San Francisco's Chinatown

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Introduction

"The biggest Chinatown outside of Asia. Where 30,000 people are crowded into a few blocks, so they can attract tourists and disease. Chinatown. Beloved indulgently and condescendingly by the rest of San Francisco - as long as its inhabitants stay in their own places and make no attempt to cross the invisible boundaries into the 'white' city ... Strange little transplanted world of bald-headed women who still wear the costume of their forefather, of 'sharp university graduates who want something better than their fathers got, of bright-eyed children who play the dank alleys and somehow remain charming and flower like.

"Contrast, confusion, conflicts. Neon and chromium fronts on buildings that reek of the ages inside. A million dollars' worth of oriental treasures in a 'Family Association' meeting room, opening onto a balcony that overlooks flat rooftops covered with drying fish. Phony pagoda corners on houses, a delight to the tourist but deplored by the young Chinese architects who want to see their section modernized as long as they are restricted to it." 1

Chinese, picturesque balconies and pediments, restaurants and curio shops. These are artifacts of the particular conditions of its historical development that led to the creation of a hybrid social structure that in turn gave rise to a special physical environment.

The physical fabric of San Francisco's Chinatown was influenced by the demographic structure of Chinese American immigration and the discrimination. The immigrants were predominantly single males in search of employment and wealth. A series of Anti-Chinese Exclusion Acts beginning in 1882, which remained in force until World War Two, froze
the Chinese American population in the mode of newly arrived immigrants for more than 70 years. The patterns of daily life and the social organizations continued to dominate the Chinese American community. The dialect, district, and surname associations, which had been founded in the nineteenth century, became an interlocking network of institutions that came to dominate Chinatown life.

Discriminatory rental policies kept them confined to a small area at the western edge of the central business district. The Chinese were barred from owning property by the State of California and had to slowly adapt the existing urban fabric to better serve their needs. The resulting landscape adapted standard American buildings to better serve the requirements of a hybrid immigrant culture. Crowded residential hotels occupied every space not already taken by the associations, temples, shops, small factories, brothels, gambling houses, and theaters.

The 1906 Earthquake and Fire provided the Chinese with an opportunity to more closely shape Chinatown to their needs. New decorative treatments graced the building occupied by associations, and some commercial buildings attempted a Sinocized appearance. The rebuilding focused on reinforcing the established social hierarchy of associations, and towards capturing more of the tourist trade. Christian churches and missions were constructed around the edges to serve and convert the community.

After World War Two families began moving to residential areas leaving Chinatown into a home for new immigrants and the elderly. New buildings inspired by the Modern Movement began to visually fragment the physical fabric. The expansion of the Financial District and rising property values threaten the continued existence of the community.

Discrimination as a force in molding the Chinese American subculture is very important. Discrimination and subculture did not act as independent entities. On the contrary, discrimination had a major influence upon the shaping of this group’s social structure, outlook and patterns of daily life. It was the interaction between cultural heritage and discrimination that shaped the Chinatown landscape into a unique physical setting within the fabric of the city.
Discrimination had a major impact on the development of the Chinese American community. Discrimination block assimilation into American life and drove Chinese Americans to seek protection and security in the conservation of the institutions and traditions that had been established by the first generations of immigrants. This generated a physical environment that was distinctly Chinese American. Chinatown often has been referred to as an "Oriental" city. Those qualities that gave it its special character were cultural traits that had been imported from China, and represented elements directly borrowed from an unchanging age old culture. To understand the physical setting one must look at the social history that generated it. Discrimination combined with the conservative forces within the Chinese American community. Together they generated and maintained a subcultural landscape for single male immigrants. An urban landscape one would normally associate with recent immigrants surveyed into the twentieth century, and continue to dominate the appearance and character of Chinatown. What commonly had been assumed to be the result of direct cultural transmission from China to North American was actually a new subcultural landscape created in response to the specific conditions imposed by the North American context.

In the core of Chinatown, there are only 1.91 acres of public open space to serve an estimated population of over 40,000 residents. The problem is further exacerbated by the socio-economic and language barriers of a Chinatown population which lacks the mobility and means to maximize surrounding recreational areas outside the neighborhood. Many of the residents of community work long hours, live on fixed incomes, and are non-English-speaking. These factors constrict the mobility of a portion of the population. How they can live better in American is a big problem to many Chinese people.
RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA:

Historical data are drawn from literature, maps and photographs. Contemporary data derive from literature, photography I will take myself in San Francisco's Chinatown and from a collection of interviews with people who lived in Chinatown.

I spent one summer vacation and one semester in San Francisco. I got a lot of historical data (nineteenth century California newspapers, congressional records, pamphlets, diaries etc.) from the Library of the Environment College, Bancroft library at the University of California at Berkeley and San Francisco Public Library. The City Hall of San Francisco archives also house valuable data.

I took a lot of photography about the architecture in San Francisco's Chinatown and open spaces in Chinatown such as the Portsmouth Square.

As we known, the interviews can be the defining characteristics and interrelationships of different generations and social groups in Chinatown such as the elderly people, the "establishment," immigrants, shopkeepers, male workers, women and the youth. By talking to people from all the generations present in the community, I was able to trace the process of the San Francisco's Chinatown's historical development from at least the beginning of the century on. Also I perceived in which economic position and social background affected and changed people's lives. By including autobiographical questions along with certain questions on distinctive features of Chinatown (participation in its complex institutional life, perception of the non-Chinese society outside) I tried to build an objective picture of Chinatown society as a whole, based on the way in which different statements reinforced or conflicted with each other. The method of interviewing I relied on is formal questionnaires and informal untapped conversations.
CHINATOWN: 

The Historical Background of Chinese Community in San Francisco

In 1849, San Francisco grew with the speed of an "instant city". A population of male adventurers swarmed into San Francisco either on their way to the gold fields of California, or in search of enterprises that could tap the wealth of a boom economy. They came from all parts of the America and from other parts of the world including Europe, Australia and Asia. The Chinese immigrants of 1849 and 1850 made up a part of the adventurers in search of wealth rather than permanent settlement. San Francisco was known to the Chinese as the first port of Gold Mountain.

By the turn of the century the Chinese American community occupied three sides of Portsmouth Square - one of the oldest commercial districts in San Francisco. It maintained the highest level of homogeneity of any ethnic neighborhoods and soon was noted for its unique character. This distinctly Chinese American community resulted from the interaction of a Chinese heritage with the particular conditions posed by the North American context. To understand what made the special of the community, one must examine the heritage of the Chinese immigrants.
The Heritage of the Chinese:

People from the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong Province represented the majority of Chinese immigrants to North America in the nineteenth century. In China, Guangdong Province contained a dialect group who represented only 5% of total population. Due to its location in the extreme south, Guangdong Province had served as the center of trade with Southeast Asia and later with Europe and America.

Traditionally the Cantonese people self-consciously viewed themselves as different and special. The people of the other provinces also viewed the Cantonese as different.

"Chinese from other provinces often stressed the uniqueness of the Cantonese. They were considered uncommonly bellicose, and they were often looked down upon serpentine Yeh-man (savage southern barbarians) whose habits were bizarre and uncouth. ... It is not uncommon to find articles in twentieth century magazines written by people from Guangdong who claim that their province is the most Chinese of all areas. While the rest of China was sullied by barbarian Mongol and Manchu invasions, Guangdong remained 'pure.' The family, which is the basis of Chinese culture, is stronger there than anywhere else." ¹

The degenerating situation in Guangdong Province during the nineteenth century could be explained by population pressures. At one time government officials were posted to Guangdong Province as a form of punishment. This province had been a sparsely populated frontier of China for a long time. But at the end of the eighteenth century it became overcrowded. By 1850 it had become one of the most densely populated provinces in China. However, much of the province was hilly and mountainous leaving a limited area of good agricultural land. The increases in population, and the stagnation in agricultural technology led to increasing peasant impoverishment and starvation which in turn led to social instability.

¹ Wakeman, Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China, 1829-1871 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966) p.57
The mid-nineteenth century was a period of internal strife in China. Some of the rebels and members of outlawed secret societies in Guangdong fled from Guangdong to San Francisco.

The political disorder and the general impoverishment of the people in China during the nineteenth century drove many people overseas. The discovery of gold in the Sacramento Valley in 1848 and the demand for cheap labor to build the Pacific railroad were two of the most important factors that attracted Chinese immigrants to the United States.

The Chinese Came to San Francisco:

There was no official record of when the first Chinese settlement arrived in San Francisco. The first report of Chinese invasion of San Francisco and California began in the Spring of 1848, when three Chinese disembarked from the American brig "Eagle" and vanished into the interior. The following year 323 were reported and in 1850 another 450 Chinese arrived in San Francisco.

The California gold rush diverted some of the Cantonese migration to California, and the port of entry for those headed for the gold fields was San Francisco. The immigrants came from a limited number of districts of Guangdong Province. The majority came from the area in and around the Pearl River Delta, and a few from near the northern Guangdong port Swatow. As many as 95% of the early Chinese immigrants to California came from only eight districts (roughly equivalent to counties) of Guangdong Province, and the immigrants from these districts continued to represent about 90% of the Chinese population of California in the twentieth century.

The immigrants could be divided roughly into four groups based upon ethnic and dialect differences. The largest group were the Sze Yup representing the four districts of Yanping, Kaiping, Taishan, and Xinhui. The immigrants from these districts constituted the majority of immigrants. These districts were to the south of the provincial capital at the edge of the Pearl River Delta where the land became more broken up by hills, and the
The immigrants from the district of Chungshan (Zhongshan) formed the second largest group. The district bordered the west side of the Pearl River Estuary and the Portuguese colony of Macao.

The third largest group was the immigrants from Sam Yup which included the districts of Namhoi (Nanhai), Punyu (Panyu), and Shuntak (Shunde). These districts bordered the provincial capital, Canton (Guangzhou). The people of these districts were more likely to have been familiar with trade and commerce, and had knowledge of foreign lands and peoples. They
The third largest group was the immigrants from Sam Yup which included the districts of Namhoi (Nanhai), Punyu (Panyu), and Shuntak (Shunde). These districts bordered the provincial capital, Canton (Guangzhou). The people of these districts were more likely to have been familiar with trade and commerce, and had knowledge of foreign lands and peoples. They constituted less than twenty percent of the total Chinese population in California.

The fourth group, which formed about six percent of the immigrant population during the 1860s, was Hakka. They established separate settlements scattered throughout Guangdong Province. The Hakka brought with them their own subculture and their own dialect which was unintelligible to the Cantonese. In California, they probably remained at about five percent or less of the Chinese population.

In the early gold rush town of San Francisco, there was no mention of the formation of a Chinese community in the first or second year. This may have been because of the small size of the Chinese community and the transient character of the population. Also, either there was not any strict segregation of ethnic groups in the small boom towns, or conditions were so fluid that the locations for various groups tended to shift rapidly. According to the census in 1850, 92% of the population of the California State was male. In 1852, the San Francisco census placed the male portion of the white population at 83%.  

Many of the Chinese, who arrived in San Francisco, remained there and did not strike out for the gold fields. San Francisco quickly became the metropolis for the Chinese immigrants due to its position on the line of communication and transportation between the inhabited areas of the West Coast and China.

The Emergence of Chinese Associations:

Within two years of their arrival in, the Chinese formed the first of what was later to become an elaborate interlocking structure of associations. The social structure that emerged was a natural outgrowth of their cultural heritage and was meant to support as much of their traditional patterns of daily life as possible within the conditions posed by California. These institutions also had their origins in China.

The idea of institutions within the local community was derived from the role of informal organizations in local governance in Chinese society.

"The central Chinese government maintained an infrastructure that extended from the capital out to the provinces and down to the level of district magistrates. At that point the formal government ended and connection of government to the people of the district depended upon the informal relationships established between the magistrate and the local notables and district organizations." 3

At the local level, the central government had to act through the existing local institutions to implement its policies. And for the people, the local institutions were the only possible buffers between them and the central government. The leaders of the local community dominated the organizations that acted as intermediaries between the government and the community. It was an easy translation from the extra-legal mechanisms of local control in China to a notion of quasi-governmental structure for the Chinese American community in San Francisco.

The first association to be established in San Francisco was the Kong Chow Association (literally meaning the Pearl River Delta) in 1850 to represent the interests of six of the seventy-two districts that composed Guangdong Province. At first the Kong Chow Association was formed to represent the immigrants from Guangdong. But soon it started to fracture into separate dialect and district associations (Hui Kuan) that represented more homogeneous memberships. By the end of 1851 Kong Chow Association split into two independent associations. With the rapid growth in Chinese immigrant population in San Francisco, by the end of 1852 there were five separate Hui Kuan. And by the 1890s, there were eight independent Hui
Kuan to represent the Guangdong immigrants. The Hui Kuan offered their members a cultural identity in an organization. It was made up of ethnically homogeneous members who share a common dialect, local norms and values.

As a group, the Hui Kuan represented almost all of the Chinese in the United States, and served as the basis for a social-political structure for the Chinese community. With the fissioning process, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association was created by five of the Hui Kuan in 1862. This association (later known as the Six Companies) became the central coordinating body and the spokesman for the Chinese community.

The growth of the immigrant population during the 1860s and 70s made it possible to create the organization based on specialized activities that the smaller Chinese population of the early 1850s could not support. Also the longer the Chinese community existed, the more elaborate the relationship became between individuals and groups within the Chinese community. Some of the new organizations represented a more intimate selection of members than was previously possible within the more all-inclusive Hui Kuan. Organizations emerged to fulfill roles which the hui kuan and the Six Companies did not deal.

A number of clan associations were formed based on common lineage or lineages. The emergence of this kind of association was strengthened by the nature of Chinese immigration. It was common for new immigrants to follow established paths created by relatives or village members that had already made the journey to the United States. The Italian community of San Francisco did the same pattern of settlement. Most clan associations expanded beyond just the membership of a particular lineage to include all immigrants with the same surname within a dialect group. The Chinese commonly believed that at some time in the beginnings of Chinese history there were common ancestors for each of the Chinese surnames. Since among the Chinese there were relatively few surnames, it was possible for the association based on the more common surnames. The member of a clan association could share the intimacy, trust and security afforded by an actual or even a symbolic extended family structure. When a clan association expanded into a surname association, an actual lineage bond
remained with at least a portion of the membership and a symbolic sense of unity with a "family" maintained with the rest of the membership. Such organization could offer its members a number of services that might parallel some of the activities of the hui kuan.

"Clan officials established hostleries for their kinsmen, and the clan Association became a kind of immigrant and society providing food, shelter, employment, protection and advice. The clans further served to remind the sojourner of his ties to village and family in China, and in the absence of the original lineal authorities, assumed a role in loco prentis. In some instances clans obtained a monopoly over some trades or professions in Chinatown and effectively resisted encroachments on these monopolies by ambitious Chinese from other clans." 4

Another collection of associations were known as tongs. A tong merely refereed to an organization that offered mutual-aid, a place to meet and "exchange social amenities." These associations were often referred to as either "fighting tongs" or "highbinder societies." Tongs might be associations established by members of a secret society, a group that felt disenfranchised from either district and or surname associations, a special purpose group, or a service branch of one of the established community associations.

Over the last half of the nineteenth century, a complex network of interrelated associations grew up to serve the various needs of the Chinese community in San Francisco and the United States. The activities and the membership of organizations overlapped binding the Chinese community together through a process bonds and relationships which permeated every level of the social structure. The extensive overlapping could be either a blessing or a disaster. The network of interlocking bonds and relationships knit the community together which could aid members in finding help from diverse sources, but when trouble erupted between two organizations a struggle could rapidly escalate and engulf the whole community.
The Chinese and Discrimination:

The discrimination experienced by the Chinese in California fostered among them a dependence upon their own community for employment, social interaction, and protection against some of the hurts resulting from the racism they experienced. The central role and elaboration of the Chinese American social structure, its aberrations, the slow rate of assimilation, and the continuation of a skewed demographic structure can be attributed as much or more to discrimination against the Chinese as to any internal tendencies within the Chinese American immigrant community.

Hostility and discrimination:

In California, hostility towards the Chinese became overt in the gold fields, and took the forms of discrimination, violence and legal action.\(^5\)

Because of the discovery of gold, a great number of adventurers migrated to California. As the number of gold seekers increased, the gold sites became crowded and played out. Conflicts based on ethnicity and race took hold among the different communities. One by one the "non-American" group were driven out. The Chinese were the main victims. Prohibitions against the holding of claims by Asiatic were widespread, and probably in most districts Chinese were ousted regularly or sporadically from their digging.\(^6\)

The conditions of Chinese American became worse and worse. In 1854, the Chinese lost their right to testify in court against whites, which made it all but impossible to convict a white person of a crime against a Chinese person.\(^7\)

The Chinese found themselves ethnically stratified into a narrow band of occupations that were desirable to either White American or European immigrant males. They became the menials of the mining camping, washing clothes and cooking the food for white miners. In essence the Chinese functioned as a servant class. Laundries, restaurants, contract labor and service trades including servants, and employment with the Chinese American community formed the basic range of opportunities allowed to the Chinese. Also the Chinese worked in a number of other
labor-intensive, low paying occupations in the manufacturing industries such as the woolen, textile and clothing industries. They also made up an important portion of the labor force needed to establish agricultural production in California. 

In the late 1860s, the California economy suffered a serious depression that threw many workers out of their jobs. The hard conditions led to the Chinese for the large scale unemployment in the state. At the early time, the Chinese immigrants mainly engaged in mining and working on the railroad. However, they were soon drifted from the mining places and back to the cities. After the finishing of the railroad, a large group of Chinese labors flocked to cities in California competing with the white immigrants. The sudden growth of the Chinese population and the unstable social and economical condition at that time become the main causes of the Anti-Chinese agitation. Hostility to the Chinese increased dramatically during the 1870's with the rise of an anti-Chinese movement centered in San Francisco.

The growing anti-Chinese Movement of the 1870's had significant repercussions in the politics of the state. Much of the anti-Chinese legislation hinged on the inability of the Chinese immigrants to become naturalized citizens. Also much acts of discrimination and hostility also occurred throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. This included ordinances passed by the City of San Francisco to make the life of the Chinese in the city more uncomfortable and to undercut Chinese employment opportunities.

At the national level the hostility to the Chinese resulted in the passage of the 1882 Exclusion Act and its periodic extension and modification until exclusion was made permanent by the 1924 Act.

In 1882, Congress passed the first of a series of Chinese Exclusion Acts blocking Chinese immigration into the United States. The first act cut off the flow of new Chinese immigrants and led to a steady decline in the Chinese American population since the vast majority of the immigrants before 1880s were male. In 1890 the Chinese population was 107,488; by...


