The Committee Continues:
Tacoma's Anti-Chinese Committee of Fifteen, 1885-1895

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The dark, bold lines come together to form the image of a boat. It is a young child's pencil drawing: a picture of innocence forever preserved at the Alaska State Library. Not because the drawing is from a great artist or prominent figure; the child was just a child.[1] The drawing is preserved because it is on the back of a picture. A picture that includes several prominent men in history: men who were far from innocent. It is an old, black and white picture of fourteen white men, some standing, some sitting. These men, along with one man absent from the photo, organized, planned, and executed the Tacoma Chinese expulsion in 1885.[2] Collectively they are known as Tacoma's anti-Chinese Committee of Fifteen. The men gathered for the photo to commemorate the Committee and the Committee's deeds. The men were not hiding their faces in shame: they were proud of their actions. They are prominently dressed, with their faces up and facing the camera.[3] Pride in their actions can also be seen in a brief notice that appeared in the *Tacoma Daily Ledger* (*Ledger*) on November 25, 1885: "Parties wishing photographs of the Committee of Fifteen…will please send their names to Mrs. J. A. Comerford, as it is impossible to call on every one."[4] Countless people were clamoring for photographs of the Committee and a notice had to be submitted to the newspaper to let people know how to get a copy.[5] The Committee, and the citizens of Tacoma, were showing their pride in one of the worst acts of racial violence carried out, and largely forgotten, in Tacoma history.

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[1] Photograph of the Committee of Fifteen – Having Charge of the Anti-Chinese Agitation in Tacoma, W.T., 1885, ASL-MS220-01-04-01and02, Jack Allman Papers 1935-1959, Alaska State Library, Historical Collections, Juneau, Alaska, https://vilda.alaska.edu/digital/collection/cdmg21/id/6179.

[2] "Chinese Expulsion: How it was Affected in Tacoma; Tomorrow's Big Celebration; A Brief History of the Exciting Times in 1885 Which Culminated in the Heroic Measures Taken by the Celebrated Committee of Fifteen," *Tacoma Daily News*, November 2, 1891, GenealogyBank.

[3] Photograph of the Committee of Fifteen – Having Charge of the Anti-Chinese Agitation in Tacoma, W.T., 1885, Jack Allman Papers 1935-1959.

[4] *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 25, 1885, GenealogyBank.

[5] It can also be seen in how many copies of the photos are still in existence. The image is preserved not only at the Alaska State Library, but the Washington State Historical Society and the University of Washington.

Tacoma was not alone, however; In the 1880s along the Pacific Coast of the United States town after town inflicted racial violence on the Chinese.[6] Murray Morgan implies that the Chinese expulsion in Eureka, California, which happened in February 1885, inspired Tacoma to expel their Chinese population.[7] The fact that other towns expelled their Chinese populations before and after November 3, 1885, gives the impression that Tacoma was just following along. However, Tacoma's expulsion was devastatingly unique in history. There are similarities between the expulsion in Eureka and the expulsion in Tacoma, but there is one glaring difference. Historian Beth Lew-Williams writes, "The Tacoma expulsion was not a spontaneous act by a mob angered by a triggering incident. Rather, it was cold and deliberate collective action that was publicly announced well in advance."[8] In two sentences, Lew-Williams points out the difference between expulsions that had come before and the horrific actions that took place in Tacoma on November 3, 1885. Eureka did have a triggering event; it was not a planned event like in Tacoma. The triggering event in Eureka was the death of a white councilmen who had gotten caught in the crossfire between two members of the local Chinese community.[9] In that respect, and others, it is tragically different. One of the things that makes Tacoma's expulsion unique was that it provided a model for other towns to follow. Lew-Williams writes, "The vigilantes in Tacoma helped normalize tactics of terror, lowering the threshold for violent action

[6] Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2008); "Mapping Anti-Chinese Violence," *Tacoma Method*, https://www.tacomamethod.com/mapping-antichinese-violence.

[7] Murray Morgan, *Puget's Sound: A Narrative of Early Tacoma and the Southern Sound* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 222.

[8] Beth Lew-Williams, *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 115. A triggering incident begets the violence that happens afterwards.

[9] Morgan, *Puget's Sound*, 222.

and providing a strategic blueprint for communities across the U.S. West."[10] This blueprint became known as the Tacoma Method.

The normalization of racial violence towards the Chinese led towns up and down the coast to follow Tacoma's example.[11] On the website titled "Mapping Anti-Chinese Violence," an interactive map records many of the known incidents of anti-Chinese violence on the West Coast during this time period.[12] Each of the blue dots on the map represents a separate incident of racial violence. The dots are heavily concentrated in Washington, California, and Oregon.[13] The racial violence was not limited to those three states, however; dots are scattered as far east as Colorado, as far north as Alaska, and as far south as Mexico.[14] By scrolling your mouse pointer over the different points a box pops up with brief details of each of the events. Each point represents the terror, lives disrupted, and in some instances, loss of life that the Chinese experienced in the U. S. West during this time period. In a sea of blue dots, Tacoma is just one.

In Tacoma, the expulsion was over November 3, and the blueprint had been created for others to follow. The Tacoma Chinese expulsion has been written about by a handful of historians.[15] Local historians, such as Herbert Hunt and Murray Morgan, have written descriptions from a local perspective.[16] Historians of Asian-America, like Beth Lew-Williams and Jean Pfaelzer, have written from the overall broader view of anti-Chinese violence on the West

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[10] Lew-Williams, *The Chinese Must Go*, 115.
[11] "Mapping Anti-Chinese Violence."
[12] "Mapping Anti-Chinese Violence."
[13] "Mapping Anti-Chinese Violence."
[14] "Mapping Anti-Chinese Violence."
[15] Jules Alexander Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," *Pacific Historical Review* 23, no. 3 (August 1954): 271-283; Lew-Williams, *The Chinese Must Go*; Morgan, *Puget's Sound*, 212-252; Pfaelzer, *Driven Out*; Herbert Hunt, *Tacoma: Its History and Its Builders; A Half Century of Activity*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1916; Tacoma: Tacoma Historical Society, 2005), 355-383. Citations refer to the Tacoma Historical Society reprint.
[16] Hunt, *Tacoma*; Morgan, *Puget's Sound*.

Coast.[17] Each of the different historians have told the events of November 3, 1885, and some have included the details of the subsequent trial. However, a significant period of Tacoma history has long been forgotten and overlooked. The events in Tacoma for the decade following the expulsion have long been silent and their significance overlooked. Hunt writes about this time period in Tacoma but does not consider it as a continuation of the anti-Chinese violence that occurred in 1885. This paper attempts to bring that long-forgotten history to light.

On the night of October 31, 1885, a rally was held in Tacoma.[18] Several speeches were given followed by a march through town with torches.[19] There had been many rallies, or mass meetings, in Tacoma leading up to the expulsion, but this rally was more significant from the perspective of continued anti-Chinese violence in Tacoma.[20] At this rally, the citizens in the city resolved, "That the Tacoma citizens' Committee of Fifteen be, and is here-by continued as a permanent organization…with full power to add to its own numbers, and to fill vacancies, and to take all steps necessary in the execution of the tax imposed upon it."[21] Making the Committee a permanent sitting body gave them a great deal of power in the city. These fifteen men were not elected by the citizens but were appointed by a large group of the citizens. The Committee was made up of men from different classes and political parties. Lew-Williams writes, "the anti-Chinese movement united white colonial settlers in the U.S. West across traditional divisions of class, politics, and ethnicity."[22] All other differences were set aside.

