

The Chinese And Chinatown Of Rossland

Fragments From Their Early History

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I welcome comments, criticisms and suggestions.

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The Chinese And Chinatown Of Rossland: Fragments From Their Early History

Ronald A. Shearer

I grew up in what was left of Rossland's Chinatown in the late 1930s and 1940s and I have long wondered about the histories of the few Chinese men that I knew, particularly Louie Joe who sold us vegetables and old half-blind John who was the last resident of the Chinese Masonic Hall across the street from our house and who occasionally sawed wood in the middle of the night. Unfortunately, I cannot resurrect their stories but as I was preparing a history of my family I began to wonder about the broader history of the section of town in which I once lived and of the Chinese men who inhabited it.

Rossland's Chinese community was never large nor did it have unique characteristics that would make it stand out among other small-town Chinatowns across the country. As a result, in the extant literature on the Chinese in Canada Rossland is at best an afterthought. For example, what is billed as "a definitive history of Chinatowns in Canada" does not list Rossland in its index.¹ This is also true of Morton's history of the Chinese in British Columbia.² Other major works on the Chinese in Canada generally focus on Canadian and British Columbian attitudes and policies toward the Chinese. If they mention Rossland at all they make passing references to particular incidents that occurred in the city, but they do not examine the city's Chinese community, its rise and decline.³ A 1901 *Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration* included an officer of the Rossland Miners' Union as a Commissioner and took evidence in Rossland, but apart from contradictory estimates of the size of the Chinese population in the city and some comments on the employment (or non-employment) of Chinese in various occupations its report provides little evidence on the nature and development of the community.⁴ The report is substantially a compilation of the attitudes of competitors and selected citizens, including clergymen, toward British Columbia's Chinese residents. Rosslanders' prejudices are well represented. As the report of a Canadian Royal Commission it is shocking in its shallowness. The foremost work on Rossland's mining boom, Jeremy Mouat's *Roaring Days*, briefly explores the information on the city's Chinese provided by the 1901 census including both population size and employment patterns.⁵ A variety of older local histories do not mention the Chinese community,⁶ but two short articles about the Chinese in Rossland on the web site of the Rossland Museum have interesting insights and anecdotes.⁷ A relatively recent local history by Jordan and Choukalos provides a brief but useful overview.⁸ Although it is thin on detail it tells us that there was a Chinese community almost from the beginning of Rossland; that it was entirely males who were isolated in a ghetto; that many of the men had wives in China who they probably never saw again after they left China for Canada; that the men cultivated gardens on the southern slope of Rossland from which they provided vegetables through door to door sales to residents of the city, eking out a meagre living in the process; that they were severely discriminated against, socially and economically; and that they had very low incomes.

All of this seems to be true but as a matter of personal curiosity I wondered what more could be said about the history of Rossland's Chinese community. The availability of the local newspaper (the *Rossland Miner*) on microfilm and of the enumerators reporting forms (census manuscripts) for the 1901 and 1911 censuses provides raw material for such an exploration. This paper is the product of my enquiries. It does not pretend to be a history of the Chinese community in Rossland. Rather, it is a collection of fragments from that history -- fragments gleaned from public records that are incomplete and in some respects possibly defective. The period covered is from the late-1890s to the mid-1920s.

How Large Was The Chinese Community?

Rossland was a gold mining town. Its mines were lode mines. That is, the gold was extracted through shafts and tunnels dug deep underground not through the sifting of sand and dirt on river banks

(placer mining). Some of Rossland's smaller mines in the so-called south belt had free gold embedded in quartz that could be easily recovered. In the largest, most productive mines, however, the gold was in a complex ore that required treatment in a suitably designed smelter. Such smelters were built at the nearby towns of Trail, British Columbia, and Northport, Washington. Copper was the principal by-product with small amounts of silver. Although gold was always the primary value extracted, copper was of sufficient importance that fluctuations in the price of copper could have a powerful impact on the mines and the community (the price of gold, the base of the monetary system, was fixed by statute). For example, a drop in the price of copper in 1907 forced a cutback in output and a reduction in wages to keep the mines open⁹ and a sharp jump in the price in the run up to and during World War I brought almost unprecedented prosperity until an interruption in the supply of coke paralyzed the Trail smelter. Even when the mines were operating fully it was an unstable economy. There was some crushing and concentrating of the ore in Rossland but the smelting activity was elsewhere, near abundant supplies of water (both Trail and Northport are on the Columbia River). Early Rossland was a mining town pure and simple.

In the early stage of the mining boom hundreds of men were employed digging shafts down into the ground and a network of tunnels and drifts seeking gold underground. Some were exploratory and some were developing proven properties. There was strong antipathy on the part of workers and their unions toward the employment of Chinese in lode mining. It is possible that some of the Chinese early-comers anticipated employment in the mines. If so, their hopes were dashed by the opposition of workers and the unwillingness of mine operators to foment labour trouble over the issue in the midst of a wild mining boom. Thus, in testimony to the Royal Commission the managers of Rossland's major mines stated that the Chinese were unsuitable for this kind of mining and were emphatic that no Chinese were or ever would be employed in their mining operations (some were employed in bunkhouses, however, as cooks and cleaners).¹⁰ The general antipathy was institutionalized by an 1897 law that prohibited Chinese men (or any women or boys under *twelve* years of age!) from working underground as gold miners or operating the equipment for lifting ore and miners from the underground works.¹¹ In principle, Chinese men could have been employed on the surface as general labourers but even that would have elicited an adverse reaction from the strong and vociferously anti-Chinese miners' union. Thus, unlike the Cariboo where many Chinese were engaged in placer mining, they could not be involved in mining in Rossland. If mining brought some of them to Rossland it was not mining *per se* that held them there.

However, as I will note below, the Chinese were an important ancillary to the mining operations, providing basic services to the community. It seems likely, therefore, that the Chinese population followed a path similar (but not identical) to that of the general population, rising to a peak at the beginning of the twentieth century and then declining. The number of men employed in the Rossland mines reached a peak in the neighbourhood of 1000 in the years 1900-1902 (see Figure 4, p. 36).¹² As some claims did not show promise, some mines were abandoned as unprofitable and the nature of mining activity changed from frantic exploration and development to more routine production and shipment (with development of established properties and some exploratory work continuing, of course) the number of men employed in mining began to decline, hitting a low of 641 in 1910, a drop of over 35% in a decade.¹³ When the jobs in mining evaporated the unemployed men, their families (if any) and the people in other occupations that their incomes indirectly supported moved on to other places, probably other mining camps. As Rossland changed from being the premier mining camp in the province to being an important but no longer dominant gold producer the population contracted. Supported by the wartime demand for copper the city boomed again during World War I but relapsed into stagnation after the war. In 1921 the population was only 2100. The mines closed in the second half of the 1920s and it looked like the city was doomed until transportation developments permitted it to reinvent itself as a bedroom for the giant smelter and fertilizer plant at Trail. The city was then a quiet family town with a slowly growing population. The Royal Commission hearings and the census of 1901 occurred at or near the peak of the population of Rossland and probably also at the peak of the city's Chinese population. As the nature of mining activity changed the smaller population of Rossland became more settled with a higher proportion of families and fewer itinerant single men and it became less reliant on the laundry, food and domestic services provided by the Chinese. In addition to whatever other pressures were present, economic forces would have induced a more rapid decline of the Chinese population than of the population at large.

There is considerable uncertainty about the actual number of Chinese residents in Rossland at the turn of the twentieth century. According to one report, there were 201 Chinese in Rossland in 1897, 200 males and one female.¹⁴ There are two other sources of information, testimony given to The Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration which held hearings in Rossland in May, 1901, and the almost concurrent Census of 1901. One of the estimates was provided by the representative of the United Mine Workers Union.¹⁵ Based on a survey he reported that 403 Chinese men lived in Rossland and he provided a breakdown of their occupations (the sum of which was 411 not 403). The union was vociferously opposed to the Chinese presence in British Columbia and particularly in the mine fields so they may have had reason to exaggerate the number in order to emphasize the perceived Chinese threat to workers' living standards and to western civilization in this remote corner of British Columbia. A Chinese restaurant owner provided a somewhat smaller estimate of "about 350." He also classified them by occupation, giving rather different numbers in some occupations than did the union. In some of the categories he offered a range of possible numbers so that the total of his classified data ranged between 297 and 353.

Both of these estimates are much higher than the number found by the census enumerators. By my count from the enumerators' forms the number of Chinese in Rossland in 1901 was between 238 and 253 depending on the definition of "Rossland" (see below, p. 4).^a What explains the wide discrepancy between the census enumeration (taken in April, 1901) and the testimony before the Royal Commission (taken in May, 1901)?

In principle, the census should provide the most reliable estimate of the Chinese population, but there is a troubling difference between the occupational figures derived from the census and those reported by the Royal Commission witnesses. Cord wood was essential for heating the homes and businesses in Rossland and the city would have consumed an immense amount each year. Cutting cord wood was a common activity of Chinese workers in British Columbia¹⁶ and witnesses before the Royal Commission reported that a substantial number of Chinese men were employed in Rossland as wood cutters, perhaps 75 or more. There is other evidence of Chinese men engaged in cutting cord wood in Rossland. Thus, in early 1905 it was reported that because of the celebration of Chinese new year "... it was impossible to get wood cut. Usually when a load of wood leaves the woodyards it is followed by several Chinese who wish to secure the contract for cutting it and packing it in."¹⁷ Later in the year when a wood sawing machine was brought to Rossland it was reported that "... several Chinese woodsawyers" observed it in operation and expressed their dismay.¹⁸ In another story it was reported that "A good many citizens are compelled to saw their own wood at present. A number of the Chinese are engaged in doing rough work on the pole lines ..."¹⁹ The West Kootenay Power and Light Company was extending its service to the west of Rossland and apparently had no compunction about hiring Chinese workers for construction work.

If there were seventy five wood cutters in 1901 they do not appear in the census; only two Chinese men reported working as "wood sawyers" and it is not clear whether they were cutting cord wood or working in a sawmill. Is it possible that the enumerators did not know about men in wood cutting camps or chose not to visit these camps which would have been in the forests around the city and which may have been difficult to access? Or, did the men who cut cord wood have other primary occupations (like farming) and cut wood in the off-season? Alternatively, were the wood cutters itinerant, moving from place to place following available work. If so, they may not have been captured in the census. It is possible that the evidence given to the Royal Commission about the Chinese population in Rossland is closer to the truth than the results of the census, but it is far from certain.

It is obvious from looking at the enumeration forms that the enumerators struggled with the recording of the Chinese data. The garbled names and incomplete information on the forms testifies to their problems. Language was a basic obstacle. I don't know if the enumerators were accompanied by translators, but there is no indication of this on the forms; only the name of the enumerator was listed. Many of the Chinese answered yes to the question "speak English?", but most stated that they did not. Moreover, there is a question of what "speaking English" meant. The instructions to the enumerators stated "account is not to be taken of the degree of proficiency."²⁰ An affirmative answer to the "speak

^a The Royal Commission cites the census as giving 241 as the number of Chinese in Rossland whereas Mouat places the number at 231. {Canada, 1902 #1069, p. 43 ;Mouat, 1995 #391, p. 121}

English" question did not guarantee effective communication between the enumerator and the respondent. There was also a profound cultural problem. Like most of the rest of the population, the enumerators undoubtedly regarded the Chinese as an inferior race whose presence was unwelcome. If so, they may not have been highly motivated and diligent about recording their names, numbers and characteristics. On the other side, it would be perfectly understandable if the beleaguered Chinese were deeply suspicious of the census takers, their motives and the implications of the survey. Were some Chinese residents concealed, particularly those whose immigration status was uncertain? Was there a significant undercount for this reason? Was the information that was provided deliberately incomplete and inaccurate? We will never know.^b

Nonetheless, the census returns provide the only comprehensive quantitative insights into the Chinese population of the time. We must rely on them, but we cannot be certain that they are telling us the truth.

There is another minor problem in counting the number of Chinese in Rossland: how to define "Rossland." In the 1901 census we are offered both the Rossland Riding and the City of Rossland. Which is appropriate? Historically, the Census of Canada reported some statistics for the riding and some for the city. For my purposes, in 1901 the Rossland riding was too broad an entity. It included the entire area from Trail and Castlegar on the Columbia River in the east to Grand Forks, Greenwood and beyond in the west. Yet the City of Rossland was too narrow a compass. It left out a number of Chinese living and working at mining properties that were part of the Rossland mining camp and sawmills and farms in the close vicinity of the city and economically linked to it. I have included a small number of Chinese in these places outside the formal city limits in my count of the number of Chinese resident of what we might call greater Rossland.

The same problem arises in 1911. For this census the city of Rossland was divided in half corresponding to the two wards (east and west) used in municipal elections. The residents of areas outside the city limits whom I include in greater Rossland were recorded as residents of Rossland but in the Ymir riding. Ymir is considerably to the east of Rossland, between the cities of Trail and Nelson but included in the Ymir riding appears to have been all of the unorganized land between and surrounding the three cities. I have included the Chinese in the areas of the Ymir Riding around the City of Rossland in my count of the 1911 Chinese population of greater Rossland.

Reviewing the 1901 census returns I found 238 Chinese men said to be living in the City of Rossland at the end of March, 1901^c, just under 3.9% of the reported city population of 6156. However, the enumerators' forms also show fifteen Chinese men living in outlying areas giving 253 as the number of Chinese men in greater Rossland, just over 3.9% of the estimated population of 6416.^d Over the next decade the estimated total population of Rossland fell sharply to 2826. An additional 170 people lived on farms and in sawmill and railway lodgings just outside the city for a total population of greater Rossland in 1911 of 2996. Of this total, 95 were Chinese, 3.2% of the population. Seventy-seven lived in the city (2.7% of the city population) and eighteen on farms and saw mill camps outside the city (10.6% of the outside population). No Chinese women were reported in either census,^e By 1921 the number of Chinese in the city had dwindled to 48 (2.2% of a total of 2097); by 1931 to 33 (1.6% of a total of 2848)

^b In the United States it was strongly asserted by government authorities and others that the census significantly undercounted the number of Chinese in that country. The 1900 census reported 93,000 Chinese; the Treasury estimated that the true figure was closer to 300,000 (Senate, 1902a #1139, pp. 86-87). According to one witness: ... the deceptiveness of the Chinese and their bunking, as it were, in tiers in small rooms and sleeping in relays, and the manner in which the census enumeration must be conducted -- by day and without much opportunity for careful investigation -- all these things cast upon our census returns grave doubts. The Chinese underrate their number, because they resort to all methods to get into this country, and they do not wish census reports to indicate the extent of their success in evading our laws (pp. 233-234).

^c The enumerators were supposed to record the number of residents at the end of March. In fact, the census was taken over several weeks in April and early May. However, it seems unlikely that this introduces major discrepancies in the figures.

^d The published census reports a population of 6156 in the City of Rossland. The enumerator's reports list 6139. Presumably adjustments were made in Ottawa based on additional information. I have added the 260 people listed by the enumerators as living in the outlying areas to the published census total of 6156 to obtain the estimate of 6416 in greater Rossland in 1901.

^e The Royal Commission was told that there was one Chinese woman in Rossland. If so, she was not discovered by the census enumerators. (Rossland Miner, 1901a #1077). In June, 1906, a Chinese man from Trail married a Rossland woman in the Anglican church. However, the woman was Japanese (Rossland Miner, 1906a #1135).

and by 1941 to 37 (1% of a total of 3657). I don't have the data to estimate the greater Rosslund population for these dates. Subsequently the Chinese population of Rosslund was not sufficiently large for the census to report the relevant figures.

The size of the Chinese population of greater Rosslund in the period we are considering is thus uncertain. However, the best estimates are 253 in 1901 and 95 in 1911.

Age Distribution

If we can believe the ages reported to the enumerators and assume that the distribution of the ages of the large number who did not report their ages or were not enumerated was similar to that of those for whom ages were recorded, the Chinese population of Rosslund was relatively young in 1901.^f The mean age on the census returns was 31 and the median 30 (see Table 1 and Figure 1). For almost 10% of the Chinese no age was reported. Either the space was left blank or the respondent (possibly the person designated as the "head" of the "household" rather than the individual himself) "did not know." Also troubling is that 70% of the men for whom ages were recorded reported that they did not know their birth date, either the day or the year. It is possible that this simply reflects unfamiliarity with the western calendar. Perhaps they knew their birth date, but could not easily translate their dating system into the western one. It is also possible that the reported age is just a guess on the part of the head of the household who was technically responsible for responding to the enumerator's questions and who in many cases was the only member of the group who acknowledged any command of English. We cannot take the reported ages as the literal truth, but perhaps they provide a general picture of the age structure of the community.

