⁸

Police harassment may seem inconsequential in comparison with these acts, but it was ubiquitous and unrelenting. Police harassed Chinese laundrymen in New York when that city stepped up its enforcement of Sunday closing laws.⁹ In Oakland, California, police harassment was so outrageous that even the mainstream *Oakland Tribune* mocked it.

In 1875, a certain Ah Sam was arrested for peddling without a license: "His vegetables are lying on the floor of the police Court office, while businessmen throughout the city are going ahead as usual, very few of whom have taken out a license".... "Ah Dong has been arrested on suspicion of being a Chinaman." In 1887 a police officer set out to arrest Wing Hop, who ran an unlicensed laundry. Wing Hop was not at home, so the officer arrested another man "at random," and booked him as Wing Hop, "on the theory that there is little difference in the appearance of Chinamen."¹⁰

When laundryman Soon Hing challenged San Francisco's Sunday closing law, arguing that its sole purpose was to harm the Chinese, his case became a test of the

History from Gold Mountain to the New Millennium 10, 2002:389-410; Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 2007); Scott Zesch, *The Chinatown War: Chinese Los Angeles and the Massacre of 1871* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁶ Light, "Vice District"

⁷ *WW*, Mar. 23, 1889.

⁸ *ODN*, Mar. 30, 1890.

⁹ *NYS*, Dec. 4, 1882; Batya Miller, "Enforcement of the Sunday Closing Laws on the Lower East Side, 1882-1903," *American Jewish History* 91(2) (2003):269-286.

¹⁰ From the archives of the *Oakland Tribune* as quoted in Lawrence M. Friedman and Robert V. Percival. *The Roots of Justice: Crime and Punishment in Alameda County California, 1870-1910* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 108-109.

constitutionality of such provisions and went all the way to the Supreme Court. Hing lost.¹¹

Soo Hoo Doo's story illustrates the deleterious effects of pervasive police harassment of Chinese in the relatively small cities of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. These cities were home to only a small number of hard-working, law-abiding Chinese American laundrymen and restaurateurs. They made no effort to "steal" the jobs of coal miners, machinists, or railroad workers. They and their families gave the lie to the argument that the Chinese could not assimilate. They had to assimilate. There were only 36 of them in a community of almost half a million. Yet abusive racist speech defined the Chinese as undesirable and the police harassed them with a vengeance. Like the Chinese capital punishment *lingchi*, "death by a thousand cuts," no single assault was lethal. Done repeatedly, however, they led to a painful end. In China, the Qing Dynasty was abandoning *lingchi* to better align its judicial system with Western sensibilities.¹² Through the practice of police harassment of Chinese, America imported the practice, at least metaphorically.

Police harassment originated in the creation of formal urban police departments in nineteenth-century American cities. Before such departments, civil order was kept by part-time, self-employed constables and night watchmen who worked for fees and brought their cases directly to the courts. As cities grew in size, mayors replaced these part-timers with hierarchically-organized, uniformed, and salaried police officers who reported directly to the mayor. These policemen were not trained in the law. Instead, new recruits "heard a brief speech from a high-ranking officer, received a hickory club, a whistle, and a key to the call box, and were sent out on the street to work with an experienced officer."¹³

The regular salaries attached to the posts made police positions attractive political plums. Newly-elected mayors typically fired the old guard and redistributed the posts among their own supporters. Mayors used their police to deter unsympathetic voters and attack opponents. Often there were "rackets" that generated extra income for the police and for the politicians for whom they worked. Those who refused to cooperate were fined, arrested, or worse. "Reform" mayors often authorized practices that were just as harmful for minorities. Their crackdowns on the saloons, gambling halls, and prostitution rings that thrived under the racketeers' protection gave the police license to harass anyone they deemed "undesirable." In the xenophobic atmosphere of the late-nineteenth century, both "Bosses" and "Reformers" might target the Chinese. Policing was political.¹⁴

Against this background Doo's choice of Scranton seems curious. Scranton was home to labor leader Terrance Powderly, a man historian Stanford Lyman called "one of

¹¹ *Soon Hing v. Crowley*, 113 U.S. 703 (1885) cited in Alan Raucher, "Sunday Business and the Decline of Sunday Closing Laws: A Historical Overview," *Journal of Church and State* (1994):18.

¹² Timothy Brook, Jérôme Bourgon, and Gregory Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹³ Mark H. Haller, "Historical Roots of Police Behavior: Chicago, 1890-1925," *Law & Society Review* 10(2) (1976): 303.

¹⁴ Eric H. Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America, 1860-1920* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

the most vitriolic and vituperative of the labor movement's Sinophobes."¹⁵ It was, arguably, a national epicenter of anti-Chinese rhetoric. Moreover, like many late-nineteenth-century American cities, its rule alternated between "Bosses" and "Reformers." For Chinese persons in particular, Scranton was a dangerous place.

Scranton's Danger

Scranton was founded in the 1830s by brothers Seldon T. and George W. Scranton. America's railroad boom was in full swing yet she imported the t-rails for her tracks from Britain, and at great expense. No one in America was able to produce them. When the Scrantons perfected an iron-making process adapted to the local anthracite and began making their own t-rails, the town's economy took off.¹⁶ As they came to appreciate the quality and extent of the underlying coal seam, the Scrantons purchased huge tracts of coal lands and transformed their Lackawanna Steel Company into one of the nation's largest coal producers.¹⁷

During the Civil War Scranton's iron mills and coal mines ran at full capacity; her population grew three-fold; she became Pennsylvania's fourth-largest city. After the war, sales of steel and coal plummeted; miners, mechanics, and foundry men lost their jobs; wages fell. Those who could leave left. Among those who remained, ethnic tensions grew.

Ethnic tensions were never far from the surface. Immigrants from Wales were skilled miners whose mountainous homeland greatly resembled the Scranton area. They kept up the Welsh language and culture. They were Protestants who denounced dancing with the same vehemence they denounced murder. To a man they voted Republican. Immigrants from Ireland came from rural agricultural backgrounds, their only mining experience occasional work as strikebreakers in Wales. They were Catholics and many spoke Gaelic. As their numbers grew, Irish saloons began appearing up and down Lackawanna Avenue, the front room reserved for drinking and the back for dancing and other amusements. They voted Democratic. Later arrivals included Germans, Italians, Poles, Slovaks, Hungarians, Ukrainians, and Russians.¹⁸ They did not consider themselves "White," not even "American." They were Welsh or Irish, Polack or Italian.

Ethnic tensions erupted in 1869 after the fire set for ventilation at the base of a mine shaft spread to the wooden breaker that straddled the shaft's mouth and blocked

¹⁵ Stanford M. Lyman, "The 'Chinese Question' and American Labor Historians," *New Politics* 7(4) (new series), whole no. 28, (Winter, 2000).

¹⁶ W. David Lewis, "The Early History of the Lackawanna Iron and Coal Company: A Study in Technological Adaptation," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (1972):437.