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[17] Lew-Williams*, The Chinese Must Go*; Pfaelzer*, Driven Out*.

[18] "The Monster Demonstration: People of Seattle and Tacoma Hand in Hand; And Enlisted for the Conflict; A Meeting to Be Proud of- And One That the Coolies and Their Abetters Will Remember," *Tacoma Daily News*, November 3, 1885.

[19] "The Monster Demonstration."

[20] A rally or mass meeting is a publicized meeting among a large assemblage of people on a topic of common interest. In this paper the topic was the anti-Chinese sentiment in town.

[21] "The Monster Demonstration."

[22] Lew-Williams*, The Chinese Must Go*, 34.

In the following decade, the Committee of Fifteen used the power that was granted to them by the citizens at the meeting on October 31, 1885, in a number of ways. After the expulsion, most of the members of the Committee were indicted and faced legal problems that lasted for over a year. That did not diminish their influence over the city. The Committee, with the help of the local newspapers, made sure that a candidates' anti-Chinese stance determined their electability. The Committee had battles with the Chamber of Commerce and the mayor in the direction the growth of the city should take. The Committee of Fifteen were given the power to make their voices heard above many others, including elected officials, steering Tacoma in the direction *they* believed it should go. **Tacoma's Chinese expulsion was more than the events of November 3, 1885. The anti-Chinese Committee of Fifteen, an unelected group of white men, were appointed to carry out the ethnic cleansing the town's people desired. Making the Committee a permanent sitting body ensured the exclusion of the Chinese would continue. Between 1885 and 1895 the Committee impacted the growth of Tacoma and continued the exclusion of the Chinese by their interference in elections, confronting the Chamber of Commerce and mayor, and denying the basic rights of citizens.**

On November 3, 1885, Tacoma forcibly removed all of their Chinese residents, but anti-Chinese violence in Tacoma did not start in 1885. The bullying and harassment began long before then. Herbert Hunt writes about an incident that took place in January 1878, noting, "that a Chinaman had been stoned by boys as he walked through the streets."[23] Hunt does not mention a precipitating event or a reason for the boys to harass and assault the man. This clearly shows that the Chinese residents could not walk down the street in Tacoma without fear

[23] Hunt, *Tacoma*, 1:355.

of harm several years before the expulsion. In March 1884, Councilman John E. Burns hired Chinese workers to dig ditches for the water works.[24] This violated Tacoma's ordinance 7, which stated that no Chinese labor can be used for public works.[25] Since anti-Chinese violence had been present in Tacoma from the time that the Chinese workers followed the railroad to town, it would be impossible to pinpoint a specific incident as being the event that precipitated the expulsion in 1885.

Ordinance 7 banning Chinese labor on public works projects was not the only law passed that directly targeted the Chinese population.[26] The Chinese would carry slop through downtown to their pigs.[27] On their journey through downtown, they would face harassment from the local children. Hunt writes, "One of the favorite jokes of the small boy of the period was to stretch a wire to tangle the feet of Chinamen homeward bound with liquid fodder, and there were ludicrous plunges and nauseating baths."[28] Hunt does not suggest that the children received any form of punishment for their actions.[29] Rather Hunt's account implies that the children were encouraged in their acts of violence.[30] The city passed an ordinance preventing the Chinese from carrying slop to their homes on the sidewalk.[31] This shows how the effects of harassment could lead to more oppression, rather than protections under the law. An ordinance was passed placing restrictions on how people could live. Though this law did not specifically single out a specific race, it did target the cultural habits and norms of the Chinese community.

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[24] "A Workingman's Protest," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, March 4, 1884, GenealogyBank; "Chinese Labor," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, March 4, 1884, GenealogyBank.

[25] "Chinese Labor."

[26] "Chinese Labor."

[27] Hunt, *Tacoma*, 1:358.

[28] Hunt, *Tacoma*, 1:358.

[29] Hunt, *Tacoma*, 1:355, 358.

[30] Hunt, *Tacoma*, 1:355, 358.

[31] Hunt, *Tacoma*, 1:358.

Hunt writes, “As one antagonistic measure the council passed an ordinance providing that no sleeping room for one person should contain less than 500 cubic feet.”[32] These are just a few of the targeted laws that the city passed in order to harass, intimidate, and just make life miserable for the Chinese residents.

In 1885 a census was taken of the citizens of Tacoma. Line after line identifies the name, age, and occupation of the people of Tacoma. Looking through the census it becomes quickly apparent that many Chinese were not considered significant. They were counted, but they were left anonymous, listed only as “Chinaman.”[33] Tacoma’s population in 1885 was 6,936, the Chinese making up about 10% of the population, at approximately 700.[34] They were not segregated, the Chinese interacted with their fellow residents, both Chinese and white. Lew-Willaims writes, “It is vital to recognize the degree to which Chinese were interwoven into the multiracial fabric of the U.S. West…When anti-Chinese advocates depicted the Chinese as segregated aliens, they were attempting to erase interracial encounters necessitated by daily life.”[35] The Chinese in Tacoma interacted with the white residents regularly, having both business and personal relationships. Those relationships did not stop the violence the Chinese faced in the city.

The anti-Chinese agitators had three main arguments they used to create fear. The first argument was that the Chinese were uncivilized. An article in the *Ledger* says, “Their social habits are such, that they endanger the very individual, every household, the state, the church,

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[32] Hunt, *Tacoma*, 1:363.

[33] 1885, Pierce County Census, Pierce County Territorial Auditor, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives, http://digitalarchives.wa.gov.

[34] “Expulsion,” *Tacoma Method*, https://www.tacomamethod.com/expulsion.

[35] Lew-Williams, *The Chinese Must Go*, 38.

civilization, the very existence of our race and all its institutions."[36] The second argument was that the Chinese would overrun the U. S. West. James Wickersham, a member of the Committee of Fifteen, wrote that he feared that if the Chinese were "given an equal chance with our people," they "would outdo them in the struggle for life and gain possession of the Pacific coast of America."[37] The argument used most often was the labor argument. The labor argument took three forms, one was aimed at the employer to encourage him or her not to hire Chinese laborers, the second was aimed at white laborers to stoke fear, the third was aimed at patrons to encourage them to only use white businesses.[38] These arguments were used individually, or in some combination, to incite fear and resentment. The newspapers were filled with daily reminders to be outraged and fearful.

The two largest Tacoma newspapers during that time, the *Ledger* and the *Tacoma Daily News* (*Daily News*), played a significant role in the lead up to the expulsion. An article in the *News* says, "Mr. Hall…proposed three cheers and a tiger for the Tacoma Daily NEWS, which he considered the ablest exponent of the anti-Chinese cause on the Puget Sound."[39] Both newspapers contained articles filled with hateful rhetoric against the Chinese population and those that opposed the planned actions of the Committee of Fifteen. Karlin writes, "Regardless of their motives, they worked unceasingly to make the clamor against the Chinese unremitting…In this campaign these leaders were aided by a local newspaper 'war' for

[36] "Report of the Committee on Chinese Habits and Their Mode of Living," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, June 4, 1885, GenealogyBank.

[37] James Wickersham to Herbert Hunt, April 21, 1916, folder 6, Wickersham Collection, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma.

[38] "More Work to Be Done," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, October 27, 1885, GenealogyBank; "Furnish Them a Good Excuse to Go," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, October 27, 1885, GenealogyBank.

