Placed on the Margins: The Idea of Chinatown In Rossland, British Columbia, 1890-1902

Michael Ripmeester*

In his account of the first fifty years of mining at Rossland, British Columbia, Lance Whittaker wrote: "[f]riendships were readily formed in this strange, heterogeneous population. Few were the questions about antecedents or ancestry; if a man was a staunch worker, an intelligent miner and a loyal partner little more was required."[1] To some extent Whittaker's assessment describes the social relationships of mining in Rossland. Among miners, shared experiences and common ideological goals somewhat ameliorated ethnic tensions often associated with industrial production. This blurring of ethnic divides, however, did not extend to include the city's Chinese residents. Though there were numerous ethnic groups represented in the city, few were clearly identified by signifiers that connoted distinctiveness and a degree of self-containment. And only one of these groups, the Chinese, was a regular topic of discussion in the local press. Indeed, the degree to which the Chinese were set apart from the mainstream is aptly captured by an 1897 report in the *British Columbia Mining Record*: "It [Rossland] has grown from a few shacks to a town of some eight thousand -- and a number of Chinamen."[2] In this paper I will focus on the *in situ* construction of the racial category "Chinese" and the ways in which Rossland's Euro-Canadian population cast Chinatown as a foreign place.

This paper is structured around ethnicity as inextricably woven into wider systems of knowledge.[3] In this case, the ways in which the people of turn of the century Rossland engaged the Chinese population of the town were grounded in a wide ranging sinophobia. A broad discussion of this is far beyond the scope of this paper. But, briefly, over centuries of contact between East and West, Europeans had built up a reasonably consistent, and incredibly durable, body of knowledge concerning the Orient and Orientals. The crux of this is that the West had created a set of characteristics for the East and then projected them back as a means of understanding all things emanating from the Orient.[4] Important here is that the West interpreted difference as inferiority. From a western perspective the Orient, and Orientals, were believed to be despotic, dirty, sinister, unclean, and lethargic. The wide-spread presence of these perceptions suggest that it should not be surprising to find them manifest in Rossland.

There is now a wide body of literature that describes how these processes manifest themselves in the social fabric of urban places, so there is little need to delve into great detail here. Put simply, as ethnic groups become established in specific sites, cultural institutions, shopping districts, and other cultural markers reflect their presence.[5] But ethnic communities never exist in isolation. The perceptions and actions of host communities play a large role in the shape of the community and the place it occupies in the socio-spatial fabric of the city. In general, the greater the social distance a group is from the mainstream, the more confined and inward focused it will become. Particularly germane to this paper is Kay Anderson's detailed exploration of Vancouver, British Columbia's Chinatown.[6] Anderson argues that, irrespective of the agendas and identities that the Chinese community of Vancouver constructed for themselves, Euro-Canadians projected perceptions of race onto both the people and their settlement. Thus, because the Chinese were perceived to be dirty, immoral, and threatening, Chinatown accrued the same sorts of evaluative symbolism. And this, in turn, served to legitimate and justify racist assumptions. In many ways, then, social distance was transcribed into physical distance replete with material and cognitive boundaries.[7] Furthermore, Anderson describes how

Michael Ripmeester is an assistant professor in the Department of Geography at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. He has a long time interest in mining and mining landscapes.

cultural and institutional elites at various levels of power were able to manipulate and legitimate the material and symbolic shape of the Chinese community according to specific agendas. Thus, depending upon the context, powerful groups were able to represent Chinatown as a social cesspool, as a slum, or as a shining example of the successes of multiculturalism.

Before delving into how these processes played out in Rossland, a brief historical overview is necessary. Mining activity in Rossland did not occur in a historic, economic, or cultural vacuum. By the late 1880s there was reason for prospectors to believe that there were exploitable metal ores in the south-eastern regions of British Columbia (Figure 1). Indeed, the far flung distribution of rich strikes in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s provided evidence that mineralization was, at least to some extent, continuous throughout the cordilleran West. Each strike was quickly integrated into patterns of development and production. New camps could virtually spring up overnight, peopled by prospectors and other wealth seekers. If initial promise was not met, the momentum of activity rapidly dissipated and the camp could fade as quickly as it had sprung up. Conversely, if activity boomed the camp was often radically transformed by the appendages of an emerging western cordilleran hard-rock mining complex: heavily industrialized mines integrated by transcontinental railways into global circuits of capital, labour, and socio-cultural mores.

This pattern was largely repeated in Rossland. Before the arrival of prospectors there had been little, if any, activity in the region. Even an initial discovery of gold and copper ore on Red Mountain in the late 1880s drew little response.[8] In 1891 there were still only thirty men working small claims in the area.[9] However, with the convergence of several factors, including promising local assays and a fall in world silver prices, interest in the small camp on the side of Red Mountain boomed in 1894.[10] Within a couple of years a flurry of activity materially transformed the region. Prospectors overran Red Mountain, staking over 4,600 claims between 1894 and 1896 (see Figure 2). Activity on and around Red Mountain transformed the settlement, which locals now named Rossland, from a minor, largely anonymous camp into a chaotic, dirty, but exciting place.[11]

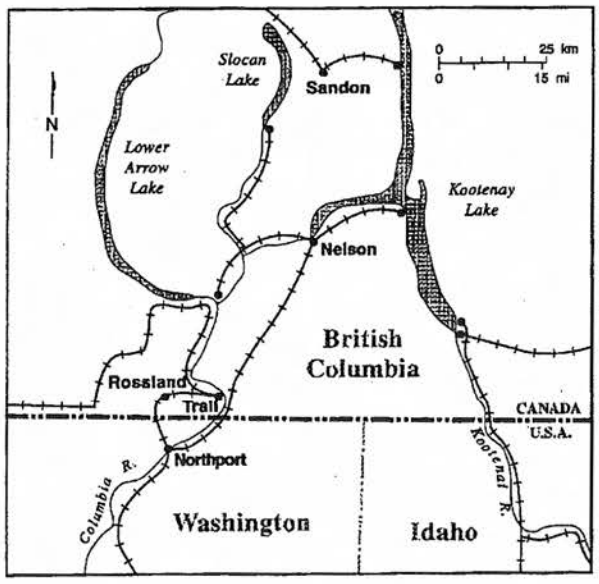


Figure 1. Southeastern British Columbia, c. 1902.

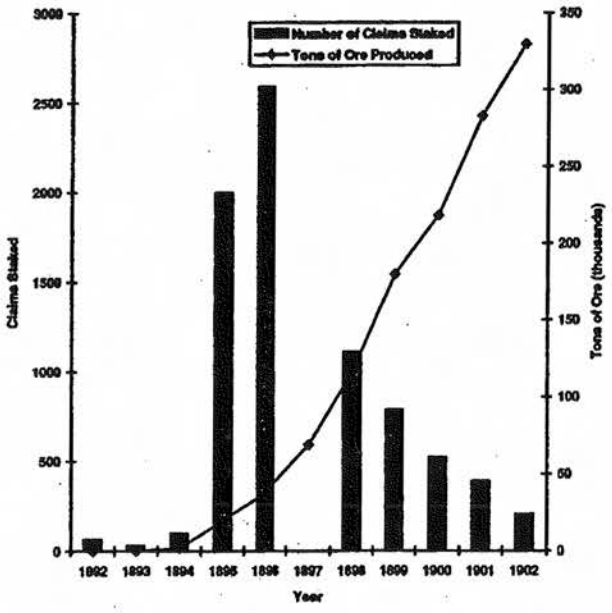


Figure 2. Rossland Mining Statistics, 1892-1902. Source: *Annual Reports of the Minister of Mines, 1892-1902.* Note: No claims available for 1897.