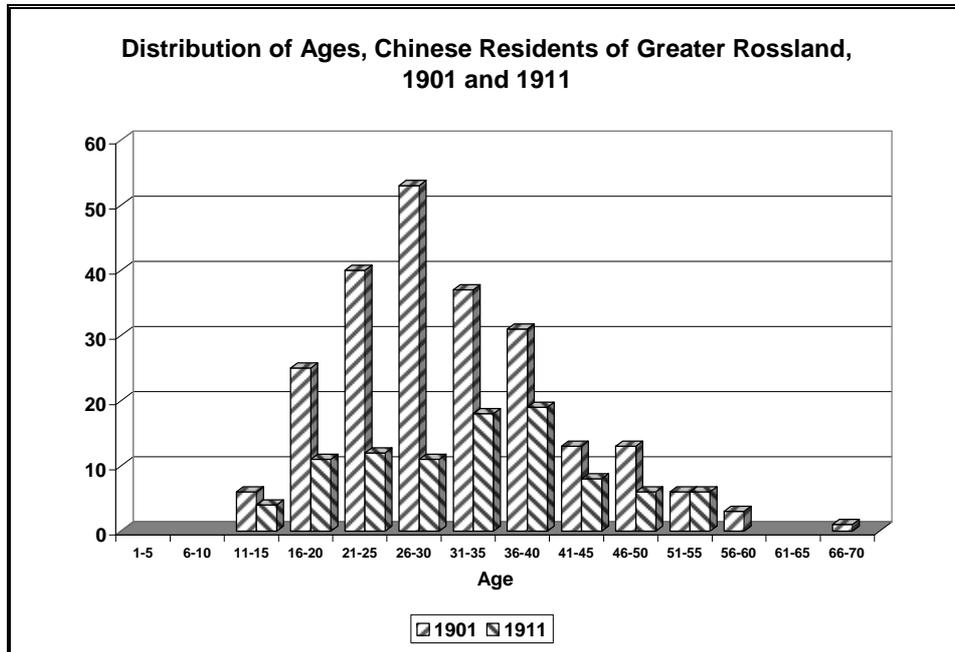
The 1911 census differed from that of 1901 not only in the size of the Chinese population but also in the completeness of the returns. There was only one Chinese man for whom no age was reported. I don't know if this reflected more effective enumeration or more creativity on the part of the enumerators (did they receive special instructions given the failings of the 1901 enumeration?). Not surprisingly, the shrinking population had aged somewhat by 1911 (see Table 1 and Figure 1). The mean and median ages were 2-3 years higher and the most numerous age groups, whether by decade or by quinquennium, had shifted up. What is surprising is that despite the social and economic disabilities facing the Chinese and the shrinking economic opportunities in service industries in a city with a shrinking population, if the information on age and immigration gathered by the census takers is correct most of the Chinese in Rosslund in 1911 could not have been there in 1901.

^f This may be a false assumption. It is possible that the older men were less likely to know their age than the younger men. If so, the average age may be slightly higher than that reported.

Table 1
Age Distribution of Chinese Residents of
Greater Rossland as Recorded by the
Census Enumerators, 1901 and 1911

Age Range	1901		1911	
	Number	%	Number	%
1-10	0		0	
11-20	31	13.6	14	18.7
21-30	93	41.7	18	24.0
31-40	68	30.2	26	34.7
41-50	26	10.1	12	16.0
51-60	9	4.0	6	6.7
61-70	1	0.5	0	
total reported	228	100.0	75	100.0
not known	25		0	
total	253		75	
mean	31		33	
median	30		33	
minimum	14		11	
maximum	66		55	
* not known= did not know, not reported or unreadable				

Figure 1



Year of Immigration

None of the Chinese men resident in Rossland in 1911 reported immigrating before 1891 and only 12% of them before 1896 whereas 45% of the 1901 residents for whom the year of immigration was recorded immigrating before 1896 (see Table 2 and Chart 2). Over 60% of the Chinese residents in 1911 reported immigrating in 1901 or later and a surprising 43% between 1906 and 1911. As the population shrank, many of the very early comers to Rossland must have died or moved away to be replaced by relatively young newcomers, most of whom were recent immigrants. The coterie of Chinese men who were in Rossland from near the beginning of the town and who grew old together must have been very small. Unfortunately, the date of initial residence in Rossland is not recorded and the garbled names in both censuses makes it almost impossible to identify them with any confidence in successive censuses and, of course, we do not have the enumerators' forms after 1911. However, it was reported that one of the Chinese men who died in 1929 had resided in Rossland for 28 years (1901) and another who died in 1945 for 40 years (1905). Such information on death registrations was provided by distraught relatives or, in these cases, by friends. In my experience the information is not always accurate. However, these two instances do suggest a small coterie of stubborn old timers. Nonetheless, the year-of-immigration data suggest a revolving population.

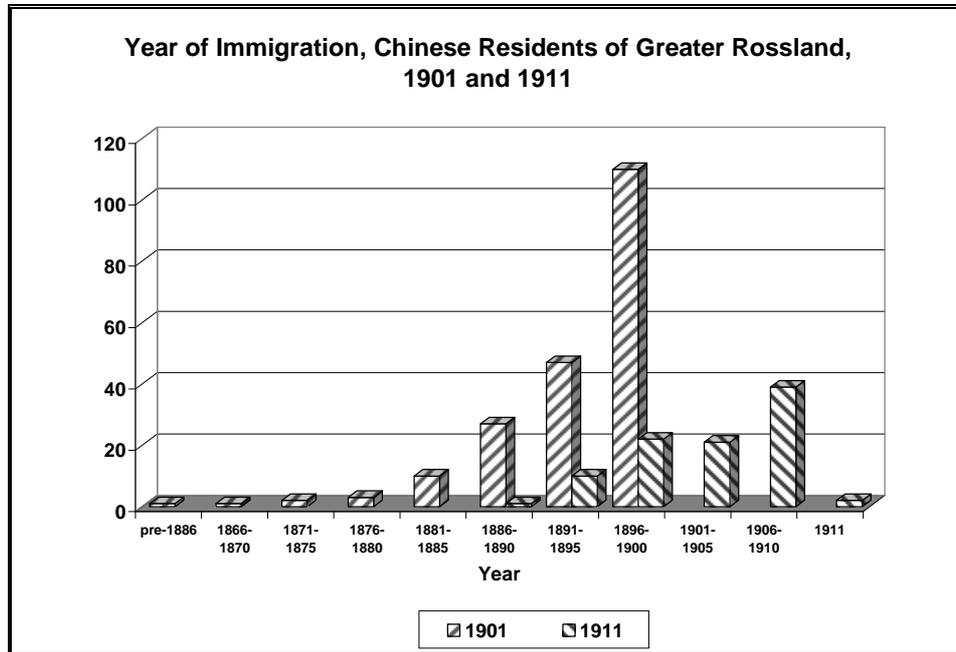
Can we trust the date-of-immigration figures? Almost all of the Chinese men in Rossland appear to have immigrated as adults and in terms of their life histories immigration was a relatively recent event that must have been such a traumatic experience that it was memorable. It also produced documentation in English that they may have retained, if only a receipt for the head tax paid. On the other hand, the men may or may not have had documentary evidence of their birth and any dates that they remembered had to be translated into the western calendar. For these reasons I suspect that the reports of immigration dates are more accurate than those of age or year of birth which occurred much farther in the past and in a very different cultural and legal environment.

If a few of the early comers remained in Rossland in 1911 what happened to them as the population further dwindled? Did death take a heavy toll? Or, did they simply leave to go elsewhere?

Table 2
Year of Immigration of Chinese Residents of
Greater Rossland as Recorded by the
Census Enumerators, 1901 and 1911

Year of Immigration	1901 Census		1911 Census	
	Number	% of Reported	Number	% of Reported
Pre-1886	1	0.5		
1866-1870	1	0.5		
1871-1875	2	1.0		
1876-1880	3	1.5		
1881-1885	10	5.0		
1886-1890	27	13.4	1	1.1
1891-1895	47	23.4	10	10.5
1896-1900	110	54.7	22	23.2
1901-1905			21	22.1
1906-1910			39	41.1
1911			2	2.1
Total Reported	201	100.0	95	100.0
Not Reported*	52			
Total Residents	253		95	
* Not Reported includes did not know and unreadable				

Figure 2



Deaths of Chinese in Rossland

Death was not a significant factor in the drop in the Chinese population of Rossland. Deaths in Rossland were not registered before 1895. Although the so-called Trail Creek Camp existed before 1890 the Rossland townsite was not created until a crown grant of land to Ross Thompson in 1894 and I have not found death registrations for the Trail Creek camp in Nelson, the closest registration office. However, it is reported that a young Chinese man died in 1891 and was buried with great ceremony.²¹ If there were other early Chinese deaths I have not found reports of them. The first registered death of a Chinese man in Rossland was in May, 1900⁹ -- and it was violent and mysterious. A young cook, recently arrived in Rossland, was shot at close range in the kitchen of his employer, the only instance that I have found of the violent death of a Chinese man in Rossland. Between the census of 1901 and that of 1911 there were only eight deaths of Chinese men registered in Rossland (see Table 3). Given a drop in the Chinese population of between 185 and 325, clearly mortality was not a significant cause of the population shrinkage between the censuses. Given the widespread concern about tuberculosis among the Chinese²² it is worth noting that half of the deaths (four) in this period were attributed to tuberculosis. Three of the four were gardeners or farmers (the occupation of the fourth was not reported)^h in the prime of their lives, who would probably have been working in fields in the southern part of the city and living in poorly constructed shacks or sod houses. Their living conditions were not conducive to good health. As the population continued to dwindle so too did deaths and with some exceptions the later decedents were older and died of ailments typical of the elderly.

⁹ As Ward noted in his analysis of attitudes and policies toward Chinese in early British Columbia, in 1872 the British Columbia legislature exempted Chinese (and Indians) from the legal requirement to register births, marriages and deaths. However, by 1888 that provision had been deleted from the Act. {British Columbia, 1872a #1182; British Columbia, 1888aa #1183; Ward, 2002 #1067, p. 32}

^h Unfortunately, perhaps because of the confusion of names by the census enumerators, I have been unable to match up the 1901 census records with the death records to find occupations and places of residence.

Table 3
Registered Deaths Of Chinese Men In Rossland, 1900-1986

Date	Age	Occupation	Years in Rossland	Years in Canada	Cause	
1900	May 23	22	cook	nr	nr	shot
1901	Dec 1	45	laundry (owner)	nr	nr	not stated
1902	Mar 23	35	gardener	nr	nr	tuberculosis
1902	Oct 10	27	not reported	nr	nr	tuberculosis
1904	Jun 27	23	not reported	nr	nr	opium poisoning
1905	Mar 3	45	farmer	nr	nr	tuberculosis
1908	July 3	61	not reported	nr	nr	cerebral apoplexy
1909	Dec 25	40	farmer	nr	nr	tuberculosis
1910	Jan 29	62	gardener	nr	nr	paralytic stroke
1916	Jun 16	28	laundry	1.5	1.5	endocarditis (heart)
1918	Jun 19	51	farmer	0.25	0.25	cardiac failure
1918	Nov 10	50	clerk	2	3	pneumonia
1921	Mar 31	47	cook	5	dnk	cirrhosis of liver
1929	May 10	59	gardener	28	28	gastric haemorrhage
1935	Feb 22	58	rancher	7	dnk	pneumonia
1945	Feb 28	82	merchant	40	60	myocarditis (heart)
1958	May 3	86	cook	0.08	56	cerebral vascular accident
nr = not reported; dnk= did not know						
Source:						

Migration

Migration rather than death accounted for most of the decline in the Chinese population of Rossland from 1901 until the population stabilized at a low level in the 1930s and 1940s. Like others, the Chinese migrants were escaping the economic decline of the former mining boom town and particularly the associated contraction of their sources of livelihood. Where did they go? There are no records to tell us. Some probably returned to China and some probably went to nearby towns with more vibrant economies (particularly Trail and Nelson). Others may have joined the Chinese communities in Victoria, Vancouver and other coastal cities. At this time the Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited almost all Chinese immigration to the United States (there were exemptions for those who could prove that they were born in the United States or were bon fide merchants, students accepted into higher education or people in transit to other countries). Rossland was said to be a jumping off point for Chinese to cross the border illegally²³ -- "... a favourite rendezvous for the pig-tailed hordes that swarmed across the international

boundary on their way to the big cities in the States.”²⁴ This assertion is given some credibility by the apprehension in 1897 of two alleged “people smugglers,” operators of a livery stable in Northport, Washington, the closest US town with a border post,²⁵ and by a concern expressed by officials of the American government in 1904 about “... the frequency with which strange Chinese are arriving in Spokane, directly south of Rossland, and other Eastern Washington centres.”²⁶ If conducted on a significant scale such cross border migration could explain the apparent continuous flow of recent immigrants to Rossland. They may have come to Rossland, a remote location with direct rail connections to both Vancouver and Spokane, surrounded by wilderness and close to the US border with but a single US border post that could easily be circumvented, hoping to find relatively safe passage to a Chinatown in one of the west coast American cities where they had a chance of being hidden from authorities. Although I have no other evidence, I suspect that many of the Chinese who left Rossland were part of such an illicit flow across the border.ⁱ In any case, it is clear that for a time there was continuous migration to Rossland and even larger migration out.

Where Did They Live?

In the beginning years of Rossland -- the first claim was staked in 1887, serious mine development began about 1890, the townsite was laid out in 1894 and the city was incorporated in 1897 -- the Chinese lived in various parts of the town. A Chinatown existed; it is shown on an 1897 map of the city and it was well developed by the time of the 1901 census. However, the Chinese were not confined to this area. For example, in 1897, not long after the city was incorporated, when Lee Wah Lung was arrested for keeping an opium den and selling opium without a license, his establishment was in Sourdough Alley, the legendary heart of the old town.²⁷ A witness at the 1901 Royal Commission hearing in Rossland stated that there were two “Chinese sections” in Rossland.²⁸ He may have been referring to the two sections of Chinatown, Kootenay Avenue and Le Roi Avenue, or to Chinatown and the western laundry area, but the 1901 census shows that there was even wider dispersion.

Chinese Lodging Houses In Chinatown, 1901

Rossland’s Chinatown was compact. Its core was one city block on Kootenay Avenue between St. Paul and Monte Christo Streets. This was only two blocks down a steep hill (and across the railway tracks) from Columbia Avenue, the city’s main commercial street, on land that in the early development of the city, before the railway was completed, was at the head of the wagon road to Trail and hence subject to the traffic of heavy ore-laden wagons. When the railway was completed (as I can testify), the noise of the wagons was replaced by noise and intense vibrations from the frequent trains carrying ore, freight and

ⁱ In testimony to the Senate Committee on Chinese exclusion laws a representative of the State of California emphasized the potential for the smuggling of Chinese from communities like Rossland:

Any gentleman who has been in British Columbia will be aware that it would be a physical impossibility, if ... we did not keep an army along the frontier, so to police the line between the Canadian Province and our State of Washington so that we should be measurably secure from the smuggling of Chinese persons across the border, unless, of course, we had on the part of the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company a proper respect for our laws. (United States Senate, 1902a #1139, p. 114)

The complaint against the Canadian Pacific was that they carried groups of Chinese to border crossing points without regard to the US immigration status and deposited them there (hardly a violation of American law). By a 1903 agreement the Canadian Pacific was to return all those not eligible for admission to the United States to the coast for shipment to China (New York Times, 1903b #1142). Rossland was not the only point of entry to the United States for illegal Chinese immigrants, nor, indeed, was it a major one. Such crossings occurred all along the boundary, in the east and on the plains as well as in the west. Thus, the 1902 Senate hearings have references to Portal, North Dakota, as a significant smuggling point (a detention centre was established there) (United States Senate, 1902a #1139, pp. 69-72) and in 1906 the *Rossland Miner* carried the story of “sensational testimony” at the trial of a US Deputy Collector of Customs and two alleged Chinese accomplices for smuggling opium and Chinese people into Montana (Rossland Miner, 1906b #1140). Ports on the Pacific coast, particularly San Francisco where most of the steamers from China docked, were major centres of smuggling and politicians and union leaders from California promoted more rigorous legislation and enforcement. Northwest ports were also important. A 1903 story referred to the difficulties faced by revenue cutters in dealing with high speed boats from Victoria winding through the Gulf Islands with Chinese destined for Seattle or Tacoma (New York Times, 1903a #1141). In 1903 a special detention centre for would be Chinese immigrants was established at Sumas (one of four across the country) (New York Times, 1903b #1142). Like San Francisco, New York as a major attraction for illicit Chinese. In 1902 the New York Commissioner of Prisons complained about prisons along the border with Canada being “over crowded with United States prisoners, charged with violation of the Chinese Exclusion Act (Globe 0201.01).

passengers. As a residential area it was unattractive and hence very marginal.^j Beyond the core on Kootenay Avenue, Chinatown reached up and across the railway tracks to a contiguous block behind the original railway station and across Le Roi Avenue. The Chinese habitations in Chinatown are listed in Table 4.

For identification, the first three columns of Table 4 show the location of each dwelling as recorded in Schedule 2 of the Census of 1901 (see Appendix, p. 49 below). Columns four and five report the number of rooms in each building and the total number of occupants of the building. The final column shows the average number of men per room, an index of the degree of crowding in residences in Rossland's Chinatown.

Table 4
Chinese Lodging Houses in Chinatown, Rossland, 1901

Census Reference *			Number		
District	Building	Lot	Rooms	Occupants	Occupants per Room
Kootenay Avenue (Block 49)					
H2 (pg. 4)	30	2	2	3	1.5
H2 (pg. 4)	31	2	5	12	2.4
H2 (pg. 4)	32	3	3	8	2.7
H2 (pg. 4)	34	4	3	9	3.0
H2 (pg. 4)	35	4	2	6	3.0
H2 (pg. 5)	36	4	9	6	0.7
H2 (pg. 4)	37	6	4	15	3.8
H2 (pg. 4)	38	7	2	7	3.5
H2 (pg. 4)	39	7	2	9	4.5
Le Roi Avenue (Block 50)					
H2 (pg. 4)	24	6	18	19	1.1
Total			50	94	1.9
* Census Reference: See Appendix					

^j On an 1897 insurance map of the city details of streets and buildings stop in the middle of Kootenay Avenue with the notation "Scattered wood dwgs. beyond." {Goad, 1897 #739}

Overall, the census shows about 1.9 men to a room in Chinatown in 1901; the buildings were crowded. However, some buildings -- those designated 34, 35, 37 and 38 -- were reported to have had three or more occupants per room and 39 had 4.5. This was very significant overcrowding particularly given that the rooms were undoubtedly very small. Living in Chinatown in 1901 was not like living in a luxury hotel.

Schedule 2 of the 1901 census tells us the location (block and lot) of the buildings occupied by the Chinese but it does not provide information about the size, type of construction or condition of the buildings. Some were undoubtedly no better than shacks. The lots in this part of the city were 30 feet by 100 feet and, apart from the section across Le Roi Avenue, were far from level. All of the Chinese occupied buildings were on the north side of the street (block 49.) (the south side, block 48, had another use; see below, p. 18). At their back was a steep hill across which ran the railway tracks and beyond the tracks was the railway depot. Thus, not all of the 100 foot depth of the lots was usable for building. Nonetheless, some of the lots had more than one building. Indeed, a 1913 insurance map shows three or four small buildings on some lots.²⁹

Another important point is made by Table 4. Only 94 men lived in Chinatown in 1901, fewer than forty percent of Rossland's Chinese population. Where did the rest live?

