

CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN THE PRAIRIES

A Preliminary Report

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INTRODUCTION

This report is based on a research project [financed by the Ministry of the Secretary of State] [under its Multi-Culturalism Program.] Considering the fact that it started in 1971, this report is long overdue - for this I owe millions of apologies to many people. Especially to Mr. Myron Momryk of the Ministry who has been most understanding and generous in extending the deadline for me more than once, I am deeply indebted. Some unfortunate incidents in my family circle and my move to a new job have caused the delay.

To many of my co-workers I extend my sincere thanks. My former students: Ken Runge, Howard Alexander and Greg Hales, were involved in the library research of this project in its earlier days. Mr. Lawrence Lau of the University of Alberta accompanied me in the fieldwork and later conducted about one-third of the interviews by himself. Finally, to the many many friends we met - Immigration Officers, University colleagues, Chinese students on various campuses, and of course, our interviewees, I would like to register my gratitude for their hospitality and cooperation.

It must be noted that I have been somewhat reluctant in revealing some of the findings for some time. However, as the time goes by, sensitivity of the issues have been

CHAPTER 1

softened, due to the natural course of events. Although I have exercised as much precaution as I could, identity of individuals and implications are still possible.

My intention is only to prove the points raised in the report, not to expose any individual or group. Through this project I have learned not only many facts about Chinese communities in the Prairies but also the burden of being a social scientist.

F.Q. Quo
Burnaby, November, 1977

1. North-West Census 1885, Ottawa, 1886, p. 7. The 8 Chinese in Alberta were distributed as 6 in Calgary and Red Deer District and 2 in Macleod District.

2. Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, Ottawa, 1885.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

With the completion of the transcontinental railway came the Chinese settlement in the Prairies. Though the goldrush of the 1850's brought many Chinese first from California and later directly from Southern China to the province of British Columbia, only very few of them spread into the prairies. According to the North-West Census of 1885 which covered the majority of the prairie territories, the Chinese population of the region totalled only 10, 2 in Qu'Appelle and the Regina district of Assiniboia and 8 in Alberta.¹ Needless to say, the issue of Chinese immigration was hardly of concern to the prairie residents in 1895 and the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration made no reference to the Chinese outside the province of British Columbia in its Report.² The 1901 Census of Canada indicates 419 Chinese aliens in Manitoba and the then North-West Territories as in contrast with the

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1. North-West Census 1885, Ottawa, 1886, p. 10. The 8 Chinese in Alberta were distributed as 6 in Calgary and Red Deer District and 2 in Macleod District.
 2. Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, Ottawa, 1885.

14,301 in British Columbia.³ There were an additional 67 Chinese listed as naturalized Canadians residing in the same region by the same census. The nearly 500 Chinese, however, were less than one-quarter of one per cent of the Chinese in Canada.

The Chinese population in the prairies, however, had a significant increase during the first decade of the century. By 1911 the Census of Canada recorded nearly 6,000 Chinese population in the three prairie provinces.⁴ Although the 1903 Act which increased the head-tax on Chinese immigrants from \$100 to \$500 did discourage the arrival of Chinese, the higher wage for Chinese labour in the country promptly negated the effect of the restrictive legislation. The number of Chinese immigrants jumped to 1542 in 1907, to 4667 in 1910, and to 6227 in 1913.⁵ (See Table I-1). The sudden increase of Chinese

3. The breakdown was as follows:

Manitoba	167	Northwest Territories	252
Brandon	29	Alberta	202
Lisgar	16	Assinibonia, East	19
Macdonald	16	Assinibonia, West	28
Marquette	15	Saskatchewan	2
Provencher	1		
Winnipeg	90		