By 1897 the boom had passed and Rossland had become a mature city, its economy based on the production of corporate-run and capital-intensive mines. This shift caused activity in and around Rossland to become reorientated. As Figure 2 illustrates, the number of claims staked began to decline as prospectors discovered that ores were both difficult and expensive to extract. As its reputation as a camp of quick riches faded, prospectors left Rossland, following rumour and fact to other gold fields. Despite the end of the boom period, production from the mines actually increased, as did the total value of the ore produced (Figure 3). At the same time, the value of the ore per ton began to decline. Local commentators, however, did not view this as a

sign of declining ore quality. Instead, mining experts interpreted this as evidence that they could profitably extract lower quality ores.[12]

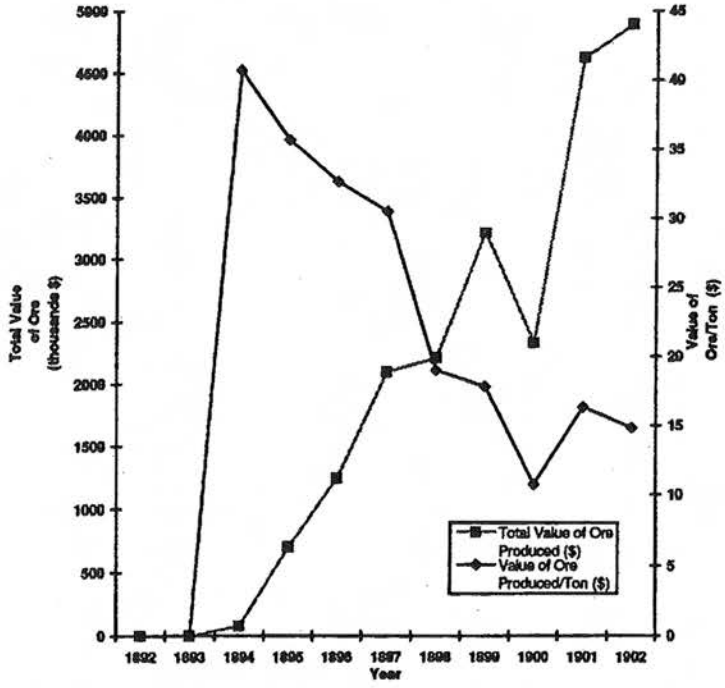


Figure 3. Value of Ore Produced, Rossland 1892-1902. Source: *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines, 1892-1902.*

The morphology of Rossland reflected these changes. Heavily industrialized mines dominated the city and loomed over the residential and commercial districts of Rossland. By 1900 three large mines, the Le Roi, the Centre Star, and the War Eagle, dominated Rossland's mining and the landscape of the city.[13] The production of these mines seemed to assure prosperity while the noise and activity in and around the mines signified the vitality of the community to its residents. The local correspondent for the *British Columbia Mining Record* wrote,

> Allusions have been made to the music of the Robin and his associates. This is indeed acceptable to the denizens of Rossland, but far more acceptable is the harsh and discordant notes which come from the ton tram cars as the ore is unceremoniously dumped into the bunkers of the War Eagle, Le Roi, and Iron Mask and thence into railway cars.[14]

Local confidence in continued wealth was also made manifest in the city. Residents formed organizations such as the Rossland Board of Trade, the Rossland Progressive Association, and the Rossland Boosters Club to create an image of a vibrant and vital, yet mature city.[15] And public concern over issues such as sanitation, fire protection, and public order, once subsumed by the quest for gold, rose to the forefront of concern. The solutions to these problems, however, were beyond the means of those willing to contribute to their correction.[16] Residents believed incorporation of Rossland as a city as the only solution and as a result, Rossland was established as a city in July 1897. With the passing of the bill and the election of the first council, the city successfully applied for a $50,000 loan and began a program of civic and institutional improvements.[17] By 1900 order and controlled planning replaced the random organization of the frontier camp.

Rossland's social structures also reflect some of the key events described above. During the boom days, Rossland was a boisterous camp, inhabited by a population of wealth seekers: prospectors, lawyers, assayers, entrepreneurs, and prostitutes. But with the passing of the boom Rossland's frontier days came to a close. Prospectors and those others seeking the quick riches of a booming camp left the immediate region. A new population, and a social structure that was much closer to that of an industrial city than to that of a frontier camp, replaced them. However, despite the presence of company mines and industrial activity Rossland's social structure was in many ways truncated. The distribution of employed persons is skewed towards skilled and semi-skilled wage labour and service positions. Work associated with mines and mining obviously dominated the employment structure. Among employed males, for example, 41 percent claimed to be gold miners.

Other than a labouring class there were no easily identifiable class groupings in Rossland (see Table 1). A strongly unified elite group is, for example, hard to identify. Few of the mines were headquartered in Rossland, but instead were principally controlled first by Americans, and then later by eastern Canadian and British companies. There were, of course, those managers, engineers, draughtsmen, assayers, and others employed by, or associated with, the mines who made up a majority of the professionals and white collar workers. A few public officials and influential proprietors probably made up the remainder of this group. A small group of more or less influential business people and professionals, artisans, proprietors, and lower income white collar workers were situated between the labour and elite groups.

Ethnic Group		Professional, High Income White Collar, Capitalist	Other White Collar	Non-retail Proprietors, Retail Proprietors, and Self Employed Craftsmen	Skilled and Semi-skilled Wage Earners and Service Workers	Unskilled Wage Earners and Service Labourers	Other	Totals	Index of Segregation
Austrian	Sample	1	3	3	30	9	0	46	12.2
	Expected	2.1	3.8	6.1	24.7	8.8	.5		
Chinese	Sample	0	1	58	2	173	4	238	70.0
	Expected	10.8	19.5	31.4	127.9	45.4	2.8		
English	Sample	60	111	133	528	123	12	967	9.2
	Expected	44.1	79.4	127.8	519.9	184.5	11.29		
Finnish	Sample	0	1	0	32	4	0	37	25.2
	Expected	2	3.5	5.7	23.1	8.2	.5		
French	Sample	3	4	25	98	46	0	176	10.5
	Expected	8.0	14.4	23.3	94.6	33.6	2.1		
German	Sample	14	21	42	112	43	7	239	8.5
	Expected	10.9	19.6	31.6	128.5	45.6	2.8		
Irish	Sample	29	57	71	333	78	6	574	7.7
	Expected	26.1	47.2	75.8	308.6	12.5	6.7		
Italian	Sample	0	1	8	148	35	0	192	24.6
	Expected	8.8	15.8	25.4	103.2	36.6	2.2		
Russian	Sample	0	0	5	31	8	1	45	16.3
	Expected	2.1	3.7	5.9	24.2	8.6	.5		
Scottish	Sample	50	85	89	442	96	9	771	10.6
	Expected	35.2	63.3	101.9	414.6	147.1	9.0		
Swedish	Sample	2	0	12	106	20	1	141	22.4
	Expected	6.4	11.6	18.6	75.8	26.9	1.6		
Welsh	Sample	3	4	3	24	5	0	39	13.5
	Expected	1.8	3.2	5.2	21	7.4	.5		
Other		6	14	32	101	60	2		
Total		164	295	475	1933	686	42	3595	

Table 1. Distribution of Ethnic Groups by Occupation, Rossland 1901.
Source: Manuscript Census of Canada, 1901.