Chinese Lodging Houses Outside Of Chinatown, 1901

Table 5 shows lodging houses occupied by Chinese men in 1901 in Rossland but outside Chinatown. The two in the north east part of the city were on what became premium residential lands on a hill at the eastern end of the main commercial street, an area that the *Rossland Miner* then described as "the best residential area in Rossland."³⁰ The land was largely outside the original Rossland townsite but was captured by the expanded borders of the city when it was incorporated in 1897. The occupation of a piece of this land by Chinese at a time when the city was bursting at its seams with people who were scrambling to find attractive living spaces is an anomaly. The larger of the two lodging houses was on a tract of land claimed by the Paris Belle Mining Company, the so called Paris Belle Addition. Although the company's mining claim was not rich in minerals, the surface was valuable for residential purposes and from 1895 to 1897 the surface rights were bitterly contested in British Columbia's Supreme Court by the Paris Belle Company and the Nelson and Fort Sheppard Railway Company. The railway company claimed the land by virtue of a land grant and the mining company claimed it by virtue of an allegedly proven mineral claim. Contradictory decisions were obtained at the trial and appeal levels.^k An appeal to the Privy Council in London was pending. As a result of the legal entanglements, neither claimant to the land could guarantee clear title to any purchaser of lots in the area. There were squatters, but the land was unsalable. The dispute was settled out of court in late 1898 and the land was prepared for sale. By the time of the 1901 census some lots had been sold and houses built on them. That the Chinese still occupied a plot of land must have reflected delays in preparing and selling the land although the Chinese occupants reported to the census takers that the land was leased and the lease may not have expired. However, it is equally plausible that the Chinese were squatters who had not yet been removed. In any case, the Chinese occupancy was a holdover from the time when the lands were virtually unsalable.

^k This land was part of an 1895 land grant to the Nelson and Fort Sheppard Railway that was built from Nelson to Waneta, a village on the American border where the Columbia River crosses into the United States and where the railway met a companion railway from Spokane, Washington. Both railways were controlled by the American entrepreneur D. C. Corbin. The land grant entitled Corbin to alternate blocks of land six miles wide and sixteen miles deep along the right of way of the railway. Although the land was supposed to be along the railway right of way, one of the blocks that was chosen was at the western end of the railway, starting at Waneta and extending six miles west along the international boundary. The sixteen mile depth to the north surrounded the townsite of Rossland on the east and north and partly to the west. However, there were exclusions from Corbin's rights to this block of land, including land held for legitimate mineral claims. The holder of a mineral claim that satisfied the provisions of the Mineral Act obtained the surface rights to a considerable piece of land to permit working the claim. The Spokane based Paris Belle Company, occupied an old mining claim on the land that Corbin had chosen adjacent to the townsite, had sunk a shaft, produced sufficient mineralized rock to have its claim confirmed and asserted the surface rights. It is unclear if the company had any real interest in working the claim or, like the railway company, was actually engaged in real estate speculation (I strongly suspect the latter). In any case, the legitimacy of the Paris Belle claim was contested by Corbin in the Supreme Court of British Columbia. Corbin won at the trial level but the decision was reversed on appeal. The next step was to be a final appeal to the Privy Council in London, England. In the mean time the Nelson and Fort Sheppard Railway was sold to the Great Northern Railway who took a different stance. Presumably because of the risks and costs involved in further appeal, the parties reached an out of court settlement in November, 1898. I don't know the details of the settlement.

Table 5
Chinese Lodging Houses Outside Of Chinatown , Rossland, 1901

Census Reference			Number of		Occupants per Room
District	Building	Lot	Rooms	Occupants	
Northeast Side					
H2 (pg. 6)	59	12	3	10	3.3
H2 (pg. 6)	62	16	3	5	1.7
West Side					
H6 (pg. 12)	136		1	2	2.0
Total			7	17	2.4

The other lodging house on the northeast side of town was farther east than the one on Paris Belle land, on land that was unquestionably the property of the Nelson and Fort Sheppard Railway. When these lands were incorporated into the city they became part of an extensive "Railway Addition" that reached across the northern side of the city. The land on which the Chinese house was located was contiguous to the Paris Belle lands and direct access to the main part of the city was across those disputed lands. The Paris Belle Company had attempted to prevent such access, building fences and posting no trespassing signs, making the railway lands difficult to sell until the controversy was settled. In other words, both of the Chinese lodging houses were on land that was of marginal value for housing until 1899 or 1900. As streets were built and the land became available for regular housing the temporary Chinese occupancy came to an end. By the 1911 census there were no Chinese lodging houses in this part of the city.

The single room dwelling on the west side of town was close to the Trail Creek and to an area of active mining and was beyond the reach of the electric grid.. It was not an attractive residential site. From the table it appears that the one room shack stood alone, but that is misleading. It was surrounded by Chinese laundries.

Combining lodging houses in Chinatown and outside Chinatown accounts for 126 Chinese men, less than half the reported population. Where did the rest live?

Living in Business Establishments, 1901

That Chinese men lived in crowded and unsanitary conditions in business establishments was long a complaint of opponents of Chinese immigration. As Table 6 illustrates, the census of 1901 seems to confirm that a surprisingly large number of Chinese men were living in business establishments in Rossland in 1901. They were overwhelmingly in laundries but also in a restaurant and a mercantile establishment. Were the census returns correct? Given the small number of rooms involved, did so many owners and employees actually live in stores? It is, of course, impossible to know with certainty. The instructions to the enumerators called for recording people at "their home or usual place of abode" but left open other possibilities. However, in every case reported in the census the owner of the business establishment is listed as "head" of a "household" and any other occupant is listed as a "lodger." Testimony before the 1901 Royal Commission, both from non-Chinese competitors and from Chinese laundrymen, refers to men living in laundries in Nelson and elsewhere.³¹ Businesses that were not also residences were not captured by the census of population and the relevant schedules that might have recorded them have not survived. Thus, a row of stores said to exist on LeRoi Avenue and laundries and stores (and a cigar factory) on Kootenay Avenue as shown on a 1897 map are not recorded in the

census.³² Presumably they did not have residents. For these reasons I think it is reasonable to assume that the census reflects reality.

Table 6
Chinese Lodgings in Business Premises, Rossland, 1901

Location	Number			Occupants per Room
	Establishments	Rooms	Occupants	
Central City	7	23	33	1.4
West Side*	16	37	48	1.3
Total	23	65	96	1.5
* Data on the numbers of rooms was not reported for one establishment. I have assumed one room.				

In considering the degree of crowding shown in Table 6, and particularly in comparing it to the data for Chinatown, it is important to keep in mind that part of the available space was taken up by the business operations. The figures for "occupants per room" in Table 6 are thus an understatement of the degree of crowding. What is striking in Table 6 is the number of men who lived in these circumstances. The census shows 96 men living in business establishments, more than lived in lodging houses in Chinatown. Although laundries in the central area also had a significant number of live-ins, the largest concentration was in laundries in the far western part of the city, close to the major operating mines but also close to Trail Creek, indirectly a source of free water until its use was stopped by the City. These laundries were remote from the major concentrations of residences in Rossland, but the Chinese laundrymen picked up dirty items from customers' homes and later delivered clean items to them.¹

Living on Farms, 1901

Another 47 Chinese men lived on Chinese-operated farms in 1901. Two of the farms were chicken ranches. The others grew berries and vegetables for sale in the city. Two of the farms were relatively large operations just outside the city limits to the north and the east. The one to the north was 15 acres on leased land and the one to the east 20 ½ acres reported to be owned by the Chinese head. This was the largest Chinese farm and the only one for which the land was said to be Chinese owned (in many cases the building but not the land was said to be Chinese owned). The other twelve Chinese farms were on small, leased acreages to the south of the city in the valley of Trail Creek -- what were commonly referred to as the "Chinese Gardens". It was these small farms that became a long-term fixture of Rossland. When I was growing up on Kootenay Avenue our family obtained most of its fresh vegetables from Lui Joe who then operated one of the gardens. I visited it occasionally.

¹ The Rossland Miner never tired of poking fun at the Chinese. In March, 1905, it told the story of a Chinese laundryman struggling up slippery hill with a basket overfull with clean laundry. He slipped and fell and the clean laundry was scattered all over the mud and slush. The Miner found the story highly amusing, but what was the real purpose of publicizing such an inherently trivial event? {Rossland Miner, 1905i #1181}

**Table 7
Chinese Men Living On Farms In and Near Rossland, 1901**

Farms	Buildings	Rooms	Occupants	Occupants per Room
Southern Gardens				
12	12	17	34	2.0
West Side Of City				
1	1	1	1	1.0
North Of City Limits				
1	1	3	5	1.7
East Of City Limits				
1	1	2	7	3.5
Total				
15	15	23	47	2.0

Some Chinese farmers lived alone in small, one-room shacks on a small plot of land. Others lived in groups of two or three in two room shacks. There were a few larger buildings on the farms in the north and east and in the south belt in which several men lived in cramped condition. In general, the same degree of overcrowding can be seen on the farms as in the urban dwellings

Live-in Cooks and Domestic Servants

The other type of residence provided to the Chinese in Rossland in 1901 was as a live-in domestic servant or cook in a Chinese or non-Chinese home or business establishment (there were some servants and many cooks who lived in Chinese operated lodging houses and businesses that are counted in Tables 4, 5, and 6). The census reported 14 such people; three as cooks or domestics in hotels, three as cooks in bunkhouses of a mine and a sawmill and five as cooks or domestic servants in private homes.

Summary: Residential Locations of Rossland Chinese in 1901

Table 8 summaries the reported residential locations of Chinese in Rossland in 1901.

**Table 8:
Location of Chinese Residences in Rossland, 1901**

Location of Residences	Number of Dwellings	Residents	
		Number	Percent
Chinatown	10	94	37.2
Outside Chinatown	3	17	6.7
Businesses	24	81	32.0
Farms	14	47	18.6
Live-in cooks and domestic servants*	11	14	5.5
Total	62	253	100.0
Wood Cutters	?	?	?
* Non-Chinese homes and business establishments only			

What Was Different in 1911

As the population shrank the Chinese were pulled -- or pushed -- in from the extremities. By 1911 the land occupied by Chinese for rooming houses outside of Chinatown had become valuable as residential land; Chinese occupancy was over. As Table 9 illustrates Chinese men continued to live in laundries in the less attractive far west side section of the city and, of course, as cooks and domestic servants in non-Chinese homes and hotels around the city. There were two living in a Chinese laundry in the central business district. However, the vast majority were either in Chinatown or the gardens in the southern part of the city. In this total I have included those on farms contiguous to the southern gardens but across the southern city boundary. There was a substantial saw mill development four miles north of the city that by 1911 employed 7 Chinese men. The workmen were housed in what the Miner described as "commodious shacks,"³³ but I am sure that the Chinese quarters were very crowded. There was also a non-Chinese farm north of the city that employed four Chinese men. The Chinese infiltration of the city at large, such as it was, had been contained; with the noted exceptions the Chinese population had become concentrated in Chinatown and the small but stubbornly held western laundry area.

Table 9
Location of Chinese Residences in Rossland, 1911

Location of Residence	Residents	
	Number	Percent
Chinatown	29	30.5
Southern gardens*	35	36.8
Western laundry area	9	9.5
Central business area	2	2.1
Domestic servants**	9	9.5
Non Chinese farms north of the city	4	4.2
Saw mills outside the city	7	7.4
Total	95	100

Note: * Includes men living on a Chinese farm south of the city.
** Domestic servants and cooks ;living at private homes and hotels

Prostitutes in Chinatown

The Chinese were not the only inhabitants of Chinatown. It was also the centre of prostitution in Rossland. Indeed, the short strips on Kootenay and Le Roi Avenues became known as “the line” or the “restricted district,” the more or less official red light district of the city. We know from newspaper reports that the red light district in Chinatown continued into the early 1920s, but was then closed following pressure from the provincial government.

In principle, prostitution was illegal, but it started early in the history of the city and it was officially tolerated both as a necessary social evil in a town full of footloose single men and few women and as a source of municipal revenue. Thus, in April, 1898 in a series of raids on brothels thirty two madams and prostitutes were arrested and fined between \$20 and \$30 each, yielding the city between \$600 and \$900.³⁴ This was not an inconsequential sum of money for a young city government whose total revenue in 1898 was \$13,500.³⁵ Other raids followed as did other fines not individually noted in the press, but the police chief reported that in 1898 there were ninety-five arrests of madams, prostitutes or customers, twenty two percent of the cases heard in police court.³⁶ Prostitutes were fined but the red light district was not closed down. Indeed, it gained a type of official endorsement. Early in the history of the city the police commission and the police magistrate agreed on a policy of allowing prostitutes to pay a monthly “fine” as “vagrants” without the necessity of attending court. If the fine was paid they could carry on their business without police interference. In effect, the fines became business license fees. This policy was in place in 1903 when the then police magistrate announced that it was unacceptable and that the women would have to appear in court each month to pay their fines. I don’t know how long this inefficient procedure was in place, but if not before it certainly ended in December 1907 with the unexpected death of the magistrate who proclaimed it.

Unlike his predecessor the new magistrate, Richard Plewman, was not a lawyer, but he was not innocent of the law. He was an accountant who had worked in a law office for some years.³⁷ “Judge” Plewman had an acute sense of the local community, its history, its mores and its tensions, as well as a pragmatic streak, and he applied the old policy of monthly fines without a court appearance as a matter of established principle. This was brought out clearly in 1915 when the chief of police tried to reduce the numbers of brothels and prostitutes in Chinatown. When two women purchased a house on Kootenay

Avenue to open a new brothel contrary to his instructions he arrested them. However, when the women appeared in court the magistrate demurred. They had regularly paid their “fines” so he “could see no logical reason why the women had been brought before him.”³⁸ He suspended their sentences. The policy of tolerating and taxing the red light district seemed well entrenched.

Eventually the municipal government came under attack from well organized local social reformers for its accommodation of prostitution. In 1916 the mayor was forced to defend the policy, not on principle (“I have handled the situation as I found it”) but as a valuable source of funds for the city.³⁹ Thus,

*... the revenue received from this source was needed by the city and was used for clearing the snow from the sidewalks, breaking the trails in the winter and everybody was getting the benefit of it.*⁴⁰

Soon, however, a much more powerful group of reformers got into the act. In late 1916 the Conservative government was defeated in an election by what historian Martin Robin referred to as the “Liberal purity crew.”⁴¹ In addition to introducing prohibition in the province the new government looked askance at Rossland’s tolerance of prostitution and assorted other social evils in Chinatown.^m A constable with the provincial police in Nelson was sent to Rossland in 1919 with the warning that the city’s police force would be replaced by provincial police if “the line” was not cleaned up.

This was the beginning of the end of the policy of accommodation of prostitution. The mayor gave orders to close the brothels and “Judge” Plewman obediently reversed tradition. Several madams and prostitutes were expelled from the city under the threat of jail terms, but one was allowed time to dispose of her property. This may have provided the toe hold. In any case and contrary to the wishes of the police chief, the red light district soon reopened on a reduced scale and apparently under the protection the two elected police commissioners. This led to a confrontation. At a stormy session of the police commission in 1921 the two elected commissioners (a majority on the three man commission) voted to dismiss the police chief. Against the opposition of the mayor the chief was replaced. However, the mayor immediately used his authority to again order that the brothels be closed. Adapting to the new political situation, “Judge” Plewman completed the clean up. The *Miner* summarized his lecture to the women:

*In the past he had thought a “line” was the lesser evil, provided the women kept in their place and behaved themselves in an orderly manner. [But now] having decided to enforce the law in regard to such houses, there would be no change from the position in the future even if a “line” started up again with the tolerance of the Police Commissioners.*⁴²

Faced with the alternative of a jail sentence the women left town. It is perhaps symbolic of the end of the line” that in 1922 two lots at the corner of Kootenay Avenue and St. Paul Street that had earlier been “the location of two brothels reverted to the city for unpaid taxes.⁴³ If prostitution occurred subsequently it was irregular and at scattered locations throughout the city,

In the very early days, prostitution was not confined to Chinatown. The reports of the 1898 raids on brothels referred to a “row” “on the hill” on the north side of town on what is now Queen Street, well out of Chinatown. Business must have been good. There may have been as many as 21 houses and 36 women engaged in prostitution in Rossland in 1901(see below, Table 10, p.). The numbers in 1911 are uncertain. However, in 1906 125 “keepers of house of ill fame” and 21 “inmates of houses of ill fame” paid fines (but only 5 “frequenters of houses of ill fame”).⁴⁴ This suggests that there were approximately 10 brothels in the city, most operated by a woman working alone,^{45 n} each paying a monthly fine of \$10 (\$200-\$250 in 2007 dollars). This was a very substantial fine given income levels at the time (see below, p 32) and a welcome source of revenue for the city.

The 1901 census also listed several houses outside Chinatown (possibly “on the hill”) with only female inhabitants, not including what were obviously families with female heads or residences for nurses

^m Paradoxically, W.D. Willson who was the mayor who so vigorously defended the city’s prostitution policy in 1916 was elected that year as a Liberal MLA and so was a backbencher in the provincial government that wanted to crack down on Rossland’s practice. I have no information about Willson’s discussions in Victoria about the Rossland situation, but on several issues he was a maverick who refused to toe the party line. He was not re-nominated at the next election.

ⁿ In 1906-07 monthly police reports were frequently (but not regularly) published in the *Rossland Miner*. They show between 8 and 13 “keepers of house of ill fame” paid fines each month.

and female teachers. These houses were in all probability brothels. Table 10 shows the houses in Rossland, both in and out of Chinatown, that were occupied exclusively by women in 1901 and 1911. In each case, the person designated as the “head” of the household gave her occupation as “housekeeper” or “lodging housekeeper” even if there were no lodgers. If there were other residents who were said to be lodgers they reported their occupations as “hairdresser,” “dressmaker,” “milliner” and in one case “nurse.” Most claimed to be self employed, a category of people for whom income data were not collected, and the few who claimed to be employees did not report their incomes. Several of the houses had a single female occupant. The women were of various nationalities but most were Americans, some of them blacks, and there were three Japanese.