1920 the Chinese population in the Continental United States had declined to 61,639. 11

Generally, Cantonese immigrants did not take their wives or families with them when they went aboard in search of employment and wealth because they viewed their stay in the new land as temporary. The Exclusion Acts hit the Chinese community at a time before there was a significant development of families in the United States. These Acts made it very difficult to bring women into the United States from China. The Chinese population in United States at the time of 1882 act was overwhelmingly male. The US. Census of 1880 showed there to be about twenty-one Chinese men for every Chinese Women. 12

Since the ratio of males to females was so imbalance within the Chinese American community, and many of the women were abused as prostitutes and slaves, very few Chinese families were established in the United States. That meant, that the Chinese population of the United States was primarily first generation male immigrants, and that the growth or even the maintenance of the Chinese population at a stable number was dependent on continued immigration as a replacement mechanism for deaths, and emigration.

Hostility towards the Chinese continued throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century in spite of the passage of the Exclusion Act and its extensions. The Chinese population declined in a period of rapid population growth. The discrimination led to a "freezing" of the Chinese American demographic structure in the mode of a first generation immigration group due to the preponderance of males in the population. It remained dominated by "single" first generation males. This kept the Chinese cultural roots of the Chinese American community strong, which in turn kept the community a visible target for hostility and discrimination. 13
The Impact of Discrimination and Hostility:

The first Chinese who came to San Francisco were not confined to any particular street of locality, but within a few years, the Chinese began to father into a distinct colony of their own. There are many reasons for this. One of the most important reasons for the early Chinatown is the nature of the Chinese occupations and business undertakings. They were excluded from skilled occupation by the labor unions and were prohibited by Federal and State laws from participating in mining, civil services, teaching medicine and other professional fields. To mitigate against unfair and discriminatory legislation and employment practices, the Chinese entered fields which were non-competitive with the white population. Those with capital opened and operated small laundries, restaurants, tailor shops and grocery stores and were usually in large metropolitan areas because there was a population base from which to draw customers.

As early as 1849, the Chinese first located in a canvas house on Sacramento Street Kearny and Dupont Street (now called Grant Avenue). After then, increasingly large groups of Chinese immigrants began to settle there. In 1853, partically all the Chinese in San Francisco managed to live within a small territory six blocks in length, running north and south Dupont, from California to Broadway and two blocks wide, from east to west on Sacramento, Clay, Commercial Washington, Jackson, Pacific and Broadway Street, from Kearny to Stockton crossing Dupont, the great Chinese artery, at a right angle. This quarter was then known as "Little China", and its inhabitants as China Boys. It was not until 1860 that San Franciscans began calling the district Chinatown. Then it appeared on the "Official map of Chinatown in San Francisco". Gradually the quarters expanded, so that by 1906 it occupied fifteen blocks, all below Mason Street and North of Sacramento Street.

The hostility and discrimination had an impact on the social structure of Chinese community. The Chinese American community became to rely on its own institutions and organizations for support and protection. Discrimination led the Chinese to a greater dependence upon their institution. Other immigrants to San Francisco also established their own organizations, but these organizations tended to become primarily social
activities as the ethnic group settled into the life of the city.\(^{14}\) The number of Chinese American institutions increased in number and came to form a complex social hierarchy that functioned as a quasi-government for the community. Various activities came to be handled by the different organizations.

The Chinese Benevolent Association (the Six Companies) in San Francisco symbolically became the central organization. It took on the roles of protecting and acting as the spokesman for the Chinese in United States. The Six Companies acted as the defender of the community from government actions, tried to lessen the impact of racial discrimination, and acted as the head of Chinatown's quasi-government composed of the organizations of the Chinese community. The Six Companies also arbitrated between disputing groups. When major disputes arose between organizations, groups and individuals, the Six Companies could be called upon to arbitrate the dispute, and tried to defuse any trouble that threatened the stability of the community. "The Six Companies served as a Chamber of Commerce until 1910 witnessing and ratifying the commercial dealings between Chinese."\(^ {15}\)

To some extent the primary associations participated in helping to arrange for passage to San Francisco, and often met the new arrivals at the docks and brought them to a place to stay in Chinatown until the new arrival could find a job. This could often be in a buildings owned or leased by the associations.

Some organizations did labor contracting to industries, such as the railroads and agricultural interests, so that the workers were of ten groups by dialect and worked with people in the same association. Other organizations participated in illicit activities associated with Chinatown entertainment such as gambling, opium, and prostitution.

The memberships of various organizations tended to overlap which added another level of complexity, to the interlocking structure of institutions.

The severe discrimination that the Chinese experienced in California forced an intense dependence upon the institutions of the Chinese community for protection. Unable to fully participate in the general society, the Chinese
turned inward to those institutions they made for themselves. As anti-Chinese feelings increased towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Chinese sought solace and security inside a shrinking circle. Discrimination and segregation compressed the Chinese community, and intensified the aberrations that lurked among the cultural baggage which they had brought with them, or that had developed in the United States. The impact of discrimination and racist hostility acted upon the cultural heritage of the immigrants to generate the Chinese American social order of the late nineteenth century. This social order and the patterns of daily life that it helped to foster shaped Chinatown into a unique landscape.  

Other Settlement in San Francisco:

It was not unusual for an immigrant group to be overwhelmingly male, and to view their stay in the United States as temporary. The Italian and Chinese immigrants to San Francisco shared a similar notion about their stays in the Unites States.

From most of the reports, almost all of the immigrants planned to return to Italy, and their primary goal in going abroad was to make money in order to solve the economic difficulties that they experienced in Italy. Not only did the Italian immigrants views their stays in San Francisco as temporary, they also left their wives in their native country and was hoped to be back as earlier as possible. Throughout the 1870s, Italian women constituted only 10% of all immigrants. By the 1890s the percentage had risen to about 20%.

The attitude that the United States was only a temporary place of residence survived into the twentieth century.

"Probably until the end of the First World War, most Italian considered their residence in the United States only temporary. ... Moreover, about 80% of the Italians who arrived in the United States in 1907 - were between the ages of 16 and 45, and almost all those who were married had left their families in Italy."
It was often only one or two visits to Italy that Italian immigrants finally decided to establish their permanent residence in the United States, and brought their families to the new country.

The difference between the development of Italian community in San Francisco from the Chinese was the level of legal discrimination that each group experienced. After one or more trips back to the old country, many of the Italian immigrants reassessed their intentions and decided to remain in San Francisco. Once the decision was made to settle in the United States, the Italian American men would set about getting their families over to San Francisco. The rising percentage of female Italian immigrants during the 1890s represented the migration of wives and fiancées to join them.

By contrast the Exclusion Acts beginning in 1882 began the process of blocking new Chinese immigration, and each successive act made it all the harder to bring women into the United States from China. Whereas the Italians were allowed to shift from a male community to a family centered community, the Chinese were not.
During the Gold Rush, the San Francisco city was established on a street grid whose dimensions were rudely defined by the Mexican-era settlement around Portsmouth Square. In 1839, a few streets were laid out around the square. In 1847, Jasper O'Farrell conducted a proper survey, correcting the grid, and extending it over a great area of settled land. The original commercial district around Portsmouth Square spread north at first to the area we now call Jackson Square, but very quickly it shifted south towards its present location. As the city grew the commercial district expanded, displacing houses and forming district sub-areas. The city began to fill in the grid. The financial district was settled near the corner of California and Montgomery Streets by the
1860s, warehousing activities were concentrated on the landfill closest to the bay. Retailing, shifted from Portsmouth Square to lower Kearny Street in the 1860s and 1870s, and later spread gradually west to the Union Square. (Fig. 2.1)

The Beginnings of the Chinese Settlement:

The area known as Chinatown, the graveyard at Lone Mountain, and the port of entry (the Pacific Mail Docks) formed the geographical entity that dominated the lives of the Chinese in San Francisco in the years before the Earthquake and fire of 1906. The pattern and order of San Francisco's nineteenth century Chinatown reflected the complex interaction of the community's social structure and discrimination. Racial hostility and discrimination blocked the dispersal of the Chinese population into residential areas, and the growth of the central business district kept Chinatown a highly focused population in a tightly contained area. The Chinese inherited the existing urban fabric and went about making modifications to it to better suit their needs and desires. (Fig. 2.2)

Fig. 2.2
The Chinatown in 1850 and 1860.
Note: Shaded area indicated the Chinese Quarter in 1850. By 1860 the Chinatown had expanded to include the entire area shown.
In the first year, the Chinese settled in different parts of the city depending in part upon employment. Although there had been Chinese in San Francisco since April of 1848, the Chinese population did not become a significant force in shaping the demographic character of the city until 1851. In that year the Chinese began to arrive in larger numbers, including number of Chinese women. By April of the next year possibly 10,000 had landed at San Francisco and the city could count about 3,000 to 4,000 as residents. ¹

"Though individuals of the race reside and carry on business in every quarter of the city, the chief district in which they are located is the upper part of Sacramento street, the whole length of street, and portions various streets adjoining these named. In such places the Chinese are almost the only inhabitants, and the quarter is often called 'Little China'". ² (Fig. 2-3)

It would seen that Chinese businesses tended to cluster in the area that was to become Chinatown. In fact the concentration of Chinese around Sacramento and Dupont aroused the opposition of some who felt that the Chinese ought not to have been allowed to settle in such a favorable location.

"Sacramento Street between Kearny and Dupont, Jackson from Kearny to Stockton, and Dupont Street between Sacramento and Jackson, is now occupied almost entirely by Chinese. They seem to have driven out everything and everybody else, and to have monopolized this portion of the city. Sacramento Street is devoted by them to trade, while the other streets mentioned are filled with low establishments of the vilest description... The houses which they occupy are mere shells and tinder boxes, which could be fired by a single spark... The buildings on Dupont Street are rented to the Chinese, only for the reason that they will pay more than any other tenants. Dupont Street is one of the most desirable in the city for retail stores and family residences, and it seems a pity that so fine a street should be occupied with so much filth and nastiness as Dupont Street now is." ³

The establishment of commercial ventures on Sacramento Street, the movement of laundries into the area around Portsmouth Square, and the tendency of other Chinese to live near shops catering to their needs all helped to make the area to the east of Portsmouth Square and around the intersection of Sacramento and Dupont Streets the core area around which Chinatown formed.
Dupont Street, now Grant Avenue, was a major transportation corridor from Market Street to the north side of the city. This tended to make the east-west streets and the alleys the primary communications paths and places where the daily life of the community was conducted. As the community grew in numbers and the area built up, some alleys became important commercial frontages and a differentiation of activities developed along some of the alleys. Some of the associations located their meeting rooms on an alley rather than along a street. (Fig. 2-4)
The Consolidation:

As the tide of anti-Chinese feelings rose during the 1850s and 60s, there took place a gathering of the Chinese population into the area that became Chinatown. Sometimes the Chinese were forcibly removed from parts of the city. In July 1877 three days of anti-Chinese rioting broke out in the city during which rioters sacked and burned buildings that were occupied by Chinese.

The Chinese associations and businesses located in other areas had to move into Chinatown. While more and more Chinese businesses and organizations moved in, businesses operated by whites and other ethnic groups moved out. As more Chinese settled in this area, all of the white residents moved out, until the population of the eight blocks bounded by Sacramento, Kearny, Pacific and Stockton Streets became overwhelmingly Chinese.
Chinatown found itself in an intermediate zone wedged between the central business district and the edge of the middle class residential areas that formed on the eastern slopes of Russian and Nob Hills. These residential districts began roughly at Stockton Street and moved up the slope of Nob Hill. Chinatown was centrally located making it easy to any part of the emerging central business district, and within reach of the port at Yerba Buena Cove. The Chinese leased space in the existing building stock which was continually being burned down and replaced in the series of fires caused by accidents that struck the core area during the early 1850s. (Fig. 2-5)

For Chinese Americans San Francisco's Chinatown was the "metropolis" that tied the various small communities around western United States together and connected them with their native places back in China. For the Chinese it was the location through which news from China and remittances back to China passed. The various organizations and their affiliations with branches in Chinatown came to either actually or symbolical represent all of the Chinese Americans in the numerous Chinese settlements that popped up around the West.
Architecture and Urban Planning in Chinatown in the Late Nineteenth Century:

By 1887, about 60% of the building stock in the Chinatown area was made up of brick buildings two to four stories high. Many of the wooden buildings were infill structures wedged into the spaces between bricks buildings, or were additions to the brick structures. The pattern was most noticeable on the lots that lined Dupont Street from Pacific to Sacramento. In the small blocks bounded by Dupont, Clay, Washington Streets and Spofford Alley, the site coverage approached 100%. This was equally true for the block bounded by Dupont, Stockton, Washington and Jackson Streets. In these blocks almost the only open spaces were the narrow alleys that gave access to the structures imbedded in the block.

The brick buildings from this period were simple rectangular boxes with no ornament or decoration except for the windows sills. To these simple structures the Chinese added wooden structures to fill up any extra open space within the property line.

Most of the buildings were multi-use. Since the vast majority of the population was single men, and the community had to contain both residential, commercial and industrial uses within a tightly confined community, commercial activities, small factories, entertainment establishments and residential quarters might be found within the confines of one building. If there was space, it was common to have a shop or some commercial activity on the street frontage and occasionally along alleys as well. Behind these might be office space, storage and some residential space for the owner and the employees. Above would be more residential and commercial space. The street frontages tended to be dominated by stores. Space was at a premium so that little space was wasted or left unoccupied. (Fig.2-6)

There was no formal zoning. Various uses were juxtaposed within the same block and within each multi-storied building. For example, drying platforms for a laundry were located along two sides of a small Chinese lumber yard at 741 Pacific Street in 1887 and a brick building with
commercial activities at street level and residential space occupied the third side.

In early days of Chinatown, the district was crowded with flimsy shacks and odorous cellars, which lined dirty narrow streets and alleys. In these dismal surroundings, hundreds of Chinese men, women and children lived in enormous cellars, opening into an underground court into which the inhabitants of the place descended from the street by means of ladders.
This type of habitation, which lacked even the most primitive conforms and conveniences, was sometimes called the Devil's Kitchen, Palace Hotel, Dog Kennel and others. Although white regarded most of the living quarter in Chinatown as pest holes of filth and squalor, no attempt was made to clean them until the bubonic plague scare of 1901, when health officials invaded the district and fumigated it with three hundred pounds of sulphur. Nevertheless, these dismal places were considered superior to the accommodations which the same class of people would not have been able to obtain in China.

There were several reasons for the severe crowding and the poor conditions. First, the vast majority of the buildings in Chinatown were not owned by Chinese. Because of the uncertainty of their future in this country and their restriction from buying land due to non-citizen status, the Chinese tended to invest their money in personal property rather than in land, preferring to take long leases in order to sublet. Only ten of 153 properties listed as within the confines of Chinatown in 1873 were owned by Chinese. Individuals born in the United States of Chinese origin were able to purchase property as were the incorporated Chinese associations. As late as 1904 only 25 of 316 properties within the boundaries of the Chinatown were owned by Chinese. That represented an insignificant amount of property from 7% to 8% Chinese ownership of properties in Chinatown over a thirty-year period. This situation changed very little in the period before the Earthquake and Fire of 1906.

The discriminatory housing practices and the desire of landlords to maximize their profits can also explain the crowding and the poor conditions. Virtually all of the Chinese in San Francisco had to live within the confines of Chinatown. It was impossible for the Chinese to either lease or purchase residential property in any other part of the city due to discriminatory practices. Landlords sought the most intensive use of their properties as possible and did not return capital to their properties for repairs or improvements because it was not necessary to guarantee full occupancy. The Chinese immigrants, who were barred from citizenship and property ownership certainly saw no reason to put their hard earned capital into dwellings they did not and could not own.
The Character of The Business Buildings:

Often the shop fronts could be opened to the street so that produces and other goods might be displayed on hooks and counters along the sidewalk. This was normally the case for shops selling edible goods. (Fig. 2-7) Fish mongers set up their fish cleaning tables on the sidewalk against the front of their shops and from that vantage point conducted their business. This was also a common practice for produce stores, dry goods stores, herbalists, and other commercial enterprises to make use of the standard American commercial frontage with large glass display windows and an entrance that was flush with the line of the sidewalk. Inside one would find a symmetrically disposed shop with the goods for sale on shelves or in cabinets along the long walls. Since space was precious, only one counter along one side or no counter was equally as likely.

Fig. 2-7
The Shop Window In Dupont Street At The End Of The Nineteen Century

At the back of every shop a small shrine was placed to bring the shop and its owner good fortune. In a modest shop or rough and tumble poultry, fish or grocery store the shrine might be a modest niche or table with an image of the deity, candles and an incense holder. In a successful dry goods store or art dealer, one might find a more elaborate altar with a
model of the deity enthroned, silk scrolls framing the setting, and an altar table with a full set of metal ritual objects for incense and offerings.

It was common for the owner of a store or business to live in an apartment over his business or in the back of the business. Similarly at least some of the employees lived in the back of the business. In this way the employee could find a place to stay and eat that minimized expenses, and the owner had the added protection of having employees present in the business even when the shop or business was closed.

The restaurant business became an important element in the economic and social life of the Chinese community. As conditions became more stable and the Chinese population grew, the number of ingredients available to Chinese cooks, and the number of higher quality Chinese restaurants increased.

The interiors of fashionable restaurants were decorated with carved and inlaid panels and carved wood screens imported from Guangdong. The carved screens and panels made use of geometric and abstract patterns as well as flora and fauna, and a variety of birds and beasts, real and imaginary. (Fig. 2-8)
The Character of Entertainment:

The Chinese opera was a very popular form of entertainment that made its way to San Francisco. In 1855 the Shanghai Theater opened on Dupont Street south of Washington Street in a two-story building. A reporter noted the spare nature of the stage in Chinese opera: (Fig. 2-9)

"The stage is a carpeted platform a few feet high, at the back of which there is a door on either side fronting the audience and leading into the green room. A few chairs and tables, and a bench between the doors for the orchestra, complete the furniture of Chinese theater. There are no 'scenes and no drop curtain."  

Chinese opera was a common feature of Chinatown's entertainment world from the 1860s on. New companies would like come to San Francisco for a season or more of performances, and the locations of the performances tended to move around between the theaters in or near Chinatown.

In the 1870s the most popular opera house was the Chinese Theater on the south side of Jackson Street and between Dupont Street and Kearney Street.
Chinese opera was to remain an important form of entertainment for the rest of the nineteenth century.

Other three important forms of diversion in this almost totally male Chinese community were gambling, prostitution and opium smoking.

During the early 1850s, Chinese gambling houses appeared in Sacramento Street near Stockton Street and in large numbers on the east side of Dupont Street. A few gambling houses were clustered at the south end of Bartlett Alley at the edge of a concentration of Chinese brothels.

Since many women were brought to San Francisco under false pretenses (some had expected to find their husbands), or against their will, the brothels were off the streets and along the alleys. Almost all of the Chinese brothels were located at the north end of Chinatown along either Sullivan or Bartlett Alleys; these two alleys accounted for more than three-fourth of all the Chinese brothels.

