

Chinese Pioneers On Your National Forests

Presented By:
Region 1 of the United States Forest Service
In Partnership With
University of Montana, Missoula



The University of
Montana

I N T R O D U C T I O N

During the last half of the 19th Century, millions of Chinese left their homeland in search of opportunity and prosperity around the globe. From Australia to Chile to even Montana, these pioneers joined the world labor market in various professions including miners, laundry operators, restaurateurs, gardeners, servants, and countless others.

These immigrants were searching for a better life for themselves and the families they left behind. Mostly men, these individuals sent their meager earnings to their wives, children, parents and siblings back in China. Many Chinese overseas attempted to quickly earn a fortune and return home, but most worked tirelessly for decades in the rural mine fields or urban factories. Over time those that did not return home settled in ever-growing Chinatowns along the Pacific and Atlantic Coasts.

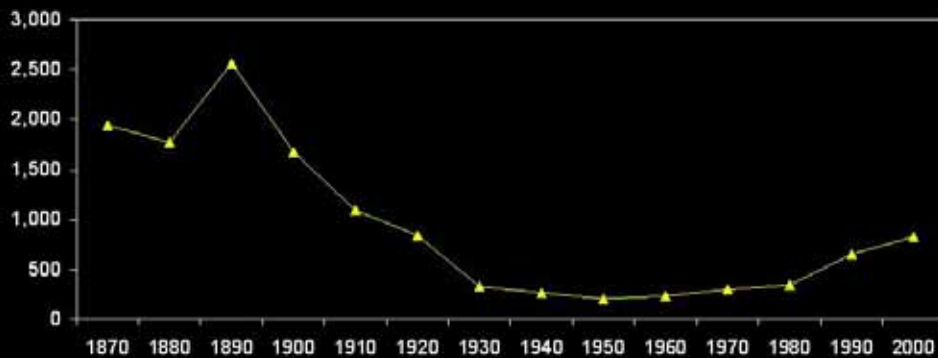
Chinese came to Montana in the early 1860s behind the major gold discoveries at Bannack and Virginia City. By 1870, Chinese pioneers accounted for 1 out of every 10 residents of Montana Territory with a population of nearly 2,000. However, with racist Federal Laws and declining job opportunities the Montana Chinese population declined, and by 1900 the Chinese accounted for only one percent of the state's residents.



Ca. 1890's
Tu Hang, Cook.
Fort Benton, MT.

Photo by J.P. Ball.
Tom Minkler Collection
Courtesy: Overholser
Historical Research
Center

Population of Chinese in Montana (1870-2000)



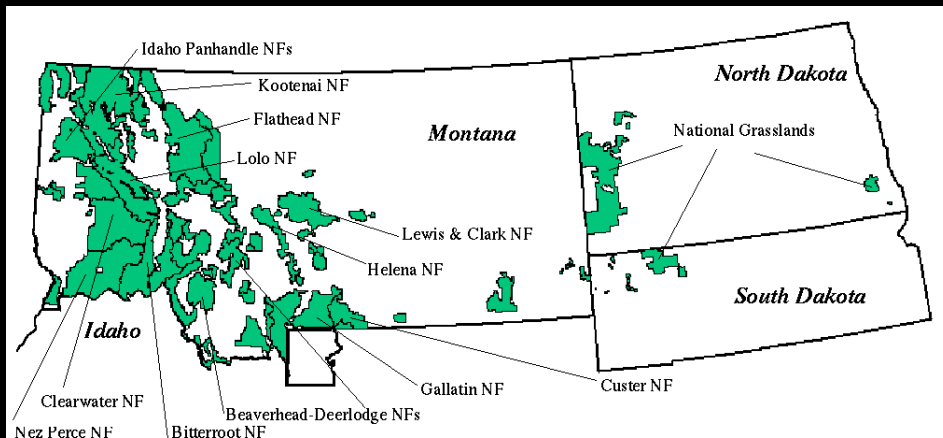
N a t i o n a l F o r e s t s

While living and working in Montana, Chinese oftentimes found opportunity on the lands now managed by the United States Forest Service. Many areas on the National Forests were once prime mining territory, and the Chinese, along with other groups, patiently worked to glean small pieces of gold from Montana's creeks and streams. Chinese also found employment in mining boomtowns springing up on these lands to provide services to all of the area's inhabitants.

Today, the only physical reminders of the Chinese presence on these lands are archaeological sites and artifacts. Archaeologists within Region 1 of the Forest Service, encompassing lands in Idaho and Montana, have partnered with researchers from the University of Montana to study the experience of these Chinese pioneers.