Occupation Cateregories adapted from O. Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Developments and Immigrants in Detroit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982)

Note: This table illustrates the distribution of ethnic groups across occupational structures. There are two ways to read this table. 1. Expected values can be compared to sample sizes. The expected value is that value expected in each occupational group if the distribution is even. 2. The last column (index of segregation) gives a statistical measure of segregation given the actual distribution. Generally, values from 1-30 are considered to be insignificantly segregated, values from 31-69 to be somewhat segragated, and values 70 and above to be very significantly segregated. See, D. Massey, "Ethnic Residential Segregation: a Theoretical Synthesis and Empirical Review," *Sociology and Social Research*, 68:3 (1985): 315-349.

Despite difficulties in defining class boundaries, issues of class were central in Rossland. For example, in response to highly, mechanized mines, dangerous working conditions, and tenuous employment, Rossland's miners organized the first Canadian local of the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) in 1895. Beginning in 1899, Rossland's mines became the focus of long and vitriolic labour disputes that culminated in a bitter strike in 1901. The union never officially called off the strike, but allowed it to fade into little more than a painful memory.[18] But the strike did throw questions of social structure into sharp relief. Of course, the mine management and some of Rossland's elite vehemently opposed the strike. On the other hand, Rossland's labouring peoples rallied in support of the striking miners: other unionized mine employees, such as carpenters and joiners, walked out on a sympathy strike; representatives of most of the city's unions turned out for parades, picnics, and demonstrations; a co-operative store was set up for the benefit of the miners and their families; and even the newspaper carriers refused to carry or sell the pro-management newspaper, the *Rossland Miner.*

The remaining population (about 20%) were placed somewhere between the miners and the managers. Perhaps the only thing uniting this group was a concern for the reputation of their town. During the labour trouble, for instance, it is difficult to identify where public sentiment lay, but it is clear that threats to Rossland's reputation were not tolerated. Residents criticized the miners for the few instances of violence that they seemed to have instigated. One commentator noted: "[w]e cannot afford, in a literal sense, to have it become known that such gross breaches of the law and decency are permitted or that go unpunished."[19] On the other hand, they did not withhold reproach from the mine management. Indeed, some placed the blame for the strike squarely on their shoulders. A concerned citizen wrote to the pro-labour *Evening World*: "[t]he present strike in the Rossland camp is largely due to the desire of men managing overcapitalized properties to make the labour unions the scapegoats for their own sins."[20]

This, then, is the context in which the shape of ethnicity was worked out in Rossland. Though class allegiances formed the most crucial social divisions, ethnicity would also become significant in Rossland as mining activity and concerned citizens transformed the frontier camp into an industrial city. Prior to the labour troubles in the mines, there were few ethnic conflicts in Rossland. Though many different ethnic communities were represented in the population, most belonged to charter immigrant groups with well-established presences in North America. Indeed, the most notable concerns focused on the seemingly heavy American influence in the city.[21] This began to change with the labour conflicts of 1899-1901. As part of the efforts to break the WFM, the management of the Le Roi and War Eagle began to import "new" immigrants, those who were originally from south and central Europe, to work the mines. A prolonged discussion of these relationships is beyond the scope of this paper. However, already established Euro-Canadians and Euro-Americans applied common stereotypes to these people: they were a source of moral and cultural pollution and a threat to established labour.[22]

Initially, the ploy seems to have worked. In February 1901, for example, the editor of pro-labour *Industrial World* opined:

> nearly all the "surface men" now employed at the War Eagle and Centre Star are Italians who have but recently arrived in this country and your name must end in an "o" or an "i" in order to get a job there, except where an expert miner is needed. The same now applies at the Le Roi, so I have been informed by parties that work there.
>
> The question naturally arises: why are the Italinas given the preference? Mr. Kirby says it is because union men are loafing. What a lie! The real reason my be found in the fact that these Italians have no votes nor are they likely to have; they are more content to be working than they are to concern themselves as to what wages they are getting; that they have not the gumption to organize for their own protection and, therefore, will be willing tools in the hands of swell-headed mine managers to make Rossland a cheap labor camp.[23]

Despite this vitriolic asssesment of "new" immigrant miners, labour attitudes soon shifted. Common experiences both at and beyond the workplace lessened tensions among labouring peoples. Immigrant strikebreakers were quick to join the union cause as they became aware of the labour dispute.[24] As the secretary of the union, Frank Woodside, declared: [a]n Austrian or an Italian takes to Unionism like a newly hatched duck to a pond of water. Thirty-five Austrians joined the union in one week. . . . they exposed the whole infamous scheme to flood and overcrowd the labour market.[25] However, underlying this acceptance was a very explicit fear that the presence of these men would in some way damage the union's position and

the contexts of work in the mines. Woodside himself expressed this concern: "[f]oreigners coming here caused a great deal of trouble. I call foreign labour, European labour, Oriental labour."[26] "Foreigners" were, therefore, treated with considerable suspicion. But where there was grudging acceptance of "Europeans," Rossland's population actively excluded "Oriental" immigrants from work in the mines and from society generally.

It is difficult to interpret the Chinese experience of Rossland because the Chinese community's past is knowable only as filtered through the representations of an antagonistic host community.[27] The manuscript census of 1901, however, offers a somewhat detailed snapshot of Rossland's Chinese community (see Tables 1, 2, and 3 for comparative summaries).[28] The Chinese population was relatively large. Though less than 4 percent of the total population, the Chinese were the fifth largest ethnically defined group in Rossland. They were also a remarkably homogeneous group. Most (85%) had arrived in Canada after 1890. And although the documentary record makes scattered references to Chinese women in Rossland, the 1901 census did not enumerate a single female. Most Chinese men were boarders living almost exclusively in homes headed by other Chinese people. A few were live-in domestics in Euro-Canadian households. A majority, including married men, lived as individuals. And most were employed in low-wage, labour and service jobs. None were employed in mining. As an article in a Trail newspaper reported: "[s]till another interesting type is the Chinaman, stoic that he is, unheeding the general hurry and bustle, wrapped in his own thoughts of the gold that can be turned during the 24 hours in each day that he may wash shirts in Rossland."[29] What the census does not show is that the place of the Chinese population in the social and spatial structures of Rossland was derived from the interplay of perception and courses of actions emanating from the host community.

