

The only ethnic group in United States history to have been specifically denied entrance to the country, the Chinese were prohibited by law to testify in court, to own property, to vote, to have families join them, to marry non-Chinese and to work in many ordinary jobs. Silver Reef's *celestials* faced slightly different challenges than they had in other western mining camps.

### **Celestials and Yankees.....The Contrast.**

One of the missionaries in China shows up the following "they's" and "we's":

The Chinese parents select the wives for their sons, and decide whom their daughters shall marry. Their badge of mourning is white, and their funeral cards are written with blue ink. They mourn for the dead by proxy, and select a burying place for the departed by the aid of one who makes that his profession. We read horizontally; they perpendicularly. We read from left to right; they from right to left. We uncover the head as a mark of respect; they put on their caps. We blackball our boots; they whitewash theirs. We compress the waist; they the feet. We give the place of honor on the right; they on the left. We speak of north-west; they of west-north. We say the needle of the compass points north; they to the south. We shake the hand of a friend in salutation; they shake their own.— We locate the understanding in the brain; they in the belly.

Our officials designate their office or rank by a star on the breast or epaulettes on their shoulders; they by a button on the apex of their caps. We page our books on the top; they on the margin. We print on both sides of the leaf; they upon one. We place our foot-notes at the bottom of the page; they at the top of it. We mark the title of a book on the back of the binding; they on the margin of the leaf. In our libraries, we set our volumes up; they lay theirs down; we keep our wives in the parlor; they keep theirs in the kitchen. We put our daughters to school; they put theirs to service. We propel our canal boats by horses and steam; they pull theirs by men. We take our produce to market by railroad; they take theirs on men's shoulders. We saw lumber and grind flour by steam and water-power; they do it by human muscle. We turn a thousand spindles and fly a hundred shuttles without a single hand to propel; they employ a hand for each. We print by power presses and metal types; they on wooden blocks with a hand-brush. We worship God; they offer incense to the devil.

*April 4, 1860 Deseret News*

Chinese immigrants began to appear in California during the Gold Rush, more than a decade before they were conscripted for work on the Central Pacific railroad. They were very different from other immigrant groups. Those differences are contrasted in this 1860 Deseret News publication.

In 1862, when the Civil War was raging, the Republican-controlled Congress passed legislation to prevent southern plantation owners from replacing their slaves with Chinese "coolies", unfree indentured laborers.

*An Act to Prohibit the Coolie Trade in American Vessels (1862)*



*April 15, 1870, Deseret News*

**A STRANGE STORY.**—The Californians have been charged with great inhumanity to the "Celestials," as the Chinese are called. These charges are doubtless true to some extent, as they have been made chiefly by their own press; but however that may be, the Chinese enjoy far more toleration there than the nation at large seems inclined to accord to the people of Utah. Not only are they permitted to practice the rites of their idolatrous religion unmolested, but even to put to death their own people, regardless of the laws of this country, as the following from the *Call*, of the 14th inst., goes to show:

Despite the inhuman mistreatment the Chinese were subjected to, some felt they enjoyed more tolerance in the practice of their idolatrous religion, than Utah's Mormons had received for their practice of polygamy.

*January 24, 1877 Salt Lake Herald Republican*

**SILVER REEF CITY**  
is at present the great centennial show of our camp. It is quite a city; has a big hotel, several large, first-class restaurants, general stores, hardware store, groceries, three meat markets, a dozen saloons, shops of all kinds, about fifty Chinamen and women, barber shops, several assay offices, Wells, Fargo & Co.'s express, paint shops, billiard halls, fast women establishments, gamblers and all the hereditaments of a western town with full complement of "modern civilization."

**BONANZA CITY**  
adjoins it and is also fast improving. It has corrals, stores, saloons and many other institutions, and about divides the Chinese persuasion with its neighbor. Its location is the best, and will make a pleasant place for a town. These places are about two miles from

In 1877, there were about fifty Chinese in Silver Reef and another forty or so in Bonanza City. Each had its own chintown. Some work done by "celestials" in other mining camps was not available to them here. Mormon girls waited on tables. Mormon farmers raised vegetables, fruit, wine, poultry, eggs and other foodstuffs. The Chinese could not work in the mines, mills or prospecting.

Chinatowns were crowded with wooden shanties, laundries, opium dens, rooming houses for bachelors (ratio of men to women was 20 to 1), brightly colored lanterns, silk pennants and frequent firework displays.