This partnership has resulted in a broader understanding of the Chinese experience on National Forest lands in Montana by locating previously unknown and undiscovered archaeological sites and by intensive excavations and research on important known Chinese sites.

This document summarizes the Chinese history of each National Forest in Montana, and highlights information recovered from archaeology.



Northern Region of the USFS



Volunteers and Forest Service employees joined together to help bring to light the forgotten history of the Chinese in Montana

L O L O N . F .

Located in Western Montana, the Lolo National Forest boasts a significant collection of Chinese archaeological sites that span from 1869 to the late 1890s.

Chinese miners and entrepreneurs first arrived in large numbers to Western Montana during the Cedar Creek gold rush near modern-day Superior, MT, during 1869-1870. During the summer of 1870, white miners across the border into Idaho passed racist mining laws that forced the Chinese out of their homes and businesses, and many fled to the growing boomtowns located in Cedar Creek.

The first wave of Chinese into Cedar Creek settled in the town of Louiseville and adjacent areas. The first years in Cedar Creek were tough for the Chinese, but by 1873 with a population of nearly 600, they had constructed their own religious temple, butcher shop, stores, and doctor's office. Between 1870 and 1890 Chinese miners retrieved millions of dollars worth of gold out of Cedar Creek and its tributaries, more than even the white miners.

In 1874, gold was discovered in the Ninemile District, just west of Missoula, MT. White miners, followed by the Chinese rushed to these new strikes. Chinese settled in the towns of Montreal and Old Town, both on the Lolo National Forest as well. Few remains of those towns exist today.



Only known historical photograph of Louiseville,
ca. 1895, taken by Trefle LaCasse.

Courtesy Mineral County Historical Society, donated by
Sam Viche.



130-year-old rock hearth near Louiseville. Chinese
constructed this for cooking and to keep their tents
warm at night. This hearth is a rare physical re-
minder of the Chinese.

Investigating History on the LOLO N.F.

Since 2006, archaeologists with the Lolo National Forest and the University of Montana have investigated the Chinese experience in Western Montana. This partnership has resulted in extensive excavations of Chinese sites and preservation of the past through Passport In Time (PIT) projects.

In the summer of 2008, PIT volunteers from around the nation came together and conducted archaeological excavations in Louiseville and nearby Chinese sites. In addition, these volunteers removed trees and brush from near these sites to protect them for future generations to learn from and enjoy.

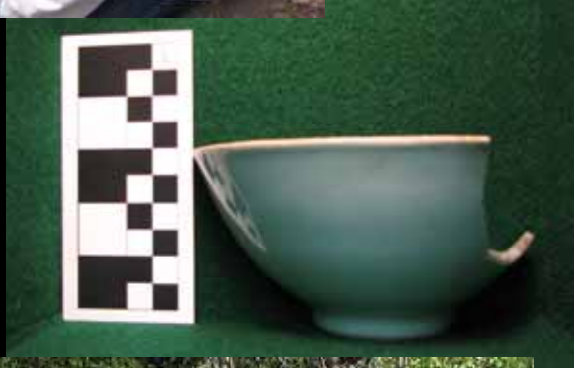
Results from the archaeology suggest that the initial Chinese that moved into Cedar Creek in 1870 were on the edge of starvation. However, by 1873 the Chinese were able to recover and create a community in Western Montana wilderness. Artifacts from the sites included pottery, gaming pieces, and other items that were imported directly from China.

Today, visitors to the National Forest can visit the site of Louiseville and see remnants of the area's Chinese heritage at the Mineral County Historical Museum in Superior, MT.



PIT Volunteers
excavating at
Louiseville

A Chinese Bowl
found at Louiseville



PIT Volunteers with the pile of brush removed
from the remains of Louiseville

Gallatin N.F.

Chinese began working in and around the lands managed by the Gallatin National Forest as early as the 1860s. In particular there were a few dozen Chinese miners working in gulches around Chico Hot Springs and Gardiner, MT during the 1870s and 1880s. There is only one site relating to the Chinese on this forest, but there is potential for more discoveries.

While the Gallatin NF does not have as much Chinese archaeology and history as some other forests in the region, it does contain one unique site. Even as most of Montana's Chinese were consolidating into large Chinatowns in Butte, Helena, and Missoula in the late 1890s, there was a company of Chinese miners working in a remote corner of the state near Chico Hot Springs, roughly 40 miles north of Yellowstone National Park.

The Quong Chong Co. purchased placer mining claims and water rights in the upper reaches of Emigrant Gulch in 1897. Archaeology survey during the summer of 2008 discovered the cabin that the Chinese miners, headed by an individual named Wong Chong, used as base camp for their mining endeavors during the late 1890s.