¹⁷ Eliot Jones, *The Anthracite Coal Combination in Pennsylvania* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1914), 24; Lewis, "Lackawanna Iron and Coal," 424, 437.

¹⁸ Phebe Earle Gibbons, "The Miners of Scranton," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, LV (November, 1877):916-927; John E. Bodnar, "Socialization and Adaptation: Immigrant Families in Scranton, 1880-1890," *Pennsylvania History* 43, no. 2 (1976):147-163.

the only means of egress. The fire then spread to the coal itself, trapping those caught below ground. One hundred and ten miners were asphyxiated. They left behind 72 widows and 158 fatherless children in the Scranton area plus hundreds more back in Europe. Most of the victims were Welsh. Though ruled an accident, many believed the fire was an act of arson, perpetuated, perhaps, by the Molly McGuires, a secretive Irish society that engaged in murder and committed other violent atrocities to achieve what it viewed as “retributive justice.”¹⁹

Terrance Powderly, the son of Irish immigrants, came to Scranton at this time. He worked as a machinist in the locomotive shop of the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad where he joined the Machinists' and Blacksmiths' International Union. A powerful speaking voice and intimate knowledge of parliamentary procedures propelled his rapid ascent in the organization. He was elected president of his local, then Secretary of the District Assembly, and later Grand Master Workman (president) of the Knights of Labor, a nationwide organization that sought to unite all workers into a single union. Powderly forged the strategies that propelled his rise to national prominence in the furnace of Scranton politics.

As coal prices continued their fall into 1871 the mines cut wages and miners went out on strike. This time, for the first time in Scranton's history, the Welsh, and Irish, and Germans stood together and idled every mine. Scranton's Republican mayor chose the moment to authorize a crackdown on the city's Irish and German saloons. There were 125 of them, all in flagrant violation of the city's Sunday liquor ordinances. Brawls and crime were rampant; saloon owners defiant. Attorney Edward Baker (E.B.) Sturges, the son of a Congregational minister who had arrived in Scranton from Connecticut a few years earlier, organized a group of reformers, all men of property, who vowed to break them. In the face of threats of bodily harm, Sturges obtained 113 indictments against 63 saloon men and put an end to the all-night drinking. The Irish and Germans fumed.

As the strike dragged on, worker solidarity eroded. Angry crowds hooted and jeered those who returned to work. The governor sent the Pennsylvania National Guard's Ninth Division, Hazelton Brigade, and its Fifteenth Regiment to escort strike breakers to and from work each day. In early May a group of several hundred men and women throwing stones at the marchers drew the militia's fire. Two strikers and two militiamen were killed in the chaos that followed. Strikers returned to work.²⁰

The incident led Powderly to define Labor's challenge as forging a “common bond of brotherhood” among working men hailing from different countries, speaking different languages, practicing different religions, and often engaging in heated

¹⁹ Gibbons, “Miners of Scranton”; Robert P. Wolensky and Joseph M. Keating, *Tragedy at Avondale* (Easton: Canal History and Technology Press, 2008).

²⁰ Frederick Lyman Hitchcock, *The History of Scranton and Its People*, Vol. 1 (Scranton: Lewis Historical Pub. Co., 1914), 489-492.

competition with one another.²¹ Powderly proposed to tackle this herculean challenge by scapegoating of Chinese.

There were no Chinese in Scranton when Powderly first adopted this tactic. He was directing his remarks to a national audience. While other labor leaders also attacked the Chinese, Powderly took this racist rhetoric to new extremes. The Chinese are "coolie slaves," Powderly roared. "Their labor is slave labor."

The Chinaman is ignorant, conscienceless, and corrupt. He is crafty, he is criminal, he is depraved. His only virtue is his industry; and in this he acts with deadly results upon that of our own people. [Chinamen] hate and detest our people. They have no conception of our free institutions; they know nothing of our schools, our charities, or our religion. They are a set of thieves, cut-throats, and pagans.²²

By comparison with this pejorative portrait, differences among the Welsh, Irish, Germans, Russians, Slovaks and Italians paled to insignificance. In comparing them with this caricature of Chinese, Euro-Americans became "White."²³

The Scranton economy continued to worsen. The nationwide panic of 1873 hit the region hard. With investment at a standstill, demand for iron collapsed. Even coal sales declined as unemployed workers could no longer afford to fuel their stoves. To spread what little work remained, the mines and mills reduced wages and instituted short time. Until he heard the morning toot of his company's whistle, a man did not know if he would work that day. Whistles were silent for weeks on end.²⁴

Scranton's Democratic Party, the party of Irish and German workingmen, grew in strength and organization. By the mid-1870s Irish immigrant Frank Beamish, the Democratic Party's Lackawanna County leader, had established a political machine his critics described as "a smaller edition of New York's Boss Tweed." Reformers, again under Sturges's leadership, launched a legal battle that sent Beamish to the state penitentiary on a conviction of embezzling funds from the city's schools.²⁵

In the summer of 1877, with wages already near subsistence levels, major railroads across the nation announced yet another coordinated round of pay cuts. Upon hearing the news, freight hands at the Baltimore & Ohio repair shop in Martinsburg, West Virginia stopped work and brought traffic along a long stretch of that road to a

²¹ Vincent J. Falzone, "Terence V. Powderly: Politician and Progressive Mayor of Scranton, 1878-1884," *Pennsylvania History* 41(3) (1974): 289-309.

²² Terence Vincent Powderly, *Thirty Years of Labor, 1859-1889* (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1890), 423-424.

²³ Saxton, *Indispensable Enemy*; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); David R Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (Verso, 1999).

²⁴ Samuel C. Logan. *A City's Danger and Defense* (Philadelphia: Jas. B. Rodgers, 1887), 6-7.

²⁵ Hitchcock, *History of Scranton*: 487, 493; SR, Apr. 9, 1919.

complete halt. Within a few days the strike was nationwide. State militias were ordered to open the rail lines. President Rutherford B. Hayes sent in the Second U.S. Artillery. Cities became war zones. Only the troops' sympathy with the striking workers averted a bloodbath.²⁶

In Scranton, workers put their ethnic differences aside and all 35,000 of them joined the strike. No longer Welsh, Irish, German, Russian, Polish, Slovak or Italian, they were proudly, if temporarily, "Labor." Fearful of property damage, Scranton's mayor recruited a private militia to supplement the city's constables and night watchmen. W.W. Scranton, cousin of the city's founders and manager of Lackawanna Iron & Coal, turned over the company's general store for use as headquarters for this "Scranton Citizens Corps." It drilled three times daily in the city center. After a week without work, men began returning to their jobs. Some five thousand of those remaining on strike assembled on the city's outskirts and marched into town. The chaos that ensued when the strikers met the Corps left four strikers dead.²⁷ In the view of Labor, workingmen had been gunned down by a posse of *vigilantes*. Aldermen called for an inquest and a week later announced a three-fold indictment for "wilful murder" against more than 21 members of the Corps, all prominent men of property. To the propertied class, these men were "patriotic public servants who had [the] wisdom to discern the City's danger and the patient courage to provide for its defense." Fearful for the corpsmen's safety, the governor ordered federal troops to place the accused in protective custody. A few months later a judge in neighboring Wilkes-Barre exonerated them.²⁸

