

MYSTERY

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to Guangdong, where most of the miners originated.

The first assumption, she said, is that Chinese miners were desperate landless peasants who fled China to escape famine and war. In fact, Chinese mining companies had effective managers and skilled laborers, and most Chinese immigrants were educated and came from families above the poverty line.

A second assumption is that the Chinese only reworked claims abandoned by Euro-American miners, she said. The Chinese purchased or leased claims from Euro-Americans, but they greatly enlarged the mines and adapted a wide range of mining techniques to fit specific placer deposits.

The third assumption is that the Chinese mostly worked for Euro-American companies, but most Chinese immigrants worked for Chinese companies that not only mined but also owned stores, gambling halls, laundries, restaurants and hotels, she said.

Digging for facts

Much of the evidence supporting Rose comes from archaeological digs at mining sites around the Southern Blues. Their locations were discovered in historical records at the Grant County Courthouse or the Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site or during onsite inspections ahead of timber sales.

Malheur National Forest archaeologist Don Hann walked the timber sale sites and flagged critical locations to protect them from heavy equipment. Nine cabin sites associated with Chinese mining have been located in the Middle Fork John Day River area.



Contributed photo

Katee Withee, an archaeologist with the Blue Mountain Ranger District, and volunteer Eric Hanson screen material excavated from a Chinese mining camp site in the Middle Fork John Day River area dating to the 1870s.

In 2016, the Malheur Forest partnered with SOUTLA, Kam Wah Chung and the Grant County Historical Museum to support the study, protection and interpretation of these cultural resources. Rose and Hann co-directed the project.

Recently 19 volunteers donated 660 hours to work with the archaeologists in the first phase of the project, which involved site clearing, surface artifact identification, metal detector surveying, feature mapping and test excavations.

Historic finds

Despite signs of looting at some sites, numerous artifacts were found with links to China, including ceramic potsherds, brown-glazed stoneware, fragments of Chinese Winter Green porcelain and pieces of glass bottles. The artifacts came from cups and dishes used for dining but also liquor bottles and opium containers.

The stamped seal on one container was identified as the brand of the Sheung Wan Fook Lung company, a Hong Kong opium producer. The design is among the first internationally recognized brands in the history of Asia. Opium was outlawed in the U.S. in 1909.

The archaeologists also found rubber boots with hobnailed soles used by the miners in the cold mountain streams. Metal items discovered at the cabin sites included cast-iron cooking pan fragments, vegetable oil cans, Chinese-style cut-off shovel heads, remains of five-piece gold pans, handmade perforated metal pieces used to repair grizzly sluices and a trigger mechanism from a percussion cap rifle.

The miners often repurposed metal for other uses. A piece of steel chiseled off a railroad track was likely used by a metal-worker as an anvil, Hann said. Handmade nozzles for hydraulic mining were made from metal pieces rivet-

ed together, he said.

While the cabins' logs disappeared over time, dry-stacked rock cooking features remained. Buried in the soil and debris nearby were bones from sheep, pig and chickens — but no beef, Hann noted.

Early success

Researchers are unsure when the Chinese first came to Grant County, but commerce between the West Coast and China existed before the early gold strikes, Rose said.

The earliest record of a Chinese-owned placer-mining claim belongs to the Ah Yee site in the Middle Fork, recorded in an 1867 mining sales agreement found in the Grant County Courthouse.

Chinese mining activity ballooned after that. By 1870, according to federal mining reports, about 82 percent of placer claims in Grant County were owned by Chinese companies.

The government found it difficult to assess the gold yield from Chinese miners as they were reluctant to talk. While the Chinese reported about \$126,000 in gold production in 1870, federal agents suspected it was twice that amount, equivalent to \$4.5 million today.

Chinese mining companies in Grant County were set up in a similar fashion to the kongsi business partnerships found in China. Partners were not paid a wage but earned a share of the profits based on their level of contribution and their expertise.

The miners sent their earnings back to China where it helped finance community centers, libraries and tower-shaped family homes called dialous.

Shortened timeline

As gold diggings played out, the Chinese survived the

transition from placer mining to hydraulic mining. According to a 1892 federal mining report, about 79 percent of the workers at hydraulic operations in Grant County were Chinese, and two-thirds of the gold was extracted by Chinese.

But the Chinese population had significantly declined — by 1890, only 6 percent of the county's population was Chinese. One reason for the decline was the move to underground hard-rock mining, which required a larger investment in equipment, a hurdle the Chinese mining companies could not meet, Hann said.