As the population of Rossland shrank and particularly the population of single men, the number of prostitutes also shrank and prostitution became concentrated in Chinatown. For some unexplained reason the brothels on the south side of Kootenay Avenue were not enumerated in the 1911 census, but five such houses were counted in the Chinatown section of LeRoi Avenue.⁹ They contained seven women, including one Japanese and three Americans (two of whom were black). In this case the women’s occupations were listed as “inmate,” echoing the term used in legal proceedings against prostitutes.

Prostitutes were not allowed uptown except to purchase groceries and other necessities (not liquor!) and to pay their fines at the courthouse. One extreme opponent of the presence of prostitutes in Rossland explained his support of rigorous enforcement of the restriction was:

*... on account of the ill effect the district was having on the young boys and girls of this city when the inmates were permitted to go on the streets in public places, and that their gaudy attire and actions created a feeling among our young people that might in time have a bad effect.*⁴⁶

In another context, the *Miner* gave vigorous support to a proposal to relocate the wagon road to Trail, which at the time ran through Chinatown, in part because

*The present one ... passes through the demi-monde, so that many persons who would frequently drive or walk over it refuse to do so on the ground that it is unfit to take their wives and children past*⁴⁷

In 1910 a Chinese man in nearby Nelson was fined \$50 for keeping a “disorderly house” that was said to have been frequented by Chinese men⁴⁸ and Chinese involvement in prostitution was one of the standard complaints against the Chinese in the United States. However, I have found no evidence of Chinese involvement in prostitution in Rossland even though it was centred in Chinatown nor evidence that the Chinese were regular clients of the Chinatown brothels (equally, I have not found evidence to the contrary).

⁹ The obvious hypothesis that different enumerators reacted differently to the enumeration of prostitutes does not hold up. The same man was the enumerator in both sections of Chinatown.

Table 10

Prostitution in Rossland, 1901 and 1911 Houses with Only Female Occupants

Census Reference		Map Reference		Number of Female Inhabitants	Reported Occupations	
District	Page	Line	Block			Lot
House in Chinatown, 1901						
h2	6		48	12	5	housekeeper, dressmaker (2), milliner (1), none (1)
h2	6		48	12	2	housekeeper (1), hairdresser (1)
h2	6		48	9	5	housekeeper (1), dressmaker (1), servant (1), spinster (1)
h2	6		48	4	1	housekeeper
h2	6		48	4	1	housekeeper
h2	6		48	1	5	housekeeper (1), dressmaker (3), nurse (1)
h2	6		49	1	1	housekeeper
h2	6		49	1	1	housekeeper
h2	6		49	1	1	housekeeper
Total (9 houses)					22	
Houses Elsewhere in the City Suspected of Being Brothels, 1901						
h2	6	26	13	I Rly Add	1	housekeeper
h2	6	27	14	I Rly Add	2	housekeeper, ?
h2	6	29	14	I Rly Add	1	housekeeper
h2	6	30	15	I Rly Add	1	housekeeper
h2	6	31	15	I Rly Add	1	housekeeper
h2	6	32	15	I Rly Add	1	housekeeper
h2	7	4	18	J Rly Add	1	housekeeper
h2	7	5	19	J Rly Add	1	housekeeper
h2	7	6	19	J Rly Add	2	housekeeper, cook
h2	7	8	18	J Rly Add	1	housekeeper
h2	7	9	20	Rly Add	1	housekeeper
h2	7	22	16	I Rly Add	1	housekeeper

Total (12 houses)				14	
Houses in Chinatown, 1911					
east	22		Le Roi Avenue	1	inmate
east	22		Le Roi Avenue	1	inmate
east	23		Le Roi Avenue	2	inmate
east	23		Le Roi Avenue	2	inmate
east	23		Le Roi Avenue	1	inmate
east	23		Kootenay Avenue	?	not enumerated
Total (6 houses)				7 + ?	

What Became of Chinatown?

A map prepared for the insurance industry in 1908 shows Chinatown densely packed with wooden structures. Several of the lots along Kootenay Avenue had two or three structures and one had four. Most of the buildings were occupied by Chinese men, the rest by prostitutes. What happened to all of the dwellings and businesses? A densely packed neighbourhood of wooden buildings was extremely vulnerable to fire and it has been reported that most buildings were destroyed by fire,⁴⁹ but I am not certain. I have found reports of isolated fires in Chinatown, some just chimney fires⁵⁰ and some involving entire buildings.⁵¹ A fire in 1926 destroyed three buildings in the Le Roi Avenue section of Chinatown,⁵² but I have found no reports of a catastrophic fire that destroyed most of the buildings on Kootenay Avenue. In most cases the lots in Chinatown were owned by non-Chinese and leased to their Chinese or prostitute occupants. I suspect that as the population dropped lots became unsalable, buildings were abandoned and in accordance with fire regulations were condemned by the City and torn down. Some (perhaps most) of the lots reverted to the city for unpaid taxes. In 1937, for example, my father purchased our two lots at the corner of Kootenay Avenue and St. Paul Street that had earlier been occupied by at least two brothels from the City for \$60. When I was growing up in the 1940s there was only one Chinese building left, the Chinese Masonic Hall. It was a substantial building across a wide street from the main part of Chinatown and was continuously occupied by a dwindling number of men until the late 1940s. By then all of the lots except that of the Masonic Hall were owned and occupied by non-Chinese.

What Did They Do?

The vast bulk of the men working in Rossland at the turn of the century were miners in lode gold mines, an activity barred to the Chinese^P. I don't know what skills the Chinese brought to the city, but Table 11 shows that when in Rossland in 1901 and in 1911 they were confined to a very narrow range of occupations. The vast majority were employed as laundrymen, cooks or farmers (the figures in the table include employees, employers and self employed). As the population of the city fell from 1901 to 1911 employment of the Chinese fell sharply in all occupations. For some of the lesser fields of employment the drop was large in percentage terms but the absolute numbers were small. However, in two of the major occupations, cooks and laundry workers, the drop was dramatic in both senses. The shrinkage of employment in agriculture was much smaller. As a result, in 1911 agriculture stood out as by far the most important employer of Chinese. Not only did the Chinese dominate market gardening, market gardening was coming to define the Chinese community.

^P Two Chinese men reported to the 1901 census enumerators that they were "gold miners." They may have been placer mining in local creeks and rivers.

Cooks and Domestic Servants

In a city full of men living in bunkhouses, rooming houses and single rooms throughout the city, it is not surprising that there was a strong demand for cooks and domestics. The presence of a small coterie of wealthy mining company officials, lawyers, doctors and real estate brokers added to the demand for domestics.

Little can be said about the employment patterns of the Chinese cooks. Almost all of them lived in lodging houses in Chinatown with no indication of where they worked. Of the few whose employers could be identified one worked at a hotel, one at a Chinese-owned restaurant, one in the home of a real estate agent, one at the home of a Chinese merchant and two at a sawmill. In 1911 half (5) of the many fewer cooks worked in hotels or boarding houses and one for a Chinese merchant. The employers of the rest are unknown.

Table 11
Reported Occupations of Chinese Residents
of Greater Rossland, 1901 and 1911

Occupation	1901		1911		Change 1901 to 1911	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Food service						
Cook	57	22.5	10	10.5	-47	-82.5
Other	5	2.0	2	2.1	-3	-60.0
Personal service						
Domestic servant	9	3.6	5	5.3	-4	-44.4
Laundry	98	38.7	24	25.3	-74	-75.5
Other	1	0.4			-1	-100.0
Agriculture	53	20.9	41	43.2	-12	-22.60
Labourer	14	5.5	9	9.5	-5	-35.7
Merchant	9	3.6	3	3.2	-6	-66.7
Other	6	2.4			-6	-100.0
Not stated & retired	1	0.4	1		0	0
Total	253	100.0	95	100.0	-158	-62.4
Note: Employment figures include employees, employers and self employed						

Rossland had Chinese owned and operated restaurants for many years, a lingering reminder of the early history of the Chinese in Rossland and of their importance in the food industry. I don't know when they were established, but one, the Headquarters Cafe, was listed in the city directory until the opening years of World War II and the other, the Empire Cafe, lasted much longer. I can remember occasional meals at the Empire Cafe with my father when I was a child.

A witness before the Royal Commission reported that some householders preferred Chinese to non-Chinese domestic servants because they would do other tasks like splitting wood and washing clothes.⁵³ If that is true, it is surprising how few were working in private homes. Of the seven Chinese domestics reported in 1901, two did housework for Chinese laundrymen, one worked in a hotel and only four in non-Chinese private homes (those of a broker, a lawyer, a mine manager and a real estate agent). By 1911 the number had shrunk to five. Of these two lived in rooming houses in Chinatown so I do not know where they were employed. Of the other three, one worked for a Chinese merchant, one for a hotel and only one in a private home, that of a bank manager. That the employment of Chinese men as domestics continued at least into the early 1920s is evidenced by a comment in a story about the imprisonment of one man on an opium importing charge. It was reported that

*... Magistrate Plewman is persona non grata with the housewives of Rosslund to whom "Shorty" has become an indispensable accompaniment of house-cleaning.*⁵⁴

Laundries

The Henderson's Directory Rosslund for 1901 had a list of thirteen "Chinese Business Firms" that included eleven laundries (one of which was also a store).⁵⁵ The Directory must have identified only the "leading firms" because its list was a substantial understatement of the number of Chinese laundries then in the city. A witness before the 1901 Royal Commission testified that there were 20 Chinese laundries in Rosslund employing 60 men,⁵⁶ but both of these figures also appear to be slight understatements. As I have already noted, 21 laundries had laundry workers living in them in 1901 and there were other laundries that did not serve as residences. Thus, insurance maps published in 1897 and 1907 show two Chinese laundries in Chinatown that were not recorded in the 1901 census as premises with Chinese residents. In the 1901 census thirty Chinese men reported that they operated laundries in Rosslund, either as employers of other Chinese men or as self employed launderers. A few of these men were in partnerships so there were less than thirty Chinese laundries, but there were certainly more than the 21 that also served as residences. In any case, in 1901 some 67 Chinese men said they were employees in laundries and taken together with the 30 owner-operators there were 97 Chinese directly involved in the laundry business. Laundries were the largest employers of Chinese in Rosslund by a long margin. Unfortunately, the census takers were not diligent about collecting income data for Chinese employees. Income is reported for only one Chinese laundry worker, a paltry \$200 per year (a typical miner made about \$1000).

That the Chinese dominated the laundry business in Rosslund in 1901 is evident. There were perhaps five non-Chinese laundries at that time. One, operated by a man and his son on the main commercial street (The Rosslund Laundry), was listed in the Rosslund Directory for 1901. Another four, operated by women apparently out of their homes, were not listed in the Business Directory but were in the census. Two of the women reported that they were married but husbands are not in evidence. One was widowed and the other divorced. All four had dependent children. They appear to be classic cases of women "taking in laundry" to support themselves and their children. Two of the women's laundries were on adjacent lots a block off the main street while the other two were in the residential areas on the north side of the city. In addition there were two people, a male and a female, who reported that they were employed in a laundry but where they were employed is not revealed.⁹ There were also two people who reported operating businesses as "Cleaner and Dyer." One was on the main commercial street and was listed in both the Business Directory and the census. The other seems to have been operated out of a woman's home in the residential areas on the north side of the city. Her business is listed in the Business Directory but in the census she is shown as a wife with no occupation. These two businesses were presumably not laundries but dry cleaners using the very flammable petroleum chemicals then employed by dry cleaners.⁵⁷

Given a shortage of capital and in the cases of the western laundries a lack of electricity, the Chinese laundries were of necessity hand laundries, using scrubbing boards, wash tubs, clothes lines drying racks and flat irons (heated on a stove). It seems probable that the laundries operated out of their houses by women were also hand laundries. Whether the laundry located on the main street and

⁹ One of these lived in a substantial boarding house. It is possible that she did laundry for the house and its lodgers.

perhaps the Chinese laundries in the business district used early types of paddle washing machines is not evident. A steam laundry -- the paragon of modern laundry technology -- was established in Nelson and in August, 1904, it advertised in the *Rossland Miner* promising 48 hour service (presumably with delivery by train).⁵⁸ The *Miner* strongly promoted the service as a more sanitary alternative to the local Chinese laundries that were said to be “unsanitary, their work is slovenly and the value of the articles lost more than offsets the lower charges compared with the white steam laundry.”⁵⁹ Apparently Rosslanders did not agree; they continued to patronize the Chinese and the Nelson firm’s advertisement soon disappeared from the pages of the *Miner*. The *Miner* promoted a 1907 suggestion to establish a steam laundry in Rossland “on the co-operative plan.”⁶⁰ The stumbling block was the \$3,000 - \$5,000 of capital required. Later in the year a proposal was made to the School Board by the “Rossland Steam Laundry and Nursery Company” to rent an abandoned school building for use as a laundry (nothing was said in the story about the “Nursery” aspect of the proposal).⁶¹ The school in question was on Kootenay Avenue, near the Chinese laundries, and so would have conformed to the zoning restriction (see below, p. 47), but would have been well out of the main business district of the city, hardly an ideal location. The School Board and the city agreed to a one year lease, subject to cancellation if the building was needed as a school. In August, 1908, it was announced that the steam laundry was “ready for business.”⁶² I found no advertisements for the laundry until December, 1908, when it participated in a large ad celebrating the reopening of the renovated Hoffman House Hotel. The motto of the Rossland Steam Laundry was “Everything Back But The Dirt,” and obvious allusion to the reputation of the Chinese laundries for losing items. I don’t know if the steam laundry opened “on the co-operative plan” or what happened to the “nursery,” but in February, 1909, management of the business was assumed by a woman who was said to have had extensive experience elsewhere in the laundry business.⁶³ Nothing was said about the ownership of the laundry. The announcement of the change in management was quickly followed by an effusive article in the *Miner* about the laundry, emphasizing not only its up-to-date machinery but also its “twelve Caucasian employees.”⁶⁴

*What strikes the visitor is the neatness and cleanliness of the entire establishment, while the clothing turned out is sweet, clean and wholesome*⁶⁵

This is the antithesis of the *Miner*’s descriptions of the Chinese laundries.

Did the arrival of a steam laundry sound the death knell for the Chinese laundries? This seems unlikely. Indeed, the subsequent history of the steam laundry is puzzling. I don’t know if it survived. No commercial steam laundry was listed in the city directory for 1910, but the Hoffman House Hotel advertised in that directory that it had a steam laundry. Had it taken over the Kootenay Avenue laundry? Was the hotel laundry open to the general public or was it only for the hotel’s own requirements and those of its guests.⁶⁶ Another proposal for a commercial steam laundry was announced in 1916 by a Spokane laundryman.⁶⁷ However, I have no evidence that it ever opened for business. No steam laundries were listed in the 1918 city directory.

There were repeated complaints about unsanitary conditions in the Chinese laundries. In a particularly vicious editorial the *Miner* thundered

*... they are pestilential dens, a fine breeding place for disease and contagion. ... If something is not done soon to abate the evil in Rossland, it would not be surprising to see the outbreak of some serious epidemic. ... Their charges are as exorbitant as the tariff of white labor, and they are notorious for failing to return all the articles delivered to them ... It is to Rossland’s lasting shame that these places are patronized and allowed to flourish to the almost total exclusion of white laundries.*⁶⁸

The epidemic did not happen, but in some cases the complaints may have had merit. Faced with allegations that the laundries were using dirty water the Municipal Health Officer investigated. He found that many of the Chinese laundries were using well water, often from very shallow wells, that was not clean -- water that “... was dirty and murky, containing vegetable matter in suspension.”⁶⁹ Moreover, some of the laundries on the west side of the city had wells that were slanted so that they effectively tapped into the polluted waters of Trail Creek. He ordered that the wells be filled in and that the laundries be connected to the city water supply. Laundries must have been relatively heavy users of water. In 1905 the city ordered that the Chinese laundries have water meters installed, presumably to collect

additional revenues from the heavy use of water. The Miner had a slightly different and somewhat malicious cast to the story. The meters will put the city

*... in a position to exact its just toll from the wily Chinese, who have heretofore been rather shy about paying rates...*⁷⁰

By 1911 the Chinese laundry business had shrunk dramatically, from 98 men engaged in the business to 24. Moreover, laundries were no longer the major employer of Chinese men. Unfortunately no later census manuscripts have been released and the available city directories are of little help. With few exceptions, they did not list Chinese-owned businesses. We know from occasional newspaper stories that some Chinese laundries continued into the 1920s and one was listed in the city directory until 1943. I cannot recall any Chinese laundries when I was growing up in Rossland (but why would a schoolboy notice such things?)

Farmers and Gardeners

A witness before the 1901 Royal Commission stated that the Chinese controlled market gardening for the city. In a sense he was correct. The Chinese were clearly the major local grower and sellers of fresh vegetables and berries. In another sense the witness was incorrect. Fruits and vegetables came into Rossland grocery stores from outside, both from nearby areas (e.g., along the Columbia River) and from more remote locations (e.g. Washington, California and other US states). Also, there were several non-Chinese men who were said to be gardeners or farmers, some with extensive holdings of land. We know from other evidence that they had a share of the berry market⁷¹; they may also have had a share of the vegetable market. Moreover, there was more to agricultural production than growing vegetables and berries and the other branches of agriculture were not dominated by the Chinese.

According to the 1901 census there were probably 56 Chinese men engaged in agriculture in and around Rossland in 1900, operating or working on 15 farms. I say "probably" for two reasons. First, there were three men living on farms in the south belt of Rossland whose occupations were listed as labourer not gardener or farmer. I assume that they were labourers on the farms on which they lived. Second, there was a 20.5 acre plot of land on which seven men lived at the eastern edge of the city the use of which was not reported. This was an agricultural area. It seems implausible that the men were just living on 20.5 acres of agricultural land and working elsewhere; I assume that this was Chinese farm, the largest in Rossland. It also should be noted that three other men reported their occupations as "gardener" but lived in Chinatown. The location of their employment is not reported, but it is unlikely to have been in Chinatown. I assume that they worked on nearby farms in the southern garden belt, but it is possible that they were employed as gardeners for non-Chinese families.