Chinese at this site used a variety of goods manufactured in China, England, and United States. The site is only accessible by a significant hike, which has largely protected it from development or vandalism.



The Quong Chong Company Cabin in Emigrant Gulch



Fragment of
Chinese Rice Bowl
found at Cabin

L e w i s & C l a r k N . F .

The Chinese came late to the areas managed by the Lewis and Clark National Forest. It appears that the first Chinese to arrive in this region of Montana came to the gold boomtown of Yogo Town, located along Yogo Creek on the eastern slopes of the Little Belt Mountains. According to the 1880 Federal Census, there were at least two Chinese men in Yogo Town, 19-year old Lee Wau and 47-year old Hobb, both involved in the Laundry business. Archaeologists discovered what appears to be a Chinese dwelling in Yogo Town during the summer of 2008. The dugout home has a rock hearth similar to those found on the Lolo National Forest at Cedar Creek.

In addition to Yogo Town, there was a significant Chinese population at all the mining communities of the Little Belts, including Neihart, Barker, and Hughesville. However, in 1885 the miners at Neihart passed legislation that barred any Chinese from living or working in the mining district. This led to most of the Chinese leaving the area for better opportunities elsewhere. Nearby Great Falls, MT passed similar laws in 1886, creating one of the most negative experiences for the Chinese in Montana.

There is a high potential to find more Chinese archaeology sites in the Yogo Mining District, and these discoveries will help illuminate the history of these pioneers.



U-Shaped Stacked Rock Hearth at Yogo Town, which appears to be part of the Chinese heritage of Montana.



Yogo Town is Part of the C.M. Russell Historic Trail.

Beaverhead- Deerlodge N.f.

With most Chinese activity centered Montana's mining districts, the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest has an abundance of Chinese archaeological sites spanning decades and includes parts of a unique chapter in the Montana Chinese story.

The Chinese were involved in many mining enterprises in Southwestern Montana, but nowhere as significant as German and Jeff Davis Gulches. German Gulch is located just west of Butte, and was the site of a 100-200 Chinese population for over thirty years from 1870 to 1900. The Chinese community in German Gulch is gone today, with the only reminders being artifacts recovered from archaeological studies. Excavations uncovered thousands of Chinese-related artifacts including pottery, opium pipe parts, gaming pieces, and remnants of food imported directly from China. One of the most unique finds was half of a coconut dating to the mid-1870s.

Jeff Davis Gulch southwest of Dillon, MT, was named after the President of the Confederacy during the Civil War, but by the late 1860s the mines were purchased by the Chinese miners while whites moved to more lucrative opportunities. Unfortunately, most of the remains of the Chinese town were re-mined during the early 20th Century, but on National Forest lands some sites remain.

Some Artifacts
from the German
Gulch Chinese
excavations



Even though the Chi-
nese are long gone,
their legacy remains
on maps and signs of
the area.



A possible
Chinese
Cabin near
Jeff Davis
Creek



Beaverhead- Deer Lodge N.f.

Outside the major Chinese mining districts in German and Jeff Davis Gulches, there were significant populations working north of Deer Lodge, MT along Pikes Peak, Gold, and French Creeks. Just off National Forest lands the ghost town of Pioneer once had several hundred Chinese miners, and was a local hub of commerce for these immigrants. In addition, there were Chinese working south of Anaconda, west of Philipsburg, and southeast of Butte in Highland City.

Later re-mining of the mining districts have destroyed most evidence of the Chinese. With additional archaeological survey and excavations more information can be found in these areas.

Outside the mainstream Chinese story, there is the life of Tommy Haw. In 1850s California, Tommy, an orphaned Chinese boy, was adopted by white ranchers who later moved to just outside Dillon, MT in Beaverhead County. By the 1880s, with help of his adoptive family, Tommy Haw became one of the richest people in the county and owned hundreds of sheep and cattle. In the 1890s and early 1900s, Tommy invested his fortune in mining ventures in the Pioneer Mountains. Tommy's investments failed, and in 1913 he died in Dillon, destitute.

During the summer of 2008, archaeologists found the remains of one claim owned by Tommy, Blue-Eyed-Annie, near Elkhorn Hot Springs.



Tommy Haw, ca.
1890s.

Courtesy Beaverhead
County Historical
Society

Log Cabin Shafthouse
at Blue-Eyed-Annie
Claim



Helena N.F.

The area around Montana's capital city had the largest and longest-running Chinese population during the 1800s, eclipsed only by Butte in the 1890s. In particular, the Chinese lived and worked in the mining districts south of Helena up Last Chance and Grizzly Gulches. In addition, there were Chinese working in the mines up Greenhorn and Austin Creeks.

