

READ ALL ABOUT IT

News for the younger set

Revisiting the history of Eureka's Chinese expulsion

Jessie Faulkner
FOR THE TIMES-STANDARD

It's hard to imagine now, but a little over 100 years ago an entire racial segment of the Eureka population was summarily booted out of town.

To research the event, Dr. Jean Pfaelzer, a University of Delaware professor of American studies and English, has made more than one trip to the Humboldt County Historical Society's Research Center. She's gathering information for her upcoming book, "Driven Out: Roundups and Resistance of the Chinese in California," exploring the 1880s expulsion of Chinese from the state. As most Humboldt County residents know, the North Coast took part in that expulsion.

On Feb. 6, 1885, Eureka City Councilman David Kendall had finished dinner and was walking north across Fourth Street when he was hit and killed by a stray bullet from a shoot-out between rival Chinese groups. In short order, an angry mob decided to order all Chinese residents out of Eureka. A committee was chosen to inform the Chinese residents of Eureka that they had 24 hours to pack their belongings and get out.

In partnership with Humboldt State University and the Humboldt County Historical Society, KEET is organizing and Pfaelzer is presenting a symposium, "Driven Out: The Chinese Experience in Humboldt County," at 7 p.m. March 11 in Room 118 of Founders Hall on the HSU campus. The symposium is timed to complement WNET's Bill Moyers' series "Becoming American: The Chinese Experience," which examines the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Reform Act of 1965.

While most may know about Eureka's expulsion of the Chinese people, few may know the vital roles these residents played in the county's development between 1850 and 1885.

The Chinese immigration into Humboldt County was not an easy one. Anti-Chinese sentiments were laced through the area's newspapers, and the labor community — from leaders to workers — made their similar feelings known. These sentiments were not unique to Humboldt County, but prevalent in many other parts of California.

The late historian Lynwood Carranco

surmised that the first Chinese people came to Humboldt County in 1850, on their way to the gold mines. The writing, a chapter in Carranco's 1986 "From Redwood Country," notes that the white miners began to complain about the Chinese men's willingness to work for less wages and their habit of sending money home, instead of spending their earnings locally.

Those complaints reached the state Legislature, which passed a law requiring the Chinese miners to acquire a foreign miner's license. As most Chinese miners were unable to acquire the license, their focus shifted to settling in the populated areas and pursuing other work. A number of the Chinese workers took road construction jobs throughout the area.

"Before the end of the 1870s, Chinese laborers, California's road builders, constructed the road along the north bank of the Van Duzen River from Bridgeville to Carlotta and Hydesville," Richard C. Johnson wrote in the November-December 1981 issue of the Humboldt Historian.

Carranco notes that a Chinatown had been established in Eureka by 1874. The 1880 Census counted 241 Chinese people in the county. Of those, just four were women. According to the Census, 96 Chinese lived in Eureka, 17 in Arcata, 58 in Orleans, 14 in Willow Creek, 11 in Trinidad and the balance lived in towns from Gold Bluff in the north to Ferndale in the south.

Eureka's Chinatown stretched from E to F streets between Fourth and Fifth streets. A number of truck farms were further east near Eighth and K streets. Among the occupations of those calling Chinatown home were house servants, janitors and cooks. Others took work in logging or railroad construction.

Casper C. Ricks and his wife, Adaline, among Eureka's earliest settlers, owned the block that was home to Chinatown. In fact, it was Adaline's money that purchased the city block between E and F and Fourth and Fifth. Local newspaper columnist Will Speegle wrote in 1945 that Mrs. Ricks had purchased the property in 1856 for \$300 from D.D. Williams.

In a letter appearing in the West Coast Signal on April 9, 1879, Ricks defends himself against claims that he was benefiting from renting high-cost homes to

Chinese ladies of the evening. In his defense, Ricks provides a glimpse of the Chinese community.

"I had at that time," Ricks wrote, "six or eight other houses, rented to Chinamen from which I received from \$5 to \$8 per month each. I have since built as many more and today I do not receive from the rent of Chinese houses over \$100 per month."

The late historian Martha B. Roscoe took careful notes during a talk by the late Peter Rutledge at a March 23, 1954, Humboldt County Historical Society meeting. Rutledge was 12 or 13 years old at the time of the Chinese expulsion and, according to Roscoe, known for his clear memory.

Rutledge recalled that he would often walk home from school along E street to Fourth street, then up Fourth Street to look at the Chinese residents.

"The principal houses of the Chinese were located on Fourth Street between E and F and on E Street up a way from Fourth," Rutledge said. Others were situated along the slough that crossed the middle of the block.

"Here were the homes of over 200 Chinese," D.L. Thornbury wrote in the 1923's "California's Redwood Wonderland: Humboldt County." "The ground on which the quarters were located was low and swampy. A gulch which headed about Ninth and H streets, ran through the block from the southeast to the northeast and debouched into the marsh near A Street. The houses, costing from \$20 to \$50 each, were nothing but miserable shacks, built by the Chinese themselves, from rough refuse lumber. These were rented by the owner of the land for six to eight dollars per month. Fronting Fourth on both sides were the merchandise stores, the rooming houses, opium dens and market shops."

With the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, all of Eureka's newspapers campaigned against Chinese immigration and against the Chinese people already living here. The matter became more complicated, Thornbury notes, when a "different" class of Chinese took up residence in Eureka in the 1880s. Rival Tong groups were represented among Chinatown residents by 1883. Shootings took place between the rival groups on several occasions in 1884.

The residents of European heritage were upset — a flicker that grew stronger following the discovery of two white women in an opium den one evening in January 1878. The women were said to have "become insensible to



Humboldt Historical Society

This was taken at the intersection of Fourth and E streets looking eastward before the Chinese expulsion in 1885. The Chinatown block is on the right and extends about one-fourth of the way up the block on the left side. This was the corner where Eureka City Councilman David Kendall was accidentally shot on Feb. 6, 1885.

the effects of the opium." These developments only deepened the anti-Chinese sentiment among the populace.

When City Councilman Kendall died from crossfire between two rival groups, the simmering anti-Chinese prejudice reached boiling point — resulting in the expulsion of all Chinese whether or not they were involved in the gun battle. Little time passed before the same actions were followed in Arcata and surrounding areas, according to a Feb. 17, 1885, article in the Sacramento Record Union.