Table 13
Chinese Agriculture in Rossland, 1901

Census Reference			Land		Building	
District	Page	Household	Acreage	Own/Lease	Occupants	Rooms
			Acres		Number	Number
Southern Gardens						
h2	12	9	15	nr	5	3
h2	12	148	2	lease	4	1
h2	12	147	nr	nr	1	nr
h2	1	146	3	lease	2	1
h2	11	144	8	lease	8	2
h2	11	143	5	lease	3	2
h2	11	136	7	lease	4	3
h2	11	142	5	lease	3	2
h2	11	141	2	lease	4	2
h2	11	138	2.5	lease	3	2
h2	11	137	1.5	lease	2	1
Living in Chinatown						
h2	4	33			1	
h2	11	33			1	
h2	4	35			1	
North of City						
h8	1	9	15	nr	5	3
Eastern Edge of City						
h9	6	72	20.5	own	7	2
Poultry Farmers						
h6	19	244	nr	nr	1	1
h2	11	145	1	lease	1	1
Total *			87.5		56	26
Average*			6.7			
Note: nr = not reported; * Totals and average of reported numbers only						

Some characteristics of Chinese agriculture in Rossland in 1900 are displayed in Table 13. Two of the 1901 farms raised poultry, one in the south belt and the other on the far western edge of the city. The rest were market gardens. We know from newspaper stories that the Chinese raised vegetables and berries for sale in the city and that some orchards were planted but not until 1904.⁷² There was no

Chinese presence in raising large animals -- cattle and pigs for meat and cows for milk -- and they were only a minor factor in the market for tree fruit. Their specialization in vegetable and berries may have reflected their agricultural traditions and expertise but I suspect that the major reason was lack of capital to acquire the extensive land, buildings, equipment and animals required for other types of farming. Given the Chinese reputation for unsanitary agricultural practices there may also have been a social barrier to Chinese in health-sensitive milk production (although it did not prevent their involvement in food preparation). At that time Rossland's milk was not pasteurized and although dairies were regularly inspected by municipal health officers sanitation was a continuing concern.

Most of the Chinese gardens were on land leased from non-Chinese owners (including the P. Burns Company, a Calgary based meat packing company that had a slaughterhouse in the vicinity of the Chinese gardens). The head of the largest Chinese farm on the eastern edge of the city, however, reported that he owned the land. If that report is correct I don't know what became of the land.⁷ The farms in the southern garden belt tended to be small, 2-5 acres, employing 2-5 men, although one was 8 acres employing 8 men and another 15 acres employing 5 men. There were two relatively large Chinese operated farms on the outskirts of the city. One, 15 acres, was in the valley north of the city and the other (noted above) was in the north east section. Both of these districts were becoming well developed agricultural areas.

The contrast between Chinese and non-Chinese farms is striking. Table 14 summarizes non-Chinese agriculture in greater Rossland in 1901. In this table I have designated the farms as "farm", "garden" or "dairy" depending on the census classification of the occupations of the operators, although I don't know what the distinction is between "farmer" and "gardener." It may signify a difference in the types of products; fruits and vegetables versus other crops and animals. If so, some of the fruit and vegetable gardens were amazingly large. Clearly, the classification did not signify a difference in the size of the operations. Some of the "gardens" were among the largest and at least one of the "farms" was among the smallest. It is most likely that it was just different enumerators' designations for the same thing. In any case, although some of the non-Chinese farmers and gardeners were working small plots of land, many of the farms were large for a mountainous terrain that had few pockets of flat or gently sloping arable land. Although both averages are distorted by a few large farms, it is notable that the average size of a Chinese farms was 6.7 acres (median 5 acres) contrasted with 247 acres (median 52 acres) for the non-Chinese. It is also notable that four of the non-Chinese farms were dairies whereas there were no Chinese owned dairies. None of the non-Chinese farms were designated poultry farms but given the size of some of the operations that does not mean that raising poultry for market was not an aspect of the business of some of them. Indeed, there must have been non-Chinese people raising poultry whose listed occupation was something entirely different. Thus, in 1910 a Poultry Association ("to encourage breeding of fowls in Rossland") was formed with the lawyer E.S.H. Winn as president⁷³. In another story it was reported that a Mr. Sol Johns had earned \$700 in 1905 on five acres in the south east part of the city "from the sale of berries, vegetables, eggs and chickens."⁷⁴ Unfortunately, the census records available to me do not identify the crops or products of each farm.

The other striking difference between the Chinese and the non-Chinese farms is in the ownership of the land. All but one of the Chinese farmers operated on leased land. All of the non-Chinese farmers operated on land that they owned.

⁷ The head of the household in 1901 was said to be Huin Lee. In 1905 land belonging to Hop Wee Lee in the railway addition was seized by the City for failure to pay taxes and offered for sale. The farm would have been in the railway addition and it is possible that the name was mangled by the census takers, but the lot seized by the City was too close into the centre of town to have been part of the farm {Rossland Miner, 1905h #1180}.

Table 12
Non-Chinese Agriculture In and Near Rossland, 1901

Census Reference			Farm Characteristics	
District	Page	Line	Acres	Type
Southern Garden Belt				
h2	11	23	3	Dairy
South of the City				
h8	1	16	80	Farm
h8	1	19	30	Farm
h8	3	12	7	Farm
h8	3	6	320	Farm
West Side				
h6	17	27	7	Dairy
North of City				
h8	1	29	1400	Farm*
North East Side				
h3	25	28	1	Garden
h3	25	29	10	Garden
h3	25	37	7	Garden
Near the Road to Trail (East of the City)				
H9	1	1	700	Garden
h9	1	2	700	Garden
h9	1	3	600	Garden
h9	1	13	30	Garden
h9	1	16	160	Dairy
h9	1	33	nr	Garden
h9	1	41	86	Dairy
h9	1	50	52	Garden
Average			247	
Note: nr = not reported; * Land was owned by a contractor but he had a "farm laboree" as a "servant." I assume that the land was in part a "farm" (perhaps with cattle).				

Much of the land on non-Chinese farms would still have been covered with trees in 1901, but as clearing progressed it is likely, based on information about later years, that some farms became multi-product enterprises. Orchards were being planted and some farms were beginning to produce hay for animal feed. Those that had grazing land were probably raising beef cattle, providing animals to the

Burns slaughter house in Rossland. Certainly, by 1919 there were cattle ranchers in the vicinity who were providing meat to a local farmers' market in competition with local butcher shops.⁷⁵ One of the dairy farms in the 1901 census employed a butcher suggesting that more than milk was produced.

The available census returns for 1911 do not provide comparable details about the size and location of farms in and around Rossland. Table 15 presents the barebones of available information on the Chinese farms. There is no reason to think that the nature of Chinese agriculture changed over the decade. The big farms to the north and northeast of the city were gone but to the south much of the same land was under cultivation and the Chinese gardeners played the same role in the city's economy, although on a reduced scale.

Table 13
Chinese Agriculture in Rossland, 1911

District	Page	Line	House	Probable Location	Occupants
Ymir	7	48	50	South of City	7
				Sub total	7
East Ward	25	3	303	Southern Gardens*	3
East Ward	25	6	304	Southern Gardens	1
East Ward	25	7	305	Southern Gardens	1
East Ward	25	8	306	Southern Gardens	1
East Ward	25	9	307	Southern Gardens	1
East Ward	25	10	308	Southern Gardens	6
East Ward	25	16	309	Southern Gardens	3
East Ward	25	19	310	Southern Gardens	1
East Ward	25	20	311	Southern Gardens	1
East Ward	25	21	312	Southern Gardens	1
East Ward	25	22	313	Southern Gardens	2
East Ward	25	25	315	Southern Gardens	1
East Ward	25	26	316	Southern Gardens	3
East Ward	25	29	317	Southern Gardens	3
East Ward	25	32	318	Southern Gardens	2
				Sub total	30
Ymir	3	19	19	North of City**	4
				Total	41
Notes: * Living in Chinatown, assumed to be farming in southern gardens.					
** Employed by non-Chinese farmer.					

For non-Chinese agriculture the story was rather different. Between the two censuses Rossland experienced a frenzy of fruit tree planting and, dairying aside, tree fruit came to dominate non-Chinese agriculture. Could this be the panacea that would save the city from its inevitable decline when the mines gave out? In 1904 the Provincial Fruit Inspector visited the area and commented favourably on four fruit ranches in the valley south of Rossland, one with 700 trees and another, the leading dairy in greater Rossland, 60 trees.⁷⁶ This was followed in 1910 by the announcement that the provincial government would establish a “demonstration orchard” in Rossland to promote the growing of fruit trees and to teach potential farmers techniques suitable to the mountain environment and for which the City promised free water.⁷⁷ Following a competition the orchard was established northeast of town in 1911.⁷⁸ The city government also got into the act. In 1907 the City offered to purchase 500 fruit trees, both apple and soft fruit, for sale to residents.⁷⁹ Some 350 trees were actually ordered by residents, to be planted on a city designated Arbor Day. Much was made in the *Miner* of the favourable reception given Rossland fruit at an agricultural show in London, England in late 1907, including reports of astonishment that it had been grown at an altitude of 3500 feet.⁸⁰ At the Canadian National Apple Show held in Kaslo in 1910, Rossland’s “high altitude fruit” “was the subject of much favourable comment.”⁸¹ In 1910 the City Directory listed 20 men who said their occupation was “fruit rancher.” However, the Directory appears to have been seriously inaccurate in this listing,^s but perhaps it is an indicator of the local enthusiasm for fruit growing. One, Charles Peters, had a ranch north of the city that employed four Chinese gardeners. However, despite apparent early successes Rossland did not develop into an orchard paradise. Although Rossland continued to be surrounded by farms, little was heard of fruit growing on a commercial scale in later years. Indeed, as I was growing up there were abandoned orchards around the city that may have dated from this period. In any case, commercial fruit growing was a passing phase in the history of the city.

For a time the *Rosslund Miner* was effusive in its praise for the Chinese gardeners. Their gardens south of the city were “a revelation to the citizen” in an area “regarded as a district of little promise.” Their “remarkable results” foretold the possibilities of major agricultural development in the area. The newspaper lauded the Chinese’ “... perseverance and energy...” in clearing the land, removing rocks, laying out their “small plots,” developing an irrigation system, and planting fruit trees -- and their “admirable cultivation” of the land that was increasing their control over the market gardening business in Rossland.⁸² Inevitably the praise soon turned to a note of sourness. When a non-Chinese began producing strawberries at a creek mouth on the Columbia River and selling them in Rossland the *Miner* was effusive in its praise for their quality.⁸³ In urging readers to purchase these strawberries the editor ominously warned:

The Chinese are thoroughly unscrupulous in packing their fruit, and entirely oblivious to the sanitary aspects of strawberry culture, Any interested observer can satisfy himself in an hour that the principal strawberry grower among the Chinese gardeners near the city has quietly tapped the sewer below Thompson avenue and run the filthy fluid there from to his strawberry patch, where the sewage is run over the ground and used to wash the berries for the purpose of brightening the fruit and rendering it attractive in appearance. In forcing early vegetables the Chinese men resort to still more filthy practices, but their strawberries are equally unfit for consumption, and the Chinese vendors should be avoided in the interests of health.⁸⁴

The use of sewage to fertilize the land and wash the fruit and vegetables was a continuing theme in the *Miner*’s commentary on local Chinese agriculture. Tapping the sewer lines was not the only sanitation problem. Trail Creek ran through the Chinese garden area and it was a source of water for irrigation. Rossland’s sewers emptied into Trail Creek so that the city’s waste was carried past the Chinese

^s I have been unable to locate many of these “fruit ranchers” in the census of 1911 and of those of the same names that I am able to locate some gave radically different occupations. The list included a school janitor, a gold miner, a hotel keeper and a labourer. If these are the same people as in the directory they presumably had land on which they had fruit trees although farming was not their primary activity. Some others seem to have lived in nearby communities but may have marketed their fruit in Rossland. Unfortunately, information about land holdings in 1911 is not available. One of those listed was George Merry who was in the 1901 census as a carpenter with extensive land near the road to Trail and in the 1911 census as a farmer. In 1904 he was said to have a “prosperous young orchard” {*Rosslund Miner*, 1904zd #1167}. It may have been started by 1901 but I have not included him in the list of farmers for that year. In later years the Merry family had a sawmill and lumberyard in Trail. I don’t know if they continued their involvement in tree.

gardens, down the valley, through the City of Trail and into the Columbia River. In 1927 some Trail residents blamed the creek for an outbreak of typhoid fever.⁸⁵ The wells that the Chinese gardeners used for household water were also suspect. They were close to and probably drew water from the creek. Eventually the City announced a plan to require the Chinese gardeners to connect to the city's water system. If and when the plan was implemented I don't know.

The continuing importance of the Chinese market gardeners is suggested by another event in 1919. When the City, in an attempt to reduce the soaring cost of living in the post- World War I inflation, opened a farmers' market in a building on the main street of Rossland, local non-Chinese farmers asserted that it would only be a success if Chinese gardeners were prohibited from selling vegetables door-to-door on market days.⁸⁶ The City Council was sympathetic, but decided that they could not do that (but briefly considered raising the license fee for door-to-door sales).

The gardens were the mainstay of Chinese life in Rossland and as such they continued into the 1940s. As a youngster I remember dwindling numbers of elderly Chinese men with two baskets full of vegetables at the end of a long pole over their shoulders slowly walking up the steep hill from the gardens, past our house, on their way to their customers in the city. The pole was slick and shiny from years of rubbing on their shoulders. It was a metaphor for the hard life that they had lived. That some of the Chinese gardeners had more equipment is suggested by a 1905 court case in which a Chinese man was fined for leaving his wagon and team of horses untied on the main street,⁸⁷

Unemployment

None of the people responding to the 1901 and 1911 censuses – Chinese and non-Chinese -- reported that they were unemployed. Indeed, there was no provision for such a category on the reporting form. It is possible that some of the people who did not report incomes were in fact unemployed, but that is far from a certainty. There was no form of unemployment relief at that time. The City operated a modest welfare program but it was for indigent women and families and it was exceedingly modest in scope, with each case studiously scrutinized, in public, by the Council. I suspect that unemployed men quickly left the city for more promising locations (or were run out of town by the police as vagrants).

What Did They Earn?

Given this pattern of employment of the Chinese, what can be said about their incomes?

The only data available are from the 1901 and 1911 censuses. When reviewing these data it is important to keep in mind that the incomes of the top earners in the Chinese community were not recorded. Only the earnings of employees were asked for in the census; the incomes of the self employed and owner-employers were not requested, although occasionally they were reported. There were a few apparently wealthy merchants among the Chinese in Rossland. The omission of their incomes from the data gives a downward bias to the apparent income distribution. The same problem infects the non-Chinese data as well. Unfortunately, there is no way to assess the magnitude of or to correct this problem.

There are some other features of the census data that merit emphasis. The 1901 and 1911 censuses provide information about months (1901) or weeks (1911) worked and earnings for the previous year if the respondent worked during that year and if he reported his earnings to the census enumerator. When the respondent reported working less than twelve months or fifty-two weeks in the previous

Money Values

Prices have risen dramatically since the early twentieth century so a dollar had much greater purchasing power then than it has now. To approximate the number of 2007 dollars that would be equal in purchasing power to a given sum of money in the early years multiply the latter sum by a factor reflecting the change in the price level.

Year	Multiplier
1900-1905	25
1906-1915	20
1916-1930	10

These multipliers are at best a crude approximation. They are based on the Canadian Consumer Price Index, extrapolated back from 1913 to 1900 using the Wholesale Price Index, and rounded to the nearest 5. These indexes are for all of Canada, not for Rossland. This is likely to be a problem in the early years when Rossland was a relatively isolated boom town where prices were undoubtedly relatively high compared to the rest of Canada. Thus the multiplier for 1900-1905 may overstate the inflation that occurred to 2007.

year I have grossed up reported earnings to represent the implicit full time equivalent earnings.^t The accuracy of the reported earnings of the Chinese is questionable, not only because of the usual problems of the fallibility of memory and the general suspicion of the census but also because of communication problems. We do not know who provided the information, the named respondent or the head of the household, and if the latter, if he was fully knowledgeable. Beyond this there is an additional concern. The earnings do not necessarily reflect an individual's total income. Although earnings from investments are unlikely in the case of Chinese workers, the earnings reported are for the person's primary occupation only. If a person worked additional hours at another job (e.g., gardeners cutting cord wood in winter) it was not recorded even though there was a column on the census form for it. These are serious potential flaws, but the census returns are the only data available. It is useful to see what story they tell.

Earnings in the 1901 Census

Unfortunately, the enumerators for the 1901 census of Rossland were not diligent about collecting earnings information, particularly for the Chinese residents. Earnings were reported for only nineteen out of the total population of 253 Chinese men. This is a small sample and we cannot be certain that it is representative. The 1901 census figures are summarized in Table 13 and for comparison purposes information about reported earnings for non-Chinese in selected occupations are shown in Table 14. The latter data are derived from a sample drawn from the census.^u

The lowest earnings reported by the Chinese were for agricultural workers, \$216 per annum (about \$5400 in 2007 dollars). Their employers were other Chinese. The highest incomes were for cooks, some employed in private homes of wealthy non-Chinese and some in hotels or bunkhouses. Although not at the level of the earnings of non-Chinese cooks -- among the lowest paid of non-Chinese occupations -- on a full time equivalent basis three were in excess of \$500, more than the earnings of at least two non-Chinese cooks,^v and one exceeded \$800, well above the earnings of fourteen of the seventeen non-Chinese cooks. Apparently, talented Chinese cooks were scarce and much in demand; indeed, in 1907 an exodus of Chinese cooks to other centres created great consternation in the city.⁸⁸ Cooks aside, the only non-Chinese workers with incomes comparable to those of the Chinese were messengers and women in various service jobs. The messenger category is bifurcated. At the top are three bank messengers, responsible for inter-bank transactions often involving large sums of cash. Their earnings were relatively high -- \$800 or \$900 per year. At the bottom were young boys acting as messengers for express and telegraph companies. Their earnings were very small, averaging \$318 per annum. Women were the victims of extreme and blatant gender discrimination. The general rule was that when a young woman married she left her job -- voluntarily or involuntarily. As a result, few married women were employed. Married women were expected to be full time homemakers. The female employees reported in the census were either young single women or divorced or widowed women, often middle aged and most of them immigrants, some from non-English speaking countries striving to survive in a difficult work place. No women were reported working in well-paying jobs in Rossland in 1901; they occupied the marginal positions on the fringes of the economy, occasionally competing directly with the Chinese for menial jobs.