The next year, Powderly was elected Scranton's mayor. In office, he launched an ambitious program of civic improvement that included the suspension of the entire police department and its replacement with a full-time, hierarchically-organized, uniformed, and salaried force. Other Powderly policies helped revive the Scranton economy and mend the social compact. He established a board of health, built a public hospital, paved the city's streets, and constructed a modern sewer system. When a small pox epidemic struck he quickly quarantined the sick and vaccinated the well, saving many lives. To pay for these initiatives he revamped the city's tax code and licensing practices to broaden the tax base, close loopholes, and enforce collections. To discourage speculators and encourage investment he implemented Henry George's scheme of taxing unimproved land at a higher rate than improved.²⁹

In spite of the improvements, many laborers found Powderly far too willing to compromise with business interests. In 1884 they elected Frank Beamish, "boss" of the Lackawanna County Democratic Party and convicted embezzler was elected Scranton's mayor.³⁰ Two turbulent years later Colonel Ezra Hoyt Ripple, Civil War POW survivor, capitalist, and former captain of the Scranton Citizens Corps, replaced him. It was under Ripple's leadership that the city electrified its street lights and inaugurated its electric

²⁶ Philip S. Foner, *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877* (New York: Monad Press, 1977).

²⁷ Logan, *A City's Danger*, 99.

²⁸ Logan, *A City's Danger*: iii; *PT*, Aug. 9, 1877; Nov. 29, 1877.

²⁹ Falzone, "Terence V. Powderly."

³⁰ *WSG*, Jan. 30, 1884.

trolley system, the first of its kind anywhere in the world. Scranton became the “Electric City.”³¹

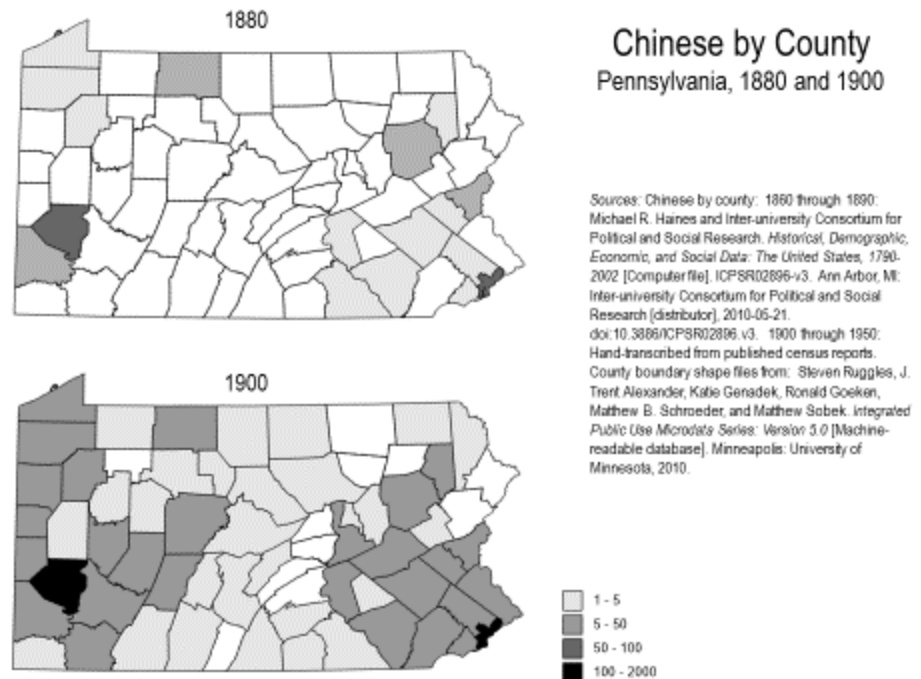
Meanwhile, the city’s Board of Trade had begun recruiting manufacturers of silk, buttons, lace, and underwear—all traditional employers of women.³² More jobs for women would sustain households’ incomes during the frequent downtimes at the mines and keep single women from having to leave town for work. As a consequence of the Board’s successful efforts, women’s manufacturing employment grew and as a result domestic help became increasingly scarce and expensive. Demand for laundry services soared. John Highriter, a manufacturer of custom-made men’s shirts, established the city’s first commercial steam laundry.³³ The Chinese took note.

The Chinese Arrive in Scranton

Attracted by the brisk demand for commercial laundry services, Sam Lee came to Scranton in the late 1870s.³⁴ Apparently pleased with Lee’s work, the Board of Trade recruited Charley Sing, a handsome, Americanized laundryman.³⁵ Soo Hoo Doo and several other Chinese laundrymen arrived soon afterwards.

Doo and his countrymen were part of a large-scale relocation of the Chinese American population that took place in the years following passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Exclusion

Act ended the unrestricted migration that brought over 280 thousand Chinese to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century and ushered in wide-ranging restrictions on Chinese employment. The Chinese population fell. Those who remained and the few who were able



³¹ PEG, Apr. 6, 1885; WBR, Nov. 30, 1886; STT, May 9, 2013.

³² Harold W. Aurand, "Diversifying the Economy of the Anthracite Regions, 1880-1900," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (1970): 54-61; Scranton Board of Trade, "Board of Trade Will Celebrate 50 Years of Achievement and Unselfish Service for Scranton on December 12," *Scranton Board of Trade Journal* 14(1) (Nov. 1917): 9.

³³ SR, May 12, 1894.

³⁴ M. W. Lant & Brother, *Scranton City Directory 1879-80* (Scranton: Republican Steam Printing House, 1879).

³⁵ SR, Oct. 19, 1893.

to enter moved outside the West. In 1880 only 156 Chinese lived in Pennsylvania, about half of them in Philadelphia and the rest dispersed across fifteen different counties including Lackawanna County where Scranton was located. Twenty years later the Pennsylvania Chinese population had reached almost 2000 scattered across 56 of the Commonwealth's 67 counties.