*January 25, 1878 Salt Lake Herald Republican*

The house committee on education and labor on Thursday heard arguments by Page, Loring, Horace Davis and Luttrell on the question of the Chinese immigration; they agreed to meet again next Monday, to hear further argument. The speeches were wholly opposed to Mongolian immigration and suffrage to the Celestials now here, who in twenty-eight years had failed to assimilate with the American people.



OUR SILVER REEF correspondent tells of the arrest of a Chinese woman on the charge of murdering her infant, the mother excusing the crime on the ground that the child "was a girl and of no value." The evidence of her guilt being insufficient to warrant the holding of the woman for trial, the justice discharged her, first imposing a fine of ten dollars. If the defendant were anything but a heathen, people would very naturally inquire why she had been fined at all. If she were guilty of the crime charged, mulcting her in ten dollars would hardly be deemed as satisfying the ends of justice, and if not guilty, the law, as ordinarily interpreted, would decree her discharge. However, as the woman is simply one of a hated race, perhaps the Silver Reef law is all right—a just punishment on general principles. If she didn't know any better than to kill her babe, she, at least, had no business to be a Chinese woman.

*October 19, 1878 Salt Lake Herald Republican*

In 1878, a Silver Reef justice fined a Chinese woman ten dollars for killing her newborn baby girl. The crime was forgiven because she was a heathen of a hated race, and didn't know any better.

*July 12, 1879 Ogden Junction*

About 9 o'clock on Wednesday evening a fire was discovered in the Chinese quarter of Silver Reef, which consumed several wash houses and other buildings occupied by the Chinese. A light southwest wind was blowing at the time, and the remaining portion of the town narrowly escaped destruction. The fire is believed to have been of incendiary origin. The loss is estimated at \$5,000. This is the third large fire that has visited Silver Reef within a short time, and a general feeling of insecurity prevails throughout the camp.

*December 16, 1881*  
*The (San Francisco) Wasp*

Many newspapers of the period published cartoons that grouped childlike caricatures of the *Chinese* question, the *Indian* question and the *Mormon* question in Columbia's lap. Three troublesome children that couldn't or wouldn't behave for their mother country.

Harsh political remedies were proposed to resolve each question. In 1876, the national platforms of Republicans and Democrats singled out "Mongolian" immigration as a problem. In 1879, California revised its constitution to limit the ownership of land to aliens of "the white race or of African descent."

United States President Ulysses S. Grant visited China in 1879. Grant acknowledged that he was "ready to admit that the Chinese have been of great service to our country. I do not know what the Pacific coast would be without them. They came to our aid at the time when their aid was invaluable" in building the West's infrastructure. He also expressed skepticism about anti-immigrant workers who claimed California was "overstocked" with Chinese labor, Grant remarked that "I rather suspect that many generations must pass before so great an empire as California would have too much labor."

Grant's biggest concern was that the Chinese came to America under circumstances which made them slaves, and not of their own free will. They didn't come with their wives and children. They didn't come to stay. The labor wasn't their own, but the property of capitalists.



President Grant told the Chinese emperor, "We had slavery some years since, and we only freed ourselves from slavery at the cost of a dreadful war. Having made those sacrifices to suppress slavery in one form, we do not feel like encouraging it in another."



*Chinese Exhibit at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition 1876*

*The Chinese Question: Thomas Nast, 1881*

Thomas Nast's political cartoon summarizes the justifications used to dehumanize Chinese labor. Columbia (the US government) is his only protector.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the first significant law restricting immigration into the United States. It also prevented those already here from becoming citizens.

Also in 1882, the Edmunds Act became law. Polygamy became a felony in all federal territories and unlawful cohabitation was a misdemeanor. Mormons who believed in plural marriage were prohibited from voting, holding public office, serving on juries or becoming citizens.

Vermont's Senator Edmunds was heavily involved with both pieces of legislation, as well as the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson.



*May 6, 1882 Silver Reef Miner*

The general feeling in Silver Reef in 1882 was that the heathen Chinese, the savage Indians (and also the barbaric Mormons) were threats to civilization and prosperity.

EASTERN sentimentality on the Chinese question is of the same kind as Eastern sentimentality on the Indian question. It will do very well for people who never had anything to do with the barbarians of either race; but it is the sheerest kind of nonsense when applied to actual surroundings as we have them in the West. If there is any good in either we have been unable to find it out, but we rather like the idea of a Chinese colony and an Indian reservation in Massachusetts and other Eastern States.