[39] "The Monster Demonstration."

circulation and influence."[40] Karlin does a good job of explaining the significance of the newspapers in the anti-Chinese movement, but he fails to point out that the *News*, that he called "rabid,"[41] was run by H. C. Patrick, a member of the Committee of Fifteen.[42] This meant that the Committee had a guaranteed way of influencing a large number of the Tacoma citizens to their end.

On September 24, 1885, a notice appeared in the *Ledger* calling for a congress to be held in Seattle on September 28, 1885.[43] The article reads, "Be it resolved by the citizens of Seattle…That a congress be held in Seattle…to formulate a plan of intelligent and concerted action to be taken in this matter."[44] The notice called for all towns, cities, corporations, labor organizations, and trade unions to send three delegates each.[45] Delegates came from, among other locales, Tacoma, Whatcom, Sumner, Black Diamond, Renton, and New Castle. In total there were 69 delegates at the congress; the city of Tacoma sent twenty-three.[46] Reflecting their outsized representation at the meeting, the mayor of Tacoma, R. Jacob Weisbach, was elected president of the congress.[47] One of the resolutions was a call to action. An article in the *Ledger* says, "on the return of the delegates to their respective localities, they shall call mass meetings to be held on October 3, 1885, for the purpose of appointing committees to notify the Chinese to leave on or before November 1, 1885."[48] Those become the exact actions taken by Tacoma.

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[40] Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," 272.
[41] Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," 275.
[42] "The Monster Demonstration."
[43] "Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, September 24, 1885, GenealogyBank.
[44] "Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, September 24, 1885, GenealogyBank.
[45] "Anti-Chinese Meeting," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, September 24, 1885, GenealogyBank.
[46] "The Result: The Anti-Chinese Congress in Seattle – The Delegates – The Work Done, Etc.," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, September 30, 1885, GenealogyBank.
[47] "The Result."
[48] "The Chinese Must Go: The Preamble and Resolutions Adopted by the Puget Sound Anti-Chinese Congress," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, September 30, 1885, GenealogyBank.

On October 3, 1885, Tacoma held their mass meeting. Hunt writes, "A torch light procession with pyrotechnics and bonfires preceded the mass meeting October 3 in the Alpha Opera House. About five hundred men were in line, carrying banners and transparencies."[49] There are differing reports on how many were present at the mass meeting. Karlin writes, "Although the Tacoma dailies declared that 500 men marched…Reverend E. C. Oakley secretly informed the Portland *Oregonian* that not more than 325 men marched. This number included 'a good many not grown to manhood,' and there was 'little, very little enthusiasm…'"[50] One report suggests that the number supporting the anti-Chinese movement is larger and more vocal than maybe it really was. Misrepresenting the number of people that follow a cause could lead others to follow along when normally they would not. No matter the number present, the job of creating a Committee to organize the removal of the Chinese residents was completed. The *Ledger* reads, "Resolved…We recommend that a committee of fifteen (15) citizens be appointed whose duty it shall be to carry into effect the measures recommended by the 'Seattle Anti-Chinese Congress' for the removal of the Chinese…"[51] The meeting was sure to have struck fear in many of the Chinese residents. Karlin calls the spectacle, "a gala occasion, featuring a torchlight procession, a brass band, fireworks, bonfires, and banners bearing [xenophobic] slogans."[52] It surely would not have gone unnoticed by the Chinese population.

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[49] Hunt, *Tacoma*, 1:366.

[50] Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," 275.

[51] "Anti-Chinese Meeting: A Large Parade and Enthusiastic Gathering of the Citizens – An Orderly Parade – Speeches and Resolutions – A Peaceable Convention," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, October 4, 1885, GenealogyBank.

[52] Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," 274. In his original writing Karlin uses the outdated term chinophobe.

On October 8, 1885, the Tacoma Chamber of Commerce called a special meeting to discuss adopting resolutions concerning what they had dubbed the "Chinese question."[53] At the meeting, three sets of possible resolutions were presented to the group. Ezra Meeker, a prominent man in the area, was the only one to propose a set of resolutions against the expulsion.[54] He felt that the language and actions of the mayor, and the incendiary reports in the newspapers, would incite violence.[55] The group rejected the resolutions presented by Meeker and passed a set of resolutions supporting the expulsion and the Committee of Fifteen. [56] Meeker was not the only critic of the anti-Chinese movement. Reverend W. D. McFarland, a Presbyterian minister, was also a vocal opponent. McFarland got upset when the Committee of Fifteen came to his house and questioned if they had any Chinese workers.[57] He was not at home at the time and became angry when he learned of it.[58] That Sunday he took to the pulpit and vented his anger.[59] Several parishioners got up and walked out.[60] The *Ledger* attacked him for his stance against the expulsion.[61] The article says that McFarland's actions go, "far to justify the claim of the Knights of Labor, that the only violence to be feared in the present crisis is from pro-Chinese fanatics."[62] Not only were the newspapers inciting violence against the Chinese, as Meeker pointed out, but they were also attacking and inciting fear of those who stood against

[53] "Chamber of Commerce: They Meet in Special Session and Consider the Chinese Question – Ringing Resolutions Adopted," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, October 9, 1885, GenealogyBank.
[54] "Chamber of Commerce."
[55] "Chamber of Commerce."
[56] "Chamber of Commerce."
[57] Hunt, *Tacoma*, 1:369.
[58] Hunt, *Tacoma*, 1:369.
[59] "Let Him Preach to Empty Benches," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, October 13, 1885, GenealogyBank.
[60] "Let Him Preach to Empty Benches."
[61] "Let Him Preach to Empty Benches."
[62] "Let Him Preach to Empty Benches."

the anti-Chinese movement. The newspaper attacking those that voiced opposition to the expulsion silenced many who might have been against the expulsion.

On the morning of November 3, 1885, at 9:30 a.m., the whistle blew at the Lister Foundry.[63] Normally this whistle would be a call to work, but on this day, it had a more sinister purpose. It was the mob's signal. They gathered with the Committee of Fifteen leading the mob.[64] Karlin writes, "The committee's system was simple. Going from one Chinese house to another, it notified the [Chinese residents] that they must depart that day…At each place it left several men to supervise the packing by the Chinese and to oversee their departure."[65] They even had a translator to assist them.[66] The translator, the signal, and the organized actions taken, show the level of detail in this planned event. It was not something that was decided at the last minute. Those that had the ability and power to stop the expulsion, the mayor and the sheriff, just stood by and watched.[67]

The next day the headline in the *Ledger* simply said "Gone."[68] In part the article said, "No blood has been shed; no one has been hurt; the long agony is at an end and the Chinese have gone."[69] The Committee of Fifteen had driven all of the Chinese residents from Tacoma; however, the expulsion was not as peaceful as the newspaper claimed. In his review of the book *The Chinese Must Go*, William Carrigan points out that one of the main arguments is that

[63] Morgan, *Puget's Sound*, 237.
[64] Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," 279.
[65] Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," 279. In his original writing Karlin uses the outdated, derogatory term Oriental.
[66] Morgan, *Puget's Sound*, 237.
[67] Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," 279.
[68] "Gone," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 4, 1885, GenealogyBank.
[69] "Gone."

Tacoma controlled the narrative of the expulsion.[70] The affidavits of a few leading Chinese former residents paints a different narrative. One of the former residents, Kwok Sue, says, "A large riotous group of white persons…expelled the Chinese, breaking open the houses where the doors were locked. Some of the mob had clubs in their hands, some were armed with pistols."[71] The clubs and pistols are consistently present in the affidavits of the Chinese residents present in Tacoma that day. Another former resident, N. W. Gow, goes further in his affidavit, saying, "I saw the mob strike the Chinese, but they did not hurt them much."[72] Another common theme in the affidavits is theft. Gow says, "they threw my goods and my trunk and my treasures out in the street…The mob put many of my things on wagons and carried them away. I did not recover my goods."[73] The presence of pistols, clubs, and thievery, proves that this was not a peaceful mob.