The Chinese who came to Scranton and to the many other communities throughout Pennsylvania bore no resemblance to the ugly stereotype Powderly portrayed in his rantings. Doo and Sing, together with Yot Sing, Charles Tom, Lon Sam, Hoo Hung, Joe Ling and Too On, joined the First Presbyterian Church on the invitation of long-time chair of the Presbytery's outreach to non-English speakers, Henry Boies, a gunpowder manufacturer and one of the town's prominent reformers. Many other eminent men in the community were also congregants including Judge Alfred Hand and E.B. Sturges.³⁶ The Chinese attended church and Sunday School each week and practiced their English between classes. Their hard work bore fruit. After two years they were able to entertain their teachers with readings and recitations, almost all in English. By way of thanks they hosted a cake and ice cream reception at which they presented their teachers with gifts of Chinese pottery, banners, tea, and candy.³⁷ A few years later Sing married the young and attractive Jennie Shaffer as the bride's mother looked on with pleasure and approval. Newspapers across the state reported the remarkable story.³⁸

Doo introduced himself to influential members of the Scranton community and soon became well known and widely respected. Former mayor Ezra Ripple became an investor in Doo's laundry. The Franklin Avenue Rescue Mission invited Doo to lecture on Chinese culture and society. The *Scranton Republican* reported Doo's family ties to the military governor of Canton and other high-ranking Chinese officials. It noted Doo's visit with the Reverend Stearns of Germantown in its "Personals" column. Doo encouraged such favorable publicity. When his cousin Soo Hoo On was baptized, he raced to the *Republican's* offices to ensure that the milestone was widely broadcast. The reporter with whom he spoke described Doo as "well dressed," "very devout," and "very earnest."³⁹

After establishing his laundry Doo opened an import store and brought coveted Oriental goods to Scranton. He sold "Chinese crockery in great variety, Fans, Cards, Trays, Jewel Boxes and Lacquered Ware, Richly Embroidered Shawls, Handkerchiefs, [and] Napkins. Beautifully Worked screens and Hanging Ornaments ... beautiful Chinese lilies ... Toys in great variety...the largest and most varied stock of unadulterated Chinese and Japanese Teas, Pure Coffees, Spices...fancy, useful and unique articles, many of which were never seen in Scranton before."⁴⁰ He purchased or

³⁶ Hitchcock, *History of Scranton*, 230, 252; SR, Apr. 9, 1919.

³⁷ WBTL, Mar. 25, 1890.

³⁸ SR, Jan. 21, 1894; LDN, HDI, WBT, ST, PT, AL Jan. 22, 1894; HDI, Jan. 23, 1894; LC, Jan. 24, 1894; WBUL, Jan. 26, 1894.

³⁹ SR, May 9, 1892; Aug. 10, 1892; Feb. 19, 1894.

⁴⁰ SR, Dec. 14, 1892.

started a half-dozen laundries, hiring his countrymen to run them.⁴¹ In 1894 he returned to China to bring his wife.

The town's newspapers gushed with compliments upon meeting Mrs. Doo. They declared her "as pretty as a wax doll" adorned with "an assortment of her rare jewelry."⁴² Mrs. Doo adopted the assimilationist approach of her husband. She registered with the tax collector under the terms of the Geary Act and declared her intention to become a resident.⁴³ She began taking instruction in the Christian religion and the English language.⁴⁴ She acquainted herself with members of the Scranton community. Some patrons were said to come to Doo's shop for the express purpose of catching a glimpse of his pretty wife.⁴⁵ That summer, when a large quantity of fireworks exploded in Doo's store, blowing the plate glass front window and door into the street and setting the store's interior on fire, the Doos' neighbors and fellow Presbyterian congregants, Judge and Mrs. Alfred Hand, took them in.⁴⁶

The community noted the Doos' assimilation with approval. When Mrs. Doo gave birth to a baby girl a few months later, the

Tribune reassured its readers that there would be no "beating of tom toms, incense burning or other unusual things." Soo Hoo Doo was a Christian, it reminded them, "...enlightened, and Americanized, even though his nationality denies him the rights of citizenship..." It found the newborn exotic--a "little olive skinned Celesto-Americanese"--but reassured its readers that the baby "kicks its toes and sputters and grunts the same as the

ordinary Caucasian youngster." Doo was found "...smiling the smile that usually adorns the visage of a newly made father." When a reporter suggested that he name the baby "Scranton," he replied diplomatically that "possibly the name might do."⁴⁷



Source:
United
States
National
Archives
and
Records
Administr-
ation--
Northeast
Region
(New
York),
Case
number
14,1100,
Box 93.

⁴¹ *WBT*, Feb. 19, 1907.

⁴² *ST*, Jan. 2, 1894; *MMFP*, Apr. 16, 1894.

⁴³ *ST*, Apr. 26, 1894.

⁴⁴ *ST*, Nov. 9, 1895.

⁴⁵ *WBT*, Feb. 19, 1907.

⁴⁶ *ST*, July 6, 1894.

⁴⁷ *ST*, Nov. 15, 1894.

Tragically, baby Scranton died. Little Jennie arrived a year-and-a-half later. Doo's neighbors described her as a "very pretty baby" "blessed with unbound feet" that her parents intended to keep that way. Unlike her mother, whose feet were bound when she was a girl in China, Jennie "will be as able to pedal a bicycle or float gracefully along the streets in due time, as any other American maiden."⁴⁸ As Doo's wealth increased his family continued to grow. Several years later, when little Annie was born, Doo again introduced his children to reporters. They found Jennie "a bright-looking little girl" of seven and Harry "a stocky little chap with a beaming Celestial face and sprouting a queue-a miniature copy of Doo himself." They relayed Doo's assessment that Harry was a "very good boy." Young William was too young for the interview, but Doo's introduction revealed his political sophistication and his very American willingness to allow his son to carve out his own identity. William was the given name of arch political rivals William McKinley and William Jennings Bryan. In explaining his selection of William as the name for his son, Doo remarked, "Not know whether William McKinley or Bryan...[W]e let him say which."⁴⁹ After a while Doo adopted Western dress. A photograph from 1902 shows him with his black hair parted to one side, cut to the tops of his ears in front and gracing his shoulders in back. He is beardless, but wears a thin, handlebar mustache not unlike the one Ezra Ripple wore at the time. A dark, wide-lapel jacket covers a dark vest. Under them Doo wears a white upturned detachable collar framing a dark necktie fashioned into a heavy Windsor knot.

Some Scranton Chinese ran afoul of white sensibilities. When three young women visited his laundry late one evening for a puff on his opium pipe, Yot Sing was publicly reprimanded in the local press. Sing had done nothing illegal, yet that did not stop the editor from opining, "There are good and bad Chinamen...There are reputable sons of the Celestial Empire in this city, but Yot Sing is not one of them."⁵⁰ Not long after, Sing left town. Doo appeared to have mastered the complexities of living as a minority in an alien and often hostile culture.

Chinese Scapegoating Intensifies

In the 1890s the national mood hardened against the Chinese. The economic crisis of 1893-94 sent unemployment rates soaring above 17 percent. It was the worst depression in the nation's history.⁵¹ As downtime at the mines and factories stretched from days into weeks and then into long months, workers' anger against big corporations and big banks grew. In the campaign leading up to the presidential election of 1896, the eloquent William Jennings Bryan led a populist crusade that sought to wrestle power from the wealthy elite and put it into the hands of workingmen. Republican William McKinley emerged the ultimate victor in that contest, but only by a

⁴⁸ ST, May 14, 1896.