Ethnic Group		H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	Total	Index of Segregation
Austrian	Sample	0	22	0	11	5	8	46	29.5
	Expected	6.0	8.6	3.4	11.5	5.9	10.6		
Chinese	Sample	147	16	10	9	53	3	238	62.4
	Expected	31.1	44.5	17.8	59.3	30.3	54.9		
English	Sample	82	181	84	247	124	252	970	6.4
	Expected	126.6	181.6	72.7	241.6	123.6	223.8		
Finnish	Sample	0	17	2	9	5	10	43	21.3
	Expected	5.6	8.0	3.2	10.7	5.5	9.9		
French	Sample	7	41	6	36	22	65	177	19.0
	Expected	23.1	33.1	13.3	44.1	22.6	40.8		
German	Sample	16	47	25	68	23	60	239	10.3
	Expected	31.2	44.7	17.9	59.5	30.5	55.2		
Irish	Sample	66	106	39	143	61	160	575	5.6
	Expected	75.0	107.6	43.1	143.2	73.3	132.7		
Italian	Sample	12	38	1	103	8	30	192	34.1
	Expected	25.1	35.9	14.4	47.8	24.5	44.3		
Russian	Sample	20	21	0	0	2	2	45	60.1
	Expected	5.9	8.4	3.4	11.2	5.7	10.4		
Scottish	Sample	95	121	73	206	110	167	772	6.7
	Expected	100.8	144.5	57.9	192.3	98.4	178.2		
Swedish	Sample	6	24	11	26	30	44	141	17.7
	Expected	18.4	26.4	10.6	35.1	18.0	32.5		
Welsh	Sample	0	11	1	9	2	16	39	27.7
	Expected	5.1	7.3	2.9	9.7	5.0	9.0		
Other		19	29	18	30	14	124	234	
Total		470	674	270	897	459	831	3601	

Table 2. Distribution of Ethnic Groups by Census Tract, Rossland 1901.
Source: Manuscript Census of Canada, 1901
Note: See Table 1 for explanation.

Ethnic Group	Household Data				Employment Data	
	Sample Size	Average Age	Percent Male	Percentage of Single Person Household	Average Number Months Employed	Average Wage (Previous Year ($))
Austrian	46	29.1	100	87	9.8	701.43
Chinese	238	30.8	100	98.7	10.5	251.29
English	960	33.3	95	60.4	10.3	860.67
Finnish	43	29.5	86	58.1	8.3	670.00
French	177	33.6	90.4	67.2	9.7	770.13
German	239	34.3	84.9	61.9	10.1	824.54
Irish	575	33.7	90.8	62.1	10.0	842.94
Italian	192	31.0	100	90.1	9.1	735.09
Russian	45	31.7	95.6	75.6	8.9	724.85
Scottish	772	32.8	93	68.7	10.1	903.57
Swedish	141	31.9	91.5	76.6	10	844.07
Welsh	39	35.0	100	41.0	8.9	761.60

Table 3. Distribution of Ethnic Groups by Household and Employment Data, Rossland 1901.
Source: Manuscript Census of Canada, 1901.

In Rossland, and presumably in other places as well, constructions of the Orient were multifaceted, dependent upon national, provincial, and local contexts. A discussion of the relationships of various levels of government is, again, beyond the scope of this work. Yet, government activities have been implicated in the institutionalization of labels of difference.[30] In turn of the century Canada the links between sinophobia and government action seem relatively clear. Canada was still less than half a century old, and British Columbia, with its small and scattered population, less than that. In this context anti-Chinese rhetoric was a powerful political tool: it would win electoral support, give campaigns a moral edge, and it was a pivot upon which politicians could consolidate a largely heterogeneous population.[31] Clearly, there was support for this stance in British Columbia as provincial politicians drafted and passed a whole series of exclusionary laws.[32] Agitation from British Columbia eventually also prompted the federal government into action: they set up a series of Royal Commissions to investigate the Chinese problem and subsequently levied a fifty dollar head tax on Chinese immigrants in 1885. This was later raised to 500 dollars.

The population of Rossland was unequivocal in their support for the anti-Chinese stance of the federal government. Indeed, the creation of such a policy legitimized locally bounded racist discourse. Technology, capital, and labour were not the only things that diffused into Rossland with the discovery of rich ores. Anti-Chinese bias found its way into Rossland through wide acceptance, but also because of immediate regional precedent: miners and labours throughout the western cordillera mining camps viewed the Chinese not only as culturally and morally inferior, but also as a low-wage threat to mine labour.[33] Thus, during deliberations over the Asian immigrant question, the editor of *The Rossland Miner* could state emphatically:

> An Ottawa despatch [sic] reports that the commission which has been inquiring into the matter of Oriental immigration will recommend the exclusion of the Chinese and the placing of restrictions on the influx of Japanese. British Columbians will fervently hope that the report is correct and the verdict of the commission will in such case be given full weight. . . . We have simply to choose between a white and yellow

> occupation of this province . . . If white labour is to be supplemented by yellow it will only be a matter of time when the majority of the population will undergo the same change of tint.[34]

Further review of public rhetoric leaves little doubt concerning the overall sentiments towards Chinese residents. For example, in his evidence before to the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese immigration, a local representative of the Provincial Parliament gave as evidence:

> I am strongly in favour of the exclusion of all oriental labour. My reasons are: the Orientals are physically and mentally an inferior race, and if allowed to come into the country without restriction they will drive out the white population, outside of the capitalist class, or they will force white people to live on the same plane as the Orientals; in other words, the white race would be driven out, or be degenerated and degraded. . . . And, the inferiority of the Orientals to the white race in British Columbia is shown by refusal of the white race to assimilate in any degree whatever with the oriental.[35]

The word "Chinese" became a symbolically loaded term. Several recurring themes appear in contemporary newspaper accounts that reflect popular opinions. The most common are markers that set the Chinese apart as an "Other," a group that lay outside and beyond the norms of mainstream society. Reporters variously described the Chinese as "almond-eyed Celestials" or "Mongols," or "sons of the Flowery kingdom," or more pointedly as "Chinks," "scum of the Orient," "an evil," "infestations," or a "yellow tide."[36] Furthermore, despite the ethnic diversity of Rossland, editors gave the Chinese alone an accented voice in print. For example, in an 1897 column in *The Rossland Miner,* a reporter described the seeming lack of Chinese women in Rossland. A resident reportedly said: "One woman too muchee. Have hundled women, make too much fussee allee time. Woman allee no good."[37] He may have intended this remark as an attempt at humour. Yet, it was symptomatic of the way in which the newspapers structured accounts of the Chinese. Indeed, it appears that newspaper editors, when not vilifying the Chinese as a race, treated them as absurd comedy. Certainly, the Euro-Canadian element of Rossland found them to be a novelty. Many newspaper accounts point to crowds of curious onlookers at various Chinese events, and particularly New Year's celebrations and funerals.[38]