A few of the Chinese merchants were given permission to remain in Tacoma for a couple of days to pack and remove what merchandise had not been stolen. Included with Gow's affidavit is a handwritten note from Weisbach stating that Gow had permission to be in the city and asks the citizens to protect him.[74] Gow was no longer considered a resident, but an outsider

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[70] William Carrigan, Review of Lew-Williams, Beth, *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America,* H-Law, H-New Reviews, May 2018, http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=51815.

[71] Kwok Sue, "Affidavit in the Matter of the Expulsion of the Chinese from Tacoma," Watson Squire to Thomas Bayard and Secretary of the Interior, July 17, 1886, Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, 1789-1906, M179, roll 707, General Records of the Department of State, RG59, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

[72] N. W. Gow, "Affidavit in the Matter of the Expulsion of the Chinese from Tacoma," Watson Squire to Thomas Bayard and Secretary of the Interior, July 17, 1886, Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, 1789-1906, M179, roll 707, General Records of the Department of State, RG59, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

[73] N. W. Gow, "Affidavit in the Matter of the Expulsion of the Chinese from Tacoma," Watson Squire to Thomas Bayard and Secretary of the Interior, July 17, 1886, Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, 1789-1906.

[74] N. W. Gow, "Affidavit in the Matter of the Expulsion of the Chinese from Tacoma," Watson Squire to Thomas Bayard and Secretary of the Interior, July 17, 1886, Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, 1789-1906.

needing permission to be in Tacoma. Gow's permission slip is not the only evidence of former Chinese residents needing permission to enter the city. Included with Lum May's affidavit is another permission slip, dated April 22, 1886.[75] Weisbach wrote, "I ask all citizen to let him pass unmolested."[76] Before the expulsion they were not safe to walk down the street, after the expulsion the former residents were no longer safe to enter the city.

On November 5, 1885, the Chinatown on the wharf was destroyed by fire. This is the fire historians refer to after the expulsion, but It was not the first fire after the expulsion to destroy Chinese property. The first fire occurred one day prior, destroying the 14 Chinese homes in a gulch near the Tacoma Mill.[77] According to the article, the homes were beyond saving, and the firemen concentrated on saving the nearby structures.[78] The blaze on November 5 was a similar story. When the firefighters had enough hose to fight the fire, the homes were too engulfed.[79] The firefighters focused on saving the railroad tracks, the nearby mill, and the boat house.[80] The structures the firefighters concentrated on saving in both fires were owned by white residents. Jim Kee, a former Chinese resident of Tacoma, became a scapegoat.[81] He was arrested for the crime and was later released.[82] After Kee was released there was no further mention of the fire

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[75] Lum May, "Affidavit in the Matter of the Expulsion of the Chinese from Tacoma," Watson Squire to Thomas Bayard and Secretary of the Interior, July 17, 1886, Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, 1789-1906, M179, roll 707, General Records of the Department of State, RG59, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

[76] Lum May, "Affidavit in the Matter of the Expulsion of the Chinese from Tacoma," Watson Squire to Thomas Bayard and Secretary of the Interior, July 17, 1886, Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, 1789-1906.

[77] "A Blaze," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 5, 1885, GenealogyBank.

[78] "A Blaze."

[79] "In Ashes: The Chinese Quarters Near the Wharf Destroyed by Fire – The Work of an Incendiary – Chinese Arrested on Suspicion and Complaint," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 6, 1885, GenealogyBank.

[80] "In Ashes."

[81] Earlier accounts state his name as Ah Chung Charley. This was a derogatory name. One article says that he was known as Jim Kee.

[82] "Released: The Second Day's Proceedings in the Preliminary Hearing in the Case of the Territory vs. Ah Chung Charley – The Defendant Released," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 8, 1885, GenealogyBank.

in the newspaper. It is unknown who started either fire. The people of Tacoma first drove the Chinese from Tacoma and then used fire to erase any evidence that they had been residents.

On November 3, 1885, Tacoma sent out a press release. It described the expulsion as planned and peaceful. This release was printed in newspapers across the country.[83] Many newspapers printed the release as it was sent; others added their own commentary. The *Oregonian* wrote, "The Chinese have been driven out of Tacoma by methods that would disgrace barbarians. The act is a crime against civilization and mankind."[84] While some decried Tacoma's actions as barbaric, others saw it as a solution to their problems. The *Evening News* in San Jose printed the press release Tacoma sent them, but followed it up with, "The result of the Anti-Chinese agitation in Tacoma…is very encouraging and proves that the ideas of the anti-Chinese leagues are far from being visionary."[85] The interactive map on the website "Mapping Anti-Chinese Violence," shows that the frequency and number of expulsions increased after November 3, 1885.[86] Things were not as simple, cordial, or peaceful as Tacoma's press release claimed. The affidavits from the Chinese former residents are additional proof of that.

On November 10, 1885, twenty-eight of Tacoma's citizens were arrested by the United States Marshal for their actions during the Chinese expulsion on November 3.[87] The indictments

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[83] "The Chinese Have Gone: Pleasing Results of the Agitation in Tacoma," *Evening News (San Jose, CA)*, November 4, 1885, GenealogyBank; "Driving Out the Chinese: The Celestials Promptly Obey the Order to Leave Tacoma, W.T. – No Conviction for the Alleged Murder of Chinese at Squak Probable," *Evening Star (Washington, D.C.)*, November 4, 1885, GenealogyBank; "The Chinese Move Out," *Jackson Citizen Patriot*, November 4, 1885, GenealogyBank.

[84] *Oregonian*, November 4, 1885, GenealogyBank.

[85] "The Chinese Have Gone."

[86] "Mapping Anti-Chinese Violence."

[87] "Marshal and Troops: The Latest Arrivals in the City – U. S. Marshal George Places Under Arrest Twenty-Eight Citizens – The Troops Encamped," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 10, 1885, GenealogyBank.

had been issued by the United States grand jury stationed at Vancouver.[88] The article in the *Ledger* reads, "The indictments had been kept secret, and no one knew exactly whose name was on the list which the marshal had in his possession."[89] The indictments and arrests were far from unexpected. The Marshal, J. W. George, had come to Tacoma several days earlier to issue subpoenas to several Tacoma citizens to testify before the grand jury.[90] The marshal was greeted by individuals who were peacefully arrested.[91] Most of those arrested already had their bonds prepared and ready.[92] The article in the *Ledger* reads, "During the day there were many who had prepared bonds, so that they could render bail if necessary, and by night all but three or four had their bail-bonds prepared, or being prepared"[93] The citizens of Tacoma decided that the indicted should not have to pay for their defense, since they were acting on behalf of the city.[94]

Among those arrested were: the mayor, Weisbach; two councilmen, D. B. Hannah and E. G. Bacon; a probate judge, James Wickersham; and twenty-three others.[95] One indictment, for J. A. Comerford, could not be served.[96] Those indicted became known as the Tacoma twenty-seven. The group of prisoners were a happy, jolly bunch. The article in the paper reads, "When all had been gathered together, a better looking and happier lot of prisoners were never to be seen…there was laughter and pleasant joking, and one would have thought the entire