⁴⁹ ST, Apr. 2, 1901.

⁵⁰ SR, Dec. 24, 1891; Dec. 25, 1891.

⁵¹ The rate pertains to the nonfarm sector. David R. Weir, "A Century of U.S. Unemployment, 1890-1990." In Roger L. Ransom, Richard Sutch, and Susan B. Carter, eds. *Research in Economic History*, 14. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1992: Table D3: 341-343; Susan B. Carter and Richard Sutch, "The Great Depression of the 1890s: New Suggestive Estimates of the Unemployment Rate, 1890-1905," *Research in Economic History* 14 (1992): 341-376.

narrow margin in the popular vote. To bolster his support among workingmen, newly-elected President McKinley appointed the popular labor leader Terence Powderly as Commissioner of Immigration. The appointment gave the xenophobic Powderly an official, authoritative position from which to propound his hate speech.⁵² From his position of authority, Powderly continued to assault the Chinese: "Chinese and American civilizations are antagonistic;" he proclaimed, "they cannot live and thrive and both survive on the same soil. One or the other must perish."⁵³

Powderly wasn't the only prominent person propounding abusive racist speech. Academics from a wide range of disciplines embraced eugenics, the belief that socially undesirable traits such as poverty and illiteracy are rooted in bad heredity. In this view race rather than productivity determined the standard of living. To maintain the American standard, immigration from low-wage countries such as China had to be stopped. Among the many eugenics advocates of the era was biologist David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford, who tirelessly advocated the idea that "the blood of the nation" determines its history. "[A] Jew is a Jew in all ages and climes," Jordan wrote. "[H]is deeds everywhere bear the stamp of Jewish individuality...a Chinaman remains a Chinaman."⁵⁴ Scranton's men of influence embraced this view. In his biographies of Scranton's elite, attorney Frederick Hitchcock conspicuously highlighted the "daring pioneer stock" from which Judge Alfred Hand descended and the "splendid ancestry" of Henry Boies, both of whose ancestors had arrived in the eighteenth century.⁵⁵ The *Tribune*, the paper on whose board Ezra Ripple sat, distilled the implications of eugenics for relations with the Chinese. "The Occidental and the Oriental have behind them too long and too different a past to mix well. They are better apart."⁵⁶ Though it was surely not the intention of the elite who espoused such views, their abusive speech helped unify Euro-Americans into a united laboring class.

Inspired by an 1897 victory in the bituminous coal fields of the Midwest, the United Mineworkers redoubled organizing efforts in the Scranton region. Miners of different nationalities banded together in 1900, forcing owners to accede to their demands for higher wages and shorter hours. Just as they had done during the 1871 strike, Boies and Sturges chose the moment to initiate a reform campaign designed to sow divisions. They formed the Municipal League whose stated goal was to root out corruption in city government. Sturges contributed over \$30,000 of his own money to promote the effort. They employed a league of undercover detectives who entrapped city councilmen accepting bribes in exchange for favors; they raided unlicensed

⁵² Delber L. McKee, "'The Chinese Must Go!' Commissioner General Powderly and Chinese Immigration, 1897–1902," *Pennsylvania History* (1977): 37-51; Lyman, "The 'Chinese Question.'"

⁵³ Terence V. Powderly, "Exclude Anarchist and Chinaman," *Colliers Weekly*, Dec. 14, 1901: 7.

⁵⁴ David Starr Jordan, *The Blood of a Nation: A Study of the Decay of Races through the Survival of the Unfit* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1906), 7, 9, 10; Thomas C. Leonard, "Eugenics and Economics in the Progressive Era," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19(4) (Autumn 2005): 207-224.

⁵⁵ SR, Oct. 20, 1924; Hitchcock, *History of Scranton*: 227, 249. Hitchcock apparently had no admiration for Powderly. In his two-volume, 1,038-page chronicle of Scranton's turbulent history, three-term mayor Powderly's name appears only four times.

⁵⁶ ST, Jan. 31, 1900.

saloons, gambling houses, and “houses of ill fame.” They forced the resignation and arrest of many politicians, they closed venues of vice, but this time they did not disrupt the union.

In 1902 the miners approved yet another strike. More than 100,000 miners, roughly 80 percent of the miners in the region, joined in. Wishing to avoid a long disruption to the nation’s economy, President Theodore Roosevelt convinced owners and miners to agree to arbitration. United Mine Workers president John Mitchell declared a union victory when the mine owners agreed to a nine-hour day and a ten-percent wage increase.⁵⁷ Abusive racist speech helped win that victory. It also stoked hatred of the Chinese and emboldened the violent. Doo and the other Chinese could not be trusted. “A Chinaman remains a Chinaman.”

Doo Becomes a Target

Early one summer morning in 1899, three men entered the laundry of Fong Sing on Scranton’s South Side and attempted to rob the till. Sing surprised them with a spirited defense and they soon fled, but as they were leaving, one picked up a large rock and hurled it through Sing’s window, sending shards of broken glass into Sing’s face. George Rosar, the building’s owner, witnessed the attack and chased the assailants down the street.

The police investigated. Rosar and Sing were shown a police lineup. From it each identified John Cavanaugh as the attacker who hurled the rock. Cavanaugh, 34, worked as a day laborer, and boarded with his widowed Irish-immigrant mother, a younger sister, and two brothers on Hickory Street in one of the tougher sections of the city.⁵⁸ When the case came to trial, Sing and Rosar presented their stories. Doo acted as Sing’s interpreter. The defense called Cavanaugh’s mother, sister, two brothers, and a neighbor, all of whom testified that Cavanaugh was at home eating breakfast at the time of the attempted robbery. From the jury’s perspective, the evidence was clear. “Not Guilty,” they declared.⁵⁹ The day after the verdict was announced Wing Wah’s laundry was burglarized. It was the third time he had been burglarized that year.⁶⁰ Three years later, in the heat of the big Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902, Doo became a target.

Dressed in uniform, his shiny badge pinned to his chest and his revolver and club affixed to his belt, Detective Clifford strode into Doo’s laundry and insisted that Doo come with him to the police station. Clifford said that a customer of Doo’s, a Mrs. Minnie Carey, had sworn under oath that Doo had cheated her. According to Carey, Doo had “washed some fancy pillow-cases, torn them to shreds and artistically wrapped them under the guarantee that they were in good condition.” “They were new,” she insisted,

⁵⁷ Donald L. Miller and Richard E. Sharpless, *Kingdom of Coal: Work, Enterprise, and Ethnic Communities in the Mine Fields* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

⁵⁸ Ancestry.com. *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004. Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1900. Census Place: Scranton Ward 6, Lackawanna, Pennsylvania; Roll: 1420; Page: 13A; Enumeration District: 0068; FHL microfilm: 1241420.