More to the point, the newspapers tended to reaffirm and legitimate perceptions of the Chinese. Widespread apprehension of the Chinese as transient labour combined with the seeming insular nature of the Chinese community, therefore, solidified notions of the Chinese as outlanders who would do little for local, or national, economies.[39] More important were common beliefs in the Chinese as a morally inferior, if not a dangerous, presence in the city. Thus, there are reports of Chinese men kidnapping Euro-Canadian children (there are, however, no records of kidnapping offenses in the Rossland police dockets), of exotic gambling games, of the regularity of substance abuse, of the opium dens, and of prostitution.[40] Commentators only grudgingly offered praise to the community. In an account of the Chinese gardens, for example, the author noted that "with all their faults from other standpoints, the Celestials must be given credit for unswerving perseverance and energy."[41]

Despite the widespread nature of anti-Chinese discourse, local reaction to the Chinese can be demonstrated to be bifurcated by class. The Rossland elite were, likely, unanimous in their opinions of the Orient and Orientals. Certainly, maintenance of both a moral high ground and racial purity found constant expression in their public rhetoric. If the managers of the largest Rossland mines are indicative of elite opinions, there can be little question concerning their convictions. Bernard MacDonald, manager of the Le Roi mine, for example, testified: "I do not regard the Chinese as a class of people desirable to form the basis of the citizenry of the country. . . . I do not see why we cannot get along without these people."[42] But it also appears that there was a degree of tolerance of the Chinese presence among the elite. A need for low paid labour (as domestics, laundrymen, wood choppers, and garderners) made the Chinese presence at least sufferable. For example, Edmund Kirby, manager of the Centre Star and War Eagle, in his evidence before the Royal Commission argued:

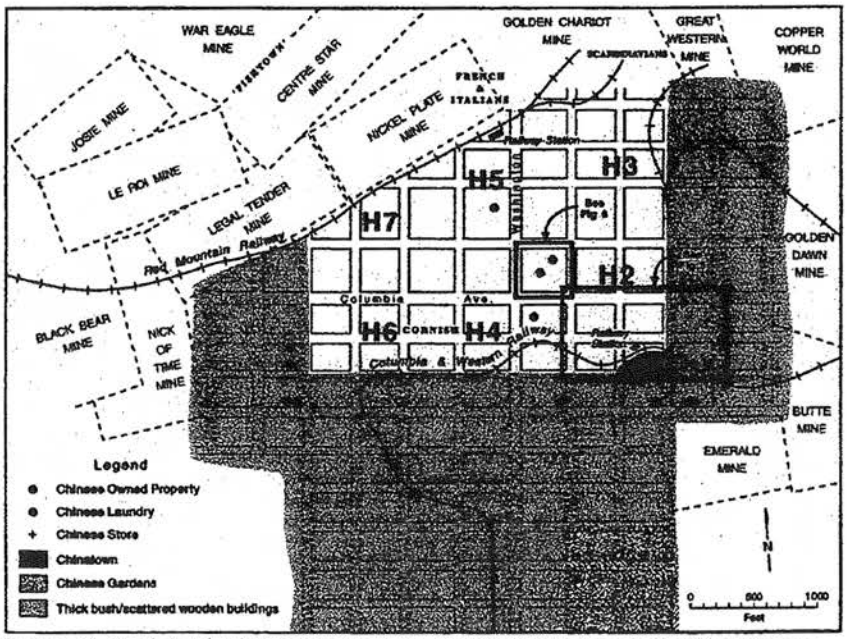
> There are enough Chinamen throughout the west to provide domestic service and do laundry work, and in short, work of the class that white labour is reluctant to undertake. . . . I find in private conversation that is the opinion of men all through the west. The reason being that there is a gap there for which there is no supply of white labour. The caste prejudice against domestic service is each year becoming stronger, and white girls seem to be more reluctant to undertake that sort of work.[43]

Rossland's labouring peoples undoubtedly held similar views of the Chinese. But fears of the Chinese as an economic threat exacerbated their intolerance. Rumours of wage cutting using low-paid Chinese labour had existed in the western cordillera for many decades -- so it is in no way surprising to find local protest to the Chinese presence couched in these terms. Woodside illustrates how he believed Chinese labour in any sector of the economy had widely diffusing effects:

> I consider that Chinese and Japanese labour employed on the railways indirectly affects the muckers in the mine. Those men [those replaced on the railways] come in here and are employed as muckers, and finally they work themselves into being miners, and work themselves into competition with the machine men and timber men and replace them. They affect the surface men along the same line; they affect the ore sorters as they affect everyone earning a livelihood in the mine.[44]

Jobs were, therefore, jealously guarded. Precedent barred the Chinese, and Asians generally, from employment in the mines in Rossland, as they had been throughout cordilleran mining. But the Chinese presence in Rossland was also marked as part of the ideological tension between elite and labouring factions. Thus, as labour conflicts escalated in Rossland, the anti-Chinese rhetoric of the city's labour groups became conflated with their anti-capital stance. As early as 1898, therefore, the Trade and Labour Council offered the following blanket statement: "the employment of Chinese and Japanese in any form [is] strongly condemned."[45] Labour organizations boycotted restaurant owners who had hired Chinese cooks and, in some instances, coerced them into replacing these employees.[46] Labour organizers even went so far as to argue that if there were no suitable employees for menial work, it was because the presence of Chinese labour in those positions made these jobs more menial and less appealing. In the case of domestic servants, labour advocate Smith Curtis argued: "Girls don't look forward to domestic service where Orientals do that service."[47] Despite continued protestations from various labour organizations, Rossland's elites continued to make use of Chinese labour and services. Appalled by this, the editor of the pro-labour *Industrial World* wrote:

> One often hears businessmen complain as to business being quiet about ten days after the monthly pay day, while at the same time those merchants who can afford it, have a Chinaman cut their wood, do their laundry work, supply their vegetables and do their housework besides other things. Then when union men start an agitation requesting them not to patronize these Chinese scum of the Orient, they throw up their hands and tell you that they cannot see how they can possibly get along without the "Chink." It's just as easy as living on two meals a day if you know you have to do so-it simply requires an effort, that's all.[48]



Sources: C. Goad, *Rossland Fire Insurance Maps*, 1897; R.H.M.A. Transcribed Oral Histories, 1965-1967, Rossland Tax Assessment Rolls, 1894-1902.
Note: Ward designations approx.

Figure 4. A Social Geography of Rossland, B.C., c. 1900.

Questions of ethnicity and anti-Chinese bias were made real in the landscapes of Rossland. Indeed, there seems to have been identifiable ethnic communities in Rossland: communities one long-time resident described as "islands about the town" (Table 2 and Figure 4).[49] However, and not surprisingly, there was little segregation among 'charter' immigrant groups. Indeed, calculation of an expected distribution for ethnic groups across Rossland's six census tracts often closely corresponds to the

sample distribution. Statistical testing further bears out this correlation (see Table 2).