There were about thirty white brothels at the south end of Chinatown along the 800 block of Sacramento and at the south end of Waverly Place; another half dozen were scattered around other parts of Chinatown.

Opium establishments tended to be located in basements. These spaces must have been dark, dingy and smoke filled places where pleasure was based solely upon a drug induced illusion. The highest concentration was along the west side of Dunecombe Alley which guttered off from the north side of the 700 block of Jackson Street.
The Character of the Association Buildings:

Even the early associations had their offices in various parts of the city. In 1853 the Ning Yung Association was on Broadway, the Yan Wo Association was at 2nd Market, and the Yeong Wo Association had a location on the southern slope of Telegraph Hill. But after the tide of the Anti-Chinese, the Associations that had originally been located in various parts of the city began to move to locations in the developing Chinatown core area.

The Character of Residential Buildings:

There were very few women and extremely few families so that the preeminent form of dwelling was the residential hotel. Spaces were also made available in places of employment and in Association structures. The dwellings that housed the Chinese were simple and a number were prefabricated structures that had been imported from Hong Kong during the early years of Chinese immigration. These structures were about 28 feet square and 12 feet from floor to ceiling. The wooden frame was composed of round timbers that were as straight or crooked as the branches from which they were fashioned. Once the structural frame was assembled, window frames were attached and a covering was put over the frame. Since the population was almost all male, these structures served as bunk houses for single males. The Annals of San Francisco in 1889 noted that, "Their dwellings, some of which are brought in frames direct from China, and erected by themselves, are small and incommodious, though extraordinary numbers somehow contrive to creep into them, and live very comfortably." These structures and the rest of the early physical fabric of Chinatown perished in the series of Great Fires.
The Religions:

Chinese religion had evolved into a highly eclectic system that included ancestor worship, animism, polytheism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. The general tendency was to incorporate part or all of a new religious system rather than to displace old beliefs with new ones. Chinese religion was primarily directed toward the present and the affairs of the living. People were concerned with the gods and the forces of nature precisely because they were believed to have so much of an impact upon one's ability to achieve material happiness and property in life.

There were Chinese temples built or set up in a scattered pattern across Chinatown. They were often sponsored by Associations and could be located in or next to the sponsoring association.

In fact almost all of the temples were affiliated with important organizations in the social structure. It was common in South China to have the local social structure closely intertwined with religious practice, the workings of temples and temple organizations. In San Francisco the first temple was established in cooperation with an important district association. The first Kong Chow Temple may have been built in 1853.

(Fig. 2-10)
"A Chinese Church is to be built on the rear of a lot on the corner of Kearny and Pine Streets. It is to be 12 by 45 feet upon the ground and three stories in height. The designs for the building are by L. Townsend."  

The temple was replaced in 1879 when a new temple was dedicated at 512 Pine Street. It was 17 feet wide 40 feet deep and 49 feet high. A marble sign placed over the entrance announced the "Kong Chow Asylum" in English and Chinese. Two 12 foot high warrior figures inside the entrance stood guard. Lantern lit the main space which contained a ten foot high main altar.

The interior quickly became darkened by the continual smoke from the burning incense giving the altar room the quality of a dark cavern. The post of temple keeper could be quite lucrative. Masters reported in 1892 that the post of temple keeper for the Kong Chow temple was leased out for $13,000 a year.

The Kong Chow temple may have been unique in occupying a whole structure. The norm was to locate a temple on one floor of a building occupied by the Association that took direct responsibility for it. The temple was most commonly located on an upper floor of the building if not the very top floor.

Another of the early temples to be erected in Chinatown was the Tien Hou Temple which was erected around 1852 under the ownership and auspices of the Sam Yup Association. It stood at 125 Waverly Place.

With the exception of special ritual occasions, prayer was an individual matter. An individual would come to seek the advice and intercession of the deities in human events. Offerings, prayer and the use of divination devices, such as divining sticks, constituted the buld of the activity within the confines of the temple. The priest or temple keeper was supported by the sale of incense tapers, candles, and paper offerings and any other devotional apparatus that might be associated with the temple deities.

Altogether there were about a dozen temples scattered throughout Chinatown. Besides the formal temples every association, commercial establishments and dwellings had shrines dedicated to one or more deity...
that helped to protect the organization and helped to guaranty its success in its endeavors. These shrines tended to take the form of a temple altar with a table in front supporting ceremonial objects. In shops the shrine was commonly located at the back of the store symmetrically placed opposite the front door. There one might find the figure of one or more wealth gods who brought well-being and prosperity. It might be as little as a paper image with character signs, and some incense burning before it, or a niche with an image, to full blown altar arrangement with statues of the deities. Paper door gods either painted or in written characters offered protection to a dwelling and its inhabitants from its perch over the doorway. Among the popular gods one might find were Kuan-Kung, the champion of justice, Hsuan Tie Shang Ti, who had conquered the Demon King with his four-edged sword, or Kuan Yin who heard prayers. In cooking areas near the stove was the most likely place to find Tsao-shen, the kitchen god.

11. The discussion of Old St. Mary's relies heavily on Gumina's book, Old St. Mary's Crossroads of the World (San Francisco: Old St. Mary's Paulist Center, N.D.)

The growth of Chinatown brought St. Mary's Cathedral to the edge of the Chinese community. Joseph Sadoc Alemany had served the Catholic Church in San Francisco and worked for the construction of a Cathedral. The site was at the edge of the middle class housing on Nob Hill and close to Portsmouth Square which was the center of the city at the time. In 1853 construction began based on a design by William Crain and Thomas England. The architects were clearly more well versed in the design of the English parish church though, and the resulting building was described as being in the sixteenth century Gothic mode. Stones for the foundation were quarried and cut in China for assembly on the site. The Annals of San Francisco referred to the use of Chinese granite and Chinese workers in the foundation of the Parrot Block which had been erected one year earlier just two blocks away on the northwest corner of California and Montgomery Streets. The body of the Cathedral was done in red brick which was brought around the horn from New England. Local lumber was used.

The Cathedral was the largest building in the city. The design resembled a simple English Perpendicular church without the pinnacles. The site and the selected design left something to be desired. The sloping site worked well with the scale of the building to give it a prominence on the skyline of...
the 1854 city and the corner lot made it possible to view the building as a three dimensional entity. Unfortunately the design made no attempt to relate the entrance and facade to the corner, and the buttressed wall of the west side aisle made not the slightest gesture to the street it overshadowed. The design did everything possible to ignore the slope of the slight as well. Spanish coats of arms decorated the interiors and entrance. Originally a tall steeple had been planned to crown the entrance tower, but it was eliminated due to the danger of earthquakes.

The Character of Public Buildings:

A series of Christian missions appeared at the edges of Chinatown. After Great Britain’s victory over China in the Opium Wars, China was opened to Christian missionaries who devoted years of their lives in an effort to convert the Chinese to Christianity. Some of the returning missionaries decided to continue their work by establishing missions among the Chinese in the United States. San Francisco became the location of intense missionary work. Missions and churches came to dot the edges of Chinatown. Primarily Protestant sects, such as the Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists worked in San Francisco’s Chinatown. The Catholic Church was soon to follow.

Schools were seen as an important element of the missionary effort. The Chinese who sought instruction in English and other subjects to attend or send their children to schools instead of going to the missions to hear the preaching. Schooling was viewed as a way of raising oneself up to the higher culture of the West and bringing one to the true God.

Another important service that the Methodists and Presbyterians provided were sanctuaries for prostitutes and abused women and girls who managed to escape from their owners and tormentors, or were rescued by Mission activists working in co-operation with the police.

The Methodists had added a third floor to their mission specifically as a “Female Department.” There the women were sheltered, given schooling, and opportunity to become Christians.
Presbyterians set up the most famous sanctuary for Chinese women in San Francisco. They set up at 933 Sacramento Street, then moved to 920 Sacramento Street in 1881. The Mission building was a chunky brick building capped by a gabled roof and domed turret at the southeast corner. The severe brick surfaces were accented by heavy window sills and lintels with an arched Romanesque revival entrance and main floor windows.

Although there were educational opportunities offered by a number of the missions, these were limited and many Chinese probably did not become involved until the religious efforts intertwined with the teaching. By 1871, 311 boys and 166 girls under the age of fifteen were estimated to live in Chinatown.

In 1859, in order to avoid the placement of Chinese children in the public schools, the San Francisco school board opened the Chinese school in the Chinatown Presbyterian church at the corner of Sacramento and stockman streets. The space was made available free of charge to the school board. The school was closed by school superintendent James Denman as a doubtful experiment. The arguments against the Chinese ranged from the problem of influencing white children, wasting tax money on the Chinese, to the disinterest of Chinese children in education. In 1874 there were about 2131 school age Chinese children and in 1883 about 2537.

Finally in 1885 the Chinese went to court to gain access to the public schools for their children. Forced to accept Chinese into the school system, the school board segregated them. The Chinese Primary School was opened on April 13, 1885 at Jackson and Powell Streets. The Public School serving Chinatown was in a leased multi-use building with commercial space on the ground floor. It was situated over a grocery store and occupied the two stories above the ground floor. As early as 1893 the Chinese Primary School was moved to Clay Street above Stockton possibly to allow the school to expand to three teachers and another classroom.
Open Spaces:

There was only one open space in Chinatown, and that was Portsmouth Square. It served the community as its park and garden. It was the one open space where one could get a view of the sky and enjoy the grass, flora and fauna. Its popular name was Fah Yuen Gwok (Park Corner) and Brenham Street Became Fah Yuen Gwok Gai (Park Corner Street). 12

Ethnicity and Settlement in San Francisco

The Chinese American population was settled in a community that was more homogeneous than any of the other ethnic communities in San Francisco. Discrimination made it difficult to live outside of Chinatown except for those working and living at a laundry, or as servants in a Caucasian household. Unlike the European ethnic groups, there was very little intermixture of other ethnic groups living within the confines of Chinatown with the possible exception of white prostitutes, who resided in large numbers at the southern end of Chinatown. With the exception of those engaged in specific occupations that demanded residence outside, the majority of Chinese lived within the ghetto, and few other ethnic groups were interspersed among them.

This can be demonstrated by comparing the Irish population to that of the Chinese. Most of the Irish came to San Francisco from urban centers of the eastern United States. In the 1852 census only 5.1% of the Irish reported that they had come directly from Ireland. 13

Although the Irish had faced a great deal of discrimination in the eastern United States, the same was not true for San Francisco. From the beginning the large Irish population was an important factor in elections. The Irish were able to live in any part of the city they wished and could afford. As a result, the Irish population of the city was dispersed and could be found in every ward. For the Irish the drive for home ownership developed rapidly in part due to the rapid equalization of the male to female ratio. The early predominance of Irish males rapidly shifted. By as early as 1860 the imbalance had dropped down to the point at which males represented 53.4% of the Irish population. By 1870 males actually
became a minority making up only 48.7% of the Irish born group. Male composed only 48.2% of the Irish population in 1880. This suggests that the Irish population rapidly shifted from a single male population to a family centered community.

Discrimination in housing, economic and social mobility, and the sex ratio went a long way in explaining why the Irish and the Chinese residential pattern were so different.

The Italians were one of the more important ethnic groups that can be compared with the Chinese. Italians shared a number of similar attitudes towards immigration with the Chinese. But the Italians were allowed to develop along their own path without having to suffer the severe discrimination that the Chinese experienced.

The large scale immigration of Italians did not begin until the 1870's and after. There was a small Italian population by the mid-1850s located in what was then known as the Latin quarter of North Beach. The first Italians settled between Pacific and Clay Streets before the community began to spread out along Dupont (now Grant Avenue) north of Broadway and between Vallejo and Filbert Streets. The area came to be known as Little Italy by the end of the 1850s. In 1860 the Italian community numbered about 400. One of the important factors in their movement to the North Beach area was that it had the lowest rents during the 1860s. Each decade brought an increase in the size of the community: 1621 in 1870, 2491 in 1880, and 5212 in 1890.

Two other Italian neighborhoods developed. Some Italians interested in farming settled in the Mission district during the 1850s and spread out into Noe Valley, the Outer Mission, and Visitacion Valley. Another small Italian settlement formed on Potrero Hill in the 1870's. At this point the dispersal halted, and the population growth of the Italian community tended to enlarge these existing communities rather than lead to the formation of more Italian settlements. Even though the Italians dispersed less than other European immigrant groups, they dispersed more in San Francisco than in the other American cities in which they constituted a large segment of the population.

14. Ibid, p.49-60


16. D. Cinel, From Italy to San Francisco, The Immigrant Experience, p.112.


When Chinatown was destroyed by the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, it proved to be an opportunity for the Chinese to shape aspects of the physical environment to better represent their social order, self-image and aspirations. The result was an environment that was dominated by monuments to the prominent associations that formed the top of the social hierarchy, commercial buildings representing the future of the community, and a cluster of Christian institutional buildings that reflected a continuation of Chinatown’s neocolonial status.

The Earthquake and Fire of 1906:

Before the Earthquake, San Francisco was a major city in the West,. Its future looked bright. But the city became unthinkable in the aftermath. By April 22, 1906, after the smoke had cleared, only two-dozen-odd salvageable buildings stood among the thousands destroyed. Even streets and property lines were invisible because everything was buried under the rubble. Just several days before, $500 million worth of buildings and property occupied the land. But after the fire, the only value of vacant land was its potential to be built upon. The future of the city was suddenly uncertain and there were very real fears of a financial panic. (Fig.3-1)

The 1906 Earthquake and Fire razed Chinatown too. The fire did the most damage to the community.
Most of the Chinese sought shelter outside of San Francisco in Oakland and other Bay Area cities, across the bay from San Francisco. About 2,000 Chinese refugees settled in Oakland permanently after the fire. But at least a few hundred remained in San Francisco. At first they were located at the foot of Van Ness near the bay. After that they had to move from one relief location to another. There was a fear that if the Chinese left on a site for too long, the Chinese might take up permanent residence in that area. Fearing such an event the Chinese were moved to Fort Mason and then to the golf links on the Presidio.

A Citizen's Committee appointed Abraham Ruef, James D. Phelan, Jeremiah Deneen, Doctor James Ward and Rev. Thomas Filben to establish the permanent location for the rebuilding of Chinatown. Many people had thought of Chinatown as a blight to the heart of the city because of the anti-Chinese movement. Besides the anti-Chinese feelings, Chinatown was in a prime location at the edge of the financial and retail districts making it a natural target for the expansion of the business district.

At least since 1853 there had been suggestions about moving Chinatown. In 1905 when Daniel Burnham created his plan for the city, there had been a discussion about the possibility of moving the Chinatown out of the center

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of the city to a more remote site. After the Fire, Boss Ruef chaired the committee to consider the moving of Chinatown from its central location to some site on the bay shore south of San Francisco. Then the origin location could be built up as either a middle class residential area or as an extension of the central business district. Dupont Street was to be widened to connect the northern waterfront to the center of the city. On a new site, the Chinese Community, could be created "... an oriental city with paved streets, schools and all the essentials of modern life. But also with the features of Chinese city, with its pagodas and its temple." 3

But there were several reasons for not moving Chinatown. 4 One was that Chinese did contribute greatly to San Francisco's economy, and the relocation would effect this contribution. The other was that Chinatown was a major tourist attraction for the city. Because the Chinese Community appeared to others to be something unusual and exotic, Chinatown had become a tourist attraction. Even in the 1860s, Chinatown had been a common part of a visitor's itinerary. Even European visitors included Chinatown as a part of their San Francisco itinerary.

As other avenues of economic endeavor began to shrink, tourism took on a more important economic function for the Chinese community. Throughout the 19th century, the economy of Chinatown was based on factory production, the import-export trade with China, and the supplying of services to the population of San Francisco. But because of the Anti-Chinese sentiment in the 1870s, the Chinese community was driven out of the industrial labor market. The economy of Chinatown was not enough to keep the community going. These conditions encouraged the development of tourism as an important element in the economy of Chinatown. It made additional revenues through the sales of tourist goods, services and meals. Moving the Chinese community to some isolated location would have reduced Chinatown's values as a tourist attraction for the city and also reduced the city's income from the tourist trade.

Secondly, there was a general belief that the pre-eminence of San Francisco's trade with China was due to the existence of a large Chinese community in San Francisco. With the removal of Chinese community, the

3. F. Dyer, "Rebuilding Chinatown" The World Today. 8, #5 (May, 1905) p.554
4. J. Kahn, Imperial San Francisco, p.203-204
city would have lost its trading position with China. This would have serious impact on the city's financial base.

Also, the white land owners of Chinatown did not want to move Chinatown. For many years they had been making great profits from the rents generated by the overcrowded conditions of the Old Chinese quarter. In 1873 only 10 of the 153 individual properties that composed the site area of Chinatown. In 1904 the situation almost unchanged, only 25 of the 316 properties in the enlarged core area owned by Chinese 5 and in 1904 only 30 of 316 were Chinese. 6

Finally, the Chinese had no intention of relocating to some less desirable part of the country. There was strong resistance to moving to some isolated site, or any location further away from the center of trade and commerce of the city.

It was very clear that the Chinese did not want to move to any other location in San Francisco, and it was equally clear that no other neighborhood in San Francisco wanted the Chinese. Recognizing the low probability of their work resulting, Ruef asked the Committee be discharged.

The Rebuilding:

Due to the Exclusion Acts the Chinese American population at the time of the rebuilding was still overwhelmingly male. The U.S. Census of 1900 showed there to be about nineteen men to every woman and the 1910 U.S. Census registered only a slight improvement to a ratio of about fourteen to one. As a result, the patterns of life that had grown up to support a predominantly male population continued to be valid more than half a century after the first major wave of Chinese immigration had occurred. The Chinese leadership was deeply committed to the social order that had grown up in the Chinese American community, and the rebuilding of the community offered them an opportunity to shape the urban fabric to better represent their social order and self-image. Whereas the old Chinatown had been the result of incremental changes to the leased environment, the new Chinatown could be created more completely from the ground up to match
the utilitarian needs and the symbolic purposes of those who could afford to sponsor the rebuilding.

Several factors affected the idea of making Chinatown a materially more Chinese community in image and organization. First, there were limitations on the ability of the Chinese to gain ownership of property. Since the vast majority of rebuilding projects were done by white land owners for lease to the Chinese, it was necessary to make any substantial changes to a Sinocized architecture part of an agreement with the property owner.

Secondly, most of the Chinese in San Francisco came from rural agricultural districts near Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Few of them had any experiences with the urban fabric in South China let alone a sophisticated understanding of construction techniques for multi-storied Chinese buildings.

As a result, there was no attempt to import the traditional Chinese building types common to those parts of Guangdong from which the immigrants had come or with which they were familiar since those structures in plan and massing could not be made workable in the San Francisco environment. The vast majority of Chinese Americans were most familiar with the various sorts of one and two story brick houses that together constituted the bulk of the village structures.