⁵⁹ ST, July 7, 1899.

⁶⁰ SR, Oct. 24, 1899.

“Now they were worthless.” The newspaper reporting the incident mocked Doo as seemingly “clueless” as he dutifully accompanied the detective, although it did note that Doo stopped en route to the station to secure the services of an attorney.

At the station house, Carey presented Doo with her damaged pillow cases. As soon as Doo felt the fabric he declared it “No good” and “Old.” The false accusation angered him. Doo was prepared to fight the charge right then and there but on the advice of his attorney he waived a hearing and entered bail. As he left the station house, “A howl of laughter arose from those who had seated themselves on the back benches.” Doo was furious. He began talking earnestly with his attorney, swearing under the oath of Fung Chooi, the evil one, that he was innocent. Drawing his hand across his throat, he signaled that he would permit his head to be cut off if he was lying. That afternoon he bought a chicken and, cutting off its head, demonstrated his idea to the satisfaction of all concerned.⁶¹ Not long afterwards, Doo and his family left Scranton and returned to China. They weren’t the only ones. Five of Scranton’s ten Chinese laundrymen departed the city about the same time.⁶²

Scranton police immediately put Doo’s successor, Wing Lee Lang, under surveillance. One afternoon they raided his place, found him relaxing under the influence of opium, and arrested him. Opium smoking was legal. They arrested Lang anyway “...to serve as a warning to seven young men who [had] been frequenting the place,” the police explained the next day. In its headline the paper mistakenly reported that Doo, not Lang, had been taken into custody.⁶³ When Doo himself returned to Scranton the next year without his family, he was met with a decidedly cool reception. The headline announcing his return expressed not welcome, but a reluctant fatalism: “Soo Hoo Doo with Us Again.”⁶⁴ Perhaps frustrated by these developments, Doo closed his Scranton laundry and moved to nearby Wilkes-Barre. There he bought a building and lot on South State Street in the red light district near the downtown and opened a Chinese restaurant.⁶⁵

“So Repulsive in its Suggestiveness...” Opium Dens and White Women

In Wilkes-Barre Doo lived frugally and amassed property. Newspapers regularly commented on his wealth.⁶⁶ Things went well for him even as a growing national paranoia over Chinese opium smoking and their alleged seduction of white women intensified. A downtown Wilkes-Barre penny arcade displayed the picture of a police raid on a Chinese opium joint. “The room is occupied by the Chinese proprietors and some of their countrymen lying around on cots with white women,” an investigative reporter noted. Continuing, he asked rhetorically, “Is this a scene, so repulsive in its

⁶¹ SR, Feb. 20, 1902.

⁶² J. James Taylor, *Scranton Directory for the Year 1900* (Scranton: Taylor’s Directory Co., 1900); J. E. Williams, *Scranton City Directory* (Scranton: Republican Print, 1902).

⁶³ SR, June 28, 1902.

⁶⁴ SR, Jan. 26, 1903.

⁶⁵ WBTL, Feb. 1, 1906.

⁶⁶ MD, Aug. 12, 1901.

suggestiveness, fit for a child to view?"⁶⁷ That same year Owen Davis's four-part play *Chinatown Charlie the Opium Fid* opened on Broadway. The next year it toured the country with stops in Scranton and Wilkes-Barre.⁶⁸ "It's like a slumming trip...a slumming trip with much that is revolting left out," declared the theatre critic for the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* when *Chinatown Charlie* came to his community.⁶⁹ The play evoked fascination and revulsion in equal measure. It provoked suspicion.

Joseph Ferguson was certainly suspicious. He was a local boy whose flair as a dramatic actor attracted the attention of impresario Charles Frohman, producer of over 700 shows and known for his ability to develop talent. Frohman offered Ferguson a spot in one of his traveling theatrical companies but Ferguson refused, saying that he preferred to stay closer to home.⁷⁰ Still, Ferguson's matinee and evening performances kept him out most nights.⁷¹ What did his wife Ann do all those evenings alone? Ferguson decided to find out. Hiding himself in a doorway, he waited. Ann emerged. Following at a distance, Ferguson saw her enter Doo's chop suey restaurant. Ferguson became enraged. He notified the police who obtained a warrant for Doo's arrest. The police said they had long suspected Doo of selling opium but had been unable to produce evidence. After midnight they raided Doo's restaurant and found Ann smoking a pipe in an adjoining room. Seizing Doo, his opium outfit, and as much opium as they could find about his restaurant and apartment, they marched him to police headquarters. They turned Ann over to her husband. At the trial Doo's lawyer reminded the court that Doo was within his rights to own an opium outfit and to smoke for his own enjoyment. Ann refused to take the witness stand or to speak against Doo. Without evidence of an opium sale, the judge ruled in Doo's favor. Furious, Ferguson sued Doo, claiming \$10,000 in damages for Doo's alleged debauchery. Ann filed for divorce, claiming her husband had deserted her several years earlier and that even before his desertion he was often in the company of other women. Doo sued the City of Wilkes-Barre after it refused to return his opium outfit following his acquittal.⁷²

Just as things were beginning to settle down, Doo received a letter from the Black Hand.

By the order of the Black Hand. Please give us \$1,000 and if we do not get this much, your head will be cut off...If you squeal you will be cut to pieces.⁷³

Below the message, sketched in black ink, was a villainous-looking, outstretched human hand.

Doo panicked. The Black Hand was an Italian American extortion racket that was active in the area. Just the previous year the Rev. Charles Palducek, rector of St. Johns Slavonian Catholic Church in nearby Freeland, had his throat cut and his head bashed in by an assailant who knocked on his door late at night and later claimed allegiance to

⁶⁷ *WBTL*, Feb. 6, 1906.

⁶⁸ *WBTL*, Feb 4, 1907.

⁶⁹ *DC*, Nov., 2, 1906.

⁷⁰ *WBTL*, Jan 30, 1907.

⁷¹ *MCI*, Feb. 5, 1907.

⁷² *WBL*, Feb. 18, 1907, Apr. 29, 1907, May 4, 1907; *WBT*, Feb. 18, 1907; May 1, 1907; *STr*, Dec. 3, 1908; *WBR*, May 6, 1907.

⁷³ *WBL*, July 11, 1907; *STr*, July 12, 1907.

the terrorist group. A local cobbler's murder was attributed to the Black Hand as well.⁷⁴ Despite the intimidation, Doo took his letter to the police. A second letter arrived and again Doo stood his ground.⁷⁵ Black Hand threats ceased but Doo's peace did not return.