^t This can be a problem if, as is possible in some cases, the respondent reported what his earnings would have been had he worked full time rather than what they actually were. Also, of course, there may be errors in the reporting of hours or weeks worked. Memories are fallible.

^u This sample is not random. I recorded the hours and earnings of all people in the listed occupations who reported hours and earnings in two heavily populated census districts, H2 and H3. These data were used to calculate averages for the top five occupations in Table 14. There are so many observations and so little variation in the earnings within these occupations that the averages calculated are clearly representative of the whole population. I then added to the sample all people in all districts of the City of Rossland (H2 through H6) who reported hours and earnings in the little populated bottom twelve occupations of Table 14. For people who did not work a full year in both groups of occupations the earnings were grossed up to "full time equivalent."

^v However, one of these was Japanese, another ethnic group that was received with less than enthusiasm in British Columbia.

Table 14
Average Annual Earnings (Full Time Equivalent) of Chinese
Employees in Rosslund, 1900 (Census of 1901)

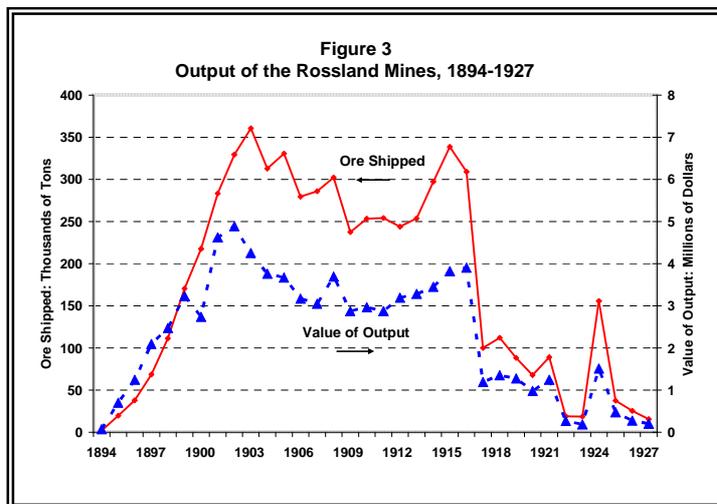
Occupation	Number Recorded	Earnings	
		Average \$	Median \$
Gardener	7	216	216
Domestic Servant	2	300	300
Laundryman	2	320	320
Cook	8	424	437
Total	19	258	300

Table 15
Average Annual Earnings (Full Time Equivalent)
of Non-Chinese Employees in Rossland,
Selected Occupations, 1900 (Census of 1901)

Occupation	Number in Sample	Income	
		Average	Median
		\$	\$
Gold miner	235	1142	1200
Carpenter	35	1162	1200
Engineer	26	1261	1200
Teamster	18	839	900
Labourer	52	804	780
Messenger	9	501	375
Nurse	1	600	600
Tailor: male	7	722	720
Tailor: female	1	480	480
Tel. operator: male	4	950	1000
Tel operator: female	1	300	300
Waiter: male	2	600	600
Waiter: female	6	488	504
Dressmaker: female	3	367	400
Cook	17	680	600
Domestic servant: female	8	296	240
Laundryman	1	600	600
All occupations (sample only)	6 75	10 25	1 030
Note: Based on a sample from the 1901 Census. The samples does not include all occupations or all people in some of the listed occupations.			

Earnings in the 1911 Census

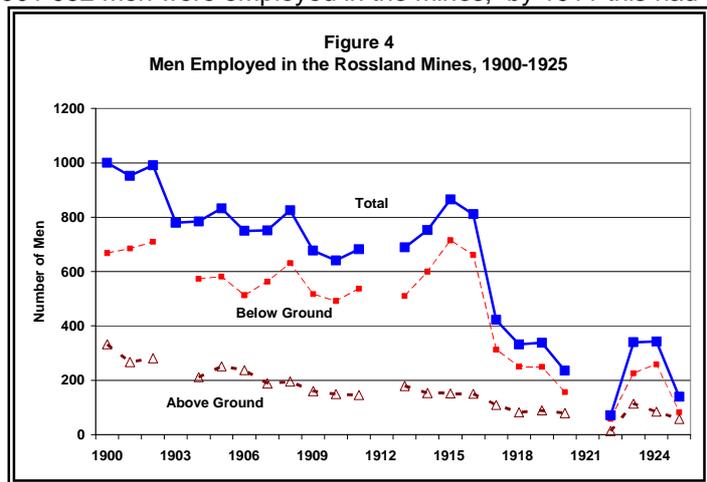
The 1911 enumerators were much more successful than their 1901 counterparts in collecting information on earnings. Some 46 of 75 Chinese residents in Rosslund in 1911 reported the number of weeks worked in 1910 and their earnings. Their responses are summarized in Table 15 which shows average reported earnings by occupation in 1910 and again for comparison Table 16 shows the same information for a sample of non-Chinese in selected occupations.^w The usual questions arise about the accuracy of the reports, of course, but if the census returns are even approximately correct, these tables suggest a dramatic shift in the level and distribution of incomes within the Chinese community and between the Chinese and the non-Chinese. In general, the earnings of Chinese employees increased significantly between 1900 and 1910, although the incomes of the increasing proportion of the Chinese populations dependent on gardens for their sustenance remained very low.



By contrast, the reported earnings of non-Chinese employees included in the sample fell, particularly the earnings of those directly involved in the mining industry. This is plausible given the change that occurred in the nature of mining activity between 1901 and 1911. The output of the mines reached a peak in 1903 and then fell (Figure 3). In 1911 quantity of ore shipped by the mines was 70 percent of that in 1903. The value of output reached peak a year earlier and the fall was even more substantial. By 1911 it was less than 60% of that in 1902. However, the really significant development was the drop in employment in the mines (Figure 4). As

exploration and development were scaled back and the construction of surface facilities at the major mines was substantially completed, the workforce was reduced. The number of miners fell, of course, but particularly noticeable was the reduction in the number of professional and trades employees like mining engineers, carpenters and blacksmiths. In 1901 952 men were employed in the mines; by 1911 this had fallen to 682, a drop of almost 30%.

The most dramatic improvement in the economic position of Chinese was among cooks. There were still some lowly paid Chinese cooks in 1901, but seven reported earnings above \$700 and one reported \$1200, much higher than either of the two non-Chinese cooks whose incomes were recorded. Both of the latter were females, perhaps a further reflection of the discrimination against females in the work force. Apparently the contraction in the mining sector was not yet fully reflected in the demands for cooks and domestics. The reduction in the number of Chinese available seems to have had the effect of maintaining -- actually increasing -- their earnings.



^w The sample was constructed on the same principle as that for 1901. All decipherable reported earnings in the East Ward were compiled, supplemented by all non-miner earnings from the West Ward. As in 1901 there was so little variation in Miners' earnings that adding West Ward miners would not have altered the results materially.

These figures, if correct, suggest that the accepted wisdom about the low level of incomes of Chinese in Rossland had, by 1911, become in part a myth. We must remember, however, that there were many whose reported earnings were very low. The averages hide the fact that some Chinese farm workers reported earnings as low as \$160, lower than any in 1900, and that those working on land in the southern gardens generally reported earnings of only \$360. The average for farm workers was raised considerably by those working on farms outside the city proper. At the same time, we must also remember that it is possible that some of the very low income farm workers had additional work and income from unreported second or seasonal jobs particularly those dependent on the gardens for income. Did the situation change later? We won't know until the 1921 and 1931 census manuscripts are released.

Table 16
Average Annual Earnings (Full Time Equivalent) of Chinese Residents of Rossland, 1910 (Census of 1911)

Occupation	Number Recorded	Adjusted Earnings	
		Average	Median
		\$	\$
Gardener	18	411	540
Domestic	5	563	693
Laundryman	23	502	450
Dishwasher	2	495	495
Cook	10	749	840
Labourer	8	454	468
Sub total	66	513	474
Income not reported			
Gardener	23		
General merchant	3		
Labourer	1		
Laundryman	1		
Sub total	94		
Occupation not reported	1		
Total	95		

Table 17
Average Annual Earnings (Full Time Equivalent)
of Non-Chinese Employees in Rossland,
Selected Occupations, 1910 (Census of 1911)

Occupation	Number in sample	Income	
		Average \$	Median \$
Gold miner	188	980	1000
Carpenter	3	1093	1080
Engineer	8	1588	1278
Teamster	6	831	1040
Labourer	45	845	900
Messenger	5	744	840
Nurse	8	518	375
Tailor: male	3	969	1000
Tailor: female			
Teleg. operator: male	2	1070	1070
Teleph. operator: female	1	480	480
Waiter: male	1	455	455
Waiter: female	3	600	600
Dressmaker	2	483	483
Farm labour	2	573	573
Cook	2	524	524
Domestic	5	608	540
Laundryman	0		
All occupations (sample only)	417	962	1000
Note: The sample includes over fifty professional people with earnings of \$1500 and higher (up to \$5000) that are not represented in the table. These earnings give an upward thrust to average earnings.			

Table 18
**Distribution of Reported Incomes (Full Time Equivalent),
 Chinese Employees in Rossland, 1910 (Census of 1911)**

Income Bracket (\$)	Number	Average Income (\$)
1000+	1	1200
800-999	7	896
600-799	8	633
400-599	9	466
200-399	18	353
0-199	3	160
sub total	46	
not reported	29	
total	75	
average income		512
median income		400

As an aside, one direct comparison between earnings of Chinese and non-Chinese is possible. A sawmill north of the city employed seven Chinese labourers in 1911. They were paid \$.15 per hour.^x Non-Chinese labourers were receiving \$.25 per hour. Were they doing the same jobs? There is no way to tell.

The Chinese and the Justice System

The 1901 Royal Commission concluded that although their culture, moral code and many of their conventions differed from those of people raised in British traditions, the Chinese "... compare favourably with others in their observance of law and order."⁸⁹ This is a remarkable observation given the otherwise vile characteristics that the Commission ascribed to the Chinese, but it appears to have been as valid for Rossland as for the rest of the province. The Chinese became entangled with the legal system, of course, both as victims seeking redress and as accused facing arrest and trial. They were victims of assaults by non-Chinese, some minor, some serious, but there was also serious personal and property violence of Chinese against Chinese. Those aside, the offences that brought the Chinese into conflict with the legal system most frequently arose from conflicts of social morals relating to opium, gambling, and liquor. Truth is elusive and not necessarily discovered through even the most even-handed of legal processes. As a result, even if all of the relevant records were available, it is probably impossible to know if the Chinese were treated fairly by the Rossland's justice system, but it is useful nonetheless to ask if there were indications of blatant bias by the police and the courts.

^x The enumeration forms for the 1911 census permitted the recording of a person's annual earnings, weeks worked, hours worked per week and the hourly rate of pay. All four categories were seldom filled in but when they were they were seldom consistent. The annual earnings were not the same as the product of the hourly wage, hours worked per week and weeks worked during the year. Memories were fallible. Which figures should be used? To be consistent with the information available in the 1901 census I have reported the annual earnings adjusted to full time (52 weeks) equivalent earnings.

The front line of encounters with the justice system was the police force. Until the Provincial Police assumed responsibility for policing in Rossland in 1925, Rossland had its own small police force, managed by a three-person Police Commission. By law, the mayor chaired of the Police Commission. Until 1919 the other two members were appointed by the provincial government, normally, but not always, on the recommendation of the mayor. One appointee was always an alderman and the other a citizen who was not on the City Council, occasionally but not usually a local lawyer. When the government went against the mayor's recommendations and appointed people with a particular reform agenda there were frequent conflicts between the mayor and one or more of the other commissioners and the Commission was at times dysfunctional. When the Commissioners were elected and so had their own local political constituency and were not necessarily political supporters of the mayor, conflict between the commissioners and the mayor was rife, with occasional suggestions of corruption involving prostitution and liquor. There was considerable instability on the police force, including the critical role of police chief. For a time in the very early years of the city the Chief of Police changed each time a new mayor was elected and in later years angry confrontations between Police Commissioners and the Chief led to messy departures of the Chief. Appointees to the force did not necessarily have police training or experience -- on one occasion the new Chief's primary qualification was that he had been an excellent steward of the Rossland Club, the city's elite social organization.⁹⁰ Until the arrival of the provincial police there was not consistent professionalism on the Rossland police force.

In this context, it would not be surprising if the Chinese were singled out for harassment by the police. There are some hints of this in police raids on fan tan games, a popular gambling pastime among the Chinese. On two occasions police raids on fan tan games followed the sighting by the Chief of someone entering a house in Chinatown and closing the door behind him, hardly the grounds for a search. The raid occurred immediately, undoubtedly without a warrant. It seems unlikely the such a procedure would stand up to close judicial scrutiny today, but it is clear that it was not an unusual procedure in dealing with gambling and liquor offences in the broader community at that time and many more gambling and liquor charges were brought against other residents of Rossland than against the Chinese. I have no clear evidence of police bias against the Chinese in gambling raids, but my source of information is the local newspaper and given the editor's attitude toward the Chinese it would be surprising if the paper sought out and highlighted police harassment of them. On the question of bias in policing I can offer no answer.

Most cases involving Chinese were tried in the Magistrate's Court (also called the Police Court) before a magistrate sitting without a jury. The magistrate was not necessarily a lawyer. His remit was primarily the enforcement of municipal bylaws and federal and provincial laws relating to such matters as gambling, prostitution and liquor, but more serious cases like assault could also be heard in this court. In some cases, this would be in the nature of a preliminary hearing to determine if the defendant would be bound over for trial in a higher court. In other cases, however, a defendant could elect a "speedy trial" in Magistrates Court and despite the court's relatively low status a finding of guilt could have serious consequences. In 1907, for example, the speedy trial in Rossland's police court of a case involving the passing of counterfeit money led to a three year sentence in the BC Penitentiary. Unfortunately, my source of information is the local newspaper. Many cases were reported in the newspaper but typically the reports are cryptic and incomplete and the information and its presentation are filtered through the choices and biases of reporters and editors. Moreover, not all cases or judgements were reported. The next highest court was the County Court which at times sat in Rossland under a travelling judge who normally heard cases without a jury. Again there were often newspaper reports that have to be considered subject to the same caveats as noted above. British Columbia's Supreme Court held Assize sessions in Nelson twice a year in which a judge heard the most serious civil and criminal cases, normally with a jury. Thus, in attempting to interpret decisions of the Assize Court there is the additional complication that the proceedings of a jury are secret so that it is inherently impossible to know completely what entered into verdicts rendered.

That said, it is my interpretation of the available records that despite the general contempt for the Chinese in the community, the courts were open to them and when cases came to trial they do not seem to have suffered from bias in the courts. There is a possible exception, a case involving a gambling charge in which the magistrate openly doubted the veracity of the Chinese witnesses (see below, p. 45), but in this instance the magistrate's comments were not necessarily inappropriate. On the other side one

court case stands out -- a civil suit. Thomas Embleton was a prominent citizen of Rossland, active in civic organizations, for a time an alderman, a police commissioner and a candidate for mayor and the owner of a major grocery store. He was a person of influence. Embleton sued a Chinese vegetable merchant for delivering frozen potatoes when the contract called for "merchantable potatoes."⁹¹ The evidence and the arguments are not developed in the newspaper stories but it is interesting, given the stature of complainant, that the Chinese defendant won his case with costs.⁹² Apparently the case was adjudicated on the merits of the evidence and the relevant law, not on prejudice.

The lack of apparent bias may be in part because the Chinese accused of offences often had the best legal representation that the city could offer -- and at that time, with money and mining and smelting contracts and cases swirling around, the city attracted some fine legal talent. In several cases the attorney for the Chinese men was E.S.H. Winn, one of Rossland's leading citizens and a preeminent lawyer with practices in both Rossland and Trail. In addition to his legal accomplishments he was for many years chairman of the Rossland School Board during the very difficult (but successful) process of locating and building a highly controversial new elementary school (and he often refereed hockey games). He left Rossland in 1917 to become the founding chairman of the Workman's Compensation Board, an institution for which he had lobbied for several years.⁹³ For at least one case the attorney was Winn's partner, James A. MacDonald. He had particular interests in mining and mining law and he became the attorney for the newly formed Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company that was soon to dominate the economy of the West Kootenay area, but he also took on other cases. He demonstrated his skills as a barrister by successfully defending a law suit against the Crows Nest Pass Coal Company in both the BC Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada.⁹⁴ MacDonald was elected as MLA for Rossland in 1904 and almost immediately became leader of the Liberal party in opposition. He continued his legal practice in Rossland until in 1909 when he resigned from the legislature and was appointed the first Chief Justice of the B.C. Court of Appeal. When the offices were merged in 1929 he assumed the title of Chief Justice of British Columbia.⁹⁵ In several other cases the Chinese were represented by C.F.R. Pincott, another preeminent attorney. He also demonstrated his effectiveness as a barrister by successfully defending a case before the Supreme Court of Canada. This case involved claims against the person alleged to have carelessly ignited a major fire in Rossland. Pincott was for a time a provincial appointee to Rossland's Police Commission and when Winn left town in 1917 Pincott took over his practices. A few years later, after the death of his wife, he also left Rossland, first for Grand Forks and eventually for Penticton where he had a thriving practice before his death. A fourth attorney who often defended the Chinese was Charles R. Hamilton. I know little about him but he was for a time the mayor of Rossland and was held in sufficiently high regard in the legal profession that he was awarded the designation of King's Counsel (KC) and was chosen as a bencher of the law society.⁹⁶ Some time around World War I he left Rossland and took up a practice in Nelson.