Other accounts report that the Chinese residents of Crescent City, Ferndale and Rohnerville were also ordered out of Humboldt County.

The inequity of the situation was immediately apparent to both the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco and a few of Eureka's residents.

"The whole trouble in Eureka has been caused by a few highbinders (professional gamblers) and law-breakers," a Chinese Consulate representative told the Sacramento Record Union. "All the Chinese expelled are not criminals. Many of them are peaceable merchants, whose business has been broken up by their expulsion."

There were those in Eureka who valiantly argued against the wholesale banning of Chinese people from the North Coast. Rev. C.A. Huntington, minister of Eureka's Congregational Church, was among them when he

addressed the growing group of angered people demanding action against the Chinese in the hours following Kendall's death.

"The Chinaman who fired the shot is guilty of violating a city ordinance and should be summarily punished. But the rank and file of the people in Chinatown are as innocent of the death of Mr. Kendall as I am," he said. "They pay their rent, they mind their own business and you have no more right to drive them from their homes than you have to drive me from my home. If a Chinaman has no character, white men ought to have some. By enforcing this resolution you become the outlaws and are amenable as such to the courts of justice."

Redress was later sought in the amount of \$132,820 in a lawsuit filed by Wing Hung against the city of Eureka. The sum requested, Carranco reported, represented the claims of 52 Chinese men driven out of Eureka.

In perhaps a final indignity, city of Eureka attorney S.M. Buck traveled to San Francisco to represent the city and filed a motion to strike all damages claimed in the lawsuit, noting that the city's assessment rolls showed no more than a total of \$2,800 for the Chinese residents of Eureka. The judge agreed with Buck's request and struck all claims from the suit except injury to property.

It did not escape notice that no injury to property occurred in expelling the Chinese people from Eureka.

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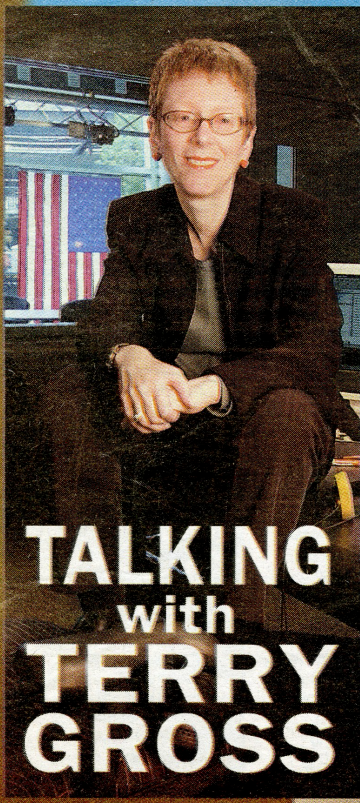
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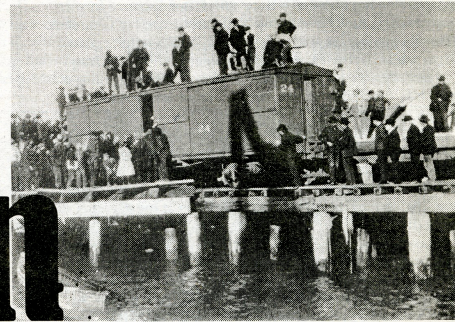
ON THE COVER

1885 photo of Fourth and E streets in Eureka looking east. Chinatown is on the right and the first few buildings on the left. Eureka City Councilman David Kendall was accidentally shot at this crossing. Below right, the 1906 expulsion of Chinese people from Humboldt County.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HUMBOLDT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE Chinese Expulsion



Looking back on a dark episode

by KEITH EASTHOUSE

IT DIDN'T TAKE JEAN PFAELZER LONG TO NOTICE SOMETHING ODD about the class she was teaching at Humboldt State University: no Asian students.

There were significant numbers of Native Americans in the Humboldt student body back then, in the late 1970s. There were also noticeable numbers of other minorities, particularly Hispanics. But, campus-wide, Asians were few and far between.

Puzzled, she made inquiries and soon learned that HSU had a bad reputation among Chinese and Japanese students in particular. It wasn't that the university didn't want them. It was that the students didn't want to come here.

The reason for Humboldt's unpopularity, Pfaelzer eventually concluded, had to do with something that took place over a 24-hour period 118 years ago — the infamous expulsion of Eureka's entire Chinese population, which at the time numbered about 300 men and 20 women.

That event, which unfolded on Feb. 5 and 6, 1885, was followed by a second, lesser-known banishment of 23 Chinese cannery workers brought in to work on the lower Eel River in 1906. Arriving in mid-September, they were shipped out in early October after loggers objected to their presence. It was not until the 1950s that the Chinese returned to Humboldt Bay, when Ben Chin arrived and got into the restaurant business. Chin's Cafe, next to Pierson's, is still a going concern.

Pfaelzer said that while most Asians don't know the details of this history, they do know the general outlines. "There's a very strong sense of history and of stories passed down. This is clearly if unspecifically known."

To this day, there are relatively few Asians in Humboldt County. Ray Wang, director of HSU's Department of World Languages and Culture, was shocked when he came here seven years ago. One of the first things he did was open the phone book to look at familiar Chinese last names, including his own. "There are 100 million [Wangs] in China and here I found there were none. I couldn't believe it."

Like Pfaelzer before him, Wang sought an explanation and soon learned about the events of 1885 and 1906.

Many living in Humboldt today know nothing about this dark chapter of local history; those who do tend to view

it at a distance, as if it has no connection with the present. But the past treatment of the Chinese lives on today in the form of a population that does not contain nearly as many Asians as it might have.

"We would have a Chinatown in Eureka," said Wang, adding that in the 1880s Eureka's Chinatown was not too much smaller than San Francisco's.

It's worth noting that no Chinese were killed in the two expulsions. It's also clear that the white population took pride in what it had done. In 1886, the one-year anniversary of the expulsion was celebrated in Eureka; the festivities triggered additional expulsions of the comparatively small Chinese populations of Arcata, Trinidad, Fortuna, Rohnerville and Ferndale. As a result, in the early 1890s, the front page of a local history and business directory was able to proudly declare, in boldface type, that Humboldt was "the only county in the state containing no Chinamen."