Another reason was growing anti-Chinese sentiment, which made it difficult not only for Chinese to find jobs with Euro-American hard-rock mining companies but also to make the transition from mining to farming or commerce. The Kam Wah Chung business in John Day was an exception.

This sentiment was made law in 1882 with the Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited all immigration of Chinese laborers. The act was made permanent in 1902 and not repealed until 1943.

The federal agents who wrote the 1870 mining report would have been surprised. While they noted that "it does not seem likely ... that the Chinese will either be universally introduced or universally excluded as a race," the agents expected the Chinese to easily transition into underground hard-rock mining.

The Happy Camp 2 archaeological site was one of the last Chinese mining sites active in Grant County. A 1901 federal mining report noted that a few Chinese miners were working the "old placers of the Happy Camp mining district."



Contributed photo

Terry and Sharon Smith's home as it appeared before it was destroyed by fire in mid-July.

MISSING

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"Information from family, friends, neighbors and the public continues to come in, and we are appreciative of the response we have received during the inception of this case," Palmer said. "It has actually been overwhelming at times. Without information and people willing to talk to us, the investigation would not be where it is today. Even though information we have is circumstantial at this point and the Smiths are still missing, we are taking this case seriously and treating it as a crime."

Family and friends told the Eagle about the social nature of Terry and Sharon Smith and how unusual it would be for them to disappear for any length of time without communicating with their friends and family.

Cathy Hinshaw, Sharon's sister who lives in Hawaii, told the Eagle she spoke to Sharon the evening of the fire, and Sharon had told her they were headed to bed. She said the Smiths' disappearance is very unusual and could suggest foul play.

Hinshaw also said the Smiths sometimes let people stay on the 80- to 100-acre property on Nan's Rock Road they bought in the mid-1990s, but the man who served as a caretaker for the property was gone at the time of the fire.

POT

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Sessions rescinded Obama-era guidance on states with

recreational cannabis earlier this year, leaving the issue up to the discretion of federal prosecutors in the states.

An earlier "draft" version of the report authored by the

Oregon State Police, which was obtained and published by The Oregonian last year, was decried as incomplete and inaccurate by Gov. Kate Brown, whose spokesperson on Friday did not respond to a request for comment on the new report.

Senate Democratic Leader Ginny Burdick of Portland said, while she thinks the regulatory system has been well developed, enforcement is the next area to emphasize.

In the most recent legislative session lawmakers created the Illegal Marijuana Market Enforcement Grant Program, which will offer \$1.5 million per year for six years to local police to fight the illegal market.

Burdick pointed favorably to the OLCC's temporary moratorium on new licenses, announced in June, and said

Friday it may be time to consider limits on the number of licenses that can be issued.

Oregon currently has no limits on the number of recreational marijuana licenses it can issue, and received a surge of applications after announcing the moratorium. She also supports removing cannabis from the list of controlled substances under the federal Controlled Substances Act. And she's not alone. In a sign of growing support for relaxing federal laws on marijuana, the National Conference of State Legislatures passed a directive this week calling for Congress to legalize cannabis.

The directive prompted Burdick and two other state senators — Senate Republican Leader Jackie Winters of Salem and Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Beaverton — to issue statements in support.

They say legalizing cannabis would allow the industry to enter the national banking system and avoid some of the perils of a system that

is now almost entirely cash based.

Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, said he has ideas about ways to improve regulations and licensing, but is keeping the specifics close to his vest for now.

"I recognized that this was an issue in 2015," Prozanski said. "I still see this as an issue, and some of this stuff is coming home to roost."

He's already floated ways to tweak the law to deal with Oregon's cannabis bounty.

In 2017, Prozanski sponsored a bill that would have allowed the governor to enter into agreements with states that have legalized marijuana and border Oregon so the product could be legally transferred across state lines, but it didn't make it beyond the Senate Rules Committee.

The OLCC, meanwhile, is preparing its own supply-and-demand study of the state-legal recreational market for lawmakers heading into the 2019 legislative session.

The agency takes issue with some of the HIDTA report's data points — for example, the number of recreational marijuana producer licenses the report cites is about 1,000 more than the actual current number of producer licenses as of Aug. 1, said spokesman Mark Pettinger.

"We need to figure out if there are other inaccuracies in the report," Pettinger said.

He also said the report doesn't make enough of a distinction between the three sources of cannabis in the state: the regulated recreational market, the medical marijuana market and the illicit market.

Pettinger says OLCC will have "a larger presence and more systemic enforcement" as the fall harvest season begins.

And hundreds of medical marijuana growers are being incorporated into a "seed-to-sale" tracking system called Metrc that was previously used just for recreational cannabis.

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