4. Census of Canada 1911.

5. S.W. Kung "Chinese Immigration into North America".
Queen's Quarterly, Vol. 68 (Winter, 1962), p. 615.

TABLE I - 1

Chinese Immigration to Canada 1906 - 42*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Adult Males</u>	<u>Adult Females</u>	<u>Under 18</u>	<u>Total</u>
1906	37	11	22	770
1907	1,391	34	117	1,542
1908	1,967	39	157	2,163
1909	1,603	58	222	1,883
1910	4,268	71	328	4,667
1911	6,189	79	392	6,660
1912	6,556	92	347	6,995
1913	5,947	85	195	6,227
1914	1,458	50	92	1,600
1915	37	17	28	82
1916	229	31	53	313
1917	476	26	45	547
1918	2,806	52	130	2,988
1919	1,905	49	130	2,084
1920	961	133	235	1,329
1921	2,063	136	533	2,732
1922	390	61	359	810
1923	68	47	696	811
1924	6	1	Nil	7
1925	Nil	Nil	"	-
1926	Nil	Nil	"	-
1927	1	1	"	2
1928	Nil	1	"	1
1929	1	Nil	"	1
1930	Nil	Nil	"	-
1931	Nil	"	"	-
1932	1	"	"	1
1933	1	"	"	1
1934	1	"	"	1
1935	Nil	"	"	-
1936	Nil	"	"	-
1937	1	"	"	1
1938	Nil	"	"	-
1939	"	"	"	-
1940	"	"	"	-
1941	"	"	"	-
1942	Nil	"	"	-

* From Canada Yearbook 1943-44, pp. 183-184.
Also see S.W. Kung.

population in the prairies, however, was an indirect, rather than a direct result of the overall increase in Chinese immigrants to Canada. It is hard to speculate that most of those new arrivals during 1907-1910 had the prairie as their destination. More reasonably, one should attribute this growth of Chinese population to the internal migration from British Columbia to the prairies.

The prairies was the frontier going through tremendous development during the first decade of the century. Not only were job opportunities more abundant, but people of the prairies were also less hostile to the Chinese than the British Columbians. Through our interviews of the older generation Chinese, we found most of them migrated to the prairies from either Victoria or Vancouver rather than directly from China or Hong Kong. Thus, the big prairie centers were used as outposts for the Chinese in British Columbia and later the small town settlements in the prairies as outposts for the big prairie cities. This pattern of settlement prevents the Chinese from being well integrated in local communities. Like the immigrants in the earlier days who dreamt of returning to China rich, those who migrated to the small towns in the prairies also thought about earning enough money to retire in a nearby big city Chinatown where the ghetto

would provide them the social and cultural comforts in their old ages.

By 1921 the breakdown of Chinese population in the major cities of the Prairies was as follows: (See Table I-2).

In subsequent years the numbers of Chinese in the Prairies did actually decrease due to the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 which excluded the possibility of Chinese emigrating to Canada.⁶ (See Table I-3).

Alberta Total	1406	21	100.00	100.00	48.51	60.17
SASKATCHEWAN						
Regina	246	4	21.66	17.39	8.49	3.39
Saskatoon	280	3	28.31	24.78	7.39	6.78
Woods Jav	177	11	22.78	47.83	6.11	9.32
Prince Albert	80	0	10.30	.00	2.75	.00
Swift Current	34	0	8.29	.00	1.86	.00
Saskatchewan Total	777	23	100.00	100.00	26.81	19.49

- MANITOBA
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6. The Act permitted people of Chinese origin, irrespective of allegiance or citizenship to land in Canada only if one was
- member of the diplomatic corps, or other government representative;
 - children born in Canada of Chinese race and descent who have left Canada for educational or other purposes and can substantiate their identity to the satisfaction of the controller at the port of entry;
 - students coming to Canada for higher education; and
 - merchants who have invested \$2,500 in business for at least three years and are prepared to invest at least \$2,500 in a business in Canada.

TABLE I - 2

NUMBER OF CHINESE IN PRAIRIE CITIES AND
TOWNS AS SHOWN BY CENSUS OF 1921

ALBERTA

City	Number		% of Alta. Total		% of Prairies Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Calgary	649	39	46.16	54.93	22.39	33.05
Edmonton	501	17	35.63	23.94	17.29	14.41
Lethbridge	162	8	11.52	11.27	5.59	6.78
Medicine Hat	94	7	6.69	9.86	3.24	5.93
Alberta Total	1406	71	<u>100.00</u>	<u>100.00</u>	48.51	60.17