"I wouldn't go as far as [calling it] genocide," Wang said. "But ethnic cleansing is accurate. People were purged."

A public airing

On March 11, the matter will get the biggest public airing in memory when a symposium sponsored by KEET-TV, HSU and the Humboldt County Historical Society will be held at the university. The featured speaker is Pfaelzer, who's working on a book that promises to be the definitive history. The working title, *The Driven Out*, is also the title of the meeting. The book's scheduled release date is the summer of 2004.

Pfaelzer, 58, taught at Humboldt for only a year — it was her first teaching gig. But she never forgot what she learned there. "It's a story that's always haunted me. It was always going to be the next book," she said in a telephone interview from her East Coast home last week.

A historian of the American labor movement of the late 19th century, Pfaelzer, the author of four works, finally turned her attention to the Chinese expulsion about three years ago. She is currently on leave from the University of Delaware, where she teaches. The university has provided her with a grant to fund the book project. So has the Library of Congress. Random House, which will publish the book, has given her an advance.

Pfaelzer even has a writer's lair here in Humboldt for reflection and inspiration, a cottage near Big Lagoon that has long served as a vacation retreat for her and her family. "My heart's in the county. Now that I'm doing a book, it seems I'm out there all the time," she said.

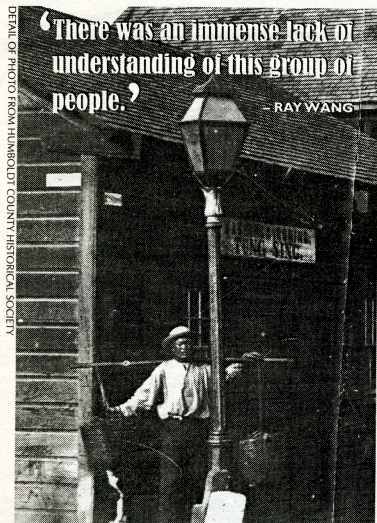
She began her research with a single, seemingly simple goal: to tell the tale of the Eureka expulsion. After a few days at the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, however, she realized she was onto a bigger story: Chinese expulsions happened not just in Humboldt, but elsewhere in Northern California too, in places like Petaluma, Shasta County and Truckee,



"I am by disposition an optimistic and happy person. The part of the story that will never make sense to me as a human being is the contempt for other people."

—JEAN PFAELZER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEAN PFAELZER



DETAIL OF PHOTO FROM HUMBOLDT COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

“There was an immense lack of understanding of this group of people.”
— RAY WANG

A slice of Eureka's Chinatown in 1885. The sign in the background advertises Washing and Ironing by Tung Sing.

pivotal. The crowd “got revved up,” as Pfaelzer put it, and without any clear leader it was decided that the Chinese should be removed from the city within 24 hours.

A committee of 15 was appointed to enter Chinatown and inform the residents that they had to go. The committee was composed not of wild-eyed fringe elements but of pillars of the community — men such as future city councilor H.H. Buhne, owner of a large store that supplied hardware and wholesale groceries; Francis Thompson, editor of the *Humboldt Standard*; Frank McGowan, an attorney; and Dan Murphy, a colleague of Kendall's on the council and owner of the Western Hotel.

What really made the expulsion feasible was the presence of two steamships in Humboldt Bay: the *Humboldt* and the *Chester*, both of which were used to transport the Chinese to San Francisco. Pfaelzer said that “because of bad weather the ships happened to be in the bay at the same time.” Wang raised the possibility that the ships were there specifically to transport the Chinese out of the area. “Obviously, something had been arranged,” Wang said.

Wang might seem guilty of fuzzy thinking — after all, how could anyone have foreseen the Kendall killing? On the other hand, the white population was unusually edgy. Pfaelzer said there was violence in Chinatown in the weeks leading up to the expulsion, mainly due to the arrival of some Chinese gamblers from San Francisco. “The Chinatown in Eureka was a very stable, settled part of the community,” Pfaelzer said. But with the coming of the gamblers, “suddenly there is violence in Chinatown that hadn't been there before.”

Did the unrest lead community leaders to plan the expulsion prior to Kendall's murder? That may be going too far, but Wang thinks it's probable that preparations were in the works; all that was needed was an excuse. “Some people with ulterior motives were waiting for a good moment to kick the Chinese out.” If Kendall had not been killed, “it would have been something else. People were waiting for a spark to kick up this fire.”

A narrow escape

Adding credence to the theory that the

expulsion was a less-than-spontaneous event is the fact that what happened in Eureka was much larger and well organized than the other expulsions in Northern California. It was also remarkably free of violence.

Nonetheless, the possibility of bloodshed was real. A makeshift gallows was constructed and a sign was attached to the wooden structure warning that any Chinese still in town after 3 p.m. on Saturday would be hung. A Chinese teenager, Charles Lum, made the mistake of stopping in at the house of the Rev. Charles Huntington on his way to the docks; he was being converted and wanted to say good-bye. Outraged that a Chinese had entered a white house, a group of vigilantes burst in, dragged Lum out, lifted him up to the gallows and put a noose around his neck. Fortunately for Lum, Huntington climbed the gallows and talked the crowd out of it.

Pfaelzer said she found the plight of the 20 Chinese women particularly poignant. They must have been hobbling as they were herded toward the ships due to the Chinese custom of binding women's feet. They also must have been distraught as many of them were prostitutes who had already been kicked out of places like Sacramento and San Francisco. “In returning to San Francisco, some of them were going into double jeopardy,” Pfaelzer said.

The banished Chinese arrived in San Francisco the following Monday. A federal marshal tried to get San Francisco police to detain eight to 10 men on the grounds

that they were suspects in the Kendall killing, but the police said there wasn't enough evidence. They, along with all the other Chinese on the two ships, were allowed to melt into the city's Chinatown.

But the story wasn't over. In a surprising move, 52 former residents of Eureka's Chinatown obtained a white lawyer and sued the city of Eureka, claiming that the city had robbed them of their property. The courts ended up ruling against the Chinese, arguing that they had no standing to sue because they had never been landowners; Eureka couldn't have confiscated what the Chinese had never possessed.