That September police raided Doo's restaurant, arrested four men and three women, and charged Doo with keeping a bawdy house. It was eight in the morning. Doo explained that the suspects were waiters and waitresses.⁷⁶ In October Doo was accused of harboring two young girls. The charges were dropped after the charity matrons who lodged them confessed to their confusion over the identity of the abductor.⁷⁷ Later that same month a man arrested for theft testified that he had exchanged his stolen goods for liquor at Doo's restaurant. Half the town showed up at court the next day to view the hearing, only to be disappointed when they learned that the court had withdrawn the charge against Doo for lack of evidence.⁷⁸ The following January, city health inspectors compelled Doo to clean his restaurant under penalty of closure.⁷⁹ In February it was Doo's turn to call the police after two patrons got into a fight and wrecked his place. In March the police again arrested Doo for keeping an opium joint.⁸⁰

Doo decided it was time to fight back. Using an approach that had worked well for him in the past, he marched into the offices of the *Wilkes-Barre Record* and told his side of the story. "I am a much abused American citizen," he insisted. He said he was born in San Francisco, taken to China by his parents as a young child, and that he returned as soon as he was old enough to work. He boasted of his family -- a wife and four children -- of his membership in the Grace Reformed Church, and of his vote for Judge H.M. Edwards, a Welshman known throughout the state for his impartiality and fairness, "a judge after Socrates' own heart...one whom kings could not corrupt."⁸¹ The opium charge was dropped after Doo's accuser withdrew his testimony, swearing that members of the police department had encouraged him to make false charges. Two days later, the new mayor-elect announced that he would be firing 17 policemen and that he had asked Doo to join his new police advisory board.⁸²

It was too little, too late.

The next month James Buckley broke into Doo's storeroom and stole three giant jars of molasses, having been told they were filled with opium. Disappointed with the

⁷⁴ *NYT*, Feb. 16, 1906; *MCI*, Oct. 30, 1906.

⁷⁵ *WBR*, July 13, 1907.

⁷⁶ *WBL*, Sept. 13, 1907; *STr*, Sept. 14, 1907.

⁷⁷ *WBTL*, Oct. 12, 1907; *WBL*, Oct. 14, 1907; *WBT*, Oct. 15, 1907.

⁷⁸ *WBR*, Oct. 22, 1907; *WBL*, Oct. 23, 1907.

⁷⁹ *WBTL*, Jan. 23, 1907.

⁸⁰ *STr*, Mar. 5, 1908; *WBR*, Mar. 5, 1908.

⁸¹ *WBR*, Mar. 14, 1908; *STr*, Nov. 6, 1913; Pittsburgh Eisteddfod, "Honorable H. M. Edwards," *Royal Blue Book. Prize Productions of the Pittsburgh Eisteddfod* (Pittsburgh: Press of American Printing Co., 1916), 53.

⁸² *WBTL*, Mar. 19, 1909; Mar. 21, 1909.

molasses, Buckley tried to extort money from Doo, saying he would testify to finding opium unless Doo paid him. Again Doo refused. Doo charged Buckley with larceny and had him arrested. Buckley charged Doo with perjury.⁸³ Later that month, exhausted by events, Doo closed his restaurant and took a brief vacation.⁸⁴

The assaults commenced the moment Doo returned. He was again charged with running a “disorderly house,” said to be visited by “wives of prominent men” in the company of “parties other than their husbands.”⁸⁵ The former police chief served as prosecutor. When the judge issued a guilty verdict the following day, the newspaper headlines read: “Soo Hoo Doo and His Black Hoodoo Which the Police Had Much to Do,” implicitly acknowledging that Doo had been framed.⁸⁶ Doo appealed and was granted another trial on the grounds of “certain errors made by the court.”⁸⁷ Doo brought his own suit against three policemen, charging them with extortion. Doo testified that when he refused to pay the police arrested him, not once, but several times.⁸⁸

Perhaps optimistic about his prospects for justice, Doo, now 44, married Belle McCulloch, 23, a white woman who had worked as a waitress in Doo’s restaurant. Gossips described Belle as “rather a good-looking young woman. She is tall and slim of build. She dresses fairly well.”⁸⁹

On the day of his trial Doo came well-prepared. To counter police charges of “nightly orgies” and frequent requests to “preserve order,” his attorney called neighborhood residents who testified that Doo’s place was not a disorderly one and that they had not been disturbed. Doo himself proved to be an excellent witness. Asked to describe his restaurant, he told of the many Chinese dishes he served, ranging in price from 10 cents to \$8 and over. The more expensive dishes, he said, he served mostly to the actors and actresses who frequented his establishment. He insisted that he kept his place as orderly as possible. When asked about his patrons’ character he explained that they arrived in carriages and cabs after the theatres closed and that he had no way of knowing whether they were of good or bad repute. Doo then took the offensive. He testified that policeman Harkins demanded \$100 from him and threatened to raid his place if he did not pay. When Doo refused; Harkins raided. Doo claimed that other policemen had made additional demands on him for money; that James Puckley and policeman Phillips had him arrested on the charge of perjury and also confiscated a quantity of supposed opium which turned out to be molasses. Doo flatly denied that he sold opium or cocaine and said he did not allow opium smoking in his place. Opium smoke could be detected from two blocks away, he noted. It would have ruined his business. Doo denied selling liquor and harboring women of ill repute.⁹⁰

The next morning the court reconvened to hear closing arguments. The prosecutor was scathing in his derision of Doo, hovering over him as he maligned his

⁸³ *WBR*, Apr. 20, 1908; Apr. 23, 1908.

⁸⁴ *SR*, Apr. 24, 1908.

⁸⁵ *WBTL*, Sept. 15, 1908; *STr*, Sept. 16, 1908; *PG*, Sept. 16, 1908.

⁸⁶ *SR*, Sept. 17, 1908.

⁸⁷ *WBTL*, Dec. 1, 1908.

⁸⁸ *STr*, Oct. 15, 1908; *SR*, Sept. 17, 1908.

⁸⁹ *WBTL*, Aug. 4, 1909.

⁹⁰ *WBR*, Jan. 30, 1909.

character. When closing statements were complete the jurors retired. After less than an hour's deliberation they returned with their verdict: Guilty as indicted!

Doo had prepared for this possibility. Upon hearing the verdict, he jumped out of his chair, ran down the court aisle, and charged out the door. He boarded his one-volt-powered Duryea car, drove it to nearby Pittston, hailed a rowboat to cross the river, and took refuge in the home of one of his new wife's relatives. When the police finally located him there, secreted in a cupboard, they arrested him, hauled him back to Wilkes-Barre, and threw him in jail. A few days later Doo's lawyer arranged for his release by pointing to errors in the legal proceedings. Still, the judge refused Doo's request for a new trial. Doo took his appeal to the State Superior Court.⁹¹

Doo was feeling the pressure. Tensions between him and his new wife built. After he had rented and furnished a nice home for her mother, Belle insisted that the two of them move in. Doo refused. They quarreled and by summer their quarreling had grown heated. Terrified, Belle went to the police saying that Doo had hung a rope from their basement ceiling and threatened to hang her with it. "Once he said that he was going to hang himself on it," Belle added.⁹²

In November the Superior Court reversed the lower court and granted Doo's request for a new trial.⁹³ Doo and Belle reconciled, moved to Scranton, and opened a Chinese restaurant on Penn Avenue. The new trial took place in July. After hearing the evidence, Judge Fuller took special pains to remind the jury of the fundamentals of the law. "[B]ecause Doo is a Chinaman should not influence [your] decision," he instructed them. "[I]f a guilty verdict be returned... it should be on the evidence introduced." Before closing he publicly criticized the police. Wasn't it strange, he remarked sarcastically, that Doo's allegedly rowdy place should have existed within 500 feet of the city hall, a place "where municipal virtue was enthroned." In the opinion of attorneys following the case, the judge's instructions were "somewhat in favor of" Doo. Many predicted a Not Guilty verdict.