The Chinese community represented an anomoly to this general pattern of ethnic integration. A long time Rossland resident, for instance, recalled: "We found we had Chinese, who came in, settled in the south. The reason they settled in the south part of town is because one of their jobs in our community was to have their gardens and supply the city of Rossland with vegetables and green foods."[50] This statement is certainly accurate: almost all of Rossland's Chinese population was sequestered in the south end of the city. Figure 4 provides a graphic example of this distribution. Chinatown was, in fact, a very closely circumscribed entity. Evidence collated from tax assessment rolls and the manuscript census illustrates that, in 1901, Chinatown consisted of a core of ten structures and five or six nearby dwellings that housed more than 150 people (Figure 5).[51]

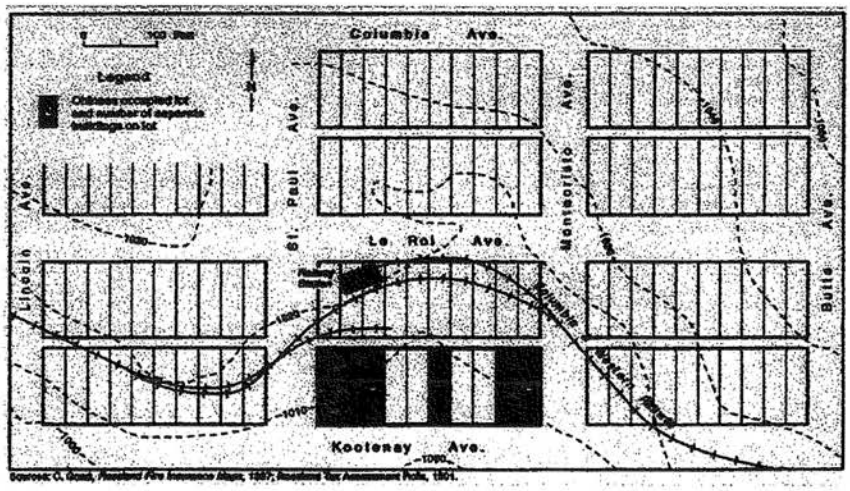


Figure 5. Chinatown, Rossland, British Columbia, c. 1902.

Though the Chinese population did engage in market gardening, the reasons why they settled on the southern fringe of the city may be more complex than that suggested above. Processes internal to the community such as chain migration, mutual aid, and extended support networks, may have contributed to a cohesive and circumscribed Chinese community in Rossland. Chinatown likely functioned as more than simply the site of their homes. Rather, it served to provide material and social needs for the community: things that residents could not likely easily garner from their hosts.[52] Thus, a number of stores supplied demand for Chinese goods such as foodstuffs, clothes, medicines, and liquors.[53] A Masonic hall/temple catered to the social and spiritual needs of the community and served as the focus for celebrations and festivals.[54] Chinatown, then, served as an axis upon which the material form and social structure of the Chinese community pivoted. Given the open discrimination they faced, it would not be surprising for the Chinese community to be inward looking and insular. But again, lack of documentary evidence renders these assertions little more than conjecture.

Despite the intentions and agendas of the Chinese residents of Rossland, Euro-Canadians largely defined their *place* in the community; a process that reflects systemic racism. A defensive effort on the part the Chinese may, then, in part, explain an easily identifiable Chinatown. Newspaper accounts, police dockets, and oral histories demonstrate that the Chinese were often victims of both verbal and physical harassment.[55] And, in one widely publicized case, the Chinese community charged the Rossland police with extorting protection money from residents of Chinatown.[56] As one Rosslander, therefore, somewhat euphemistically, recalled: "we gave them more trouble than they ever gave us."[57] But, there were other, more subtle, pressures. For example, the purposeful limitation of economic opportunities would have restricted both residential and lifestyle choices among Chinese residents.[58] Given the place of the Chinese of Rossland in the city's occupation and wage structure there may have been little choice beyond seeking space and community on Rossland's margins.

It is not enough, however, to argue that aggression on the part of Euro-Canadian residents alone created a closely circumscribed Chinatown. Rather, the place of Chinatown must be viewed as a manifestation of Euro-Canadian discourses of race. Such was certainly true in Rossland. For example, the efforts to materially reorder the city and improve its reputation (as described above) had a profound effect upon the social geography of the city and affected different groups in different ways. In the context of this new emphasis on order and civic pride, the Euro-Canadian population of Rossland increasingly viewed their Chinatown as a polluting presence. Thus, inspectors branded Chinese establishments, along with pig sties and slaughterhouses, as health hazards, banished them from Ward 6, and ordered them to relocate on the southern edge of the city.[59] Those that remained in the city were relegated to alley ways (see Figure 6). By 1902 Ward 3 had also expelled Chinese laundries. As

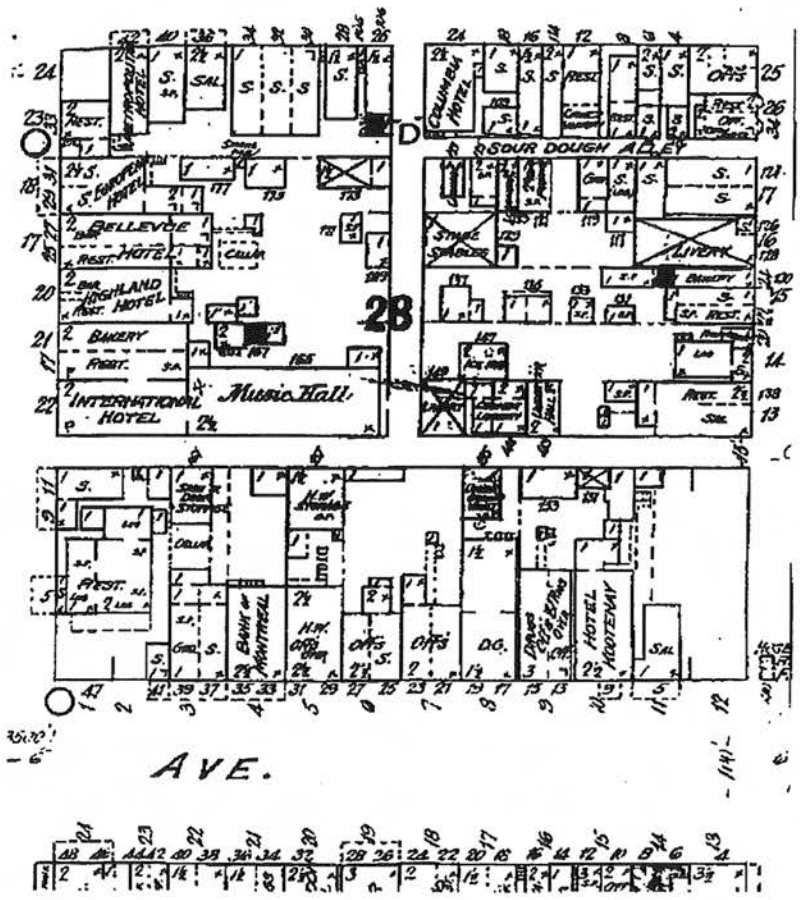


Figure 6. A detail of Block 28 — Columbia Avenue at Spokane Street. Rossland B.C. 1897. Note the location of the Chinese laundries in the alleys. Source: Chas. E. Goad, Fire Insurance Maps, 1897. Used with permission of the British Map Library.

a consequence Chinese laundries were largely removed from the core of the city.[60] These incidents were not isolated. Indeed, several other instances were reported in the local [illegible] where activities associated with [illegible]hinese came under public scrutiny because of health and sanitation concerns.