SASKATCHEWAN

Regina	246	4	31.66	17.39	8.49	3.39
Saskatoon	220	8	28.31	34.78	7.59	6.78
Moose Jaw	177	11	22.78	47.83	6.11	9.32
Prince Albert	80	0	10.30	.00	2.76	.00
Swift Current	54	0	6.95	.00	1.86	.00

Saskatchewan Total	777	23	<u>100.00</u>	<u>100.00</u>	26.81	19.49
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MANITOBA

Winnipeg	700	24	97.90	100.00	24.15	20.34
St. Boniface	15	0	2.10	.00	.52	.00

Manitoba Total	715	24	<u>100.00</u>	<u>100.00</u>	24.67	20.34
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Prairie Province Total	2898	118			100.00	100.00
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TABLE I - 3

Chinese Population (By Birthplace) in the Prairies

	Manitoba			Saskatchewan			Alberta			TOTAL		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1921	1247	32	1279	2574	39	2613	3339	83	3422	7160	154	7314
1931	1554	44	1598	3269	66	3335	3436	99	3535	8259	209	8838
1936	1031	27	1058	2444	42	2486	2647	85	2732	6122	154	6276
1941	1042	29	1071	2209	42	2249	2584	83	2667	5833	154	5987

It was not until a few years after the repeal of the Exclusion Act in 1948 that the Chinese immigrants began to arrive in the prairies again. (See Table I - 4).

TABLE I - 4

Chinese Immigration 1946-19⁵⁵~~66~~*

	<u>Manitoba</u>	<u>Saskatchewan</u>	<u>Alberta</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1946	-	-	-	-
1947	-	2	1	3
1948	3	4	8	15
1949	25	66	138	229
1950	26	184	288	498
1951	63	261	324	648
1952	75	208	298	581
1953	52	220	245	517
1954	62	193	236	491
1955	79	209	241	528

* From Immigration to Canada by Ethnic Origin from Overseas and Total from the U.S. by Province of Intended Destination: Calendar Year 1946 to 1955 inclusive, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Statistics Section, Ottawa, 1956.

During the first half decade of the 1960's Chinese immigrants to the prairies have decreased considerably in number especially in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The year 1966 was another turning point when the numbers of Chinese immigrants to the prairies grew ten times more than the previous year. (See Table I - 5 and I - 6).

TABLE I - 5

Chinese Immigrants 1960 - 1971

National Chinese Immigration Total - 100%

Year	National: Total Chinese	Prairie: Total Chinese	Prairie %
1971	47 (People's Rep. of China)	887	2.12
1970	5377	887	16.49
1969	8272	1344	16.24
1968	8382	1300	15.50
1967	6409	845	13.18
1966	4094	630	15.37
1965	197	54	27.41
1964	184	43	23.36
1963	179	60	33.51
1962	244	72	29.50
1961	861*	134	15.56
1960	1370*	265	19.34

*Ethnic Origin

TABLE I - 6

Chinese Immigrants to the Prairies 1960 - 71

Prairie Chinese Immigration Total - 100%

Year	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
	MANITOBA		SASKATCHEWAN		ALBERTA	
1971	0	00.00	1	100.00	0	00.00
1970	178	20.06	172	19.39	537	60.54
1969	275	20.46	297	22.09	772	57.44
1968	263	20.23	278	21.38	759	58.38
1967	129	15.26	205	24.26	511	60.47
1966	97	15.39	200	31.74	333	52.85
1965	29	53.70	17	31.48	8	14.81
1964	26	60.46	10	23.25	7	16.27
1963	42	70.00	6	10.00	12	20.00
1962	38	52.77	3	4.16	31	43.05
1961	31	23.13	49	36.56	54	40.29
1960	72	27.16	63	23.77	130	49.05

History of early Chinese settlements in the prairies can be obtained sporadically in local history of towns and cities, but mostly through the recollection of old-timers and local newspaper advertisements. In Winnipeg, for example, The Free Press reported the arrival of 3 Chinese from the United States on November 19, 1877, while the city's Henderson Directory listed one Chinese laundry in 1882, 6 laundries in 1886 and 11 in 1890.⁷ Similarly, a "Lee Kee's Chinese Laundry" was advertised in Moose Jaw Times in 1889.⁸ In Alberta the presence of Chinese caught little notice of the public until the early part of the 1890's.⁹ Though there were only 31 Chinese in the District of Alberta by 1891, anti-Chinese sentiment was