For their serious cases the Chinese did not suffer from lack of competent legal representation.

Violent Assaults

The Chinese in Rossland did not experience the mass protest meetings, mob violence or racial riots that occasionally occurred in other centres.⁹⁷ This is probably because the miners had the only strong, militant union organization in the city and the miners' jobs were not threatened by the Chinese. Indeed, despite the union's thundering anti-Chinese rhetoric, on balance the miners probably benefited from the activities of the Chinese. Neither non-Chinese potential laundry workers nor potential domestic servants were present in any numbers nor were they likely to riot. It is true that by 1911 the Chinese had begun to compete for jobs in saw milling north of the city, but that was a minor element in the local economy and there is no evidence that the sawmill workers were well organized. Of course, the *Rossland Miner* gave significant coverage to interracial confrontations elsewhere, particularly the Vancouver Riots of 1907, but this did not incite similar local actions.

That is not to say that Rossland Chinese led an entirely peaceful existence . On occasion contempt and hostility erupted into violence, but on a person-to-person scale -- either violent assaults on persons or attacks on property. It is also notable that in the two most serious incidents, impressionable children were charged with and tried for the offences. The most dramatic case of physical assault occurred in May, 1900, and it was deadly, resulting in the first registered death of a Chinese man in

Rossland. Because it is part of the Rossland Chinese experience and it reflects attitudes toward the Chinese residents, the story of the murder, the investigation and the trial merits a brief review.

A young cook, Mah Lin, recently arrived in Rossland, was shot at close range in the kitchen of his employer, the Chenoweth family.⁹⁸ The Chenoweths were not the typical family that employed Chinese house servants. Mr Chenoweth was an ordinary gold miner not a wealthy mining company official, barrister or real estate broker. However, the household included three sons of Mrs Chenoweth by an earlier marriage who were described as “very tough boys”.⁹⁹ Two of them were wage earners, one a blacksmith and the other a gold miner. Each reported earnings of \$1000 in 1900.¹⁰⁰ Mr Chenoweth’s income was not recorded on the census form but if he worked full time it would have been in the same range. Apparently Mrs. Chenoweth also worked in the kitchen of a hotel¹⁰¹ but this was not reported to the census takers and no income was recorded for her. A family income in the neighbourhood of \$3,000+ was similar to that of professionals in the upper income brackets. So, although the men were ordinary workingmen, if they pooled their earnings the family income was substantial. They could afford a cook. Because the cook was a Chinese man he would probably also have done other chores including splitting wood and perhaps some cleaning.¹⁰²

An attempt was made to blame the murder on an unknown Chinese man said to have been seen fleeing the scene of the crime.¹⁰³ Thus the *Rossland Miner’s* second story on the murder had the bold sub-title, “A Chinaman Did The Deed.”¹⁰⁴ However, there was no evidence that the shot came from outside the kitchen or that there was an outside intruder. The inquest was inconclusive. Officially, Mah Lin’s death was “... the result of a gunshot fired by some person or persons unknown,”¹⁰⁵ a verdict that only fuelled speculation. After the inquest the *Rossland Miner* reported that “white residents unite in declaring that a deliberate murder of a Chinaman by a white man is out of the question.”¹⁰⁶ It must have been a Chinaman, perhaps a “highbinder” (a professional assassin). The Chinese community rejected this conclusion, asserted that Mah Lin was well liked by other Chinese and that there were no highbinders in local Chinese secret societies.¹⁰⁷ They hired two lawyers “to watch their interests.”¹⁰⁸

Official suspicion soon fell on an eight-year old boy, the youngest member of the Chenoweth family described as “incorrigible”¹⁰⁹ and experienced in the use of the small bore rifle that evidence suggested was the murder weapon.¹¹⁰ That young boys were allowed to use firearms was a matter of continuing concern to some Rosslanders¹¹¹ and there was a second case of a Chinese man being shot, but not fatally, by a young boy (see below, p. 43). The Chenoweth boy was said to have been neglected by his mother who in turn was described as “no better than a prostitute”¹¹² and “not ... a fit guardian.”¹¹³ The Chenoweths must have been quite a family! When the local investigation stalled the Attorney General engaged the Pinkerton agency who sent in an agent, William Pinkerton, from Seattle. Pinkerton spent most of the day with the boy, sometimes accompanied by his mother but usually with other witnesses. Taking the boy to the scene of the crime the agent managed to get him to confess -- and it was a chilling, emotionless confession.¹¹⁴ The motive seems to have been a general dislike and perhaps a fear of the Chinese (“I ... was glad one Chinaman was out of the way”; “I was afraid they were going to kill me”)¹¹⁵ and specific jealousy of Mah Lin’s position in the household (“my mother can’t keep me but she can keep a Chinaman!”).¹¹⁶ Initially, although he was convinced that the boy fired the shot, the lawyer for the City of Rossland did not pursue the case partly because he doubted that the boy understood the nature and consequences of his act and partly because he thought that the manner in which the confession was obtained “was not ... proper.”¹¹⁷ The Chief of police then uncovered two other witnesses who independently of the Pinkerton investigation claimed to have heard the boy confess.¹¹⁸ Although these confessions were also suspect given the characters of the witnesses (both had legal difficulties and were seeking benefits for themselves) the boy was charged and quickly tried by the Supreme Court sitting in Nelson in October, 1900. His alleged confessions were ruled inadmissible so there was no evidence directly linking the boy to the crime.¹¹⁹ He was found not guilty by the jury without leaving the jury box to deliberate,¹²⁰ a verdict that was greeted by loud cheers in the crowded courtroom. The editor of the *Nelson Miner* thought it was not clear if the cheers reflected the fact that the accused was only eight years old, that the evidence was weak or that the victim was “only a Chinaman.”¹²¹ Whether or not Ernest Chenoweth fired the shot that killed Mah Lin, the reaction to the incident illustrates the general antipathy to and suspicion of the Chinese in Rossland and Nelson.

The Chenoweth case is the only violent death of a Chinese man in Rossland that I have noted in the death registrations (see above, Table 3, p. 10), but it was not the only reported assault that could

have been deadly. In 1910 it was alleged that two boys shot and wounded a Chinese man who was walking along a street in northeast Rossland. The victim asserted that the older boy (14) ordered the younger one (11) to "shoot the _____"(sic).¹²² The boys said that they had found the gun in the bush, fully loaded, and that its discharge was accidental. However, at a hearing in police court the boys were bound over for trial in County Court. The trial was held at the end of November but under a 1908 revision of the Criminal Code of Canada relating to juveniles, the trial would have been held in private with no reports on the proceeding to be published.¹²³ As a result I have found few details of the trial and no report on the verdict.¹²⁴ I have also noted four other cases in which non-Chinese were charged with assaults on Chinese. For two cases, one in February, 1905, and the other in October, 1905, I did not find a report of a trial.¹²⁵ I don't know if the trial was not reported, the charges were dropped, or, as sometimes happened, the accused abruptly left town to avoid legal penalties. The third case involved a dispute over allegedly missing laundry in which the Chinese laundryman was struck in the mouth, knocked down and kicked.¹²⁶ The assailant was found guilty and fined \$10 (roughly the equivalent of \$ 200 in today's purchasing power). In a fourth case a Chinese man was assaulted while walking along a street on a Saturday night by someone with whom "he did not even have a speaking acquaintance."¹²⁷ The accused quickly left town before the case came to trial.¹²⁸ Sometime later the accused returned to Rossland thinking the incident had been forgotten. He was arrested and fined for contempt of court for failing to appear at his original trial.¹²⁹ I have found no evidence that the original assault charge was pursued. Were these examples of the justice system failing the Chinese? Perhaps, but of course we do not know all of the circumstances. Many arrests of non-Chinese similarly did not result in court cases.

With its complement of brothels and exotic Chinese shops, Chinatown was a magnet for young men who had spent some time in the city's many saloons and were ready for a climax to their night on the town. Sometimes the results was an assault on Chinese property. Thus, in early 1907 a young man "ran amuck ... in Chinatown causing no little excitement and doing more damage than a small cyclone."¹³⁰ When a police officer tried to stop him, he struck that officer in the mouth. Needless to say, he faced severe charges in court, including striking an officer and destruction of property. His fines aggregated \$100, although they were reduced because of his age, but he was also required to pay for repairs to the damaged buildings. Two years earlier a group of young men had fun kicking in doors and breaking windows in Chinatown.¹³¹ Some Chinese gave chase, caught one, dragged him into a house and beat him. He was rescued by police and arrested but I found no report of a court appearance; perhaps the beating was thought to be sufficient punishment.

I found no reports of prosecutions of Chinese for assaults on non-Chinese, but I have noted two instances of retaliation by Chinese that resulted in injury to non-Chinese. One is the incident referred to above. In the other some boys were harassing a Chinese man in downtown Rossland. He threw rocks at them and hit a bystander, the son of attorney J.A. MacDonald, who received a bad cut on his face. Neither incident seems to have resulted in charges against a Chinese man.

The major charges of assault against Chinese men involved assaults on other Chinese. Not surprisingly, Chinatown had what the Rossland Miner called "rival factions."¹³² One such division was between members and non-members of the secret society that was called the Chinese Masonic Lodge. There were probably other such factions as well as interpersonal conflicts and commercial rivalries. At times these rivalries led to violence. In a case that may have reflected competition for business, in 1906 a Chinese farmer complained that rivals had spread a rumour that he had leprosy and as a result he lost most if not all of his customers.¹³³ After a careful examination the medical officer determined that the allegation was false but apparently the damage was done. The farmer had difficulty in regaining his customers. The victim of the false rumour launched a lawsuit against his rivals¹³⁴ but before the case came to court he took matters into his own hands and assaulted one of them, beating him with an iron bar. The magistrate took the provocation into account and convicted him a simple assault with a fine of \$5. I found no evidence that a civil suit occurred.

The judicial system treated much more seriously the assault of a Chinese by three other Chinese at the Chinese Masonic Hall in 1904. The first story appeared at the end of August reporting dissension in the Chinese Masonic Lodge and the beating of a dissenting member apparently because of his failure (inability?) to pay a \$10 assessment.¹³⁵ The injuries were so severe that he spent several weeks in hospital.¹³⁶ For the hearing in police court impressive arrays of lawyers were retained by both the prosecution and defence and each side had two interpreters, at least one of whom was brought from

Vancouver.¹³⁷ Clearly, the trial was being taken very seriously -- the *Miner* suggested that it ranked "alongside of the most important matters ever tried in Rossland police court."¹³⁸ Apparently the case against the lodge officials who were alleged to have ordered the beating was not pursued, perhaps for lack of evidence, but the three defendants who were directly involved in the beating were bound over for trial in County Court.¹³⁹^y They avoided prison sentences but were fined heavily. The main assailant had a penalty of \$150 (equivalent to about \$3750 in 2007 dollars) and the others \$60 (\$1500) to be paid in instalments.¹⁴⁰ The authorities took very seriously what could have been dismissed as a mere internal Chinese squabble of no interest to the broader community.

I found only one allegation of robbery by a domestic servant (of a \$300 fur coat) reported in the newspaper.¹⁴¹ When the case was initially brought before the County Court the prosecutor, who apparently had not been notified, was not present. However, the judge proceeded and concluded that there was a culture-based misunderstanding. Although the Chinese servant was convicted, he was given a suspended sentence. The furious prosecutor protested to the attorney general who concluded that the procedure was faulty and insisted on a new trial.¹⁴² At the trial, held in Nelson by the same judge, the Chinese servant was convicted and sentenced to prison.¹⁴³

As we would expect, other offences against property were reported, mostly of Chinese against Chinese. What is surprising is that they were so few. It is possible that not all incidents were reported in the *Miner*, but a newspaper so devoted to local gossip and to belittling the Chinese is likely to have noted most if not all. Two examples can be cited. In early 1904 someone attempted to set fire to the cabin of a Chinese gardener in the lower part of town. Despite a \$50 reward no one seems to have been apprehended for the offence but according to the *Miner* it was generally believed to have been another Chinese man with a grievance against the gardener.¹⁴⁴ In 1906 a Chinese gardener was accosted on his way home in the dark by two other Chinese and robbed of \$63.¹⁴⁵ The culprits could not be identified. There were several other cases of assaults by Chinese on other Chinese

Other Offences

Most of the court cases against the Chinese in Rossland involved offences against public morality, particularly opium and gambling but occasionally liquor. In most of these cases there was a clash of cultures as well as the violation of a law.

In the first reported opium case in 1897 a Chinese man was charged with operating an unlicensed opium den.¹⁴⁶ At that time the possession, sale and consumption of opium although morally repugnant to the wider community were not illegal, but as one of its first actions the City Council had established a license fee of \$250 (\$5000 to \$6000 in today's money) for the operation of an opium den, the highest license fee permitted by provincial legislation.¹⁴⁷ This bylaw was not particularly directed at the Chinese, however. The Council had adopted a policy of charging the highest permissible business license fees for most businesses (the exception was small retail businesses, on a motion by an alderman who was himself a small businessman who "was paying taxes enough without paying a license"!). Convicted on the testimony of a non-Chinese addict who was also a customer, the defendant was fined \$250, the same as the fee for a license. I don't know what became of him. One death from opium poisoning was reported in 1904. The opium was eaten rather than smoked. Reports differed as to whether it was accidental or a suicide. The *Miner* carried a detailed review of the elaborate funeral ceremonies.¹⁴⁸

The importation and sale of opium was prohibited in 1908 and possession and use of the narcotic in 1911. Opium was at the root of a major customs scandal in August 1910. When several boxes from China, consigned to a respected Chinese mercantile establishment were inspected the officers found undeclared tobacco and Chinese whiskey, both of which bore heavy duties, and opium, the importation of which was by then prohibited.¹⁴⁹ Various charges were laid including attempted bribery of a customs official. The resulting hearing in police court was chaotic as the customs people withdrew the charges of smuggling whiskey and tobacco asserting that they were administrative matters that would be dealt with internally. The bribery charge was withdrawn for lack of evidence with the suggestion that it had been laid simply to put pressure on the defendants for a substantial monetary settlement of the smuggling case. The opium smuggling charges were to be held in abeyance pending consultation with Ottawa.¹⁵⁰

^y The newspaper story reported that they were bound over for trial at the Assize Court. In fact, they were tried in County Court.

The editor of the *Miner* was outraged and demanded an independent investigation, which did not happen.¹⁵¹ A year and a half later the two customs official involved in the case exchanged accusations in letters to the *Miner* that effectively acknowledged that the bribery attempt had occurred.¹⁵² All in all the Chinese merchants got off very lightly. They paid the requisite import duties and a small monetary penalty but avoided prosecution on the much more serious criminal charges of opium smuggling and bribery. Winn was the attorney for the merchants.

A dramatic event occurred about midnight in mid-July 1922 when, as part of the aftermath of a provincially inspired campaign to clean up Chinatown, the mayor personally led a raid on an opium den.¹⁵³ Two men were assessed fines (\$300 for the owner and \$25 for a found-in)¹⁵⁴ but the raid did not stop the opium trade. Scattered arrests for opium offences continued for a few years. In 1923, acting on his suspicion that "there was 'something doing,'" the chief of police and a customs officer intercepted a shipment of opium at the local post office.¹⁵⁵ The opium was in packages said to contain tea. One man was sentenced to six months in prison (the minimum under then current legislation), although the ever sensitive Magistrate Plewman expressed regret that he could not assess a lesser penalty of a fine.¹⁵⁶ Another case was reported in 1928 when a man was fined \$100 for smoking opium at his house in Chinatown.¹⁵⁷

The game of fan tan was a popular pastime among the Chinese, but it was also the reason for many of the Chinese appearances in court. There were legal debates about whether fan tan was "gambling" under the statute. The issues were whether money (or anything of value) changed hands and whether the "house" took a share of the proceeds. A simple game of chance among friends, even if money was involved, was tolerated. However, if the "house" conducted the game as a commercial venture, had a bank that played against the other players and stood to profit by it, the game was illegal.¹⁵⁸ Operating, playing and watching such games were offences.

The first example of a gambling case that I have found was at the beginning of 1898 when a raid of a fan tan game resulted in the arrest of 15 Chinese men, five of whom were fined \$20 and the rest released.¹⁵⁹ Although opium was also found, this was before the possession of opium was an offence in Canada. It seems likely that fan tan games were a regular feature of Chinatown and most police chiefs seem to have been willing to tolerate them providing they were conducted discretely, honestly and in private behind closed doors. However, in 1906 a formal complaint from players that a game was not honest and that winnings were sometimes withheld (one player alleged that he had not received the \$100 that he had won; that was a lot of money) resulted in a raid in which fourteen men were arrested.¹⁶⁰ The operator of the game abruptly left town to avoid prosecution, but some players were convicted and subjected to the minimum fine under the law (\$20). The magistrate clearly had sympathy for the men. He stated that he would have imposed a "merely nominal fine" had the law permitted, but he seized the gambling paraphernalia and all of the money on the table.

Another case later in the same year is interesting for the very blatant clash of cultures that occurred in the courtroom. The Chief of Police stated that while walking through Chinatown he knew there was "something doing" when a Chinese man sneaked by and entered a building. The Chief followed and found about twenty five men engaged in a fan tan game.¹⁶¹ He was alone and the men scattered when he entered. He only managed to arrest the dealer with his bank roll and fan tan apparatus. When the case came to trial in police court six Chinese men swore that there was no game of fan tan at that time.¹⁶² However, the magistrate stated that he believed the Police Chief and that

*The longer I sit as Police Magistrate, the less reliance I am disposed to place, as a rule, on the evidence of Chinamen. Nine out of ten of whom come into court prepared to depose, regardless of the truth, to a preconcerted line of defence that may tend to secure dismissal of the complaint against them or their fellow countrymen. If this total disregard by Chinamen for the sanctity of an oath continues in future cases, I will report the matter to the department of the Attorney General, with a view to a prosecution for perjury.*¹⁶³

It is far from obvious that the magistrate was wrong in his assessment of the evidence, although his broad sweeping conclusion is disturbing.