Pfaelzer said the ruling “became a flag that no one should sell property to the Chinese.” She also said that it was very much like what the courts did to blacks in the Deep South, where former slaves had no legal standing because they owned no land.

Other heroes

There were other whites in Humboldt besides the Rev. Huntington who stood up for the Chinese. In a well-known incident, Tom Bair confronted a group of Eureka residents when they came to his Redwood Creek Ranch to take his ranch hand, Charlie Moon. Standing in the road with a gun, Bair reportedly told the group that they would have to take him first; the group turned around and left.

Less well-known is what happened in Orleans, a mining center in the late 19th century that harbored a large concentration of Chinese. In a 1988 paper published in the *Humboldt Historian*, the publication of the Humboldt County Historical Society, Orleans resident Philip Sanders and his daughter Laura wrote that only about half of the Chinese population of Humboldt County had been expelled; the other half, many of them miners, was never driven out.

Based primarily on the ledgers of two Orleans mercantile stores, the father-daughter team found that in the months following the 1885 expulsion, items that had been popular with the Chinese — such as rice, canned fish, incense sticks and firecrackers — continued to be purchased, but by people with European names. Gradually, Chinese names began to reappear in the ledgers, indicating that whites had been protecting them.

The owner of one of the stores, William Lord, was particularly sympathetic to the Chinese, even going so far as to harbor them in his home during the expulsion. Lord may not have been entirely altruistic. “The Chinese economic role in town was so considerable that these guys would have been screwed if the Chinese had been forced out,” Philip Sanders said in a telephone interview from his Orleans residence. In their article, titled *The Quiet Rebellion*, Sanders and his daughter estimated the Chinese population of Orleans at 200 individuals or more throughout the 1890s — a time when officials in Eureka were claiming that the county was free of Chinese.

It was a false claim, but as Sanders explained Orleans had once been the seat of Klamath County, which went belly up in 1874. “People didn't see Orleans as part of the county,” Sanders said.

Incomprehensible hatred

As for Pfaelzer, she is clearly in the process of attaining mastery over her material — both in terms of the Eureka expulsion and the expulsions that were going on elsewhere in that troubled time. But, she said, she will never be able to fully see the situation the way most whites saw it. Even though she thinks it was misguided, she said she can understand the belief that Chinese workers posed an economic threat. What she can't get her mind around is the hatred.

“I am by disposition an optimistic and happy person. The part of the story that will never make sense to me as a human being is the contempt for other people.” ■

Be more connected

Join KEET-TV for a symposium with Dr. Jean Pfaelzer and Dr. Ray Wang

Driven OUT
THE CHINESE EXPERIENCE IN HUMBOLDT COUNTY

March 11th - 7:00 pm
HSU's Founders Hall - RM 118

Premieres on KEET-TV
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a Bill Moyers special

Becoming AMERICAN
THE CHINESE EXPERIENCE

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The KEET connection

If all goes as Seth Frankel plans, he and historian Jean Pfaelzer will soon be collaborating on a 30- to 60-minute documentary about the expulsion of Eureka's Chinese population in the late 19th century.

Frankel, director of production at KEET-TV, and Pfaelzer have already teamed up to produce four two-and-a-half minute video spots, called “interstitials,” on the expulsion that have been airing on KEET of late.

In part, the purpose of these is simply to drum up interest in a symposium on the expulsion that is taking place at Humboldt State University on March 11. The meeting, scheduled for 7 p.m. in Room 118 in Founders Hall, will feature a talk by Pfaelzer, who is working on a book on the expulsion entitled *The Driven Out*.

But the video spots, funded by \$12,500 in grants, are also intended to increase the chances that additional financial support will be forthcoming to fund the larger project.

The reason for the sudden attention to Chinese issues is an upcoming three-part series by journalist Bill Moyers on the Chinese experience in America. The series will air on KEET from 9 to 10:30 p.m. March 25-27.

That the Frankel/Pfaelzer collaboration happened at all is due to Matina Kilkenny of the Humboldt County Historical Society. Kilkenny, who has known for some time about Pfaelzer's book, put the two in touch after Frankel came to the historical society to do research.

Frankel has done documentaries before, notably a 60-minute piece in 2000 on local engineering marvels (such as the Arcata marsh and the dam at Ruth Lake) that got an Emmy nomination; and a historical series on the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, where Frankel worked before coming here.

Why, aside from the fact that funding may be available, is a film on the Chinese expulsion worth doing?

“The majority of people I've talked to don't even know this happened,” Frankel explained. “The point is not to rub peoples' noses in it and say ‘what a terrible history we have here.’ The point is to make people aware so we don't let such things happen again.”

— reported by Keith Easthouse

Mail

NC Journal 3-6-03

Intentionally killed?

Editor:

Re: last week's cover story ("The Chinese Expulsion," Feb. 27). Want the real story? This scenario was related to me decades ago by the late Norton Steenfalt, a lifelong history buff and no fan of bogus conspiracy theories.

The Chinatown in Eureka was on land coveted by prospective developers. The city was growing fast and the Chinese were squatting in the path of Eureka's manifest destiny, progress.

David Kendall [the city councilman whose shooting triggered the expulsion] was not without enemies. He was also an easy target, punctual, regular in his habits. He walked home at the same time every night.

Certain individuals saw a win-win-win situation in this caper — they eliminated Kendall and the Chinese and freed up the real estate. So Kendall was not accidentally shot but dispatched by design as he passed Chinatown on a dark, blustery night. "Spontaneous" demonstrators laid the blame on the Chinese.

The "Chester" and the "Humboldt" were poised to whisk the Chinese away. They'd learned from the Indian Island massacre 20 years earlier. All witnesses and possible suspects disappeared in one day, 24 hours. There was no time for explanations, alibis or a defense. Excellent planning and execution.

When Sheriff Tom Brown refused to name names it was because he had none. When the San Francisco police released all the evacuees upon their arrival due to lack of evidence they did the proper thing. All the Chinese were innocent of murdering Kendall but they'd already been sentenced to exile. No one was ever indicted for the murder. The town closed ranks, secure in their smug, snug world behind the Redwood Curtain.

Dean Cleveland, Eureka

Editor's note: According to Jean Pfaelzer, a University of Delaware researcher working on a book about the expulsion, there is no evidence that Kendall was intentionally killed, either by a Chinese gunman or by anyone else.