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[88] "Marshal and Troops."
[89] "Marshal and Troops."
[90] "Issuing Subpoenas: U. S. Marshal George Calling Witnesses to Appear Before the United States Grand Jury," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 6, 1885, GenealogyBank.
[91] "Marshal and Troops."
[92] "Marshal and Troops."
[93] "Marshal and Troops."
[94] "The Gospel of Hatred," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 13, 1885, GenealogyBank.
[95] "Marshal and Troops."
[96] "Marshal and Troops." Depending on the source, J. A. Comerford, who was the editor of the *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, was either driven out of town or was helped out of town.

party were on a holiday excursion."[97] Having their bonds ready and being happy and joking shows that the group arrested showed no remorse or shame in their actions. It also shows that they did not take the accusations or accusers seriously. The men faced several charges. Karlin writes, "They were charged with conspiracy and insurrection under sections 5519, 5534, and 5536 of the *Revised Statutes*. Two days later additional indictments were handed up…charging them with inciting insurrection."[98]

The United States Attorney, W. H. White, wanted to make sure the indicted paid for their crimes.[99] White says, "evidence…warrants me in saying that short of firing upon the flag of our country no greater outrage was ever committed against the laws and government of these United States."[100] The twenty-seven indicted returned to Tacoma on November 12, 1885.[101] They were greeted by a crowd of Tacoma citizens. The paper the next day read, "They returned last night and were accorded an ovation…It was an outburst of public hearty sympathy and kindly feeling, as the great torchlight procession, the shouts of joy and welcome…and the smiling faces…extended to the twenty-seven returning citizens."[102] The citizens of Tacoma treated them as conquering heroes returning home. Tacoma did not see the twenty-seven as White did, as attackers of what America stood for; treasonous.

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[97] "Marshal and Troops."

[98] Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," 280-281.

[99] Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," 281.

[100] W. H. White, U. S. Attorney, to A. H. Garland, Attorney-General, November 23, 1885, Department of Justice File No. 1884-980-9733, National Archives Records Association, College Park, Maryland.

[101] "Glorious Welcome: Tacoma's Indicted Citizens Receive a Grand Ovation; 'Honor to Whom Honor is Due;' The People's Greeting to the Champions of Their Cause," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 13, 1885, GenealogyBank.

[102] "Glorious Welcome."

The trial dragged-on. The original twenty-seven indictments were set aside on a technicality at the request of the prosecutor, White.[103] On October 1, 1886, the United States grand jury returned indictments on ten of the original twenty-seven.[104] The case was continued until October 5.[105] When court was back in session, the defendants tried to have the indictments thrown out.[106] That failed and they entered a plea of not guilty.[107] As the indicted kept trying to delay the case, the Chinese witnesses who had come to testify were unable to find lodging in Tacoma, forcing them to find accommodations in Seattle.[108] The court had to order the marshal to find suitable lodging for the Chinese witnesses.[109] The next day in court a continuance was requested due to the speedy nature of the trial and it was granted.[110] When the court returns a new jury will be called.[111] The court returned on February 28, 1887, the defense moved to throw out the indictments as they had not been issued by a legal jury, because there had been four women on the jury.[112] A third jury did not return any indictments.

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[103] Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," 283. *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, March 1, 1887, GenealogyBank.

[104] "Eleven Indicted: The Men Chosen for Trial on the Conspiracy Matter – Court Cases," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, October 2, 1886, GenealogyBank. The title of the article says eleven were indicted, but the article only lists ten names.

[105] "Eleven Indicted."

[106] "The Conspiracy Cases: On the List for To-Day – Demurrer Overruled – Other Court Business," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, October 6, 1886, GenealogyBank.

[107] "The Conspiracy Cases."

[108] "The Conspiracy Cases."

[109] "The Conspiracy Cases."

[110] "Conspiracy Cases Continued: The Defense Secures More Time. Prosecution Evidently Disposed to be Fair. The Defendants Well Pleased," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, October 7, 1886, GenealogyBank. This is a new set of indictments, so it is considered a separate case from the earlier indictments. It had been six days since the new indictments were issued.

[111] "Conspiracy Cases Continued."

[112] "The Court Opens: Judge Hoyt Presides for the Last Term in Tacoma; Meeting the Members of the Bar; A Number of Cases Disposed of by the Supreme Court Decision," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, March 1, 1887, GenealogyBank.

[113] Therefore, the citizens of Tacoma did not face any legal repercussions for their actions on November 3, 1885.

The Governor of Washington, Watson Squire, was ordered to investigate the expulsion in April 1886, after several former Chinese residents submitted claims for compensation.[114] Governor Squire heard testimony from fifteen Tacoma citizens on June 23, 1886.[115] F. Campbell, the Tacoma prosecuting attorney, prepared a report on the expulsion for Squire.[116] Campbell concluded that nothing would come of prosecuting those who violated the law in Pierce County. [117] He writes, "any attempt to punish those engaged in the unlawful acts of that day under the Territorial laws and in Pierce County, would prove fruitless owing to public sentiment here."[118] Another line of investigation ended with the unlawful acts going unpunished. The town supported the ethnic cleansing and would never convict those that carried it out for them. The Tacoma twenty-seven, the Committee of Fifteen, and the mob, went free.

Tacoma took great pride in having forcibly removed their Chinese residents. On November 3, 1886, a great celebration was held to commemorate the anniversary of the expulsion. The article in the newspaper the next day read, "The celebration last night of the anniversary of the expulsion of the Chinese from the city of Tacoma, was an enthusiastic affair."

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[113] "Not a True Bill: The End of the Celebrated Chinese Conspiracy Cases; The Grand Jury Fails to Indict; A Brief Sketch of the Cases – Scene in Court Last Night," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, March 5, 1887, GenealogyBank.

[114] Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," 282.

[115] "The Chinese Claims," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, June 24, 1886, GenealogyBank.

[116] Report – Governor's Report to United States Secretary of State Regarding the Anti-Chinese Riots, June 10, 1886, box 2, folder 25, accession 4004-001, Watson C. Squire papers, 1850-1973, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[117] Report – Governor's Report to United States Secretary of State Regarding the Anti-Chinese Riots, June 10, 1886, Watson C. Squire papers, 1850-1973.

[118] Report – Governor's Report to United States Secretary of State Regarding the Anti-Chinese Riots, June 10, 1886, Watson C. Squire papers, 1850-1973.

[119] This celebration was reminiscent of the rallies held before the expulsion, complete with a torchlight parade.[120] These celebrations became common, held every year on the anniversary.[121] These celebrations served as a tool to reinvigorate anti-Chinese sentiment within the city. It also a way to keep the Chinese from coming back to Tacoma. Just as the rallies before the expulsion did not go unnoticed by the Chinese residents of Tacoma, these celebrations did not go unnoticed. Year after year the newspapers wrote up the celebrations and published long articles detailing the events. These articles let the world know anti-Chinese sentiment in Tacoma had not changed.

After the expulsion, a candidate's stance on Tacoma's "Chinese question" became a central point in elections. The Committee of Fifteen played a key role in determining where a candidate stood. In 1890, Stuart Rice ran for mayor of Tacoma.[122] The *Tacoma Morning Globe* printed an article saying that Stuart Rice was a willing witness against the Tacoma twenty-seven. [123] The wording in this article, and others, show that this was considered a damning accusation. The Committee of Fifteen's response was quick. An article in the *Tacoma Daily News* is titled, "Committee of Fifteen Exonerates Stuart Rice of Pro-Chinese Charges."[124] The notice was signed

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[119] "The Chinese Expulsion: Celebration of the Anniversary of their Hegira from Tacoma," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 4, 1886, GenealogyBank.