In the Elkhorn Mountains southeast of Helena, are the remains of Ruddville, a placer mining camp established in the upper Crow Creek region. In 1871, Ah Song and Ah Chong purchased the majority of the claims for \$3,000, a steep price for that location and year. Today, there are a few cabins left in Ruddville including some relating to the Chinese occupation of the area. Due to its remote location, few people visit the site and this fact has protected it from vandalism or looting.

On the other end of the Helena National Forest, just west of Lincoln, MT, there are additional fragments of the Chinese history at the town site of "Old Lincoln". Now densely overgrown with brush and trees, Old Lincoln was founded in the early 1860s as a gold boomtown, and had Chinese working as both miners and laundry operators. Future research may uncover more information on these mostly forgotten residents of the area.



Chinese laundry in Unionville, a mining camp just south of Helena.

Know, all men by this
 Deed of J. H. Clanton of the County
 of Blaine in the Territory
 of Nevada for and in witness
 whereof I have signed my name
 and seal of office at my full satisfaction
 and consideration and by
 this deed I do hereby assign and
 release and forever quit
 claim to the said J. H. Clanton his
 heirs and assigns all that tract or parcel of
 land which might and lawfully might
 hereafter be claimed by me or by my
 heirs or assigns in or to all that tract or
 parcel of land which is described as
 follows to-wit: Beginning on the south
 side of the East corner of lot owned by
 J. H. Clanton in the Township of Nevada
 County Nevada in an easterly direction
 on the south side of the
 said Township a foresaid line from the
 said corner a southerly direction
 one hundred and twenty feet
 in a westerly direction to the foot of the
 hill forty four feet thence in a
 northerly direction along the
 line of the said dam two feet
 to the place of beginning. Do trace
 and hold the piece of premises
 with their only heirs and assigns
 forever as that matter of the said
 deed shall be in my name and right
 and shall be by their heirs and assigns
 forever. I do hereby certify that
 the above is a true and correct
 copy of the original of this deed
 as the same appears from the
 records of the County of Blaine
 Nevada the 27 day of January A.D. 1871
 J. H. Clanton
 Deed of J. H. Clanton
 County of Nevada

1871 Deed of Sale for claims to Chinese miners at Ruddville.

Helena N.F .

Most of the Chinese heritage on the Helena National Forest is within the Big Belt Mountains, east of Helena and Canyon Ferry Reservoir. Within the Big Belt Mountains Chinese lived and worked in several gulches including Cave, Cooper, Oregon, and Confederate Gulches.

The majority of Chinese lived in either Cave or Confederate gulches. Diamond City, located up Confederate Gulch had several dozen Chinese living and working in that community. While Diamond City is largely in private hands today, the effect of the Chinese is felt on nearby National Forest lands as Chinese artifacts appear from time to time. There is a high potential for Chinese sites on public lands surrounding Diamond City.

A few miles to the north of Confederate Gulch, a number of Chinese sites were located after a devastating wild fire in Cave Gulch. According to the 1880 Federal Census, there were 15 Chinese living in Cave Gulch including 1 woman. These numbers are most likely lower than actuality, as many Chinese were not properly counted by census takers.

From Cave Gulch's intersection with Canyon Ferry Reservoir to 6 miles up the creek, archaeologists located three Chinese-related sites with artifacts. By the late 1880s upper Cave Gulch was known as Chinatown.

Chinese Soy
Pot.
Fragments of
these vessels
were found at
Cave Gulch
Chinese Sites.



Archaeologists mapping a building foundation at
Cave Town in Cave Gulch, site of significant
Chinese occupations.

W h a t C a n Y o u D O ?

After years of research into the Chinese in Montana, it appears that the majority of sites that once existed have been destroyed by later re-mining or development. This makes the few remaining sites located on National Forest lands, and other adjacent public and private lands all that more important to preserve and protect for future generations.

Early Chinese pioneers to Montana left an important imprint on the history of the state and the United States Forest Service is pleased to be protecting what remains of this fragile past for our posterity.

If you happen to locate any archaeological site of any kind, Chinese or not, on National Forest lands contact a Forest Service representative. But do not move, remove, or damage any archaeological or historical resource that you encounter on public lands as it is against Federal law.

If you wish to help out conducting archaeological or historical work on your National Forests the best way to get involved is to volunteer through the Passport In Time program. You can keep an eye on any opportunities that may open on a National Forest near you.



More Information on the Passport In Time
Program can be found at:
<http://www.passportintime.com>

A c k n o w l e d g e m e n t s

United States Forest Service, Region 1
University of Montana, Dept. of Anthropology
Montana Historical Society
Mineral County Historical Society
Overholser Historical Research Center
Granite County Historical Society
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&
All Those Involved In This Project

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