In another incident the following year, after a raid on a supposed fan tan game the charges were dismissed when the Police Chief admitted that he did not have sufficient evidence to convict.¹⁶⁴ In 1910, however, when the Police Chief was patrolling in Chinatown he "noticed several Chinks going into the

store of Wing Chong Sing, and that the door was fastened after them." Suspecting a fan tan game, he returned with a constable and raided the establishment. Ten men were arrested. After a lengthy legal argument about whether fan tan was gambling, the operator was fined \$20, one player was fined \$3 and the rest either received suspended sentences or their cases were withdrawn.

The liquor related cases involving the Chinese concerned the illegal sale (or possession for sale) of liquor, not drunkenness. Indeed, I did not find a single report of the arrest of a Chinese man for drunkenness (granted, the names of those arrested for drunkenness were seldom reported in the newspaper). In June, 1913 thirty cases of Chinese liquors were seized from one store.¹⁶⁵ The three owners were fined \$100 each and the liquor was dumped out (the medicinal concoctions containing alcohol were spared). As the Miner reported "Chinatown is now very dry." Somewhat later another merchant was fined \$100 for bootlegging.¹⁶⁶ In a similar vein, but with a different item, there was also a case of the sale of tobacco to juveniles.¹⁶⁷ The defendants acknowledged the sale but asserted that they did not know that it was illegal to do so.

The Chinese and the Municipal Government

One of the abiding concerns of the municipal government was the collection of taxes from the Chinese.¹⁶⁸ The City Assessor in testimony to the Royal Commission alleged that the Chinese did not pay their fair share of city taxes but that to collect the taxes due from them "... would take a regiment of soldiers"¹⁶⁹ The problem was not property taxes or business license fees, the major sources of tax revenue for the city. If property taxes were not paid the city eventually had recourse to seizing the land and if license fees were not paid the delinquent businesses could be closed. The real issue was the so called "road tax," a poll tax of \$2 per head assessed on single property-less men on grounds that as renters they did not otherwise pay city taxes. This assumption, of course, ignores the share of property taxes and license fees implicitly included in the rent paid by the single men. The tax was not aimed at the Chinese, but with the exception of a few property owners the Chinese men were subject to it. Payment of the road tax (or other taxes) was a qualification for voting in municipal elections and on municipal referenda. The Chinese could not vote so this inducement to pay the tax was absent for them. Moreover, they were also prohibited from employment on City work crews and felt harassed by various city inspectors so they would have had little affection for or sense of being well served by the municipal government. Apparently few if any Chinese voluntarily paid the road tax so occasionally special measures were taken. In late 1906, for example, the Chief of Police conducted a raid on Chinatown (with a policeman and two special constables, not a regiment of soldiers), accosting the Chinese and demanding that they produce a tax receipt.¹⁷⁰ If a receipt was not forthcoming he demanded payment of the \$2 tax. He is reported to have collected \$100 from 50 men. Two years earlier, just before Christmas, it was reported that "The city was in need of funds for Christmas" and so conducted a similar raid from which "quite a sum was secured."¹⁷¹

The Chinese also had encounters with the city over water. In 1904, whether valid or not -- the issue does not seem to have been tested in court -- the City accused the Chinese in Chinatown of secretly tapping the city water mains, obtaining water without paying for it.¹⁷² It was proposed that all buildings in Chinatown be required to have water meters. A variant on the water issues was the documented assertion that the Chinese gardeners tapped the city sewage system for fertilizer on their vegetable fields.¹⁷³

Chinese laundries also had some difficulties with the municipal authorities. In 1904 a laundryman refused to pay his \$10 business license fee and was accused of inciting other Chinese laundrymen not to pay their fees. When his case was called he failed to show up in court.¹⁷⁴ He was apprehended by the police and when he continued to refuse to pay was sentenced to ten days in the city jail. In a day or two his friends paid the license fee and court costs to get him released.¹⁷⁵ Water was also a sore point with Chinese laundries. In part the concerns related to sanitation, as noted above (see p. 25), with the conclusion that all Chinese laundries should be connected to the city water system. At the same time, it was asserted that Chinese laundries who were connected to the city water on a flat rate basis were wasting water and should be put on meters.¹⁷⁶ The timing of this harassment of the Chinese laundries was not accidental. This was late summer, 1904, when the city was experiencing a serious water shortage and was prohibiting the use of city water for outdoor sprinkling and irrigation.¹⁷⁷ What happened to the meter proposal for Chinatown is not clear although it was soon noted that the City was "wasting no

time in making the inhabitants of Chinatown conform more strictly to the regulations" and as a result had "added considerably to the municipal revenue."¹⁷⁸ The laundries on the west side were soon ordered to close their wells and connect to city water and in 1905, as noted above, to have meters installed (see above, p. 25).¹⁷⁹ In a different but related matter, the attorney for some Chinese gardeners protested to the City Council that city workmen had trespassed on their land and destroyed a spring and a water course.¹⁸⁰ They threatened legal action if it happened again. The matter was referred to a committee of Council but I have not found a report on the results of the committee's investigation.

The location of laundries also became an issue. In late 1905 the City Council objected to a plan by a Chinese man to open a laundry in a lane just off the main commercial street of the city.¹⁸¹ It was said to be in an area where a bylaw prohibited laundries. Counsel for the laundryman asserted that the bylaw was *ultra vires* and apparently the laundry was opened. The man was charged and the case was heard in police court in early 1906 but postponed until October.¹⁸² Unfortunately, the legal arguments were not reported and I have not found a report on the judgement rendered. I suspect, however, that the laundryman won his case because in 1907 a new bylaw was introduced prohibiting the location of laundries north of Kootenay Avenue.¹⁸³ Both the 1901 and 1911 censuses show at least one Chinese laundry in the central business area and, as noted below, the expansion of this laundry became an issue in 1916 (see below, p. 47). If the new bylaw was enforceable, perhaps existing laundries were grandfathered.

Social Status

Like other places in the province, Rossland must have been an uncomfortable place for Chinese to live. They were at the bottom of the social hierarchy, a social underclass perhaps one step up from the prostitutes who shared Chinatown with them -- at least the Chinese could go uptown for purposes other than paying fines and buying groceries (although the prostitutes could in principle, if not in fact, become citizens [most were Americans] and (at least after 1917) vote, possibilities not open to the Chinese). Although there were undoubtedly sympathetic members of the broader community -- or at least people sufficiently interested to try to understand them, to attend functions sponsored by the Chinese like the lunar New Year celebrations, and, of course, to purchase their wares and services -- the general attitude was not welcoming but was one of disdain and at times of outright hostility. The Royal Commission, and the most of the non-Chinese witnesses that appeared before it, dripped with hostility and the local newspaper reported on the activities of the Chinese with amused contempt. The *Miner* seldom referred to the men as Chinese and if they did they often added a demeaning modifier like "wily" Chinese. Rather, they were repeatedly referred to as "Chinamen" (the most benign of the sobriquets), "Celestials," "Mongolians," "almond-eyed sons of the flowery kingdom" and occasionally in bold headlines as "Chinks." News stories involving the Chinese seldom were straight forward reports. Attention was crudely drawn to their race and an amusing or demeaning cast given to the reporting. Thus, when a successful Chinatown businessman, accompanied by the person who was teaching him to drive, had a minor accident with his new automobile the headline was "Chinaman Driving New Automobile Runs Down Man," not "Lee Yuen In Minor Car Accident" or "J. Rorrison Injured in Car Accident."¹⁸⁴ The injury was minor (a sprained ankle). To say that Mr. Rorrison was "run down" was a gross exaggeration, and the details in the story suggest that it was the pedestrian who was largely at fault, suddenly emerging from behind a parked wagon in front of the slow-moving automobile as it turned a corner. I have found no story suggesting that the police pressed charges. When a Chinese laundry in the downtown area was consumed by fire in the winter the *Miner* expressed little concern for the loss incurred by the owner but focused on the loss by people whose laundry was burned, expressing the hope that "some of the laundry in the tub may be saved." A major point of the story was that

*When the fire department arrived the Celestials in the place were leaving like rats from a burning ship, and while they had little of their clothing stopped for nothing, but beat it for Chinatown through the snow and cold for shelter among the Chinese brethren there.*¹⁸⁵

In 1916 when the successful Chinese proprietor of a laundry in the central business district sought to expand his facility in a manner that the City Solicitor reported was consistent with the city's bylaws, permission was refused

*... the council being unanimous in the opinion that the Celestials should not be encouraged in getting too firm a foothold in the city.*¹⁸⁶

The Chinese were carefully excluded from most occupations (including employment on City work crews¹⁸⁷) but were permitted to find employment in menial tasks of low social status. Apart from a lone witness before the Royal Commission, their voices were never heard at public meetings (or at least never reported), they had no political voice and it is doubtful that any of them participated in broader community events (although on at least one occasion two Chinese businessmen made contributions to the funds being raised for the summer carnival¹⁸⁸). They had their own social organizations and events, some of which attracted the attention and interest of the broader community. Chinese funerals involved an elaborate parade through the city to the Chinese cemetery adjacent to, but separate from, the municipal cemetery where there was also a formal and, to western eyes, mysterious graveside ceremony.¹⁸⁹ The parade and graveside ceremony were watched with interest, for many onlookers undoubtedly tempered by amusement.

At least in the early years, they held an extended annual celebration of the lunar New Year that was attended by members of the non-Chinese population. At the end of January, 1900, the *Rossland Miner* provided an extended report on that year's festivities, describing the fireworks, drinking contests, and warm welcome extended to visitors in all of the houses in Chinatown.

*The visitor ... was invited to partake of refreshment, and in every Chinese shack ... no matter how humble, a spread more or less elaborate was laid out. It included Canadian whiskey and cigars, curious Chinese nuts and confectionary, some of the strange looking sweetmeats being very tasty, liquors of various kinds in funny looking bottles and a host of queer looking dishes that the white man knows nothing of.*¹⁹⁰

Clearly the reporter enjoyed himself, but the following day the *Miner's* underlying disdain for everything Chinese re-emerged. The editor placed in the newspaper's window a plate of sweetmeats

*... some of the lot pressed on visitors to Chinatown at the recent festivities. A close examination of the candy has disclosed the unpleasant fact that it is literally alive with a very bealth(sic) sort of insect -- name and tribe unknown. Visitors who accepted Chinese hospitality recently will please note.*¹⁹¹

This undoubtedly reinforced the common allegation that the Chinese were unclean.

In 1903 the Chinese Masons had a grand celebration ("far surpassing anything ever attempted previously") of the opening of new lodge rooms on the top floor of a three story building in Chinatown.¹⁹² The public was also invited to the celebration of the opening of the Chinese Masonic Hall, a substantial structure beside the railway tracks in Chinatown that was still in use in the 1940s.² The reopening of the hall in August, 1904, following an extensive renovation was the occasion of another elaborate ceremony that included a parade through Rossland that the *Miner* said was "probably unparalleled in the province, certainly it was absolutely novel in Rossland." Led by two richly garbed men on horses and accompanied by three bands playing "barbaric music" the procession of officials in exotic silk robes and their entourage wound through the streets of Rossland. The *Miner* acknowledged that the display "was well worth witnessing" and that "scores" of Rosslanders visited the finely decorated lodge rooms.

Conclusions

The Chinese community of Rossland in its early years (the late-1890s to the mid-1920s) was very artificial. It was all males; there were no women, no families, no children. The community steadily dwindled as the nature of Rossland's economy changed from a mining boom town full of footloose single

^z The Chinese Masonic Lodge was not a branch of or related to the Masons although local Chinese official tried to create the appearance of such an association. Local officers of the Masons were invited to attend the opening of the building in Chinatown and did so, in full regalia. The 1904 parade stopped at the Masonic Hall where the Chinese official were provided with a tour of the facility. The Chinese Masons were a secret society with a long history and branches in various cities in Canada and elsewhere. In the American cities like San Francisco it was alleged that the Chinese Masons were a society of "highbinders," professional thugs and assassins who maintained a type of discipline in the Chinese community {Harper, 1886 #1176}. The *Rossland Miner* reported this allegation but concluded "Whether the alleged Chinese Masons in this city are highbinders or not the local police do not know." {Rossland Miner, 1907d #1177}

men who were willing to pay for the services that the Chinese and Chinatown could provide, to a residential location for a nearby smelter full of families that required few of those services. Yet the Chinese community had a continually revolving population. A few died and many left town for destinations unknown, but at least until World War I there was a steady stream of newcomers. A few spoke English; many did not. The Chinese were embedded in a city that was predominantly British and American with institutions (legal, governmental and social) that were decidedly British. Yet, despite this British cast, there were many people from many European countries, speaking various languages and bringing with them various cultures. In varying degrees all except the Chinese were integrated into the city. Of course, all recent immigrants had problems fitting in and non-English speaking immigrants were not joyously welcomed, but it was only the Chinese that were set rigidly apart in a social caste of their own. They had none of the usual civil rights such as voting in elections, but were expected to pay regular taxes. They were permitted to engage in only a limited range of occupations and while some did reasonably well financially, many were very poor. They were regularly chastised and belittled in the local newspaper and occasionally assaulted on the streets. At times they reached out to the broader community with invitations to their ceremonies and festivals, but usually their gestures were regarded with curiosity, amusement and suspicion and were not reciprocated. There is no evidence that the Chinese were welcomed to or participated in any of the social institutions of the city. They developed their own social institutions, including secret societies like the Chinese Masons, and their own recreations, although one of the favourite activities, fan tan, was regarded as illegal gambling and if caught the participants were subject to legal penalties. Rossland was not a comfortable place for the Chinese to live but it was probably no more hostile than other locations in the province.

Appendix Census Manuscripts and City Directories

Although the original enumerators' reports have been destroyed microfilms of the manuscripts of the 1901 and 1911 censuses have been preserved in the National Archives of Canada and the microfilms are in many libraries across Canada. The quality of the reproduction varies and, although some of the information is either difficult or impossible to read, by and large the films required for this study are in good condition. Digital versions of the microfilms of both censuses are available on line through the National Archives of Canada. Besides convenience, a major advantage of the digital versions is that indexes have been developed that can be searched by name and the names in the two censuses have been linked.

Census of 1901

For the 1901 census, the Province of British Columbia was divided into six districts (Rossland was in the Yale Cariboo district). Each district was further divided into sub-districts corresponding to federal election ridings. Rossland was in the Rossland Riding which stretched from the Columbia River west beyond Greenwood. The riding was then divided into what we can refer to as enumeration districts, corresponding generally to polling subdivisions for federal elections. Each enumeration district was assigned by a letter and a number; those in the Rossland Riding were designated by the letter H. The enumeration districts in the City of Rossland bore the numbers H-2 through H-7 and those in the outlying areas that I have included in Greater Rossland parts of H-8 to H-10. Each enumeration district had several sheets (or pages) on which the information about the population was to be recorded and each page held up to fifty names.

The 1901 census manuscripts include Schedule 1 and Schedule 2. Recorded on Schedule 1 was information about the people. Each dwelling (house, apartment, etc.) and separately each household on each enumerator's route was assigned a number in sequence in the order enumerated. The household defined as a group of people in a housekeeping community was the basic unit of enumeration. A single person could be a household if he or she carried on his or her own housekeeping. In each household one person was designated as "head." The enumerator then recorded personal information for each

member of each household: his or her name, sex, colour, relationship to the head of household (including lodger), marital status, birth date, age, place of birth, year of immigration, year of naturalization, racial origin, nationality and religion. There then followed employment and earnings data and finally information about literacy and languages spoken. Schedule 2 contained information about the land and buildings occupied by each household including location, number of dwellings and other buildings on the land, number of rooms in the principal dwelling and whether the land and the buildings (separately) were owned or leased. House numbers seem not to have been common on the streets of Rossland in 1901 so there was considerable variety in how the location was recorded. Often it was very precise, listing the block number, lot number and district plan number from the land survey. In other cases it was quite vague. Sometimes the location might be given as a street name or an even vaguer property name such as Callert Gardens, Burns Property, the Railway Addition, etc. Some of these areas are identifiable on contemporary maps; some are not. Although it is not necessary, there is a presumption that dwellings with adjacent numbers were contiguous to each other. The existence of a cluster of Chinese dwellings should thus be identifiable. In any case, the method of enumeration tells us which residents lived together in the same dwelling. A group of men living in the same dwelling was considered to be a household with a head. Thus, in dwellings occupied by Chinese men, one was always designated as "head," but I doubt that this designation always had social significance.

Census of 1902

The structure of the 1911 census was different. The City of Rossland was one census district, divided into two enumeration districts corresponding to the east and west wards in municipal elections. Residents of greater Rossland who lived outside the city boundaries were enumerated in the Ymir District with their residences given as Rossland. The Ymir District included all of the unincorporated areas surrounding the three cities of the West Kootenay: Rossland, Trail and Nelson. As in the 1901 census each enumeration district had several sheets (or pages) on which the information about the population was to be recorded and each page held up to fifty names.

Schedule 1 of the 1911 census was basically the same as that for 1901 but included a location for each dwelling. As in 1901 street names were given but not house numbers. There was also some refinement in the employment section and the addition of an interesting section on life and accident/sickness insurance carried by the respondent. None of the Chinese reported having insurance. Schedule 2 is not available for 1911.

City Directories

The other "comprehensive" source of information on people in Rossland is a series of city directories published with reasonable frequency (for much of the period, annually). Unfortunately, for research on the Chinese the directories are almost useless. Although directories for a few years included a list of Chinese businesses, Chinese residents were not listed in any of the directories. For the non-Chinese population the directories varied in their degree of comprehensiveness. By and large, for the period under consideration, ordinary people were not included, only important people and those involved in downtown businesses. Spouses and family members were not listed, nor were addresses of residences. However, some information about occupations is provided and for limited purposes this is valuable.

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