[120] "The Chinese Expulsion."

[121] "An Anniversary: The Chinese Exodus Two Years Ago Celebrated," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 4, 1887, GenealogyBank; "The Chinese Have Gone: A Celebration of the Eviction at the Alpha Tonight," *Tacoma Daily News*, November 4, 1889, GenealogyBank; "Cigarmakers' Dance: Celebrating the Expulsion of the Celestials with a Grand Ball," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 4, 1890, GenealogyBank; "The Chinese Gone: And That is Why We Celebrate; The Famous Fifteen; They Live Over Again in the Scenes That Brought This City Through the Slough of Despond Into the Greatness of Destiny, *Tacoma Daily News*, November 4, 1891, GenealogyBank; "Seventh Annual Celebration," *Tacoma Daily News*, November 4, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[122] "Regular Democratic City Ticket," *Tacoma Daily News*, May 3, 1890, GenealogyBank.

[123] *Tacoma Daily News*, May 2, 1890, GenealogyBank.

[124] "The Committee of Fifteen: Exonerates Stuart Rice of Pro-Chinese Charges; Mr. Huntington Has the Floor; Huntington's Bitter Enmity Against Laboring Men and the Bricklayers' Union," *Tacoma Daily News*, May 2, 1890, GenealogyBank; "Rice and Freeman Exonerated," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, May 3, 1890, GenealogyBank.

by eight members of the Committee.[125] Rice won the election.[126] The Committee had the power to exonerate members of the public of the charge of being pro-Chinese.

A similar situation occurred two years later in 1892 when Alexander Parker was running for mayor. H. S. Huson, his opponent, accused Parker of fighting to keep the Chinese in Tacoma in 1885.[127] It took two days for a counter article to appear, contradicting the story that Parker was not fighting against the expulsion.[128] Two members of the Committee who were in the same party as Huson attempted to correct the record.[129] The attacks on Parker continued, citing specific articles in the *Tacoma Daily Ledger* from November 1885 to make their point.[130] The Committee did not agree when it came to the position of Parker during the expulsion.[131] Two members of the Committee backed up Huson's claim that Parker was not anti-Chinese.[132] In the end, Parker lost the election by a narrow margin.[133]

A candidates' stance in November 1885 was very important in elections years after the event. Rice, who was exonerated by the Committee, won his election five years after the expulsion. Parker lost his election seven years after the expulsion. When the "Chinese question" was brought into the election, it became a sticking issue. The fight between Huson and Parker

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[125] "The Committee of Fifteen;" "Rice and Freeman Exonerated."

[126] Herbert Hunt, *Tacoma: Its History and Its Builders: A Half Century of Activity*, vol. 2 (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1916; Tacoma: Tacoma Historical Society, 2005), 18. Citations refer to the Tacoma Historical Society reprint.

[127] "Huson's First Speech: Republican Candidates Take the Stump at Edison Last Night; Messrs. Doolittle and Snell Deliver Broadsides at the City Democracy; 'Chinese' Parker's Record as a Friend of the Laboring Man," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, March 27, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[128] "Annanias: He is Running the Republican Campaign; Disgusted Republicans; They Contradict the Lies of the Leaders; Colonel Steele, Major Bixler, A. F. Tullis and E. G. Bacon Deny the Chinese Stories," *Tacoma Daily News*, March 30, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[129] "Annanias."

[130] "Cheap Labor Parker: The 'News' Says He Carried Water on Both His Shoulders; Told the White Laboring Men That They Could Take Lessons of the Mongolians; Their Own Fault That They Could Not Compete with the Chinese," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, March 31, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[131] "Parker and the Chinese," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, March 31, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[132] "Parker and the Chinese."

[133] Hunt, *Tacoma*, 2:76.

was so volatile that bets were taken on the outcome.[134] The issue was far from settled in Tacoma.

The *Phra Nang* landed in Tacoma on June 17, 1892.[135] It was the first steamer to land in the new Tacoma – Hong Kong line.[136] An article in the *Tacoma Daily* Ledger reads, "Some anxiety has been felt lest Tacoma's attitude toward the Chinese would interfere to the disadvantage of the most desirable business, but there really seems to be no reason why it should."[137] The coming of the steamship started a debate in the town over whether Chinese merchants should be allowed to come to Tacoma. An article in the newspaper asked several members of the Committee of Fifteen if the Chinese could come.[138] Dolph Hannah and A. U. Mills said outright that they were not wanted.[139] H. C. Patrick said that he did not object to a limited number of Chinese merchants coming.[140] Jacob Ralph had the most ominous response. He is quoted as saying, "The questions you ask are hard ones to answer off hand, and not having conferred with the committee…I suppose a mass meeting would be called and the old committee re-empowered to act for the masses."[141]

On July 23, 1892 the *Ledger* took three pages of its eight-page newspaper to interview many in the Tacoma community on whether they thought Chinese merchants should be able to

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[134] Hunt, *Tacoma*, 2:75-76.

[135] "She is Here: Steamer Phra Nang Arrives; Grand Demonstration; Thousands Turned Out to Welcome Her; Citizens Make Speeches; The Phra Nang Brought a Full Cargo of Tea, Silk, Sugar and Spice and 237 Passengers," *Tacoma Daily News*, June 17, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[136] "She is Here."

[137] "The New Steamship Line," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, June 22, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[138] "Can the Chinese Come: The Committee of Fifteen and Old-Timers Interviewed; They are Mostly of the Opinion That They Don't Want Them; Some Think That if Only Merchants Were to Come it Would Be All Right," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, June 23, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[139] "Can the Chinese Come."

[140] "Can the Chinese Come."

[141] "Can the Chinese Come."

come to the city.[142] This article draws a clear distinction between the Chinese merchants and labor classes. The stereotypes of the Chinese in 1885 were now almost exclusively aimed at the laboring class. Most of those interviewed said they were fine with the Chinese merchant class coming to Tacoma, but not the laboring class.[143] Tacoma was full of many people who were not present in 1885. One wrote a letter to the *Tacoma Daily Ledger* that it published in the same day's paper.

> Will you kindly give in the columns of the *Ledger* the names and occupations of the "Committee of Fifteen," who seem to have assumed the management of affairs for Tacoma? To some of us who have chosen Tacoma as our home and are interested in its welfare, it seems strange indeed, that when an enterprise promising so much for the city as the new steamship line, needs encouragement, that a few men assuming the office of dictators, should put an obstacle in the way. That would be fitting for an uncivilized country. It should be remembered that Tacoma is not a wayside village, and men who stand in the way of its progress will surely get hurt.[144]

It took seven years for the *Ledger* to write critically of the Committee of Fifteen and the opposition to Chinese returning to Tacoma. During this flare up of anti-Chinese agitation, the paper would take a more critical view of the Committee, and push for Chinese merchants to come to Tacoma.

A mass meeting was held on July 25, 1892 to ascertain how the citizens of Tacoma felt about the Chinese merchants coming to the city. Both the *Daily News* and the *Ledger* wrote articles on the event but had a different take on what was decided. The *Daily News* called the

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[142] "Let Merchants Come: Practically the Unanimous Verdict of Tacoma's Business Men; With the Same Unanimity They Say Keep the Coolies Out; We Must Have Steamship Lines and We Must Furnish Them the Business; The Chinese Houses Can Sell Our Goods Where Others Cannot," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, July 23, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[143] "Let Merchants Come."