Socially, the houses of rural Guangdong Province served nuclear or extended families, whereas the structures of San Francisco's Chinatown had to be multi-use structures with space for commercial activities, residential space for a community of single males, and spaces for the numerous associations.

Economically, such buildings would not have achieved the high floor area to lot area ratio that the property owners desired, in order to maximize the leasable space.

Third, most of the designs of the new buildings were done by the white upper middle class architects in San Francisco, who had limited experience and appreciation for what actually constituted "Chinese" architecture. Their
understanding of Chinese architecture was in terms of the major monuments of Beijing, and not the vernacular types of rural South China.

After the fire, the most famous architects in San Francisco were not likely to be hired for new buildings in Chinatown. The earthquake and fire provided architects with many opportunities to design and build. Only after one year and three months were the commercial builders and architects willing to do the large volume of standard buildings desired by the Chinatown property owners.

Among the architects known to have done work in Chinatown during the period of rebuilding were Charles Beasley and his son William, A.A. Cantin, Crim & Scorr, Meyers & Ward, Hamilton Murdock, T. Paterson Ross & A.W. Burgen, Rousseau and Charles Soule. 7

The Architectural Character of Chinatown:

During this period, the white landowners erected buildings in the standard types used in the commercial and speculative West Coast construction of the time. Any effort at making Chinatown more "Chinese" had to be framed within the parameters of cost and the landowner's taste. In the <Architect & Engineer> Meyers & Ward presented a project design for the Kohl Building to be erected at the southwest corner of Dupont and Washington Streets. This drawing of a four or five story unexpected project sheathed a standard structure in a design that drew upon the city gate towers of Beijing for their inspiration. Beijing would most certainly have been one of the cities best known through photographs, and would have presented the most prestigious examples of Chinese architecture easily available to California architects in either drawings of photographs. The gate structures rose up over the portals; they had smooth expanses of wall surface punctuated by rectangular openings for cannons and rifles. A tile roof with curved eaves capped the tower structures. Meyers & Ward made a good choice of a building form to borrow for the design of a corner site, since the gate structures presented a facade and massing that could be used for multiple floored structures, and did not demand an articulation of the structural system that was such an important feature of most other Chinese building
The design was further articulated by the application of a lattice work pattern on the balconies and between the windows of the middle floors; this created a balancing of the vertical and the horizontal lines of force. Lanterns and flags completed the Sinocization of the exterior.

The traditional building forms of South China did not lend themselves to any direct translation to the conditions posed by the sites located within San Francisco's Chinatown, although many organizations may have desired traditional regional building forms to express their cultural heritage and significance.

The buildings had to conform to the conditions posed by the Chinatown lots. Usually the lots were roughly rectangular and had only two exposed edges, one to a street, and one to an alley. But in Chinatown, many structures had only one edge to a street or alley. The property owners sought the maximum usable space possible. This requirement placed any exposed facades right up against the side walk. This meant that most Associations had to work with a single exterior facade as the surface that would carry the symbolic message of the organization to the rest of the community. Since the buildings had to be commercially viable, the ground floor level was uniformly given over to commercial space. If multiple floors could be financed, any non-organization spaces above the ground floor were rented for residential or commercial use. Basements were inevitably included for storage and whatever other tenants were willing to occupy such spaces. The development of the organizational type responded to these givens.

The idealized institutional building in the Chinese context presented an axially symmetrical facade with a centrally placed entry gate on the line of the central axis of the complex. The gate might open onto a courtyard also symmetrically disposed on the primary axis which formed the forecourt for a hall. In this form of organization, placement on the primary axis from front to back signified a hierarchic structuring of spaces from least important to the most important. The buildings on the axis were always higher than the other buildings around the courtyard. (Fig.3-2)
Generally the square footage of buildings in Chinatown area increased when the rebuilding using brick construction replaced the original wood frame construction. The changes wrought by the rebuilding were exemplified by the two blocks bounded by Washington and Clay, and Grant and Powell. According to the 1899 Sanborn maps about 2/3 of the two to four story structures on the block between Grant and Stockton were of brick construction. The majority of wood framed structures were away from Grant along Clay and Stockton Streets. The overall ground coverage was over 80% with almost complete coverage of the section of the block between Waverly and Spofford Alleys. By contrast the block further up the slope was about 2/3 wood framed structures and 1/3 brick structures. By 1903 the Sanborn maps showed the block between Grant and Stockton had been almost completely rebuilt in brick with only three lots on or near Stockton still empty. The block was rapidly approaching 100% coverage. Of the approximately 40 structures, all were of brick except for three stone structures. The block between Stockton and Powell was less than half built with the lots along Stockton Street all occupied by new brick or stone building. The only wood framed residential structure stood on Powell Street.

The core of Chinatown was quickly rebuilt with multi-storied mixed-use brick buildings. As the lots along and near Grant Avenue filled in, other areas began to be filled in up to and along Stockton.
The Character of Business Buildings:

After the earthquake, the rebuilding of the Chinatown's commercial buildings also followed the idea of a "oriental and artistic" appearance. Remembering Old Chinatown as quaint and interesting, Clarence R. Ward suggested the establishment of an institution, which would include a few distinguished architects, to review the designs of buildings in Chinatown. A number of commercial buildings were designed with this. Examples can be seen in the Sing Chong Building and Sing Fat Building with the idea of creating corner building as gateways to the community. (Fig. 3-3)

These two buildings were designed by Look Tin Eli, the manager of the Sing Chong Bazaar. Look Tin Eli was born in Medocino City, and moved to San Francisco. He made a trip to China before the Fire.

T. Patterson Ross, an architect, and A. W. Burgren, an engineer, were hired to design both the new buildings on the northwest corner of Grant at
California and the Sing Fat Company building on the southwest corner of the intersection. Together these buildings and the establishments they housed made the south end of Dupont Street the oriental bazaar section for tourists visiting Chinatown.

Ross and Burgren designed the two commercial structures to form a pair. Unfortunately for them, the two sites were both on the same side of Dupont Street so that they could not act as a formal gateway to Chinatown framing Dupont Street for those approaching from the South. The result was that the two buildings framed California Street as one approached from the east rather than framing the primary thoroughfare. Both buildings were four story framed commercial structures with commercial space along their Dupont Street facades. This worked well with the slope of the hill and the commercial primacy of Dupont Street. The three floors above provided leasable space.

The attempt to give the buildings an "Oriental" flavor was confined to the treatment of the exterior surfaces and placement of pagoda-like towers at the corner of each building opposite one another.

As with most properties in Chinatown, the site of Sing Chong building was not owned by the Chinese but by American who leased this to the Chinese for twenty years. The building was intended to house the Oriental Bazaar and a restaurant. Large expanses of glass were used in the commercial facades along Dupont Street. The Bazaar was stocked with goods from China and Japan to attract the customers. At night the street facades twinkled from the studding of electric lights. (Fig.3-4)

The metal framed commercial structure was decorated on the exterior with Chinese motifs in terra cotta to contrast with the yellow pressed brick exterior surfaces. The corner of the building were pulled forward to visually carry towers that rose up above the eave lines. A cupola and three sets of curving eaves topped the corner tower. The lesser tower was topped by roofs with curving eaves to express the "oriental" imagery. An extra tower-like element with a roof sporting curved eaves was placed about midway along the Dupont Street facade to break up the mass of the building. This also allowed for different patterns of windows. The varied

window sizes were placed in bands and singly, and occasionally given hoods with curving eaves. These decoration created a picturesque quality that attempted to blur the actual regularity of the buildings. (Fig.3-5)

Fig3-4
Shing Chong Building
The Sing Fat building was designed by Ross and Burgren in the same year. D. Hamburger & Co. erected the building in 1907. The building cost $135,000 and was leased to the Sing Fat Company on a twenty year lease that came to $237,000. The new building was in many ways a more direct statement than its neighbor across California Street. Green “queen glazed” terra-cotta strips accentuated the corners and the cornice of the building and formed the primary decorative elements on the yellow pressed brick facades. Ross and Burgren designed a pagoda-like tower over the corner of the building at the intersection again. In this instance the tower was designed with a bit more grace and elegance, but at the same time, appeared to be a much more contrived addition to the building. The tower was equipped with elevators, and originally the second and third floors were designed with large reversible windows. These windows could be pivoted for easy cleaning and also could be used for raising and lowering the windows in the manner of standard double hung windows for ventilation. Either the design of the windows or the glass or both were later deemed inappropriate, and smaller standard rectangular double hung windows were installed to replace the Dean reversible windows. (Fig.3-6)
If one looks closely at the collection of details and decoration used in the "Chinese" buildings in Chinatown, he would find that they were mainly standard American elements. These were the combination of some Chinese decorative elements which attempt to create a "Oriental" environment. Classical elements were combined with the "Oriental". The details and decoration were largely used in order to give the Chinese community its unique visual character. Color was used as an important element. Bright red, yellow and green enlivened the facades.

In the rebuilding process some commercial activities were spatially regrouped. Before the earthquake, Wentworth Alley had been a major market area for fresh fish and poultry. The majority of fresh fish and poultry markets moved to the 1000 and 1100 addressed of Dupont Street. The Chinese groceries and merchandising stores concentrated in addresses along Dupont Avenue between Sacramento and Jackson Streets. 10

It should be noted that the shop fronts of Chinatown tended to shift from the common Asian open front to the standard American commercial frontage.

The Character of the Association Buildings:

The Associations could more easily obtain long term leases and reconstruction than individuals and the Associations could have spaces and facade treatments more clearly representing their self-images. The primary facades of associations buildings always took the idea of an hierarchic organization from front to back. The building facades of the building fronting the street also represented the vertical hierarchic organization. There was a common treatment of a facade applied to a basically standard commercial building in structure and layout. This expressed the traditional courtyard arrangement translated into a vertical organization on the street facades of the multi-storied mixed used buildings the associations occupied. Each floor level always functioned as a level in the vertical hierarchy. The ground floor was for commercial use. People could find an entrance flanked by symmetrically disposed display windows. Clerestory windows above increased the amount of light brought into the commercial space and
was often used for storage and office space. On one side was a doorway that gave access to a staircase to the other floors. On the sloping sites the entrance to the upper floor was located on the high side of the street facade. It was common to include a sidewalk staircase entrance to the basement. Any middle floors were used as residential and rental space. Windows would be symmetrically placed in the glazed or brick surface. If the ground floor was the least important in the hierarchy, the top floor formed the symbolic apex of the hierarchy, and would display the most extensive decoration. There offices, main hall and altar were located. The top floor facade was given an elaborated fire escape balcony and the overhanging shaped eaves with soffit were sometimes painted in bright colors - red, yellow and green. The balcony added a picturesque touch. Standing on the sidewalk, the passerby would look up and see a progression of symmetrically arranged levels culminating in an elaborate top floor that at the same time receded back to a flanked doorway that oddly reminded one of the great main halls of temples and government office in South China.

The Bo On Tong Building of 1908 which was a narrow four story building on the 800 Clay Street was a good example. The membership of the Tong were from the Kong Chow Association. The four-story building was located on the 800 block of Clay Street. The facade of the building was essentially symmetrical and the windows of second and third floors were wider to emphasis the vertical axis. Curving eaves and coffers helped to create a sense of space projecting out from the facade over the sidewalk below. The shaped cornice added some exuberance to the top where the Association rooms were located.

Not all of the Associations followed the same built form. The Ning Yung Association took a different formula in the design of its new building. (Fig.3-7) This Association founded in 1853 was one of the most important Chinese Community. The new Association built after the Earthquake was located on Waverly Place. The facade mainly resembled a neoclassical plazzo. The first floor was for commercial use. The three upper floors were treated as more of a single unit with quoin-like edges framing the facade. The windows and openings were arranged in bands of four per level with quoin-like surrounds and keystones. An enlarged fire escape with a curved eaves above it formed the balcony for the Association rooms
which were located in the piano nobile rather than on the top floor. The building cost about $250,000.

The Six Companies attempted the most literal rendering of the traditional layout. The main block was set back on its site to allow for a staircase up to the screening gate protected by a pair of lions. The main hall was placed on the first floor with its double doors opening onto a small forecourt created by the gate and the front of the building. An entrance to the right side led to a staircase that served the floors above. To employ such a compositional scheme one had to settle for less than a full coverage of the site and the primary of the composition, the great hall and its shrine, was placed in the most public and exposed location at the ground level. As a result this solution to the creation of and appropriate "Chinese" building was not repeated. (Fig.3-8)

Not all the Associations were able to raise the funds necessary to lease or buy a property and construct an association building or to lease "permanent" room within a building under construction. Some Associations, such as the Soo Yuen Benevolent Association and the Lung Kong Tin Yee, had to wait thirteen and nineteen years respectively before they were able to raise the funds and purchase and remodel buildings to fit their wishes. Some
Associations, that could not afford to purchase land or persuade a property owner to give a long term lease, approached the process of creating a symbolic Association building of their own as a long term project. To start they gathered together the capital for a future purchase or a long term lease.

Possibly the construction of the new Telephone Exchange building was in the Chinese style. (Fig.3-9)

In 1894 the Telephone company of Chinatown was located in a building at the northeast corner of Washington and Dupont Street. Loo Kum-shu, a Chinese merchant in Chinatown became the manager with three men working as operators. The switchboard only served the Chinatown
community and was not connected to the main city telephone system. A few years later, the company purchased a property at 743 Washington Street for a permanent exchange. But, the telephone exchange was completely destroyed in the 1906 Earthquake and Fire.

It was rebuilt in 1909. It was designed by M. Fisher, architect, and C.W. Burkett, engineer. The design attempted to copy the free-standing pagoda for use as a telephone exchange on a cramped urban site. In China the pagoda functioned as a mid-space object that focused the space around it, but the new exchange building was squeezed into a space with blank brick party wall rising up on three of its four sides. Instead of functioning as a mid-space-object, it presented on viewable facade to Washington Street. A very wide ground floor - with room for a pagoda - was needed to house the
exchange switch board and a public space. A podium with a green tiled surface was used in order to create a flat platform on the sloping site. Lattice work decorated the beam and two red columns of the entrance way. The curving eaves and four front columns helped visually narrow the front floor and give the building a vertical eaves with red trim, a balcony and windows with glazed panes and white munitions.

Jobs at the telephone exchange were passed down from generation to generation. Women replaced men at the switchboard. The exchange had 474 business and 600 residential subscribers by 1911.

Character of the Public Service Buildings:

The segregated Oriental School had been moved into a temporary wooden structure at Powell Street near Clay Street sometime after the Earthquake and Fire. By 1908 the School Board tentatively planned for an eight room school at Clay and Powell Streets and then considered a site on the west side of Powell Street between Washington and Jackson Street. Much is not all of the trouble with finding a site for the new Oriental School was based on the School Board’s desire to respond to the Powell Street property owners’ fears of Chinese encroachment leading to a decrease in property values, and to a decline in business. Even the selection of the Washington Street site to the east of Powell was too close for the Powell Street interests. Finally in 1914 the School Board committed itself to the site on Washington Street to the east of Powell Street and authorized $120,000 for the school’s construction.

The Oriental School designed by Albert Pissis made no effort to relate to its segregated student body. His design treated the main facade as that of an Italian palazzo with terracotta string courses dividing the facade into a base, a middle and an attic level. Arched openings further differentiated the base level and the main entrance and central axis of the facade and by the use of four fluted terracotta pilasters and terracotta trim. The terracotta contrasted well with the brick surfaces.

11. F. Dyer, "Rebuilding Chinatown", p.173
The school was soon overcrowded and the School Board was forced to purchase land across Washington Street for an annex rather than move large numbers of Chinese children into white schools. This annex designed by Angus McSweeney used the compositional ideas developed in the Spanish and Mediterranean Revivals which were popular in California at the time, and substituted Sinocized motifs in place of Spanish. On April 1, 1924, the Oriental School was renamed as the Commodore Stockton School by the School Board.

After the Fire, the mission of the Catholic Church also established a school for the Chinese community at the corner of Clay and Stockton Streets. This included four classrooms, a kindergarten, a boy's club room, a girl's club room, a 400 seat auditorium and an outdoor playground.

To this American education was added training at Chinese schools either run by Associations or by churches that would follow the normal public school day. In this way young Chinese Americans studied both in the American public school system and in a Chinese oriented educational system.

A dedication ceremony for the first Y.M.C.A. office at 1028 Stockton was held on May 29, 1912. The activities of the new Y.M.C.A. was gradually expanded to include an orchestra, table-game room, reading room, wood and machine shop, English and Mandarin language classes, and other general interest classes. In 1921 the Y.M.C.A. moved to a double store at Stockton Street.
The Character of Religious Building:

As mentioned before, the temples were some of the most important religious buildings in Chinatown. During the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, the Kong Chow Temple had been dynamited by firemen in an attempt to check one section of the spreading fire. The temple keeper rescued the statue of Kuan Ti, the primary god in the temple pantheon.

In 1909 the new Kong Chow Temple was designed by Charles Paff who attempted to create a more gracious and grand temple on a difficult site. The site was a rectangle of land in the center of the block with a narrow access onto Pine Street. Paff in his design for the temple attempted to visually replicate the bracketing system used in Chinese wood architecture as a decorative element. His decorative brackets were made of fabricated sheet metal. The elements used had more in common with the buildings of North China than with the vernacular styles of Guangdong.

Paff designed a handsome gate on Pine Street. This gate was essentially classical in configuration but with Sinocized elements substituted for each of the parts.

The temple building was a three story building main facade facing the courtyard which was symmetry. A narrow staircase led to the upper floors. On the second floor was housed the council chamber of the Kong Chow Organization, and on the top floor was housed the temple.

The main chamber was encrusted with gold-gilded carving including a large piece that formed an arch across the breadth of the space. The carvings underneath the front altar table showed scenes from the Dragon King's court and from the Three Kingdoms (A.D. 220-265). All the carvings were handmade in Guangdong and donated by the membership.

The Kong Chow temple attempted to adapt the traditional Chinese temple plan to a difficult site. Of necessity the entrance was off axis. The scheme had the entrance lead into a courtyard, and the idea of height above the ground level was employed as a symbolic equivalent to the movement backward along a processional axis from less to more important spaces.

(Fig.3-10)
The Churches and Christian Associations also rebuilt or built for the first time in Chinatown. Many of the churches attempted to design buildings that related to the other buildings in Chinatown. However, others such as the Presbyterians, were not interested in creating a "Oriental" image.

The Baptist Church in Chinatown, a mission style building located on the northwest corner of Sacramento Street and Waverly Place, was erected in 1854 by Rev. Lewis Shuck. This was a fine location as close to the core of Chinatown as one could expect to get. But it was destroyed by the 1906 Earthquake. In 1908 the new building designed by G.H. Moore and George E. Burlingame was completed. This was a two-story brick building. The second story window was decorated by yellow bricks. The stained glass windows of the chapel at the corner of the ground floor distinguished this part of the building from the rest of the mass. A third floor was added to the building in 1931 to provide a hall for social
gatherings. The facade of the new floor was designed to match the existing building. (Fig. 3-11)

Most of the churches and missions were not able to find site in the old core area of Chinatown and were forced to occupy site on or above Stockton Street. Sites to the west and south were valuable parts of the central business district. The site along Stockton was a transitional zone between Chinatown and the middle class housing of Nob Hill.