The site at the southern edge of the city where the Chinese were forced to relocate further reflects their marginal status in the community. Again, Figure 4 illustrates that the Chinese community was located on the physical margins of the city. But where the fire insurance plan suggests carefully laid out streets, blocks, and lots, these niceties barely existed in Chinatown. As the detail from the fire insurance map (Figure 4) and Figure 7 make clear, little of the reorganization of the city affected Chinatown: its residents barely carved their community from the wilderness. Furthermore, this site of Chinatown provided residents of Rossland with a cognitive as well as physical barrier from the community. Immediately south of Columbia Avenue (the main thoroughfare), the land slopes sharply downward, so that the location of the Chinese community at St. Paul Street and Kootenay Avenue, a distance of less than 150 meters from the main street, was 20 to 30 meters below street level. Indeed, it could barely be seen from most of the settled parts of the city (see Figures 5 and 8).

Though Chinatown existed on the very extreme social and spatial margins of the city, it occupied a central space in local imaginations. A trip to Chinatown marked a trip outside of the realm of normal experience and, in fact, it appears that residents viewed a trip into Chinatown as a descent into the mysteries of the Orient. For example, a local reporter, wrote of the Chinese New Year:

> All Chinatown is en fete, and at midnight on Wednesday lanterns were lighted. . . and a multitude of evil smelling cigars were indulged by visiting friends. Religious ceremonies

Figure 7. A view of Chinatown (nd). The building in the background has been tentatively identified as the Masonic Lodge. RHMA files #1942.

Figure 8. A view of Rossland, 1900. The Chinese gardens are located on cleared patch just approximately in the centre of the photograph. Chinatown is hidden from view by the relief. It would be located to the left of the gardens. RHMA File #229.

> were first attended and then in rooms lighted by innumerable Chinese lanterns, redolent with all the mysterious odors which none but John himself can tolerate and accompanied by fearful groans and shrieks . . . the merry mongols partook of everything delicious. . . . The festivities continue for a week and the bland and suave oriental is only too glad to initiate his . . . brother into the weird and mysterious rites and fantastic ceremonials of their quaint customs. To those interested in the unique and uncommon, a trip to Chinatown will be well worth the trouble. . . .[61]

The editor paints a fantastic portrait of Chinatown in celebration, but perhaps more significant is that Chinatown was portrayed as a world apart.

Apart from the ephemeral novelty of the festivals like that above, Chinatown marked a moral sore point for the residents of Rossland. This account appeared in the *Trail Daily Times* in 1897: "Rossland has added to her other evils, one of the vilest and most degrading known, and it is nothing less than an opium joint, conducted by two almond eyed celestials, with the 'same bland smile'."[62] Rossland's newspaper editors often reported that the Chinese community on the edge of the city drew in poor whites who were unable to withstand the lure of vice and moral turpitude of Chinatown. And often, well-publicized cases of Euro-Canadians falling victim to these evils provided a little needed impetus for police and other local authorities to launch campaigns to root out the problem.[63]

With the combination of the perceived innate moral shortcomings of the Chinese and the opium dens and the gambling rooms, both real and imagined, the area accrued an association with vice, poor morals, unhealthiness, and disorder. It is also perhaps no coincidence that the Chinese shared this location with Rossland's prostitutes. A strongly worded editorial in *The Rossland Miner* in 1901 captured these sentiments:

> It is utterly impossible that with such environment [Chinatown] these people can be mentally or morally healthy any more than they can be physically so. The taint which their bodies must

> receive from their surroundings cannot fail to communicate itself to its moral natures. . . . Wherever they go they will threaten the white community. . . . with all the dangers of outbreaks of loathsome diseases.[64]

Chinatown, then, existed on the social and moral margins of Rossland. The Euro-Canadian population applied evaluative racial categories to the Chinese that they, in like manner, applied to their community. And in Rossland, stereotype constantly became reality. Assumptions concerning the Chinese led to a course of action that, predictably, led back to, and reinforced, those initial assumptions. In this way Chinatown came to signify all of the negative images that Rossland's Euro-Canadian population held of the Orient and Chinese immigrants.

Conclusion

The frontier period, and its associated social leveling, then, did not last long in Rossland. Within three years of the boom, intense activity had transformed a muddy mountainside camp into an industrial city thought to be competition for Victoria and Vancouver. Contemporaneously Rossland's social fabric took on a familiar weave. As in other industrial cities, gender, class, and ethnicity became important lines upon which society was structured.

These social boundaries became particularly rigid as social distance increased. Thus, for the Chinese there were few opportunities for employment beyond those which most other groups avoided. Despite the intentions and agendas that the Chinese, as individuals or as a group, may have held for themselves, long-standing stereotypes went not only unchallenged, but were actively embellished by the host society. As a result, the Chinese population of Rossland occupied a space on the social margins of society. But even this position in the social hierarchy was contested. Labour organizers reworked Chinese employment, in even the most marginal occupations, into a weapon in a class-based conflict that marked the city at the turn of the century. The marginality of the Chinese made itself manifest in the landscapes of the city. Legislation at various levels of government had the effect of locating the Chinese community at the margins of the city where it accrued both real and imagined associations of vice and disorder. This only further reinforced the existing suppositions of how Euro-Canadians interpreted the category "Chinese." And, if such overt bias prompted defensive postures by the Chinese residents of Rossland, Euro-Canadians interpreted this too as further evidence of the undesirability of the Chinese.

In many ways these stories ring familiar. Certainly similar relationships played out in other mining towns throughout the western cordillera and in industrial cities across North America. But it is only through understanding the specific that we can understand general patterns. Discourses of ethnicity did not emerge in vacuums, but were literally constructed in places, places where global economic and social structures and cultural mores were bound into specific patterns of interaction. And the processes described here would always depend upon local contexts: in this case employment structure and the newness of the setting undoubtedly had some role in how the relationships that were described worked out. Thus, social distances waxed and waned with the specific contexts of work, social and economic structures, and ideologies of race. The point is that cultural meaning and discursive formations emerged out of the lived in worlds of real people who acted and reacted in localized contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

1. L. Whittaker (ed.), *Rossland the Golden City* (Rossland: The Rossland Miner Limited, 1949): 15.
2. *British Columbia Mining Record.* 3:6 (1897): 45. Hereafter cited as *BCMR.*
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5. See, for example, S. Olson and A. Kobayashi, "The Emerging Ethnocultural Mosaic," in L. Bourne and D. Ley (eds.), *The Changing Social Geography of Canadian Cities,* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1993): 138-152.
6. See, Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1991); Kay Anderson, "Cultural Hegemony and the Race-Definition Process in Chinatown, Vancouver, 1880-1980," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* 6 (1988): 127-149; Kay Anderson, "The Idea of Chinatown: the Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial

