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When Gold Mountain moved north by Katie Schneider

In the mid-1800s, economic hardship in China's Guangdong province coincided with rumors of gold in California. Men (and they were almost all men) sailed to the United States in search of jobs. When the gold proved to be scarce, they took work in any field available.

Discrimination in California and increased economic opportunities in Oregon drew some of the immigrants north. The Chinese thrived in communities as diverse as John Day (where they started as miners) and Astoria (where thousands worked in the canneries). They labored in agriculture in Hood River, built major rail lines throughout the state and constructed extensive business and social networks in Portland.

Dreams of the West: A History of the Chinese in Oregon 1850-1950 is a collaborative effort that documents the Chinese contribution to the state. In 2003, Portland's Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association approached scholars at Portland State University with the intent of gathering, preserving and sharing the stories of Chinese immigrants to Oregon. The resulting volume (written in both English and Chinese and published by Ooligan Press, the student-run publisher at PSU) is a beautiful resource, a straightforward text coupled with archival photographs from around the state.

Enacted in 1882, federal anti-Chinese laws stemmed the tide of immigration while also making it virtually impossible for wives to join their husbands in this country. Discrimination was prevalent, ranging from casually racist remarks to out-and-out murder. In 1887, 34 Chinese were massacred on the banks of the Snake River, with no serious consequences for the perpetrators.

The Chinese remained unassimilated, seeking strength in religious and social traditions. Organizations like the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association were based on extended family ties back in Guangdong. Celebrations like Chinese New Year offered opportunities for everyone in the community to relax. As outsiders, Portland police often found it hard to curb illegal activity in Chinatown, where gambling, prostitution and opium smuggling were commonplace.

"The story of the Chinese immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century," write the authors, "is a story of hardships—discrimination, loneliness and unimaginably hard work." Despite such obstacles, however, the Chinese were able to maintain their identity and their traditions. *Dreams of the West* is dedicated to the unidentified laborers in its pages, the men who lay the foundation for generations to come.

Dreams of the West: A History of the Chinese in Oregon 1850-1950 is published by Ooligan Press. For more information please visit our website, at www.ooliganpress.pdx.edu