[144] "The 40,000 Heard From," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, July 23, 1892, GenealogyBank.

result of the meeting for the opposition to the Chinese merchants coming to Tacoma.[145] The *Ledger* continued its attack on the Committee of Fifteen and said that the audience was in favor of Chinese merchants coming to Tacoma.[146] The argument was continued at a meeting at the Commercial Club the next day. The meeting was composed of members of the Chamber of Commerce and Commercial Club. They resolved to establish Chinese merchants in the city and support the mayor in protecting them.[147] At the meeting they also discussed the authority of the Committee. The article reads, "Mr. Sternberg asked why we had to handle the Committee of Fifteen with gloved hands."[148] A member of the Committee stood and explained the origins of the Committee. He said, they "were appointed at an anti-Chinese meeting presided over by Colonel Steele. They are a perpetual body and can fill vacancies in their own number."[149] A motion was put before the meeting to disband the Committee.[150] When the motion came up for a vote, it was sidelined since the Committee was appointed by a mass meeting it could *only* be disbanded by a mass meeting.[151] The *Ledger* was not the only body to question continuation of the Committee.

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[145] "Against Chinese: Expression of Last Night's Meeting; Laborers Wanted By No One; Merchants Not Objectionable to All, But Probably to a Majority of the Audience – No Doubt About the Sentiment," *Tacoma Daily News*, July 26, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[146] "The Ships Shall Stay: Tacoma Will Not Oppose the Coming of the Chinese Merchants; The Opposition Meeting Hears the Question Discussed at Some Length; The Opposition Resolutions Are Defeated, Thought the Vote is Declared a Tie; After Several Efforts Are Made to Secure the Opposite Result," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, July 26, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[147] "Merchants Favored: Business Men Unanimous for the Coming of Chinese Agents; They Want the Laws Enforced and Will Support the Mayor; Mr. Huson Says the Power of the City Government Will Be to Protect Them; There Was a Big Meeting, Much Enthusiasm and an Unanimous Position," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, July 27, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[148] "Merchants Favored."

[149] "Merchants Favored."

[150] "Merchants Favored."

[151] "Merchants Favored."

At the same meeting in the Commercial Club a Chinese merchant in Portland, Seid Beck, who was said to be coming to Tacoma, was discussed.[152] This article in the paper was followed by one that was a response from Beck himself. The article quotes Beck as saying, "Our trade can be very nicely handled from here, and without danger, so I can't see any use of me or anyone else going up there…It is as good as certain that no Chinese will go up there, no matter what happens."[153] Some members of the business community wanted to woo Beck to Tacoma, no article showed Beck had any interest in coming to Tacoma. Beck may not have come, but in the end a Chinese merchant did open a single storefront. Two young Chinese men came to town representing the Tacoma and Oriental Trading Company.[154] The article reads, "It is said that an agreement has been entered into by the city, guaranteeing protection to the Chinese, if they came, and that this is the reason they are so courageous."[155] The merchants were courageous. A few months after their arrival an article appeared in the *Ledger* saying that a Chinese peddler had been beaten in Tacoma.[156] The article says, "The first Chinese peddler that has dared to walk the streets of Tacoma since the great exodus was out last Thursday trying to sell wares from a pack…A little later several anti-Chinese agitators…gave him a severe thumping."[157] The power of the Committee of Fifteen had begun to be questioned, and in the end the fear the Committee spread could not keep out the Chinese merchants, but the danger the Chinese faced in Tacoma was still indisputable.

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[152] "Merchants Favored."

[153] "Seid Beck Talks: Chinese Unwilling to Undergo Perpetual Torment in Tacoma," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, July 27, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[154] "The Merchants Here: Chinese Representatives in the City, Preparing to Go into Business; They Represent the Tacoma and Oriental Trading Company of Portland; Will Ship Flour to the Orient and Import Silks, Teas and Curios," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, August 3, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[155] "The Merchants Here."

[156] "A Chinese Peddler in Tacoma: Handled Roughly on the Street by Anti-Chinese Citizens," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 20, 1892, GenealogyBank.

[157] "A Chinese Peddler in Tacoma."

But the Committee of Fifteen was called to action once again in December 1895. A newcomer to Tacoma, Mr. Thomas Riggs, had two Chinese domestic workers as his employees.[158] The newspaper asked a member of the Committee of Fifteen what their response might be.[159] The member questioned said there would be a response, but it would have to wait as the other members were out of town.[160] An article appeared in the *Ledger* a few days later announcing that the Committee would be paying Riggs a visit.[161] The article stresses there should not be another agitation, because it might prove disastrous for trade with China. The article reads, "Our anti-Chinese record has been an obstacle, but it is beginning to be overcome. Renewal of the agitation must be damaging if not disastrous, and it ought to be discouraged…by everybody who really has the interests of Tacoma…at heart."[162] The Tacoma Ministerial Alliance also tried to discourage the Committee. The article reads, "we hereby call upon the authorities of our city to suppress all such movements as threaten the liberty of any of our citizens, or the fomenting of race discord in this civilized city of Tacoma."[163] The Committee sent representatives to meet with Riggs on December 10, 1895.[164]

The Committee selected three of its members, A. U. Mills, Dolph Hannah, and Jacob Ralph, to meet with Riggs and present him with a message from the Committee.[165] The message, which was printed in the paper, identifies the Committee as representing the people

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[158] "Chinese Domestics: Employed as Servants in the City of Tacoma; The Unwritten Law Broken; Imported from Olympia Because They Can Be Had for Less Wages – The Committee of Fifteen," *Tacoma Daily News*, December 5, 1895, GenealogyBank.

[159] "Chinese Domestics."

[160] "Chinese Domestics."

[161] *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, December 9, 1895, GenealogyBank.

[162] *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, December 9, 1895, GenealogyBank.

[163] "The Ministers and the Chinese," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, December 10, 1895, GenealogyBank.

[164] "Mr. Riggs and the Chinese: 'Committee of Fifteen' Asks Him to Dismiss His Two Domestics," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, December 11, 1895, GenealogyBank.

[165] "Mr. Riggs and the Chinese."

of Tacoma and Pierce County.[166] The meeting was public, even if the reporters were not allowed in the house.[167] The message the Committee brought said that if Riggs were employing Chinese workers in his home, he must fire them, because it goes against the people the Committee represents.[168] Upon the Committee's arrival at his home, Mr. Riggs called the mayor.[169] The mayor said, "He would protect Riggs in all his rights, and all persons in his employ in theirs so long as they remained in the city and obeyed its laws."[170] After the meeting, Ralph is quoted as saying, "if he decides to keep his help…our committee will call a mass meeting of citizens and we will report to them. They can then act as they see fit."[171] This set the Committee and the mayor on opposite sides of the issue. The mayor was elected by the citizens of the city, the Committee was a small group of white men appointed by a group of citizens a decade earlier.