7. C. Millien, E. Woo, and P. Yeh, "Winnipeg Chinese", Summer 1971, printed by the Department of the Secretary of State, p. 8.
8. T. Yee, et.al., "An Ethnic Study of the Chinese Community of Moose Jaw", Report of an Opportunities for Youth Project, Summer, 1973, p. 8.
9. In the city of Lethbridge the first Chinese laundryman, Mr. Charles Gong was noted as shingling the roof of his laundry November 10, 1886. By May 1890 the city had three Chinese laundries while the population was about 1500. (Reported by Dr. James Cousins, Professor Emeritus, History Department, University of Lethbridge. In 1900 Chinese laundries which were operating on Sundays were one of the citizen's complaints, along with the problems of drunks and rowdies on the streets and prostitutes at the Point, agitating for the need of more Mounties for the city of Lethbridge. (See James H. Gay, Red Lights on the Prairies, p. 193)).

11. "How Smallpox Caused A Riot", by Ex-Corporal W. Dean, in Scarlet and Gold, 1941 edition, pp. 31-32.

inflamed by newspapers and the visit of a spokesman from the British Columbia Anti-Chinese League.¹⁰

The death of a Mrs. Haliday and her baby caused an anti-Chinese riot on August 2, 1893 in Calgary. The Halidays operated a bakery and confectionary store next door to a Chinese laundry which employed "a Chinaman who had recently arrived from the Coast" and "was supposed to have contracted smallpox". A former N.W.M. Police Corporal who had first-hand experience in the affair recalled the incident in detail:¹¹

"This tragedy occurred on a day when the town was filled with ranchers and remittance men, who were attending a polo game. As was usual in those early days, the barrooms in the evenings were full to capacity in the old Royal and Albert Hotels. Numerous drinks were passed around, and as the night wore on the liquor had its effect. It was not long before the rafters rang with the noisy, boisterous clamoring of the crowd. Someone suggested casually that a Chinaman was the cause of the Halliday tragedy. He'd brought the disease to Calgary with him. Talk spread rapidly, and the spark of gossip was fanned into an ugly flame. A vigilance committee was formed, and about ten o'clock an angry jostling mob pushed its way into the streets

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10. For an excellent analysis of the early history of Chinese in Alberta, see Howard D. Palmer, "Anti-Oriental Sentiment in Alberta 1880-1920", in Canadian Ethnic Studies, Vol. II, December 1970, No. 2., pp. 31-58.
11. "How Smallpox Caused A Riot", by Ex-Corporal W. Dean, in Scarlet and Gold, 1941 edition, pp. 31-32.

bent on the death of every Chinese in the city. At that time there were about thirty Chinamen living in Calgary, engaged in running several laundries.

In 1893 the Calgary City Police Force consisted of three men, Chief English and two constables. It was humanly impossible for three men to stem the tide of disorder that had broken loose. Flames leapt high as the Chinese laundries went up in smoke.

The Mounted Police Barracks were situated a half mile from town and comprised about 75 members. About eleven o'clock that night two terrified Chinese raced up with word that all the Chinamen in the city were being killed or burned to death. Immediately an order was given for a dozen men and a Sargeant to ride to town as quickly as possible.

Those of my readers who remember the situation will recall that when we arrived in town the street outside the Royal Hotel was jammed with nearly 2000 people, shouting death to all Chinese. Inspector Cuthbert, who was in charge, saw at a glance that every man in the Barracks would be needed to bring the crowd to order, and to break up the drunken mobs that had started to wreck the buildings. Word was dispatched to the Barracks for reinforcements. When the whole troop of Mounted Police rode into town numerous arrests were made. Chief Constable Fraser and myself arrested one of the mob. The crowd went wild as they tried to drag him away from us, and we nearly lost our uniforms before we managed to get our prisoner safely to the Barrack jail.

Meanwhile many of the Chinamen has taken refuge in the homes of ministers, and the Mounted Police had quite a task in getting them all together, and up to the Barracks. Here they were kept for a few days until the wrath of the city people had quieted down. Later, when the excitement was subdued, the