The Catholic Church was established rather later in Chinese community. In 1894, the Paulist Fathers took over Old St. Mary Church on the northeastern corner of Dupont and California Streets. But unfortunately, Old St. Mary's was razed in the 1906 earthquake. After the earthquake the mission was moved several times. It was August 1, 1921, before a permanent Mission building at the corner of Clay and Stockton Streets was completed. It came to be known as Sing Ma-li (St. Mary's) by the Chinese community. (Fig. 3-12)

This two-story building was designed by Mr. Charles E. Bradley. The facades of new corner building were treated in a restrained neo-classical mode. A red tiled roof with overhanging eaves was used. The first floor
level of the facade was smooth with large arched windows. A string course separated off the windows of the second floor and the abstracted indented rectangular elements of the surface. About 1926, in order to accommodate its growing membership, a third floor was added to the building as a part of remodeling. Visually the third floor helped to create a better sense of balance in the combination of the facades.

The Character of Residential Buildings:

There was a high demand for Chinese prostitutes and concubines since the Chinese population of California was largely male. A portion of the Chinese women sold into bondage in South China were sent to San Francisco. Gum Moon served as a sanctuary for women rescued from lives of servitude and prostitution.

The Gum Moon Residence Hall designed by Julia Morgan was a two story red brick building with a basement. The Hall was designed in a modified Renaissance style. The main two floors rested on a base formed by the basement, and the top floor with its band of smaller windows formed an attic capped by the projecting eaves that wrapped the Hall. Blue and green
glazed tiles were placed between the eaves brackets. The keystone and intrados of the entrance arch were done in glazed tile adding a restrained and elegant touch to the entrance and center of the facade composition.

The basement contained the kitchen, dining room, recreation room and classroom. Generally the rooms of the upper floors were spacious with high ceilings. The main floor was separated into two part by the main hallway that ran through the middle of the building on a north-south axis from the entrance. The upper floors contained residential dormitories which were divided into residential rooms at some later date.

Also the Presbyterian rebuilt its new home - Carerom House for Chinese women after the earthquake. It located on 920 Sacramento Street and was a more successful effort architecturally.

It was completed on August 1907 designed by Julia Morgan. The clinker brick facade on the concrete basement and the simplicity of the rectangular block did not express the rather complex program within. The placement of the landing windows made the main staircase the only interior feature expressed on the facade.

The building ... is a three story structure of pressed and brick and will cost $52,000. On the first floor is an auditorium which will seat 300 and with the adjacent commit rooms, is of much greater capacity. Dormitories to accommodate sixty Chinese and Japanese girls are upstairs, and dining-rooms with all home conveniences are tached."

The classrooms were in the basement of the building.

As the population of the community declined the rebuilding seemed to bring an overall increase in the square footage of building space in the core area. This did not mean that Chinatown ceased to be short of space. It probably did mean that some of the worst housing and sanitation conditions were alleviated. Bunk rooms with men sleeping in shifts were replaced by individual cubicles along hallways in residential hotels.
Conclusion:

The rebuilding of Chinatown in 1906-1920 represented a merging of the new economic realities with the established nineteenth century social order. New Association buildings appeared along the main streets of Chinatown adding a modest grandeur and festivity to the urban landscape. "Orientalized" commercial buildings were interspersed in recognition of the shifting economic reality. Entrepreneurs made a conscious effort to capture a larger portion of the tourist market to compensate for declining industrial production and a shrinking internal (Chinese American) market. Just as the welter of Associations found an architectural expression for themselves, shifting demographic conditions eroded their social base of single males. The missions and churches stood out like sentinels surveying a tiny colony wedged into the fabric of the city, and behind the facades lay the reality of the residential hotels with their small single rooms lined up along double-loaded corridors.
CHINATOWN: From 1920s To 1940s

The Exclusion Acts slowed Chinese immigration, and helped to generate a significant transformation in the demographic character of the Chinese American community. Since most of the pre-1882 Chinese American population were single males, or husbands with families in South China, the Exclusion Acts led to a steady decline in the overall Chinese American population as males either retired and returned to China or died. The U.S. Censuses showed the Chinese American population continually declining until 1920 when the population reached a low point. This drop in population was more dramatic when compared to the rapid growth that S.F. experienced during the same period. By about 1920 there had been enough growth in the second and third generation populations to begin a shift in the character of the Chinese American community as the number of first generation males continued to decline. (Fig.4-1)
Because the overall population declined, the relative proportion of families and children in the population increased. This meant that families began living in the existing residential buildings of Chinatown. Also families began occupying the residential hotels that had originally been built to serve a population of single males. This trend led towards a slow re-orientation of the community to the outlook of the second and third generation Chinese Americans, and from a community of single males to the beginning of a family centered one. These changes impacted the physical environment of Chinatown.

The Changing Demographic Structure:

The rebuilding of Chinatown after the 1906 Earthquake occurred while the Chinese population was in decline. From the 1890 U.S. Census, about 107,500 the Chinese American population in United Stated declined to about 61,600 by the time of the 1920 U.S. Census. This must be compared to the 69% increase in the population of S.F. during the same period. From a population of 298,997 in 1890, the city's population grew to 506,676 by 1920. As a proportion of the city's, Chinese population had gone from a high of 9.3% to only 1.53%. The Exclusion Acts had done their work.

Chinese immigration was not completely shut off during this period. As the result, Chinese attempted to enter United States as native born Chinese Americans or as the offspring of citizens. The new immigrants who gained entry by falsifying their relationships to a resident of the United States were known as "paper sons". Many Chinese Americans over the years came to have different Chinese and American surnames. The apparent mixing of surnames in kinship and surname associations that began to appear was related to this phenomenon. The question of illegal immigrants raised a further level of fear and anxiety about the law and government activity within the Chinese community. Much of the secretiveness that had had its origins in racial persecution and discrimination was given further impetus.

The restrictions on immigration, the return of elderly males to retirement in South China, and the difficulty of bringing wives into the United States, which hindered the development of a large native-born population, were the
most important reasons for the decline of population.

The character of the Chinese American population changed in other ways as well. Chinatown became a community of aging males continually declining in numbers and a slowly growing group of families. There was a slow rise in the number of American born Chinese (commonly referred to as ABC). In 1890 ABC's made up only 2.7% of the total Chinese American population in the United States. By 1920 their proportion of the Chinese American population had increased to 30% and by 1940 to 41.1%. This also affected the sex ratio of Chinatown. As mentioned before, in 1890 the sex ratio was 27 males for every woman but by 1920 the ratio had shifted to 7 to 1 and by 1930 about 4 males to every female. The numbers of families and children in the community continued to increase.  

Polygamy in China was common among the upper classes. Having multiple wives and a nuclear family housed in a huge residential compound were one of the symbols of prestige and success. This practice was continued in Chinatown. There also to have more than one wife in residence was truly a sign of great wealth and power. The practice of polygamy makes it difficult to judge the actual rate at which the community was shifting from a single male population to one of families.

San Francisco's Chinatown also was losing its primacy within the Chinese population of the United States. While the Chinese population in San Francisco declined in the period from 1890 to 1920, the Chinese population of Boston, New York, Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Oakland increased. New York's Chinatown became the second largest as its population increased from 2,498 in 1890 to 5,042 in 1920. San Francisco's Chinatown was becoming a regional center rather than a national one. Its position as the unrivaled metropolis of Chinese America was becoming ever more symbolic and less real.
Buildings in Chinatown Between The World Wars:

The ambiguity and contradictory tensions of being Chinese and being American was reflected in the changing landscape of the community.

Various organizations found themselves with an opportunity to build, and had to decide how they wished to present themselves. In general the question was whether one wished to be more Chinese and traditional or more modern and Westernized. In part the very nature and concerns of the organization in question helped to decide the balance, but even then there still remained the question as to how the organizations wished to make this apparent to both the Chinese community and to society as a whole.

The Character of the Business Buildings:

There was an alteration of the street landscape because neon signs made their appearance on some commercial frontages. These frontages attempted to use the new techniques and technology of advertising with an "Oriental" content. The sign of the Gin Wah Co. projected out over the sidewalk with an abstracted pagoda at its point. This presented an "Oriental" touch and was combined with the word "gifts" to entice the passing tourist. The curving eaves of simplified Chinese rooftops reiterated the main theme, and fringes of neon lights helped to increase the sign's visibility.

A number of businesses opened to cater to the more Americanized tastes of the ABC and the first generation inhabitants of Chinatown. The Eastern Bakery and Fong Fong's Ice Cream serve as examples.

The first Bakery serving Western baked goods was the Eastern Bakery opened in 1923 by Lee Ling. Lee had been an immigrant from Chungshan County, China. After learning the ins and outs of Western cooking, he decided to open the Bakery at 720 Grant Avenue leased from the Association that own the building. At first the shop just occupied the front portion of its present space. During the 1930's, the Bakery expanded and took over more space of the building. To keep up with the times, the
facade and interior were remodelled in about 1938. A two story high neon sign capped by an abstracted curving roof and ending in the word Coca-Cola went up over the entrance. After the World War Two new counter and booths were installed. (Fig. 4-2)

Fong Fong was a combination bakery and soda fountain. Fong Fong was opened in about 1930 by Philip Fong and his cousin Charlie. Both of them had worked in American Cafeteria for more than five years. This shop had the most modern equipment. The bakery produced both Chinese and American baked goods. On the facade the shop sported a neon sign. A moon gate separated the booths from the counter area of the fountain. On the facade the shop sported a neon sign.

Businesses such as the Eastern Bakery and Fong Fong represented the newly emerging hybrid Chinese American culture. (Fig. 4-3)
The Character of the Association Buildings:

The established associations that made up the pre-1906 social order and the newly emerging organizations often chose to build in the format of the type of association buildings that had emerged during the rebuilding after 1906. Quite often this meant renovating an existing structure to meet the requirements of the traditional organization.

The Chinese Chamber of Commerce used the structure of the association building format to present its own image. It took over many of the business related activities that the Six Companies had dominated before. The goal of the Association was to reduce predatory competition between its members, arbitrate disputes that arose, and help to regulate business activity within the Chinese Community.

A architect, R. J. Patche, designed the Terry building at 728-30 Sacramento Street which the newly formed Chinese Chamber of Commerce purchased. (Fig.4-4) The resulting facade was one of the best renderings of the established compositional formula for association buildings. The street level was given over to commercial space. There was a separate entrance to the upper stories on the uphill side of the Sacramento Street.
facade. The second floor segment of the elevation acted as a transition to the burst of decorative vitality on the third floor segment of the facade. There the fire escape was transformed into a balcony that stretched the width of the building with every handsomely shaped eaves projecting out over it. These two elements framed the symmetrical exterior of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce rooms on the top floor. The deep balcony with its columns framing the central doorway, the curving eaves and graceful balustrade completed the facade treatment.

The Soo Yuen Benevolent Association and the Lung Kong Tin Yee Association were two examples of turning to the established association building formula for an appropriate image.

The original building had been constructed for Charles Hirsch by the architectural firm of Salfield and Kohlberg in 1906. Between 1919 and 1922 the Soo Yuen Benevolent Association gained ownership of the building and set about remodeling it to their needs. The Association added a new top floor and attic level for the association rooms and remodeled the exterior of the building. To express its bipartite character two main halls of equal size were placed next to one another, each with its own identical bay on the main facade facing Grant Avenue. An elaborate balcony and ornate eaves framed the association floor. The bows in the balcony and arched elements of the eaves stressed the axially symmetrical quality of each half of the facade. The composition made very little use of its being a corner site; only the heavily bracketed balcony attempted to tie the two facades together by wrapping around the corner. The use of tan, white, green and red trim added more life to the already rather baroque display. (Fig. 4-5)

Another dual association purchased a building on Grant Avenue for their headquarters. The Lung Kong had established a temple on Brooklyn Alley which contained the consecrated statues of the Four Ancestors. This was razed in the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, and new planning ordinances barred the Lung Kong from rebuilding the temple at its old site. In 1910 the association occupied a structure at 1034 Stockton Street but the membership soon found their lodgings inadequate, and in 1921 the association wanted to build a new building. That year the Lung Kong purchased the building at 924 Grant Avenue and hired the architect Charles Rogers to remodel the
existing 1906 building to their needs. The building was a brick structure sitting on a 30 inch thick unreinforced brick foundation.

The Tin Yee Tong was another association in San Francisco. It located its rooms in the Lung Kong's new building. The two organizations were formally merged to form the Lung Kong Tin Yee Association in about 1929.

The remodeled building had the typical layout with commercial space fronting on Grant Avenue, a residential hotel on the second and third floors, and the association rooms on the top floor. The rented rooms of the middle floors opened onto hallways on which communal kitchens, showers, and toilets were located. The top floor had a floor plan arranged to be both symmetrical and to express the identities of the two organizations. A larger main hall occupied the whole east side of the top floor and contained the
altar to the Four Ancestors. A large painting of the Four Ancestors hung on the wall framed by an elaborately carved surround imported from South China. The offices of the two organizations occupied the Grant Avenue side of the top floor.

The main facade of the building while expressing the bipartite nature of the Lung Kong Tin Yee attempted to maintain a unified character in the composition of the facade. An elaborate fixed metal awning divided the commercial level from the rest of the facade. The symmetrically disposed, tile covered, exterior surface of the middle levels contrasted the purple, green and yellow tile designs with the pink surface. On the top floor the separate identities of the two organizations were respected while creating an overall unity. Under the curved metal eaves of the top floor, three tapered columns framed paired recessed doors. From Grand Avenue one saw the Tin Yee doorway to its office on the right, and on the left the doorway of the Lung Kong. The balcony and railing in front of the offices bowed out to accentuate the symmetrical compositions of each office’s exterior facade, and light bulbs mounted on the tops of the railing posts added to the festive character of the whole Grant Avenue facade of the building.

The Character of Residential Buildings:

The families could not move out into other residential areas of the city due to severe discrimination in housing. To the East lay the central business district. A move to the North Beach area was difficult. The Italian and the Chinese communities became competitions for housing. To move to Nob Hill presented the problem of gaining access to a neighborhood that had middle class housing protected by Realtors. The religious institutions and commercial structures along Stockton Street tended to form a western boundary to Chinatown. The increasing numbers of Chinese families had little choice but to take up residence in the residential hotels of Chinatown since few apartment existed within the community.

The financial situation of most Chinese Americans also blocked movement out. The Chinese were a declining portion of the labor force, and the union’s anti-Asian policy blocked the Chinese from many areas of
employment and drove them out of the manufacturing and fishing industries of the state.

Wherever possible, When the Great Depression hit, the Chinese were put out of work first. This sort of treatment made it very difficult for the majority of Chinese to raise the capital necessary to purchase property outside of Chinatown even if someone were able to circumvent the discriminatory practices that were rife in the real estate industry. Many unemployed and single males migrated back to San Francisco's Chinatown and took whatever work existed while living in the rent-free rooms the various associations made available to them. (Fig. 4-6)

Fig. 4-6
The Residential Area in Chinatown - Ross Alley

Families would often take up a series of rooms next to one another on the double loaded corridors, and the hallways became the play area for the children. There was a tendency when higher concentrations of families occupied a floor for the individual floors in a building to take on the character of a small neighborhood. Often one of more rooms on the floor of medium and larger sized buildings were turned into communal kitchens for
the residents of each floor. Toilet and bath facilities were also shared. The rooms, which were usually lined up along double loaded hallways, ranged from 60 to 120 sq. ft. in area. 6 (Fig.4-7)
By the 1920's there were probably about six or more Chinese Schools in the community including the Yeong Wo School and the Nam Kue School across the street. The Yeong Wo Association decided to purchase the building next to their headquarters at 726 Sacramento Street which they had occupied since 1908. The new purchase was for the establishment of a Chinese School to serve the children of immigrants from the Chungshan District. Charles E. J. Rogers was hired to remodel this building. He attempted to unify the tall slender five story association building with the newly purchased three story building with its 97 foot frontage next-door. The school occupied the east side of the building and the west side was used for apartments. The Lower floor contained an auditorium-gym space with classrooms above. A playground space occupied a portion of the roof.

Normally a Chinese school held its classes in the late afternoon or early evening. The core course of study generally covered learning Chinese and studying of Chinese language and the study of the Chinese Classics. Students were expected to memorize their lessons and repeat them aloud in class. Other studies included arithmetic using the abacus, brush strokes, drawing, art, and some physical education such as basketball, volleyball and marching. The association sponsored schools tended to stress traditional Chinese values and learning although one might stress Confucian, Buddhist or Taoist teachings in differing degrees. The Chinese schools run by Christian churches and missions tended to have broader curricula including Christian religious training as a part of their programs. There was a tendency in the association sponsored schools to want to supply the Chinese students with an education complete enough that they would be able to go back to China and work or seek college training if discriminatory laws and practices in the United States made it necessary at some future date.

The Nam Kue School at 765 Sacramento Street offered the rare opportunity of constructing a complete building to service both symbolic and utilitarian requirements. It was built to signify its roots in Chinese culture and to serve as a supplement and contrasting balance to the teachings the students received in public school. The building was designed to be as Chinese and
as traditionalist as possible. It was supported by the Nam Hoy Benevolent Association to give a Chinese education to the children of immigrants from the districts of Punyu, Shuntak and Namhoi. The school building was designed by the architect Charles E. J. Rogers.  

![Fig 4-8 Nam Kue School](image)

The architect represented Chinese values by using the forms and arrangements of Chinese building. The building was set back on the site with a low wall surmounted by a fence along the sidewalk to form a forecourt. The Chinese characters for prosperity and longevity decorated the wrought iron fence. One story wings framed the entrance to the two story main body of the school. A double-loaded central hallway formed the spine of the symmetrical building running from the entrance to the back.
The building was completed in 1925 and reached its highest enrollment in 1931 when it had eight teachers and about 300 students.

The churches and missions of Chinatown began to see the need for more extensive services for the children of the community.