■ Scrapbook/B2

■ Style/Love/B3

■ Annie's Mailbox/B6

TS. 3-9-03

Driven out

Local symposium takes a look back at the late 19th century expulsion of Chinese immigrants

ARCATA — "Driven Out: The Chinese Experience in Humboldt County," a symposium with Dr. Jean Pfaelzer, will be presented by KEET-TV at 7 p.m. Tuesday in Room 118 in Founders Hall on the Humboldt State University campus.

This event is being held in conjunction with WNET's Bill Moyers' series "Becoming American: The Chinese Experience," and in partnership with Humboldt State University and the Humboldt County Historical Society. Pfaelzer is the author of the forthcoming book "Driven Out: Roundups and Resistance of the Chinese in California."

Moyers' three-part series, "Becoming American: The Chinese Experience," unfolds between the pillars of two landmark pieces of American legislation: the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 — the first time the United States ever banned a group of people based on race or nationality and the Immigration Reform Act of 1965, which opened the door to Asians and other non-Europeans to come to America in record numbers. The "Driven Out" symposium will describe the roundups and expulsion of Chinese immigrants from Humboldt County in 1885 and 1906.

Pfaelzer will tell the story of how 300 Chinese men and women were forcibly driven out of Eureka's Chinatown over one weekend in February 1886 when they were given 24 hours to leave town. Pfaelzer will also describe the other purges from Arcata, Ferndale, Rohnerville, Crescent City and Port Kenyon. This is the untold story of how hundreds of Chinese men and women were driven from Humboldt County town by town, and purged

in a final sweep in 1906.

What happened in Humboldt launched 40 other purges of Chinese people in California — a racial firestorm that raged through California in the late 19th century. Eureka and Arcata were like many California towns and counties that sought racial purity, Pfaelzer explains, but in other towns and counties, Chinese immigrants in California fought back — through the courts, through strikes, through boycotts, through militant acts of resistance and through the legations and consuls of China. In several towns, Chinese residents flatly refused to go. "Driven Out" explodes pervasive stereotypes of the Chinese as passive, docile or enduring.

Dr. Ray Wang, director of the Chinese Language Department at Humboldt State University and president of the Humboldt Asian Culture Society, will moderate the discussion.

Pfaelzer first became interested in the Chinese experience in Humboldt County when she was a visiting professor at HSU in the 1970s. Since then, she has taught at the University of California, San Diego, served as executive director of the National Labor Law Center, worked as senior legislative analyst for a member of the United States House of Representatives, and, since 1985, has been professor of American studies and English at the University of Delaware. She has published four books in the field of American utopian studies and American women's literature.

This symposium is free and open to the public. The three-part television series, "Becoming American: The Chinese Experience," premieres March 25 to 27 from 9 to 10:30 p.m. on KEET-TV, Channel 13.

Exploring county's history of expulsion

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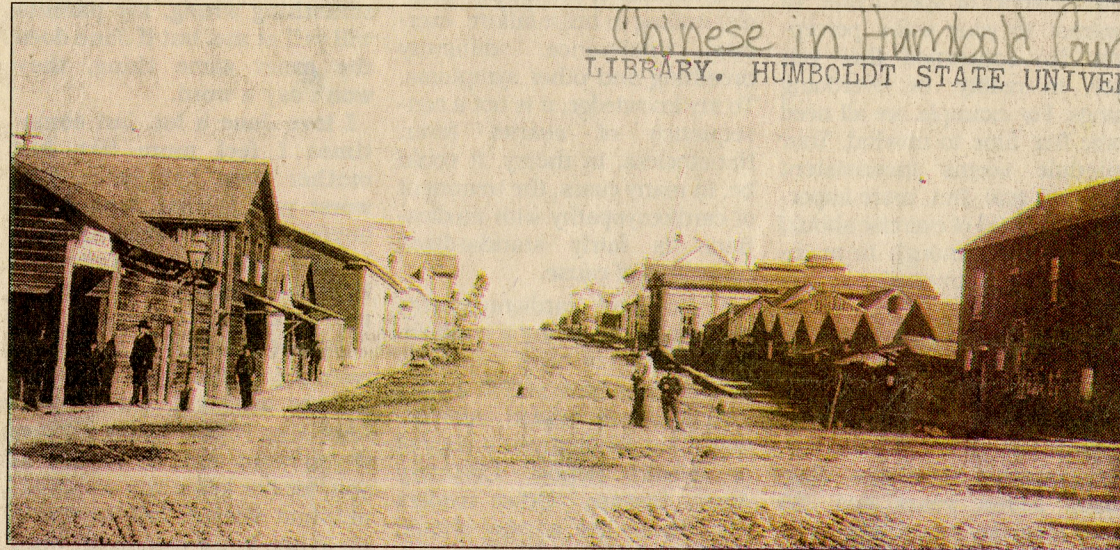
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Historical Society speech will focus on 1885 events

ARCATA — University of Delaware professor and author Jean Pfaelzer will share some of her exhaustive research on the 1885 expulsion of Chinese residents from Humboldt County as keynote speaker for the Humboldt County Historical Society's annual luncheon at noon Feb. 8 at the North Coast Inn, 4975 Valley West Blvd.

Pfaelzer's talk, "Driven Out: The Expulsion of the Chinese in Humboldt County," will provide a glimpse into her upcoming book, "Driven Out: Roundups and Resistance of the Chinese in California," due out this summer.

A professor of American studies and English at the University of Delaware, Pfaelzer was a visiting professor at Humboldt State University in the 1970s when she was puzzled by the lack of Asian students on campus.



This early 1880s image looking east on Fourth Street from the corner of E Street shows a portion of Eureka's Chinatown. The corner also marked the spot where then-City Councilman David Kendall was fatally wounded by a stray bullet.

She soon uncovered the 1885 expulsion and the lingering bad feelings toward the North Coast. About four years ago, she began research on the Eureka expulsion and found that similar incidents had happened throughout Northern California.

Although anti-Chinese attitudes pre-dated it, historical accounts have linked the expul-

sion of Eureka's Chinese residents to the death of Councilman David Kendall, she explains. Kendall left his home near Chinatown the evening of Friday, Feb. 6, 1885, and was struck down by a bullet from a gun battle between two Chinese rivals.