After a long day of deliberations, the jury was irrevocably deadlocked. Although it didn't exonerate Doo, the hung jury meant a third failure for the prosecutor. After compelling Doo to pay court costs, the prosecutor reluctantly dropped the case. In summing up, Judge Fuller admonished former Wilkes-Barre mayor Frederick Kirkendal and his chief of police, the prosecutor in the case. Fuller described Kirkendal's best efforts at keeping public order "a slight spasm of civic virtue," suggesting that civic vice was the rule. The *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader* bristled at the rebuke. Without defending the legality of police actions, and conceding that Kirkendal had made "many, many mistakes," it commended the mayor for trying to address "shocking conditions" and criticized the court for allowing them to continue through "legal technicalities, acquittals and disagreements in court."⁹⁴

⁹¹ *WBR*, Feb. 1, 1909, Feb. 4, 1909, May 21, 1909, May 22, 1909, May 24, 1909; *WBT*, May 28, 1909; *WBTL*, May 20, 1909.

⁹² *STr*, Aug. 4, 1909.

⁹³ *STr*, Nov. 16, 1909; *WBR*, Nov. 16, 1909.

⁹⁴ *WBTL*, July 1, 1910, July 4, 1910; *WBR*, July 2, 1910, July 4, 1910; *STr*, July 2, 1910.

After the trial, Doo sold his Scranton restaurant and returned to Philadelphia. There he oversaw a tiny empire of Chinese restaurants and laundries scattered throughout the region. He worked with the Presbyterian church in ministering to the Chinese community.⁹⁵ In 1912 Doo's and Belle's son Cecil was born.⁹⁶ Still, the "thousand cuts" he had endured extracted their toll. A year later, while in Trenton awaiting the arrival of relatives from Philadelphia and New York, Doo collapsed from acute pneumonia and died a few hours later. He was 49 years old. Newspaper accounts of Doo's passing mentioned his arrests, the "abundance of litigation," and his having served time in the county jail. Not one mentioned his acquittal.⁹⁷ Doo had triumphed in the court of law but in the court of public opinion he was roundly defeated.

Doo's story illustrates the remarkable degree to which at least one nineteenth-century Chinese immigrant embraced America's democratic institutions and ideals. It also illustrates the frustrations of an assimilated immigrant like Doo when confronted with a racist ideology that insisted he could never assimilate.

Not all Chinese who followed paths similar to Doo's shared his bleak fate. In related work I reconstruct the stories of Moy Toy Ni (1861-1955) of Oshkosh and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, known locally as Charley Toy, and of George Wong (1906-1988) of Waterville, Maine (aka Wong Hor Ting, Wong Wan Song, and George Wan Son). Both found community support for their struggles against racist laws and ideologies.⁹⁸ I remain puzzled by the ineffectiveness of prominent Scranton citizens like E. B. Sturges, Ezra Ripple, Alfred Hand, and Henry Boies who supported Doo in the 1890s. Sturges, at least, rejected the anti-Chinese ideology of his day. At a public lecture following his travels in the Far East in 1902, Sturges spoke out against the suggestion that the U.S. impose Chinese Exclusion in its newly-acquired territories of Hawai'i and the Philippines. "The country needs the services of the Chinaman," Sturges declared, "not only in the Philippines, but also in the states." "We cannot live without them," he insisted, "as they are an element in the world's make-up that cannot be ignored."⁹⁹ Perhaps Sturges tried to help Doo but failed, as he had earlier failed to prevent the election of convicted embezzler Frank Beamish. Perhaps the reformers were offended by Doo's opium smoking. Perhaps Scranton's (and Wilkes-Barre's) long history of violent conflict had irrevocably eroded the trust needed to form bonds across cultural and racial divides. In any case, Doo's story shows that in communities without substantive community support, even the efforts of someone as resourceful as Doo were not sufficiently powerful to resist the vicious consequences of racist hate speech.

⁹⁵ *STr*, Sept. 8, 1910.

⁹⁶ Ancestry.com. U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. Original data: *Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) Death File*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

⁹⁷ *TET*, Jan. 10, 1914; *WBTL*, July 23, 1914; *PG*, July 23, 1914; *SR*, July 24, 1914; *WBR*, July 24, 1914.

⁹⁸ Susan Boslego Carter, "How Chop Suey Came to Oshkosh, Wisconsin." In Bruce Makoto Arnold, Tanfer Emin Tunc, and Raymond Douglas Chong, eds., *Chop Suey and Sushi From Sea to Shining Sea: Chinese and Japanese Restaurants in the United States*. Fayette: University of Arkansas Press, 2018: 53-72.

⁹⁹ Sturges and his wife traveled in the company of another prominent Scranton couple, Col. and Mrs. Henry Boies. On their passage to China they were on the same ship as Doo and his family. Sturges reported that Doo furnished the couples with an introduction to the Chinese emperor. *SR*, Dec. 12, 1902; *ST*, Dec. 12, 1902.

Having exhausted his Scranton options, Soo Hoo Doo pursued his only remaining possibility. He left town.

Abbreviations: AL, Allentown (PA) Leader; DC, (Rochester NY) Democrat and Chronicle; HDI, Harrisburg (PA) Daily Independent; LDN, Lebanon (PA) Daily News; LC, Lebanon (PA) Courier and Semi-Weekly Report; MCI, Mount Carmel (PA) Item; MD, Montrose (PA) Democrat; MMFP, Manitoba (Canada) Morning Free Press; NYT, New York Tribune; NYS, (New York) Sun; ODN, Oshkosh (Wisconsin) Daily Northwestern; PG, (Pittston, PA) Gazette; PT, The (Philadelphia) Times; RT, Reading (PA) Times; SR, Scranton (PA) Republican; ST Scranton (PA) Tribune; STr, Scranton (PA) Truth; TET, Trenton (NJ) Evening Times; WBR, Wilkes-Barre (PA) Record; WBL, Wilkes-Barre (PA) Leader; WBT, Wilkes-Barre (PA) Times; WBTL, Wilkes-Barre (PA) Times Leader; WBUL, Wilkes-Barre (PA) Union Leader; WW, Weekly (Milwaukee) Wisconsin.

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