As we mention before, the Y.M.C.A. was formed on July 10, 1911 and moved to the new address at 855 Sacramento Street in 1920. The organization needed a permanent site and expanded facilities. The total cost of the land and the building came to about $208,000. The building was opened on Feb. 22, 1926. At the time the Y.M.C.A. had about 400 member in Chinatown. (Fig.4-9)

The architects, Frederick H. Meyer and Albin R. Johnsonm, attempted to create "a building picturesque and full of interest, and blending the Chinese architecture with our modern type of building, so that the effect is pleasing and free from the discordant notes that prevail about Chinatown at present." 8  

8  The building was a rather blocky three story structure with a full basement, and was intended to accommodate 300 boys in various activities. One entered under a gate with Sinocized neo-classical qualities and went up a staircase to a terrace on the east side of the building overlooking the playground below. The balustrade was derived from the decoration on the
Temple of Heaven in Beijing. Glazed terra-cotta by N. Clark & Sons added color and vitality to the rather drab reinforced concrete surfaces. The terrace facade was decorated with a row of attached columns. The top two floors contained lodging rooms along double L-shaped corridors. The basement contained a tile swimming pool, basketball court, and changing rooms. Tiled eaves, with inset tiles, supported by curved brackets formed a fringe along the top of the exterior. By 1942 the membership had risen to over 2,000.

Whereas the Y.M.C.A. building was of a modest design quality, the Y.W.C.A. proved to be much more interesting and complex architecturally. The first Y.W.C.A. in San Francisco had organized in 1878, and by the 1889 the Y.W.C.A. had established a residence for single women at 1259 O'Farrell. By the 1930s a decision had been made to open both a residence hall and a women's center next to Chinatown. Julia Morgan was hired as the architect. (Fig.4-10)
The sloping site assembled for the project was of an irregular configuration with a street frontage approaching the middle of Powell Street. Morgan’s design placed an eight story residence along Powell, and grouped the center for Asian women at the other end of the site with a gymnasium occupying the corner of Joice and Clay, and with the entrance along Clay. The two sections came together in a courtyard in the center of the site. (Fig.4-11)
The residence club presented a symmetrically arranged mass to Powell with the entrance offset to one side. In plan the building was approximately L-shaped. On the main floor lounges and an entry office were lined up at the front with a main hallway to the main hall at the back with its Chinese wallpaper and marble fireplace. The residential floors above had residence and service rooms lined up along spacious double loaded corridors. Many of the building's services were located in the basement. Some hallways were decorated with painted false-windows showing landscape scenes framed by shutters.

The gym-auditorium occupied the northeast corner, and had an arched roof that was supported and stiffened by a diamond pattern of ribs which displayed Morgan's talents as an engineer. Offices, the entrance hall, a tower room and various service rooms were arranged to create a varied edge to the sidewalks and a frame for the central courtyard. Chinese symbols, characters, and patterns were used in the interior decoration. Concrete lattices, glazed green tiles, concrete block unions and string courses helped to add definition and vitality to the red brick surfaces of the exterior.

The Residence Club at 940 Powell was finished on Aug. 15, 1932 and the Y.W.C.A. center at 965 Clay was completed on October 8th, 1932.

Another institution that Chinese set up for themselves was the Chinese Hospital.

Health conditions were poor in the crowded conditions of Chinatown, and health services were primarily limited to herbalists and traditional medical practices that had been brought by the immigrants to America. The Chinese had been barred from using the County hospital during the 1860's and 70's. For care in times of illness one was dependent upon friends and relatives. In an effort to improve the medical situation the Tung Wah Dispensary was opened in 1900 at 828 Sacramento Street. It was sponsored by the Six Companies. Three physicians worked in the dispensary. The Dispensary was rebuilt after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire.

With the support of fifteen major community organizations, the committee decided to build a new hospital to serve Chinatown and a site was chosen at 845 Jackson Street, at the edge of the Chinatown core area. In considering
its design they sought something that would be viewed as both contemporary Western, and yet Chinese. The solution was to copy a Western-style hospital in China. "the new hospital, designed in Chinese style, dominates the skyline of Chinatown with its spires and sloped gables. Its architecture was copied from the famed hospital of the Rockefeller Foundation in Peking." 10 To make the building appear Sinocized, curving eaves and a Chinese balustrade crowned the entrance which was projected forward from the rest of the facade, in part to accentuate the symmetrical disposition of composition. The top floor was treated as a decorative loggia with a higher central section capped by curved eaves. The building was done in reinforced concrete at a cost of $250,000. Inside one found a 55 bed hospital with two operating rooms and a free clinic for poor. The staff was made up of 40 physicians including five Chinese Americans. Twelve Chinese women were completing their training as nurses in the facility. The hospital was opened on April 18, 1925.

The rest of the city recognized Chinatown's importance as a tourist attraction. In 1925 Chinoiserie street lanterns were installed for San Francisco's Diamond Jubilee celebration. W. D'Arcy designed the Grant Avenue lanterns as well as the Market Street street lamps. The treatment of the cast iron standard was based upon bamboo. A pair of dragons coiled up to the hexagonal lantern with its yellow glass which was capped by a curving eaves roof.

Slowly the Chinese American community was seeking out its own unique identity within the American landscape, an identity that was neither solely Chinese nor solely American but a new reinterpretation and amalgamation of both. (Fig.4-12)

Slowly the Chinese American community was seeking out its own unique identity within the American landscape, an identity that was neither solely Chinese nor solely American but a new reinterpretation and amalgamation of both. (Fig.4-13) and (Fig.4-14)
Fig. 4-12
Street lamp on Grant Avenue
Fig. 4-13
The Chinese Playground, Waverly Place

Fig. 4-14
The Chinese Temple in Chinatown
Other Settlements In San Francisco:

By way of contrast, the Italian population continued to grow with new immigrants and from the establishment of families which generated a second generation Italian American population. Whereas the first generation clustered together for the maintenance of their cultural and social nexus, the second generation demonstrated a greater level of assimilation and dispersal into the general population. Even in the early period Italian settlement occurred in a series of areas. This meant that later dispersal could take place from multiple nodes.


"In San Francisco, most of the Italian immigrant's children grew up in the Italian settlements of North Beach, Mission, and Potrero. But as adults they usually found the settlements too confining and moved to other sections of the city to spread throughout the Bay Area" 11

In this way the Italians followed the general pattern of the other European immigrant groups though at a slower rate. Residential patterns came increasingly to reflect occupation and income rather than ethnicity. As a result, the various immigrant groups began a process of geographical dispersal, that grew in intensity with each successive generation. The Germans and the Irish were the first groups to disperse throughout the city. By 1910 the Russian, English, and French immigrants could be found in every district. The Italians, as a relatively late immigrant group, had begun a more limited dispersal into the three areas mentioned above and then into other parts of the city.
China became an ally of the United States at beginning of the Second World War. As a result, the American depiction of the Chinese was changed. The immigration laws were also changed to be symbolically less offensive even though the actual level of immigration allowed by the revisions remained extremely low.

The major immediate impact upon the Chinese American community was to open up economic and employment opportunities that had been closed to them for many years. The war brought on a labor shortage. Many new job opportunities were opened up to Chinese Americans. This made it possible for Chinese Americans to find employment in government, business and technical fields from which they had previously been barred by racial discrimination. For the first time many Chinese Americans were assimilated into the middle class job market. Chinese American who had received technical and university training before the war now found it possible to practice their skills and professions. At that time, 1.5% of the male ABC (American Born Chinese) had four or more years of college training. ¹ Other young Chinese Americans who served in the armed services earned the opportunity to go to college after the war.

This led the Chinese Americans to a search for residential housing outside of the Chinatown area: at first just to the areas adjacent to the Chinatowns in Oakland and San Francisco. Other areas were still limited to Chinese by the discriminatory practices of property owners and realtors. The new
The war led to a change in the Immigration Act which altered the position of the Chinese Americans. In 1943 the US Congress, in deference to its ally China, repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. In 1946 Congress enacted a law allowing the wives and children of Americans of Chinese descent to apply for entry as non-quota immigrants.

Finally, in the same year the Chinese were allowed to became naturalized citizens. The Displaced Person Act made it possible for Chinese already living in the United States to become citizens.

With the victory of the Communists in China, US. Congress passed a series of acts to allow refugees to enter on a non-quota basis. It was not until 1952 that Chinese women were allowed to immigrate on the same basis as men.

This also corresponded with a period in which the sex ratio of Chinese American men to women was continuing to move towards parity. The ratio of men to women was roughly three to one in 1940 and in 1960 improved to one point four to one according to the US. Census. As a result, there was a significant increase in the number of families within the Chinese American community.

The development increasingly made Chinatown a good place for shopping, meeting friends and relatives, and having a relaxed restaurant meal for the Chinese Americans who now lived outside of Chinatown. Chinatown became more and more a residential area for the elderly and the new immigrants because established families sought housing elsewhere. (Fig.5-1)
After the Second World War, although many Chinese moved out of the Chinatown, Chinatown continued to function as a symbol of the Chinese American community, the community’s existence and unique identity. The celebration of Chinese New Year with its fireworks and a parade became a proud occasion for the Chinese American community to celebrate with the blessings of the population at large. Also, the Chinese schools in Chinatown continued to function as major disseminators of Chinese values and culture to many of the young people who lived in or near Chinatown.
The Changing Physical Fabric:

Architectural revivalism lent itself to adaptation in a way that postwar Modernism never could. Because the Chinese American community became further assimilated into the mainstream of American culture, the physical setting of Chinatown began to change as tastes in design moved towards the ideals of the Modern Movement. Architects in the postwar era turned away from the revival styles that had been so easily used to create picturesque "Oriental" structures. For architects, some of whom were Chinese Americans just entering the profession with training in the Modernist idiom, the question was "How do I design a modern building that is appropriate to Chinatown?". As we know, most of the Chinese emigrated from South China. The great monuments of North and Central China were not the same as the vernacular buildings of South China. Most of the designers got their information from books. But the information offered in books about Chinese architecture described only a small number of the major monuments and little about the residential architecture in South China. Also it is very difficult to incorporate the International Style idiom into with the language of traditional Chinese architecture. (Fig. 5-2)
The Character of Business Buildings:

After the war, tourism became a more and more important part of the Chinese community's economic life. Segments of Grant Avenue were lined with shops that sold curios to tourists interested in the "Orient". At the far end of Grant Avenue near Broadway the groceries continued to cater to the local residents. Bars and nightclubs did a booming business catering to the thousands of military personnel passing through San Francisco. Chinese bands and entertainers performed to add an exotic flavor to the place of entertainment that sprang up in the sections of Grant Avenue that the Japanese businesses had vacated. (Fig. 5-3)

Gradually, Chinatown became a weekend place for the Chinese American families that had made the move to residential areas around the San Francisco Bay Area. It was a good place to go and buy Chinese food not available elsewhere. Fresh poultry, fish, shrimp and vegetables were available at reasonable prices. Fresh produce lined the sidewalks in front of
the groceries and meat markets. Here, people stopped to select a fresh fish live swimming in a glass tank, or a live chicken which would be killed and cleaned while the shopper waited. One could meet the friends while doing shopping, or have a meal before returning home. For some it was an opportunity to visit one of the temples, or to see friends and acquaintances in the tongs and associations.

On the west side of Portsmouth Plaza, the China Trade Center was designed in 1966 by Worley K. Wong, a Chinese American architect. The basically Modern Movement reinforced concrete structure was given an ethnic touch by flaring out the balconies and using round windows. This did not prevent the building from clashing both in scale and in composition with the other smaller structures around it.

The Character of Residential Buildings:

After the Second World War, the families who had been forced to live in Chinatown began to move out because other residential areas in San Francisco were opened to them. The Civil Rights Movement led by Black Americans reduced housing discrimination and made it easier for Chinese Americans to move out of Chinatown. At first this meant moving to next to Chinatown and into a few other selected areas where they could buy property. As the number of middle class families increased, some of them tried to buy better housing on the slope of Nob Hill above Chinatown or in other areas. The number of Chinese occupying residential space above Stockton Street increased. So did the number owning houses North of Lake Merritt in Oakland. The Chinese American population began to disperse, leaving Chinatown with a high proportion of the elderly, single males, and the economically less fortunate. (Fig.5-4)

Although the overall population of
Chinatown has decreased steadily since 1940, the rate of residential turnover is the lowest if compared with other densely populated areas of the city with only a 29.5 per hundred persons changing residence between 1955-1960; at this time the city average was 54.7.

The exodus from Chinatown did not mean that Chinatown was no longer short of living space. Census data showed that it was the most densely populated area in the United States. Crowding was severe since much of the area was used for businesses. In Chinatown, housing still was the biggest problem for the Chinese community. The existing housing was far from sufficient to satisfy the housing needs of the Chinese American community. Below is a depiction of Chinatown conditions in the 1960s giving a Chinatown adolescent’s reactions to white American living standards:

It was really the whole high school scene that first made you think about your father and your family and Chinatown in relation to the white status system. White kids might invite you over to their houses or their apartment some afternoon - and you'd think these white kids must be millionaires. The space they lived in! They had dining rooms that were not used for anything except meals! It was incredible.... It seemed like almost every kid in Chinatown had grown up in a household where everybody and everything was crowded into two or three little rooms. If a family has a twelve-by-twelve foot square of open floor space, that was Sunset magazine stuff by Chinatown standards.

Even today, most of the Hong Kong immigrants can not afford anything more... Father, mother, two children, and the grandmother are crowded into a couple of little rooms... There are twenty or thirty rooms to a floor and one bathroom and one kitchen... on one floor... take turns doing the simplest things. They stand in line in the morning to go to the bathroom, holding their towels, toothpaste, toothbrush, razor, or whatever, in their hands and shuffle forward in the gloom to the tubercular beat of the toilet flushing.... A lot of people take turns sleeping “hot bedding,” sleeping shifts. 3

As early as 1939, the City of San Francisco began to consider the construction of public housing for Chinatown, but the idea was met with opposition from those who objected to the use of government funds for
In 1940 a sketch proposal by the architect Mark Dabiels was published. Contemporary housing blocks were shown with Sinocized roofs for Chinatown. The project included about 230 units. It occupied three sites at the edges of the Chinatown core area. At that time 20,000 people lived in this 20 block area. Chinatown constituted the highest density of any area in San Francisco. And possibly had the worst conditions, for example the community had the highest tuberculosis rate per capita. The City put up $75,000 to help acquire sites, and the United States Housing Authority approved $1,500,000 for the project. Planning continued for the low-cost housing project and by 1946 it was announced that there would be the development of housing in the Chinatown area to accommodate about 1,000 people. Bid were taken and rejected. At the end of the decade, the way was finally opened for the construction of the project at a cost of $3,274,607.

The project was named Ping Yuen (Tranquil Garden, an expression of the developing urban renewal ethic), and each of the three sites was given a name that suggested the traditional Chinese practice of aligning a building complex to the points of the compass. The first building to be finished on Pacific Street just east of Grant Avenue was named Tung Ping Yuen (East Tranquil Garden). The others were named Chung Ping Yuen (Central Tranquil Garden) and Sai Ping Yuen (West Tranquil Garden). (Fig. 5-5)
The six story buildings designed by the architects Ward and Bolles were architecturally undistinguished. The massing was arranged to allow for single loaded open air corridors forming the circulation for the one, two and three bedroom apartments. The buildings were set back to form long narrow fenced front spaces along the main entrance sides. The plans formed enclosed playgrounds at the backs. Yellow tile roofs and dragon decorations were used to relieve the heaviness of the poured concrete exterior surfaces. The buildings were equipped with elevators. A Sinocized gate was erected in front of the Chung Ping Yuen based upon the Pailou gate at the Yellow Monastery, Beijing, China. (Fig. 5-6) The Pailou, which has clear Indian origins is the architectural element of particularly 'Chinese' appearance. The pailou is a commemorative or decorative arch, of one, three, or five openings. (Fig. 5-7) Chinese ornament continued to be a surface treatment that remained unrelated to the experiences and lives of the Chinese Americans these settings served.

More than 500 families applied for the 234 units. Preference was given to the World War Two veterans and those who had been displaced by the construction. Rents were paid according to the income of the family. Each family was required to pay about 20% of its income in rent. 6

The Ping Yuen public housing projects removed much of the old urban fabric at the edges of Chinatown and represented a significant change in the

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Fig. 5-6
Tung Ping Yuen Housing Project, Entrance Gate

way in which residential units related to the rest of the urban fabric. Although it had the trappings of "Orientalism", the housing project was at a much larger scale and introduced a different spatial structure that did not match the existing patterns of community and urban life. It stood out as an alien element in the landscape. (Fig. 5-8)
The first three buildings did not satisfy the housing needs of the Chinese American community, especially since discriminatory housing practices still blocked the Chinese seeking housing outside of Chinatown. In 1957, the Federal Government approved the construction of the Ping Yuen Annex (later the name of Buk Ping Yuen-North Ping Yuen) and earmarked $2,400,000 for the project. John S. Bolles produced the preliminary proposal which was a eight story structure for 208 apartments. The final design was a twelve story structure with 1500 units for families and another 44 units for single elderly people. (Fig.5-9)

The building, completed on Nov. 5, 1958, was significantly out of scale with the rest of the urban fabric around it. It rose up over Chinatown and the Italian community to the north. Its severe facades gave it a stark and ominous presence.
The Character of Religious Buildings:

A Buddhist Church began the transformation of the Chinatown core area. The congregation of the Buddha's Universal Church decided to purchase the property at 720 Washington Street for its new premises. The building that they purchased was an aging structure that was built after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, and housed a night club. The Congregation made the purchase with the intention of investing about $500 in alterations. To their shock in Nov. of 1951, a San Francisco building inspector informed them that three of the four exterior walls were unstable and that it would be necessary to raze the building. With only $10,000 in the bank and a $30,000 mortgage on the property, the congregation of 300 men, women, and children began the demolition of the building. The congregation decided to do as much of the work as possible, and to start immediately with the intention of purchasing materials from contributions from the members' incomes until the project was completed.

By the Spring of 1952, the Congregation found themselves in possession of an empty lot and a $20,000 debt. The money raised went for materials only, and the membership donated their labor and proceeded with construction based on the design of a Chinese American architect, Worley K. Wong (designer for the China Trade Center). Wong studied Buddhist teachings and attempted to put a Buddhist spiritual setting inside a contemporary North American building. Wong designed a rather horizontal International Styled building with a large rectangular central panel, banded second story windows with a vertical accent provided by the mullions which ran from the sidewalk to the cornice line of the primary block. The building ended in a top floor that was set back from the line of the sidewalk and the rest of the facade. Its flat projecting roof gave the design a character that showed the influence by of Edward Durrell Stone’s design for the Museum of Modern Art in New York. (Fig.5-10)

Funds were hard to come by and the congregation had only weekends and evenings to do the construction work. This project continued on for about eleven years and was finally dedicated on March 1, 1963. (Fig.5-11)
The main chapel of the completed building was located near the entrance. Its golden color scheme symbolized Buddha's aura. The altar was shaped like a ship. On the wall rose up a six foot tall mosaic depicting Buddha seated on a Lotus Blossom. The Chapel of the Purifying Waters contained a tiny fountain since Buddha had often taught next to small streams. The Monastery of the Bamboo Grove located on the mezzanine signified the famous location at which Buddha had lectured 2500 years before. The roof garden included a lotus pool and a Bodhi tree reputedly started from a cutting of the tree under which Buddha had sat. Even the lights were symbolic. "Lights everywhere are circular, as it was taught that one's path through life should be round and smooth with no hidden angles." 8

The Open Space:

Throughout the years, Portsmouth Square (which was renamed Portsmouth Plaza by the City in 1928) had been the only open green space within the tightly built up area of Chinatown. In the early 1960’s the Square was to undergo a major transformation in an effort to alleviate the growing parking problem. The migration of middle class Chinese Americans to residential areas outside of Chinatown gradually added to the number of people who would come to Chinatown on weekends and special holidays. More important, congestion in the central business district grew both in area and density. Consumed the old produce market area to its east and moved up the base of the hills to the edges of Chinatown. Tourists added more traffic.