The councilman was quickly carried back to his home, but

soon died of his injuries.

The response was immediate, with many angry Eurekans calling for the expulsion of all Chinese people, she said. A committee was soon chosen to tell them they had 24 hours to pack up and leave the county. Two steamers in Humboldt Bay took them to San Francisco by the end of the weekend,

Pfaelzer explained.

When Chinese seasonal workers returned in 1906 to take jobs in the Eel River Valley canneries, they, too, were told to leave. It wasn't until the 1950s that people of Chinese descent again made their homes in Humboldt County.

As well as spending time as a visiting professor at HSU, Pfaelzer taught at the University of California, San Diego; served as executive director of the National Labor Law Center; and worked as a senior legislative analyst for the U.S. House of Representatives. She has taught American studies and English at the University of Delaware since 1985. "Driven Out: Roundups and Resistance of the Chinese in California" will be Pfaelzer's fifth book.

The Humboldt County Historical Society's annual luncheon will be served buffet-style and the afternoon will include a drawing for gift baskets.

Those planning to attend are urged to call the Humboldt County Historical Society at 445-4342 soon and reserve a seat, as space is very limited. Tickets are \$25 per person.

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— CHIN'S RESTAURANTS —

CELEBRATING A LEGACY OF BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS IN HUMBOLDT COUNTY

Donna Tam
THE TIMES-STANDARD

Fifty-five years ago, Ben Chin came to Eureka, looking to buy a restaurant. What he found was lingering anti-Chinese sentiment rooted in events that occurred nearly 70 years prior.

It was a barrier that he would soon break down — through hard work, the kindness of others and persistence.

"I'm stubborn, really," the 87-year-old Chin said from his Eureka home last week.

Surrounded by hundreds of family portraits and photos — documentation of the family and life he has built here — Chin explained how he faced discrimination when he opened his first restaurant in Eureka, discrimination linked to an 1885 event where the Chinese were driven out of town.

According to a 1961 article in the Pacific Historical Review written by Lynwood Carranco, the expulsion was at the height of anti-Chinese tension, enhanced by warring Chinese groups called tong, organizations developed to offer protection and a sense of community for Chinese immigrants.

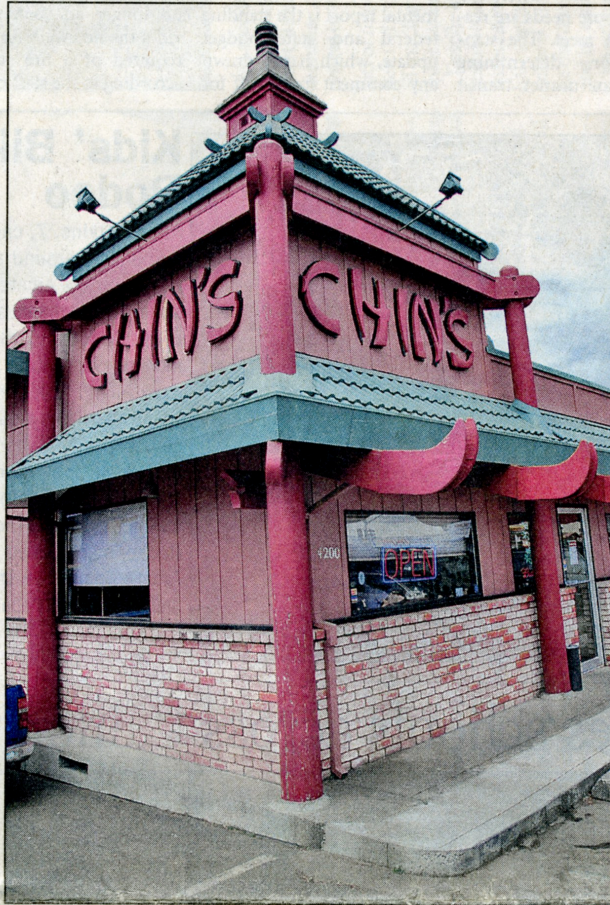
On Feb. 6, 1885, a stray bullet from the gun of two quarrelling Chinese men hit and killed David C. Kendell, a prominent city councilman. Within two days, Eureka's Chinatown was emptied of its approximately 480 Chinese residents, who were literally shipped off to San Francisco. Those Chinese who resisted were caught by a mob of residents hungry for vigilante justice. While many citizens defended the Chinese, Carranco wrote, they were criticized and ridiculed.

"Racial discrimination persisted; indeed, well into the 20th century a tendency to glory in the anti-Chinese attitude was much in evidence," Carranco wrote.

In 1941, a revised city ordinance stated, "No Chinese shall ever be employed, either directly or indirectly, on any work of the city or in the performance of any contract or sub-contract of the city, except in punishment for a crime. Nor shall any provisions, supplies, materials or articles of Chinese manufacture or production ever be used or purchased by or furnished to the city."

While the expulsion acts were repealed in December 1943, no Chinese Americans lived in Eureka until Chin's arrival in 1954.

Born in China in 1922, Chin, whose father died from tuberculosis when he was 7 years old, came to the United States at the age of 12 to live with his grandfather in Portland, Ore., where he worked in a grocery store.



JOSE QUEZADA/FOR THE TIMES-STANDARD

Chin's Cafe is located at the south end of Eureka on Broadway. Ben Chin and Mary Chin overcame initial resistance to become owners of the first Chinese restaurant in Humboldt County after the infamous expulsion of Chinese from Humboldt in the early 1900s. Below, Chin's Cafe is shown in 1972, before Ben Chin added a pagoda to the building.

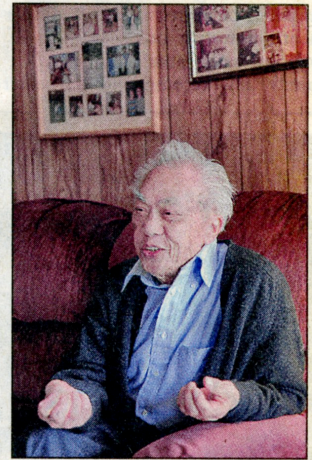


After graduating from high school, Chin worked briefly as a waiter. In 1942, he worked in a shipyard before being drafted into the U.S. Army, where he served with the military police during World War II in North Africa, Italy, France and Germany. He was honorably discharged

in August 1945.