A mass meeting was held on December 14, 1895, presided over by the Committee of Fifteen and William H. Harris, president of the city council.[172] There were several speeches, including a report from A. U. Mills on the meeting with Riggs.[173] Riggs responded to the criticism he was receiving in the *Ledger*.[174] Addressing the behavior of the Committee of Fifteen, Riggs says, "They have tried to dictate to me…what I shall do and what I shall not do, in my own household…If the time has come when an American…has to give up his individual rights, then

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[166] "Mr. Riggs and the Chinese."
[167] "Mr. Riggs and the Chinese."
[168] "Mr. Riggs and the Chinese."
[169] "Mr. Riggs and the Chinese."
[170] "Mr. Riggs and the Chinese."
[171] "Mr. Riggs and the Chinese."
[172] "The People's Voice: Against the Introduction of the Chinese; Germania Hall Crowded; Resolutions Passed Without a Dissenting Voice – Speeches Greeted with Applause," *Tacoma Daily News*, December 16, 1895, GenealogyBank.
[173] "The People's Voice."
[174] Thomas Riggs, "Mr. Riggs States His Case: Not Partial to Chinese But Likes to Manage His Own Affairs; But Desires to do Nothing Defying or Opposing Public Sentiment; Will Dismiss His Servants If the Chamber of Commerce, a Really Representative Body of Men Say Their Presence is Detriment to the City's Interest," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, December 16, 1895, GenealogyBank.

let the stars and stripes be furled, and let every bell sound the death knell of liberty."[175] Riggs states that he does not recognize that the Committee of Fifteen has power and he will only get rid of his Chinese workers if the Chamber of Commerce tells him that it is in the best interest of Tacoma.[176]

The Chamber of Commerce called a special meeting to discuss the question of whether Riggs had to dismiss his Chinese workers.[177] The trustees had prepared a report on their stance that was read.[178] The report read, "It is not claimed that Chinese have sought an entrance into Tacoma since 1885, nor could it be substantiated if the claim were made. They have, on the contrary, given the town a very wide berth."[179] The report urged that the matter quickly drop for fear the steamship line would choose either Seattle or Portland over Tacoma.[180] The report said that Riggs should be able to handle his own affairs without interference.[181] The Chamber of Commerce voted in favor of the trustees report.[182] A few days later another article appeared in the *Tacoma Daily Ledger* claiming that the agitation would cost Tacoma business.[183] The article reads, "The management had no desire to remain in Tacoma if the committee of 'fifteen' was to be regarded as in control of affairs. After the Chamber of Commerce meeting…the owners of

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[175] Riggs, "Mr. Riggs States His Case."

[176] Riggs, "Mr. Riggs States His Case."

[177] "Will Uphold Law and Order: Chamber of Commerce Announces Its Position on the Chinese Question; Advises the Agitators to Let the Matter Drop as Quickly as Possible; Little Chance of Any Chinese Invasion Owing to the Geary Law – Vigorous Speeches By Prominent Men – A Representative Gathering at Last Night's Meeting," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, December 20, 1895, GenealogyBank.

[178] "Will Uphold Law and Order."

[179] "Will Uphold Law and Order."

[180] "Will Uphold Law and Order."

[181] "Will Uphold Law and Order."

[182] "Will Uphold Law and Order."

[183] "Their Confidence Renewed: Though For a Time the Chinese Agitation Caused Faith in Tacoma to Waver; Pacific Lounge – Mattress Works Let a Contract For Additional Factory; The Management Would Not Sign the Contract Until They Had Determined That the Anti-Chinese Agitators Were Not 'Running' the City," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, December 21, 1895, GenealogyBank.

the factory decided that the better element of the city were not in favor of the agitation."[184] The contract in question had already been signed by the owners, but the newspaper wanted to make sure that the readers knew it was in danger because of the agitation.[185] The anti-Chinese sentiment had already caused problems in the city; the Chamber of Commerce did not want Tacoma to lose more opportunities.

Nevertheless, in the end, the support of the mayor and the Chamber of Commerce did not matter, Riggs dismissed his Chinese workers.[186] The headline in the *Daily News* read, "The Chinese Are Gone," echoing the headline in the *Ledger* on November 4, 1885.[187] The newspaper had spent the previous month harassing Riggs and spent a good portion of the January 2, 1896 issue celebrating Riggs and his decision.[188] Once Riggs dismissed his workers, there was no longer any reason for the Committee of Fifteen to continue to hold mass meetings. The article reads, "All necessity for any further public meetings upon this question have passed, therefore there will be none. The Committee of Fifteen once more relapses into inactivity."[189] This statement shows that the Committee was not always active. It became active whenever the precedents set for the city in 1885 were challenged. A week later a more ominous article appeared. In the article from the Committee they laid out their intention to hold a celebration on the anniversary of the expulsion.

> In order to crystallize in thought, word and memory the principle and determination involved in the anti-Chinese movement in this community, and in order that those who come amongst us in the future may appreciate the same

[184] "Their Confidence Renewed."
[185] "Their Confidence Renewed."
[186] "Congratulations to Mr. Riggs," *Tacoma Daily News*, January 2, 1896, GenealogyBank.
[187] "The Chinese Are Gone: Tacoma Once More Free From the Coolies; They Departed This Morning; Mr. Riggs Turns Over a New Leaf and Bids Them Good-Bye-This is a Happy New Year," *Tacoma Daily News*, January 2, 1896, GenealogyBank.
[188] *Tacoma Daily News*, January 2, 1896.
[189] "Congratulations to Mr. Riggs."

> the committee has resolved to celebrate in an appropriate manner on the 3rd day of November next and on each succeeding 3rd day of November the anniversary of the exit of the Chinese from Tacoma.[190]

Though the Committee became inactive it still spread the fear and hatred of the anti-Chinese movement. They could not control the growth of the city, but they had a plan to make sure that the newcomers to the city knew who the Committee was and what they believed.

Looking at just the events of November 3, 1885, in Tacoma you easily miss the importance of what happened. Calling it an expulsion, the Tacoma Method, or a riot, silences the injustices that came after 1885. What happened in Tacoma was nothing less than an ethnic cleansing. The resolution of the mass meeting on October 31, 1885, making the Committee of Fifteen a permanent body in Tacoma, ensured that the anti-Chinese movement would continue. The Committee played a major role in shaping how Tacoma grew. The Committee may not have been able to keep the merchants out of Tacoma in 1892, but the peddler who was beaten a few months later shows that the Committee still had control, influence, and narrative over the city.

Over time the Committee began to lose power over the city. In January 1896 the Committee declared that there would be yearly celebrations to commemorate the events of November 3, 1885. On November 4, 1896, for the first time in 10 years, an article did not appear in the *Ledger* or the *Daily News* detailing the events of a celebration.[191] If a celebration did occur, it did not make the newspaper. Another sign of their declining power was that articles in the newspaper after 1896 mention the Committee in a historical context. The Committee went from being written about as heroes that saved the city, to being talked about in quotation

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[190] "From the Committee of Fifteen," *Tacoma Daily News*, January 8, 1896, GenealogyBank.

[191] *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 4, 1896, GenealogyBank; *Tacoma Daily News*, November 4, 1896, GenealogyBank.

marks or in the past tense. The *Ledger* hailed the accomplishments of the Committee in 1885, yet hailed the accomplishments of the Chamber of Commerce in 1895.

In 1906 the Chamber of Commerce held a meeting and appointed a three-person committee to determine if sentiment towards the Chinese had changed in Tacoma.[192] In this matter not much had changed since 1895.[193] There was still only one Chinese merchant in Tacoma.[194] A few days after the meeting instead of a response from the Committee of Fifteen, some of whom were still in the city, the *Tacoma Herald* published the circular that the Committee gave to the Chinese in 1885 demanding they leave by November 1, 1885.[195] The city had outgrown the need for the Committee. The fourteen men in the photograph in the Alaska State Library became a memory, as did the child who drew the boat. All that remains is the image, tucked away in the library, and the scars their deeds left on the city, the 700 Chinese residents that once called the city home, and the unknown numbers that might have made Tacoma their home.

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[193] "Movement in Behalf of Chinese."

[194] "Movement in Behalf of Chinese."

[195] *Tacoma Herald*, June 30, 1906.

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