The distinguished landscape architecture firm of Royston, Hanamoto & Mayers were hired to design the parking garage and to relocate the park to the top of the parking structure. The parking structure was sunken into the sloping site with the entrance and exit for the automobiles on the Kearney Street side which was of the low end of the site. On top a split level park was created. A trellised area with tables for Chinese chess overlooked the playground from the upper level. The concrete surfaces tended to overwhelm the grass and planting which quickly become rather worn from the heavy use the park received. A number of the plaques and monuments from the old park were reconstructed and set in the new park. A monument
to Robert Louis Stevenson occupied a location in the northeast corner while a plaque honoring Andrew Smith Hallidie, the designer of the first cable propelled streetcars, was set in the southeast corner of the park.

A final assault upon the old park came with the destruction of the old Hall of Justice and the construction of a new Holiday Inn Hotel tower along the east side of the park. The Chinese Cultural and Trade Center was given space on the third floor as a gesture to the Chinese community and a huge reinforced concrete bridge was erected to connect the Center to the park. The bridge overwhelmed the park and put much of the children’s playground in shade.

Conclusion:

The alterations to the physical fabric of Chinatown tended to introduce buildings that were more heavily influenced by Modern Movement theories of design. During the postwar era, most of the new buildings were of new western design. These buildings in general replaced the efforts to reinterpret revival style buildings through the application of Sinocized ornament. The new buildings did not help to enhance the historic and unique character of the community. Instead they tended to stand out against their neighbors and to clash with the physical fabric around them. Buildings done in the idiom of the Modern Movement sprouted up around Chinatown defying the appearance and characteristics of their neighbors. Some broke with the existing scale and towered over Chinatown. The Chinatown core area which had been rather uniform in scale and density began to take on a fragmented quality as the new structures juxtaposed themselves against the old urban fabric of the community.

For example: a new Modernist apartment tower with commercial space at the street level was constructed on Stockton with disconcerting results. It clashed with its neighbors both in composition and scale. (Fig. 5-12)

Also, the growth of the central business district began to threaten the continued survival of the cluster of relatively small turn-of-the-century structures that made up the bulk of Chinatown. The thirty-three story
Hartford Insurance Building designed by Skidmore Owings and Merrill in 1964 with its pre-cast concrete skin rose up at 650 California Street next to the property of St. Mary's. The office tower was the tallest building in the business district at the time of its completion. The building made no effort to blend in with its two to four story neighbors to its west. It was hard to see what they could have done. A new rectory for Old St. Mary's done by S.O.M. at the same time played off its concrete frame against red brick surfaces, and helped to mediate between the nineteenth century church and the gigantic tower. None-the-less the Hartford Insurance Building's shadow portended a dark original future for Chinatown.
Other Settlement in San Francisco:

Just as the Exclusion Acts starting with the 1882 Act began to dramatically cut into Chinese immigration, in 1880 Japan chose to allow its citizens to emigrate. The US. Census of 1880 put the Japanese population at 55 and the Chinese at 105,465. By 1930 the situation had reversed and the Japanese population was 138,834 while the Chinese had declined to 74,954. In San Francisco the Japanese population increased from 590 in 1890 to 6,250 in 1930.9

The Chinese American image of Japan and the Japanese was mixed. At one level there was admiration for another Asian people who had succeeded in modernization, and who had avoided being exploited by the Western Powers. At another level there was anguish at China's having lost the Sino-Japanese War, and China's being forced to sign the humiliating treaty of Shimoseki in 1895. From 1931 to 1937 Japan took control of Manchuria and by July of 1937 had occupied Beijing as World War Two began in the Pacific.

The most immediate impact upon Chinatown of the United States' entry into the War came in the form of the removal of the Japanese to internment camps. The Japanese evacuees were allowed a few personal belongings such as toiletries, clothing and bedding. Everything else had to be left behind. They were given five days after their official notification to sell, rent, loan, store or give away the rest of their real property and possessions. By November 1, 1942 about 110,000 Japanese, and Japanese Americans had been forced into ten internment camps.

A number of Japanese American businesses had been established along Grant Avenue between Bush and California Streets at the southern edge of the Chinatown to take advantage of the tourist trade that was drawn to the "Oriental City" in North America. The evacuation forced the Japanese businessmen frantically settle their affairs before being shipped off to internment camps. Seemingly over night they disappeared and Chinese businesses began to occupy the two blocks of Grant Avenue.

The first problem for the Chinese American was to distinguish themselves
from the Japanese Americans who were taking so much abuse from the
general public. There was shock at what was happening to another Asian
group. Many took to wearing buttons stating their ethnicity, and some went
so far so to have "I am Chinese" tattooed on their arms. Shopkeepers put
similar sign in their windows. 10

The Sino-American alliance against Japan led to a significant shift in the
presentation and portrayal of the Chinese in the media. Now the Chinese
became heroic and courageous comrades, and faithful allies in the struggle
against the Japanese. Suddenly the suffering that the Chinese had
experienced for many years from the Japanese was seem as tragic. One
might view the changes in attitude as a displacement of the hostility towards
Asians in American thinking from the Chinese to the Japanese rather than as
a thoughtful re-evaluation of the Chinese as people.

10. S. Lyman,
*Chinese Americans*
(New York: Random
House, 1974) p.128.
6

CHINATOWN:
FROM 1960s TO 1970s

The 1965 Immigration Act and coupled with later additions to it opened the United States to a new large scale immigration from Asia. From 1961 to 1970 13% of the immigrants admitted to the United States were of Asian origin. Asians represented 32% of all immigrants between 1971-1976, and 39% between 1977-79. 1 People of Chinese descent living in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia entered the United States in significant numbers. The numbers of the new immigrants soon equaled and then over took the old timers and ABC (native born Chinese Americans) living in Chinatown. Again Chinatown became a settlement for new immigrants and a home of elderly. Many people crowded into the aging building stock. This created a serious and unresolved problem for the Chinese community in Chinatown. The new immigration also radically altered the character of the population.

Expansion out into residential areas around the city of San Francisco was led by the desire of the new immigrants to own real property. Larger numbers of Chinese moved into the North Beach and Telegraph Hill area, and to the Richmond and Sunset Districts where a new Chinatown came into being. At the same time pressures from the expanding central business district and the resulting increases in Chinatown land values put great pressures on the existing physical fabric of the community. (Fig.6-1)

Immigration and the Changing Social Situation:

The Immigrant Act of 1965 and the changes in immigration policies that followed opened the United States to a large scale immigration from Asia for the first time since the passage of the 1882 Exclusion Act. The new Act raised the quota of Chinese immigrants from 105 to 20,000 per year, and Chinese relatives of citizens were allowed to enter the United States on a non-quota basis. Many Chinese began entering the United States under the "immediate relative" clause. Others entered under special quotas established for Southeast Asian refugees, a large proportion of whom were of Chinese ancestry. After 1949 mainland China had a Communist government with which the United States was hostile. The vast majority of Chinese that entered the United States after 1965 came from other parts of Asia, including people of Chinese ancestry from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Philippine and Southeast Asia.

Fig. 6-1
Map: Chinatown
Core Area of
Chinatown about 1976
This was an extremely diverse group of peoples in spite of the fact that they were thought as being "Chinese". Their Chinese ancestors had come from different parts of China with different dialects, diets, landscapes, and subcultures. These immigrants to the United States of Chinese Ancestry brought hybrid Asian cultures with them. The immigrants, as a result, represented a group that had little in common with the ABC population who came from South China that inhabited or made regular use of Chinatown.

There was a marked increase in the available labor force of the community. During the late 1960's and early 1970's, the majority of new immigrants were literate urbanites with technical or professional skills. Most of them came from the Chinese middle class in Hong Kong and other parts of Asia. Only 20% of the Hong Kong immigrants had worked in occupations such as waiters and busboys while 43% had held professional, technical jobs. But when the immigrants sought employment in San Francisco many employers considered the skill and qualifications gained in Asia invalid. About 50% of the male Chinese immigrants who arrived between 1965 and 1972 had to work as waiters, busboys, dishwashers and cooks in Chinese restaurants in San Francisco.

But immigrants of Chinese ancestry from the various parts of Southeast Asia changed the situation. In 1970's a large number of Vietnamese, many of Chinese ancestry, entered the United States. Among them about 82.4% had neither a college education and nor any working experience.  

The Buildings in Chinatown:

Modern architecture, particularly the International Style, did not lend itself to being integrated with the older Sinocized revivalist buildings. The Modern architects used asymmetrical compositions, different surface treatments, and shifts in scale and proportions. It was difficult and seemingly impossible to blend these new designs into the existing fabric of Chinatown.

There was still a problem of responding to the existing physical fabric with a design that could be easily recognized as being symbolically Chinese. Architects did attempt to replicate something in a traditional Chinese style of building. But university trained architects were unable to incorporate accurate decorative details or whole compositional schemes derived from historical works of Chinese architecture.

The Character Commercial Buildings:

Asians continued to find themselves discriminated against by the San Francisco labor unions. They continued to be blocked from entrance into the crafts and industrial trades. The increase in the available labor force led to an expansion in the number of restaurants and sweat shops.

During the nineteenth century Chinese men had made up the Chinatown labor force for the garment industry. By 1958 the number of garment factories in and around Chinatown had increased to about 125 employing about 2,000 women. The large number of unskilled and semi-skilled immigrant women in the community after 1965 made it a good place to set up sweatshops for the production of garments. The number of sweatshops, and the number of women employed in them continued to increase.

Garment factories were always set in basements and old commercial spaces and employed women who needed to bring in income and still be with or near their children. Sweatshops could be found in every nook and cranny of Chinatown. Workers were commonly paid piece rates that were so low

that they were rarely able to make anything near the national minimum hourly wage. Conditions rarely met health and fire standards. Owners commonly curtained or blocked off windows so that the factories would less conspicuous. These acts also intended to limit ventilation, natural light and views of the outside world for the workers and their children within. Working hours were often long but flexible enough to allow the women to walk around and take care of their children.

The streetscape of Chinatown was also being altered by other forces. The Chinese had an established reputation for high rates of saving. Banks and savings and loans began to lease street frontages along Grant Avenue and Stockton Street for branch offices. They often did remodeling to create a Chinese appearance. Their facades and interior designs could often be more closely related to actual buildings or elements of classical Chinese design than the settings they replaced. One financial institution remodeled the property at 845 Grant Avenue by putting curving tiled covered eaves over false brackets and paired columns. Chinese decorative details were employed to brighten and enliven the surfaces. When the financial institution moved they were soon replaced by Citicorp Savings (Fig. 6-2).

The Bank of America branch on Grant Avenue (Fig. 6-3) did a less flamboyant rendering of a Chinese front on the sidewalk elevation facing Grant Avenue, and attached a very large lantern-like sign at the corner with the bank's name in English and Chinese on different surfaces. One bank chose to place lions in front as if to associate itself with the image of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank which ironically had taken the idea of the British lion as a symbol of the strength of the British Empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Bank of Canton took a different tack and purchased the old Chinatown telephone exchange building at 743 Washington Street and renovated the outside while turning the inside into a branch office.

The banks sometimes added elaborate facades to contribute to the visual quality of the streetscapes but at the same time they tended to cut down on the vitality and activity along the street itself. Unlike shops and restaurants, banks did not serve as gathering places for members of the community to visit and chat. The shops and restaurants tended to became gaps in the activity and vitality of the streets, especially for tourists in search of the
exotic and unusual. The increasing number of branch bank placed a serious limit on to the ongoing street life and vitality of the urban scene.
Many newly arrived Asian immigrants with money sought investments in real estate and business. Although property values in San Francisco seemed high to Americans, the new immigrants from places such as Hong Kong found the cost of property lower than what they were used to. Many properties in Chinatown were soon to be bought or leased by the newly arrived Asian immigrants.

A significant number of jade and jewelry stores appeared along the main commercial streets until there were often two or more jade stores on each street of a major block. (Fig. 6-4) A jade store did not necessarily remain in the ownership of one person for very long. Some stores were purchased by an Asian investors until they gained residence in the United States and were then sold to others interested in gaining residency. Owning a business was a way of demonstrating one's solvency and commitment. The equity made it clear that one would not become economically dependent upon the state. Other businesses opened to sell merchandise to the tourist trade. Often these shops took on the organization and aesthetic common to such enterprises in Hong Kong and other parts of Asia. The Asian shop with house above became a common feature of the Chinatown streetscape. Instead of having display windows flanking and entrance, the shop house opened to nearly the height of the ceiling within. This turned the interior of the shop into an extension of the sidewalk. Goods could be placed at the edge of the sidewalk with lanes between the goods leading back into the shop, or counters could be placed along the three walls inside the shop with the central space left open for customers to occupy. In this second arrangement the inside of the shop was turned into the display window. In the semi-tropical climates of East and Southeast Asia this open front scheme allowed for a maximum amount of ventilation; the high wide opening allowed cooler air to enter below and the warmer air to escape above while maximizing the impact of the breezes. But this plan made very little sense in the climatic context of San Francisco's Chinatown. This scheme required a great deal of heating because of the cool climate with cold rainy winters, and the fog that lowered temperatures in the summer in San Francisco. Nonetheless it was the conception of commercial space with which these merchants, recently arrived from Asia, were familiar. Often contemporary awnings with large character signs extended claiming the sidewalk in front
Fig. 6-4
Two Jeweley Shops
Next To One Another

Fig. 6-5
Shops With Signs In
Chinese, Vietnamese
And English
Even the restaurants in Chinatown experienced a dramatic change. For more than a century, Americans had thought of Cantonese cuisine as "Chinese" food. Now Americans and tourists came to realize that there were significant differences between the cuisines of the various regions of China. For example, hot spicy food in the styles cooked in Hunan and Szechwan Provinces gained popularity. The special dishes of Beijing cuisine also became popular. Cantonese cuisine now became a less desirable and less sought after style of cooking. To cash in on the interest in regional styles of Chinese cooking, many restaurants appeared with names suggesting the more popular cooking styles even though many of them were in fact manned by Cantonese cooks. Tourists had only a slight understanding of the variety of provincial styles, seldom appreciating the differences in the food being served.

Teahouses serving Cantonese lunch specialties increased in number and quality to serve the new residents of the community. Nightclubs with Hong Kong style entertainment began to appear on Broadway in the area where it meets Kearny.

The Character of Association Buildings:

A number of new organizations popped up in Chinatown to represent the interests of new immigrant groups and to act as social gathering places. These included such organizations as the Burma Overseas Friendship Association. The ownership, names and goods sold in many of the new businesses in Chinatown expressed the growing heterogeneity of the Asian American community.
The Character of the Residential Buildings:

Discrimination and racial hostility remained a fact of Chinatown life even though conditions had improved markedly. Chinatown remained the most densely inhabited part of San Francisco.

Many Chinese American families sought housing in residential areas of the city and the Bay area as soon as they had financial ability and the opportunity to do so. Nonetheless as late as 1967 about 30,000 of the roughly 47,000 Chinese in San Francisco continued to reside in the Chinatown core area and the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to it. The rate of immigration kept the Old Chinatown core area very densely populated. Between 1960 and 1980 the Chinese population of San Francisco increased from 36,445 to 82,244, moving from 4.92% of the population to 12.1%. In 1980 the total population of the Chinatown was 10,064. Many people lived alone; about 40% of the households had only one person. Among these people about 4,000 were in the low income group, and about 20-25% were elders aged 65 or older. The 50% of the population who worked were employed mostly in service occupations such as retail sales or manufacturing.

The poor had little possibility of residential mobility. Although life in the residential hotels of Chinatown was far from ideal, the small rooms were among the most affordable spaces available in San Francisco.

The new immigrants found Chinatown to be a haven away from an unfamiliar culture and way of life. They also lacked residential mobility because of their economic situation. Chinatown offered some sense of familiarity in a new culture. The foods and the items of daily use were more familiar than what they found in other parts of the city. People of Asian ancestry filled the streets and buildings.

The elderly often chose to live in Chinatown rather than in other areas that offered few cultural supports and little sense of familiarity. They stayed in Chinatown in spite of the low quality of the physical amenities in the housing stock of the area. Others among the elderly did not have the capital
needed to leave, or any relatives with whom they might stay. Some found life in suburban situations with one of their offspring unbearable because of the isolation they experienced when the other members of the household left for work and school.  

The rapid growth of the Asian population of the city led to increased housing pressures on the building stock of Chinatown and the adjacent neighborhoods as new Asian residents sought housing in or near Chinatown. Many of the Chinese middle and working class families in Chinatown had began to move to other areas of the Bay Area. The influx of new immigrants generated an increasing need for housing which kept the residential hotels of Chinatown always full. As mentioned before, at first the residential hotels that had been built to serve the post-earthquake declining male population. Now they were pressed into service for both individuals and families. Many of the new seekers of residential space were immigrants unfamiliar with the United States, unable to use English effectively, and at the margins of the job market. The increasing demand for housing raised rental prices without generating any significant improvements on the building stock. Low cost housing in the Chinatown area usually meant the residential hotels that had been constructed in the wake of the 1906 Earthquake and Fire.

In 1980 there were about 120 residential hotels within a 31 block area of Chinatown with about 4,500 rooms. The rooms ranged from about 60 to 120 square feet in size and commonly about 10 rooms shared a common kitchen and bathroom. After seventy years of use and only limited or intermittent maintenance conditions, the inside of many of them were, at best, just bearable.8

Inside a hotel one would find a mixture of single elderly women, single elderly men, couples, and families. A study published in 1975 found that 75% of the housing units in the core area of Chinatown had no heat. Fire protection was usually minimal, and many lacked legal exit stairs, landings, and handrails. More than 70% of the housing were identified as unsound.9 Since health conditions were bad, Chinatown residents had a high per capita rate of tuberculosis and other diseases. (Fig. 6-6)
Overall housing condition did not improve. Even residential hotel conditions were basically the same or slightly worse each year, because of the continued demand for low cost housing, the demolition of residential hotel units for new construction, and the reluctance of hotel owners to put money into substandard buildings.