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7. D. Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion.* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
8. W. Carlyle, "Report on the Trail Creek Mining District," Bulletin 2 (Victoria: The Provincial Bureau of Mines, 1896) in *The Annual Report of the Minister of Mines* (1896): 10-32; Whittaker, 1949.
9. British Columbia, *The Annual Report of the Minister of Mines,* 1891. Hereafter cited as *ARMM.*
10. J. Mouat, *Roaring Days: Rossland's Mines and the History of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1995); Carlyle, 1896.
11. See Mouat, 1995; M. Ripmeester, "Mines, Homes, and Halls: Place and Identity in Rossland, B.C. 1898-1902," *Canadian Geographer,* 38 (1994): 98-110.
12. *BCMR,* 5:2 (1899): *16.*
13. *RMM,* 1901.
14. *BCMR,* 5:5 (1899): 15.
15. These clubs are listed in the RHMA files.
16. The funding for these and other necessary projects was supposed to have come from the provincial government, although the opinion in Rossland was that they were seriously shirking their duties. The misrepresentation of Rossland taxpayers became a constant theme in *The Rossland Miner,* the editor claiming that they did not get back one-tenth of what they paid into provincial coffers. *The Rossland Miner,* March 30 1895; January 25, 1896; November 25, 1896.
17. Whittaker, 1949, 34; *The Rossland Miner,* Historical Edition, October 11, 1938.
18. For more detail see, Mouat, 1995; J. Mouat, "The Genesis of Western Exceptionalism: British Columbia's Hard Rock Miners, 1895-1903," *Canadian Historical Review,* 71:3 (1990): 317-345; Ripmeester, 1994.
19. *The Rossland Miner,* October 3, 1901.
20. *The Evening World,* July 23, 1901.
21. Mouat, 1995.
22. See, for example, D. Avery, *"Dangerous Foreigners:" European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972); D. Ward, *Poverty, ethnicity, and the American City, 1840-1925: Changing Conceptions of the Slum and the Ghetto* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989).
23. *The Industrial World,* Feb. 29 1901.
24. See, Mouat, 1995; Ripmeester, 1994.
25. Frank Woodside, "History of the Rossland Trouble," *The Miners' Magazine,* 20 August, 1901, 3. A copy of this manuscript can be found at: *Angus McInnis Collection* 34:8, Univ. of British Columbia, the Library, Special Collections.
26. "Testimony of Frank Woodside," *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration,* Sessional Paper 54 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1902): 210. Hereafter cited as *RC 1902.*
27. For a discussion a general discussion of the Chinese experience of western mining camps and North America generally see, W. Wilmott, "Approaches to the Study of the Chinese in British Columbia," *B.C. Studies,* 45 (1970): 38-51; Liping Zhu, "'A Chinaman's Chance' on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier," *Montana: the magazine of Western History,* (1995): 36-51; L. McGlinn, "Power Networks and Early Chinese Immigrants in Pennsylvania," *Journal of Historical Geography,* 21:4 (1995): 430-435. For more on the material condition of Chinese residents in Canada during the nineteenth century see, A.B. Chan, "Chinese Bachelor Workers in Nineteenth-Century Canada," *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 5:4 (1982): 513-534.
28. Canada, *Manuscript Census,* Rossland, B.C. 1901.
29. *Trail Daily Times,* May 28, 1897.
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32. D. Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1988); Roy, 1989.
33. See, R.E. Lingenfelter, *The Hard Rock Miners: A History of the Mining Labour Movement in the American West 1863-1893* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1974); M. Wyman, *Hard Rock Epic: Western Miners and the Industrial Revolution* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1979); M. Nueshchatz, *The Golden Sword: The Coming of Capital to the Colorado Mining Frontier* (New York: The Greenwood Press, 1986); G. Blackburn and S. Ricards, "Unequal Opportunity on a Mining Frontier: the Role of Gender Race, and Birthplace," *Pacific Historical Review,* 62:4 (1993): 19-38.
34. *The Rossland Miner,* July 14, 1901.
35. Testimony of Smith Curtis, *RC,* 1902, 95.
36. *The Rossland Miner,* Dec. 24, 1896; Feb. 20, 1896; Feb. 20, 1902.
37. *The Rossland Miner* Sept. 23, 1897. From the 1902 Royal Commission we know that the Chinese were well aware of the wider political structures and prejudice that prevented the immigration of families.
38. *The Rossland Miner,* Jan. 22, 1898; July 2, 1898; Sept. 21, 1899. RHMA, Harry Lefevre, . . . Ike Glover on the Saloons and the Chinese populations that existed in Rossland in the early days.
39. See, for example, Roy, 1989; RHMA, Ike Glover . . . ; RHMA, Harry Lefevre. . . . In his testimony to the Royal Commission, Rossland's city assessor argued that the Chinese population while constituting about one-quarter of the adult male population paid only about one-hundredth of the total amount of taxes collected. *RC,* 1902, 43.
40. *The Rossland Miner,* Sept. 17, 1901; Rossland Daily Police Reports, June 3-4, 1901.
41. *The Rossland Miner,* May 2, 1903.
42. Testimony of Bernard MacDonald, *RC* 1902, 94.
43. Testimony of Edmund Kirby, *RC* 1902, 171.
44. Testimony of Frank Woodside, *RC* 1902, 209.
45. *The Rossland Miner,* March 15, 1898.
46. *The Industrial World,* Sept. 1, 1900; Sept. 29, 1900.
47. Testimony of Smith Curtis, *RC* 1902, 171.
48. *The Industrial World,* September 29, 1900.
49. See Rossland Historical Museum Association Files, Harry Lefevre on the ethnic groups which settled in Rossland, B.C. during the early days of mining. nd. Hereafter cited as RHMA.
50. RMHA, Harry Lefevre, . . . , 1.
51. Canada, 1901; *Rossland Tax Assessment Rolls,* 1901.
52. Breton argues that groups sufficiently removed from the mainstream may develop what he identifies as institutional completeness, or, the ability to satisfy most of their material and social demands. See, R. Breton, "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants," *The American Journal of Sociology,* 70 (1964): 193-105..
53. Estimates for the number of shops in Chinatown range from 2-3 to as many as 15. Unfortunately none of the accounts listing the numbers of shops is dated. See, RMHA, Harry Lefevre . . . ; RHMA, Ike Glover. . . .
54. The Masonic hall/temple may have been located on lot 3 of Kootenay Avenue between Monte Cristo Ave and St. Paul St. According to tax assessment rolls one of the buildings on that block was the most valuable in the neighbourhood. Numerous newspaper accounts point to these celebrations. See, for example, note 40; RMHA, Harry Lefevre . . . ; RMHA, Ike Glover. . . .
55. See Rossland Police Dockets, Jan. 27, 1901; Feb. 19, 1901.
56. *The Rossland Miner,* Sept. 1, 1897.
57. *RMHA,* Ike Glover, . . . , 6.
58. See, Olson and Kobayashi, 1993.
59. *The Rossland Miner,* Aug. 28, 1896.
60. *The Rossland Miner,* April 23, 1902.
61. *The Rossland Miner,* Feb. 16, 1899.
62. *Trail Daily Times,* July 23, 1897.
63. See, for example, the tragic case of Josie Perkins as related in Moaut, 1995.
64. *The Rossland Miner,* March 27, 1901.
65. *BCMR,* 4:11 (1898): 14-15.