After the war, he went to cooking school for three months and continued to be a cook for several years.

In 1950, he opened a Chinese-American café in Cottage Grove, Ore., near Eugene, but after a free-way bypass was built, business slowed down.



JOSE QUEZADA/FOR THE TIMES-STANDARD

Ben Chin laughs as he recalls his early days in Humboldt County, working from dawn to late night at Chin's Cafe.

Loggers that would go to his restaurant told him that there were no Chinese restaurants farther south and encouraged him to open one in Crescent City or Eureka. So that is what he did — he headed to Eureka in search of a restaurant.

He found one for sale — a decrepit, rat-infested bankruptcy court property for which he paid \$1,000. But not before first getting permission from the mayor.

"He said he wouldn't encourage me to open the restaurant, he wouldn't tell me not to open a restaurant, but if I opened one he would do what he could to protect me," Chin said.

The Canton Cafe was open for business on April 30, 1954. For the first several weeks he received obscene and abusive calls.

"They would call and say we don't want your kind here, go home," he said. Chin said the calls got so bad he had to stop answering the phone altogether. But, he wasn't afraid.

"I've been in the war. The war didn't kill me, Eureka won't kill me," he said about his mentality.

Chin had to work 15- to 16-hour days at first since the labor union told him he could only hire one Chinese man at a time to help out.

Chin ultimately found that he had kind patrons, and his business flourished.

He said people would tell him he was courageous.

"They'd say, 'I got to hand it to you,'" he said.

Since he opened the Canton Cafe, the now retired restaurateur has owned a total of three Chinese restaurants in Eureka, including his namesake, Chin's Cafe, at the south end of Broadway.

CHIN'S

FROM A1

On a recent lunch at Chin's Cafe, he sat with his wife, Mary Chin, 77, and his youngest son, Don Chin, at the same table where Don Chin once celebrated a young birthday.

"It still looks the same," Don Chin said about the restaurant's decor.

The diner-style cafe was converted from a motel and features decorative Chinese hangings, as well as large black beams running across the ceiling made of knotty pine that Mary Chin said she is still quite fond of.

When Ben Chin retired in 1990, all the restaurants were passed down from family member to family member until eight years ago when they were sold to some family friends from New York, who still run them today.

He said he still dreams about work sometimes. Mary Chin poured tea expertly while they waited for their food.

"That's why I married her," Ben Chin said, joking. Ben Chin had gone to Hong Kong looking for a wife in 1962, when he met Mary.

"She came in and poured the tea for everybody, and I said, 'She's it,'" he said, joking



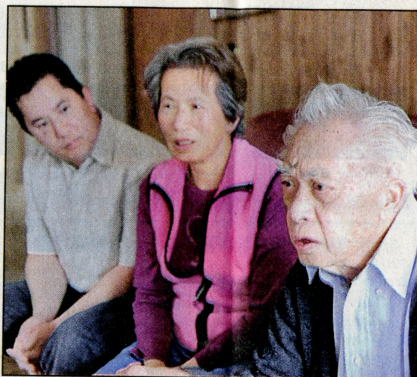
JOSE QUEZADA/FOR THE TIMES-STANDARD

Nathan and Alice Huang have managed and owned Chin's Cafe for the last eight years, remaining friends with Ben and Mary Chin.

that he was looking for a waitress to work at his restaurant.

"I was willing to work hard," Mary Chin said, with a sweet smile that matched her friendly disposition. The couple dated for three weeks before getting married. She came to the United States later that winter, and said it was strange to be a Chinese woman in Eureka back then, because there were virtually none.

"People would ask me to come outside so the children could look at me because they had never seen a Chinese woman before," she recalled. Together, they built a life in



JOSE QUEZADA/FOR THE TIMES-STANDARD

Ben Chin recalls his early days in Humboldt County with his wife Mary Chin, center, and son Don Chin listening.

Eureka, managing their business and raising four children. The Chins have 11 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

Don Chin said he had heard his father's story when he was growing up but didn't realize the significance of it.

"I don't think I really appreciated it until I got older," he said, adding that people often knew about the restaurant and enjoyed eating there. His father was always generous with his time, Don Chin said, doing fundraisers and holding ben-

efits for his school.

He said growing up he experienced some racism — racial slurs and name-calling — but for the most part had a good childhood.

Ben and Mary Chin mostly remember the kindness of their patrons and all the friends they've made over the years.

"I'm glad now that I came to Humboldt County. I have



THE TIMES-STANDARD FILE

Ben and Mary Chin are pictured in 1963 at the waterfront during the first few months of Mary Chin's arrival in Humboldt County.

lots of important friends," Ben Chin said, adding that all the "big shots" used to come by and have coffee.

Despite all the resistance and discrimination he encountered over more than half a century, he still adheres to the same ideals as he did then — work hard and be a good citizen.

He estimates that there are between 400 to 500 Chinese

people living in the area now, with 10 Chinese restaurants. Although many see the expulsion incident as an ugly reminder of a violent and racist past, the Chins see it as a reminder to be kind to one another.

Ben and Mary Chin said they hope people take what happened in the past as a lesson for everyone to be good citizens and to not fight among themselves.

Alice and Nathan Huang, the couple who now owns Chin's Cafe, echo those sentiments. They moved to Eureka in 2001.

Alice Huang said the family enjoys living in Eureka and being a part of the community. They credit the Chins not only for their kindness and continual moral support, but also for their legacy. "The people who live here, they know about the (Chins' history)," she said.

As they finished their meal, and the last of their tea, the group at the table dispersed.

"I started something, huh?" Ben Chin remarked.

Donna Tam can be reached at 441-0532 or dtam@times-standard.com.

BAKER: He'll appear in Weaverville court Tuesday

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The Vagaries of Family Survival

Traveling tales along the river

By André Cramblit

newsroom@northcoastjournal.com

One of my favorite purveyors of family accounts was my great aunt Violet's treasured cousin Ramona. Back in the days of her spritely late 80s (she passed away when she was 97), I would pick her up from her home in Eureka (sometimes with little or no notice) and take her to visit Auntie Vi out in Orleans. In her youth, this trek by trail and ferry crossings would take several days. She and I would make the same trip in a mere two hours. Her eyes dimmed by cataracts and body ravaged by arthritis, she would still twinkle with mirth as she entranced me with stories drug up from her eidetic memory.

After an uninterrupted yet invaluable lecture of 45 minutes, she would take a deep breath and slyly say, "Now, let me tell you something." She would then proceed with another lengthy session of lessons to be taught — humorous narrations and deeply personal memories that I was honored to share with her. Ramona would talk of when she was sent to a distant boarding school. She told me of how her brother was forced to ride on the running board, desperately clinging to the car that was whisking them from Orick, where they had hiked down to from outside of Somes Bar, to Crescent City on their way to a train station that would relocate them from their homeland and families for several years.

She didn't relay any of this with remorse or sadness. It was just her matter-of-fact manner, serenely understating the impact this journey into a foreign world light years

from the village of her youth would have upon her and, in turn, the resulting ramifications for her family. Those of us who were not forced to go to boarding school must remember the struggles our elders survived to return home to keep our people going. The ripple effects have long lasting repercussions, concentric rings moving outward in the grand scheme of things. In Western philosophical constructs, this is posited by Carl Jung as the collective unconscious. The more pertinent postulation in a Native context is the concept of inter-generational trauma and the related PTSD as espoused by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart. Also called historical trauma, these scars are the result of genocide, racism, displacement and alienation from our traditional culture. Psychologist Kathleen Brown-Rice defines this phenomenon: "Native Americans are experiencing historical loss symptoms (e.g., depression, substance dependence, diabetes, dysfunctional parenting, unemployment) as a result of the cross-generational transmission of trauma from historical losses (e.g., loss of population, land and culture)."

Ramona was a great teller of tales and I am saddened that I was to hear but a few in our flights of fancy up river. Another of her stories that stays strong in my memory is a retelling of what should have been a routine trip along the Salmon River. "Routine" in this instance is highly subjective, as the remote, rocky trails are still harrowingly perched between steep drop-offs to the river and the mountainside ready

to slough off tons of dirt and rocks at any given moment.

When only 15 years old, my great grandfather Bob Johnny was sent to the small trading post 8 miles distant. He was supposed to pick up a stock of sundry supplies for his family larder. Hearing a noise, he climbed up a tree to see what or who was coming up behind him. The only tree he could find was a madrone with its meager vegetation; this shabby hiding place would have to do. When he was concealed as best as possible, given the scant foliage, he could see over the cliff, down to a river bar that held a Chinese mining camp where two Asian prospectors were hard at work.

Up in the tree, Grandfather Bob spied two drunken *uyúnyun apxanntinihich* (crazy people with kind of a wide hat — the Karuk word for "white man"), singing loudly in a slurred melody slinking along the path. When they got to the trail that went down the bank to the mining camp, they dismounted, went down to the river, confronted and summarily killed the miners after cutting off their queues, or long braids. This was a barbarous act of great humiliation as the braids signified allegiance to their homeland.

My grandfather watched the braids and the two bodies disappear down the rapids and around the bend. The murderous pair then poked around the camp, looted what valuables they could find, took a triumphant piss, remounted their horses and went on their merry way. Bob waited a good amount of time before climbing

down out of the tree and scooting off home to the relative safety of his village.

It is amazing that the life of entire future generations of family can be that tenuous. I am only here today because my great grandfather was prescient enough to take precautions when he felt alarmed about something unknown coming his way. Our entire family tree could have been torn asunder into so much firewood — like those of the two murdered men — if young master Johnny had not harkened to his Spidey senses. Its rippling effects are not dissimilar to how the experience of the matriarch of a large clan being sent off to boarding school had a trickle down impact on her descending brood.

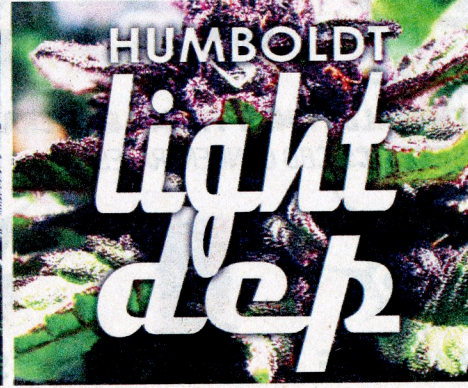
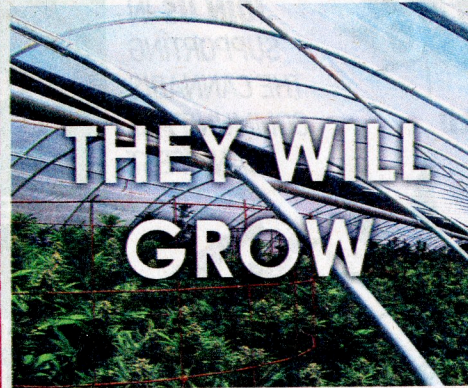
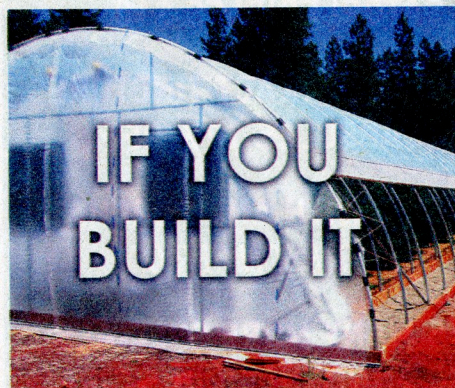
I have said it before and undoubtedly will say it again, truly all things are connected.

No matter your ethnic identity, take the time to seek out the Ramonas of your people. Ask them about what they can remember of their youth and your family history. You will come away with new knowledge that helps you make sense of your place in this world full of crazy people with those wide hats. Share what you know with your children, nieces, nephews and younger cousins so they, too, can learn about what makes them connected to your bloodline as they make their own travels and travails through life.

Just my two dentalias worth. ●

André Cramblit is a Karuk tribal member from the Klamath and Salmon rivers in northwest California, and the Health Promotions and Education Manager for United Indian Health Services, Inc. He lives with his wife Wendy and son Kyle, and still warily travels the trails of Northwestern California.

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