Some efforts were made to increase and improve the housing in Chinatown. The architectural firm of Robert Herman designed a housing project for the elderly at 990 Pacific Street well outside of the old core area but within the expanding area of Chinatown. The architect designed an uncompromisingly Modernist building influenced by the work of the French architect, LeCorbusier. The gray concrete surfaces were punctuated by a number of painted modules. The building contained an L-shaped plan and units located along double-loaded corridors. Although the budget did not allow for full balconies, Herman installed sliding glass windows and balcony railings so that the units could be opened up and the interior space could substitute as partial balconies in good weather. The building stepped down at the corner of the block to try to diminish the building's mass with respect to its wood-framed neighbors. Along Pacific Street the full mass of the building could not be disguised. Garden terraces were provided on the stepped roof. (Fig. 6-7)
Another housing project in Chinatown - the Mei Lun Yuen was finished in 1982. It contained low cost housing, community service facilities, and parking. It was located at the southwest corner of Sacramento and Stockton Streets. To include the 185 units of housing and the various facilities on a difficult site demanded the creation of a complex base with the housing above. Given the complexity of the project and the need to work with a variety of community groups, the architects, LAD Architects - Gerald Lee and Marvin Buchanam, did an admirable job. Circular openings and an entry gate attempted to add some Sinocizing elements to the Modernist concrete building. (Fig. 6-8)

These two projects were welcome additions to the available housing stock but their size, composition and selection of surface materials guaranteed that they would blend with the character of the older building stock. In terms of the number of improved units needed they represented a modest change in the overall situation.
The Character of Public Services:

The creation of a gateway to Chinatown across Grant Avenue at Bush Street exemplified both the City's attitude towards Chinatown as a welcomed picturesque feature, and the abilities of the newly trained Chinese American architects with a more scholarly understanding of the major monuments of traditional pre-revolutionary China. (Fig. 6-9)
The San Francisco Board of Supervisors choose to appropriate $70,000 for the construction of a gateway to Chinatown as a gesture to the community. A Chinatown Gateway Committee was formed. Also a competition jury of five members including four architects and one member of the Chinatown Gateway Committee was formed. Finally, the design of Clayton E. Lee, a 27 year old Chinese American architect, was selected. This design attempted to emphasize the symbolic content. “This Gateway appears to favor the pedestrian, to create a fine sense of scale by the use of trees and imply an entrance into a village rather than into a single shrine.” It was traditional Chinese architecture using modern building materials, such as steel, concrete and ceramics.

The Gate was finished in May of 1970 and the dedication took place on the following October.

Expansion and Engulfment:

The land values in and around Chinatown were driven up continually by the new residents of Chinatown. Many of the new immigrants thought of real estate as a form of savings and investment. During the early 1980's, because the question of the British lease expiring for the Hong Kong New Territories in 1997 and as the fears concerning Hong Kong’s future increased, Hong Kong investments in real estate grew in number. A 1982 article noted that Asian investors had pushed up real estate prices in Chinatown and the surrounding neighborhoods by between 300% and 400%. The continually rising property values led to dramatic increases in rents whenever a property changed ownership.

Small grocery and food shops, and other services that served the local residents found themselves unable to afford the rising rents. They had to move to new locations on side streets, and above Stockton where only a few commercial enterprises had existed before. For many years the average rent for stores in Chinatown had been around $1 per square; but by 1980 the cost of commercial space shot up to about $200 per square foot.
Restaurants and Bakeries had operated out of the location at the corner of Grant Avenue and Pacific Street for 28 years when the rent suddenly went up. Shops catering to the day to day needs of the Chinatown population began to move to locations west of Stockton Street making their way up the slope of Nob Hill. While banks and tourist oriented activities took up the old commercial frontages, the older community directed commercial services were forced to the edges by land values and the resulting pressures on rents. Chinese seeking available property and renters seeking affordable housing began spreading into North Beach, the slopes of Russian and Nob Hills, and the Marina Districts. Others began to discover the relatively less expensive properties available in the Richmond and the Sunset Districts. (Fig. 6-10)

Historically there had been hostilities between the Italian and Chinese communities which sat next to one another. The Italian reluctance to allow Chinatown to spread into their community was overcome by money.
In spite of the desire of the new arrivals to own property near the Old Chinatown core area, there were severe economic pressures that limited the process of expansion out to contiguous areas. The pressure to expand out was countered by the pressure of rising land values, and the growth of the central business district. The increasing expansion and densification of the business district pushed up land and property values in and around Chinatown in concert with the internal pressures on real estate prices. The business district experienced a massive expansion and building boom as San Francisco became one of the growing centers for the location of offices for national and multi-national corporations.

The first sign of things to come was the construction of the international building in 1960 designed by Anshen and Allen at 601 California. Every effort was made to make this modestly scaled high-rise fit into the edge of Chinatown and St. Mary’s Square located on the top of a parking structure. The original Square by John J. Gould in 1955 was re landscaped by Eckbo, Roysten and Williams. The construction of the Hartfort Insurance Building in 1965 by S.O.M. placed a thirty-three story high-rise office building only a half block from Grant Avenue. It occupied 636-650 California Street and towered over its neighbor at the corner, St. Mary’s Church. (Fig.6-11) The Bank of American World Headquarters went up in 1969, one block from Grant Avenue at 555 California Street. 13 This fifty-two story structure made a striking juxtaposition to the modest mixed-use tenements only one block away. The pressure to build office space on the eastern edge of Chinatown was enormous.

The few Chinatown structures isolated within the western fringes of the business district were quickly absorbed. The new Post Office and Kong Chow Temple exemplified this displacement process and the rejection of the old building formulas that had been developed in the aftermath of the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. Here a Chinese American architect trained in the Modernist mode struggled to create a design that was both contemporary and Chinese.

The Kong Chow Temple had always been at the edge of Chinatown and with the rapid expansion of the financial district the property came under the pressure to sell it for high-rise development. In 1969 some members of the community worked with the San Francisco Landmark Advisory Board when the building was threatened with demolition. The temple was designated a landmark but this did not save the building. The temple association agreed to exchange its site for one located at the corner of Stockton and Clay Street and the old building was demolished in 1970. The temple constructed after the Earthquake and Fire perished to satisfy the need to expand the financial district. The marble entry plaques and temple paraphernalia were saved for placement in a new temple.

The architect for the new building, Ed Sue, struggled to create a modern rendering of a building suggesting a high abstracted and simplified reinterpretation of Paul Rudolph’s Yale Art and Architecture Building, (Fig. 6-12) and the play of solids and voids associated with Louis Kahn. As with the building at Yale the new Kong Chow Temple occupied a corner site which allowed for a clear expression of the building volume. The patterned
surfaces of the vertical elements contrasted with the horizontals of the roof and balconies. There was a substantial expanse of glass curtain wall on the Stockton Street facade. Modestly upturned corners on the roof, and a massive reinforced concrete canopy with Chinese tiles over the temple entry constituted the major efforts to be Chinese-American and traditional. To these touches were added an octagonal window and Chinese characters.

The temple was placed on the top floor, but the windows and the configuration of the main room did not seem to conform to any particular traditional rules of organization. The main room was entered from the side with a corridor. The ground floor was occupied by a branch office of the U.S. Postal Service. The synthesis of a Chinese temple and Modern Movement design was not an altogether happy one. (Fig. 6-13)
One limit to the consumption of Chinatown by the Financial District had been the number of small parcels into which the blocks were divided, but this was slowly overcome by developers who bought properties to construct larger lots. The International Hotel and its neighboring buildings were purchased and demolished for the construction of commercial space which was blocked by the protests of various community organizations. The lots remained empty but the trend towards consolidation of properties and high-rise construction along the eastern edge of Chinatown continued.

Once the new immigrants had settled into American life the desire to put their earnings into real property often outweighed the desire to live in a semi-Asian environment, especially since that environment had such old and inadequate services and presented such poor living conditions. They started to purchase property out in the Avenues, in the Sunset and the Richmond districts in particular. A new Chinatown emerged in Richmond that closely resembled the more common ethnic community with a large number of Asians mixed with a number of different ethnic groups. Clement Street became the core of their new Asian community. The old Chinatown
remained more like a true ghetto with an overwhelmingly elderly and poor population.

As land values and rents went up, more of the Chinese and other families that could manage, bought properties away from the Chinatown core area. The elderly and the poor were the ones that could not leave.

Associations which owned about half of the properties in Chinatown found it increasingly more difficult to stay out of the development for profit game. Now as the officers and long-standing members of an association it was possible to get the rights to sublet association property for profits beyond anything they had known in their many years of work. Under these conditions even the old associations of Chinatown had to consider seriously the tearing down of their old properties to make way for large buildings that would bring in more money for the association and its membership.

The aid and welfare organizations, that had been born out of the civil rights movement and the Cultural Revolutions in 1960's and 1970's, struggled to find the enormous sums needed to improve the housing stock and to search for sites for their projects. For them the question became how to balance the need for housing and amenities for the poor and elderly against the destruction and transformation of the old physical fabric of Chinatown.
CHINATOWN: The Future of Chinatown

San Francisco's Chinatown is one of the longest standing ethnic minority communities in the United States. Chinatown's 140-year-old history is a reminder of how this nation excluded and discriminated against one group of Americans and the effects this had.

Today, Chinatown is many things to the Chinese American. It is a way station for the new immigrant from Asia, a shopping and cultural district serving Chinese Americans throughout the Bay Area, one of San Francisco's major tourist attractions, a neighborhood for low-income families and elderly, and a supportive environment for small businesses, community services, social and recreational facilities.

Chinatown plays three major roles: a residential village, a capital city for the Chinese population in the Bay Area and a center for tourism.

The population of residential village is primarily made up of the elderly and recent immigrant households. It has its own language and institutions, social services agencies, groceries and other small shops. These different functions are each of great importance by themselves. They are also interrelated to the other functions and need to be balanced.

As we know, the fate of a community over time is central to the field of urban sociology and central to the study of ethnicity in American society. A community exist as a complex network of relations between place of residence, employment of adults and schooling of children. San
Francisco's Chinatown represents the uniquely indelible nature of some communities. Because San Francisco's Chinatown is located in an area pressured by commercial and industrial expansion, there is continual tension between forces that wish to maintain a community and those threatening its future.

A community is best understood by examining the nature of the community and desired residential mobility. The nature of a community is defined by the resident's motives for living there, neighborhood relations, involvement in locally based organizations, the "goodness" of the neighborhood as a place to live and the identity that residents give to their neighborhood. Desired residential mobility is defined as residents' desire to move or stay. It can be a reflection of residential satisfaction. Below is a review of the changing nature and mobility in this Chinese community.

The Nature Of The Community:

Why live in Chinatown:

Convenience, ethnicity/language, and low rent are the primary motives for living in Chinatown.

The community's residential-commercial mix provides convenient access to work, stores, public transportation, Chinese restaurants, school and health facilities. Residential location is related to economic fit. The Chinese community forms a nearly self-sufficient urban village containing a network of residences, employment, and schooling. Rent is more affordable in Chinatown than in most other San Francisco neighborhoods. Residents can function there without owning a car. Moving out is associated with a change in economic status. Those with higher incomes want to move. The poorest have no choice but to stay.

Also, ethnicity and language homogeneity play a role in residential location. Even with income held constant, those who attributed greater importance to living among other Chinese showed greater wish to stay. Comments concerning ethnicity or language suggested that the enclave
provided cultural security for many and language security for those who
can not speak English. Chinatown is occupied by immigrants who are less
able to compete in the larger society. Chinatown is primarily a first
settlement area for newcomers who do not yet have the economic resources
or language skills to compete for better jobs and better living conditions.

Immigrants, who have difficulties competing in the American mainstream,
ease their process of acculturation by residing amidst language and cultural
security. But this security exists along with crowding and adverse
environmental conditions. As economic, language and social constraints
lessen, the need to live in the ethnic enclave gives way to the desire to
move out in order to secure better housing, better opportunities, a better
life. The push to leave is greatest among the younger adults and among
those whose desire for social-economic mobility or need for more family
space outweighs their preference to live among others of their own ethnic
group.

Thus, for some Chinatown is a place to leave as soon as it is economically
possible. For others, the community is a place of necessity; they have no
hope for a better life. For still others, Chinatown represents cultural
comfort, security and convenience. In its broadest symbolic term, the
community is heartland and refuge for Chinese America. Thus, one does
not find a population entirely resigned to living there because of necessity,
nor an entire population anxiously waiting to exit, nor a residency that is
stable due to contentment. Rather, we find all of the above, which
explains why there is no unanimity about moving or staying. Barring any
major changes in housing, rent, immigration, and economics, the
population composition of the Chinatown will become increasingly that of
the poor, the elderly and the immigrants.
Why Move?

The ideal neighborhood for Chinatown residents is quiet, clean, and uncrowded. When I asked to the people living in or working in Chinatown "What do you dislike about your neighborhood?", two-thirds of the respondents disliked something about their neighborhood and most often it was its "filth", "crowding" and "noise". Remarks included: "Not enough space." "Traffic jams." "Parking is impossible." "No usable open space." "No fresh air." "Dirty roads." "Filthy environment." "Garbage in the streets." "Too many people crowded in a small area." "Like a slum, too crowded, not very clean." These also are the reasons most often are mentioned for wanting to move.

"Filth" is largely due to the commercial sector, specifically the tourist and food industries. Congestion in the streets and sidewalks cause restaurants, grocery stores, and meat and fish markets to leave refuse on pedestrian thoroughfares in the evenings. "Air pollution" is directly connected with the traffic attendant to the tourist, restaurant and commercial businesses.

"Crowding" is due largely to the population density. In 1980 the population density of the core area was 744 persons per residential acre, ten times greater than that of San Francisco. The population densities of the residential and expanded areas were four and two times greater than that of the city, respectively.

The daily influx of tourists and shoppers from outside the community exacerbates vehicle congestion and competition for parking spaces. Congested pedestrian traffic adds to the sense of crowding. At midday of during a week, over 1,500 persons pass through just one main intersection of Chinatown (the corner of Stockton and Pacific streets) within a twenty minute period, and pedestrian traffic during the weekend is nearly as high. In 1987, in a move to alleviate sidewalk congestion, Supervisor Tom Hsieh authored legislation forcing peddlers to stop setting up shop on the sidewalks and curbs of Stockton Street, Chinatown's main thoroughfare. The peddlers were moved to spots around the corner on Pacific Avenue.

The noise factor is largely due to traffic, street and commercial activity and less from uninsulated buildings.
The major problem is traffic congestion, caused largely by city and tourist traffic. Stockton Street traffic spells "headache". A Tudor Engineering report (1988) stated: "Vehicle operations ... can often be described as saturated flow, a stop-and-go situation that is considered to be the worst level of traffic service" (p.42) Actually, local vehicle use is not a major causal variable. According to the 1980 census, three-quarters of the Asian/Pacific Islanders in Chinatown and half of the Asian/Pacific Islanders in the noncore area did not own a vehicle.

The placement of the Stockton Street bus stops directly across the street from each other exacerbates congestion. The "30 Stockton," one of the most heavily traveled lines in the city, "turns to molasses as it flows through Chinatown". 3 Congestion is greatest when a northbound Stockton bus stops between Sacramento and Clay streets.

Available parking is insufficient to accommodate persons from outside the community who are drawn to Chinatown's commercial sector. The search for parking invariably contributes to traffic congestion.

Thus, by virtues of location convenience and ethnic homogeneity, Chinatown is ideal. But its filth, crowing, noise, and traffic congestion make the community unappealing.

For those who wanted to move, reasons for not having yet moved are principal financial.

Finally, younger adults showed a greater wish to leave while the elderly wished to stay. Those with children wanted to leave but those without children reported a greater wish to stay. The Chinatown community seems to serve as a better fit for the elderly and those without children.
The Future Of Chinatown - Development Versus Preservation:

Most low-income ethnic neighborhoods in metropolitan areas inevitably face the threat of development, which can spell an end to existing housing. San Francisco's Chinatown is no exception, but the lessons learned here provided a model for other neighborhoods. In 1985 the San Francisco Planning commission proposed interim controls on Chinatown development in order to retain affordable housing and discourage the spillover of massive development from the adjoining Financial District into the community. The controls called for: (1) height restrictions on new nonresidential buildings higher than 40 feet (buildings in the core area currently average 35 feet, or 3½ stories); (2) additional public hearings for proposed new development projects; (3) a reduction in the floor area ratio (ratio of total floor space to lot area) in core Chinatown from six to one to four point eight to one. Under interim controls, a developer could not construct any residential building higher than six stories in the core area or four stories in the noncore area.

Heated controversy arose. The Chinese Six Companies, other property owners, architects, real estate brokers, and some members of the community protested the proposed restrictions. These pro-development advocates affirmed their desire for "a first-class Chinatown", Their freedom "to build to what the property here is worth," and their impatience with "living in a ghetto". In response, the city planning office cut the period proposed for these interim controls in half. On the other hand, community groups such as the Chinatown Coalition for Better Housing, Chinatown Resource Center, and Asian Neighborhood Design supported interim controls because of the need to curtail "overly liberal zoning rules that encourage owners to develop properties at the expense of housing".

The controversy between those who favored and those who opposed controlled development raised two questions. First, who more accurately represented the residents and their interests - the Planning Commission and certain community groups or the Chinese Six Companies and pro-development advocates? In the mid to late 1900s, the Chinese Six Companies were empowered to speak and act for all the Chinese in

5. East West, 1985, p.1
California. However, as the Six Companies acquired increasing portions of Chinatown real estate, the organization veered in a politically conservative direction. After the 1960s, community agencies replaced the Six Companies as progressive advocates for the community.

The second question concerned the price of unchecked development. Can property values be maximized without sacrificing housing for low-income and elderly Chinese? What margins of choice exist? Can current residents afford the additional costs required in a "first-class Chinatown"? What effects would uncontrolled commercial development have on the quality of neighborhood life? Chinatown had historic significance as the oldest Chinese community in the United States. What effects would unchecked development have on its ethnic character and sense of community.

Furthermore, Chinatowners are a vulnerable population, relatively helpless with regard to housing supply and rent demands, nearly all (97%) are renters, only 3% homeowners, which differs from the noncore area where 68% are renters and 32% homeowners. While noncore residents are less vulnerable, the majority are still rather powerless to control their housing options. (Fig. 7-1)
The Chinatown Master Plan:

In 1987 the Chinatown Master Plan was adopted (San Francisco Department of City Planning, 1987). The plan represented a model aimed at preserving the area's character, scale, residential value, neighborhood-serving commercial base, and multiple roles. There were seven objectives to the Master Plan.

Objective one intended to preserve the distinctive urban character, physical environment, and cultural heritage of Chinatown.

Objective two involved retaining and reinforcing Chinatown's mutually supportive functions as neighborhood, capital city, and visitor attraction.

Objective three intended to stabilize and, where possible, increase the supply of housing.

Objective four involved preserving the urban role of Chinatown as a residential neighborhood through policies that would protect and enhance the neighborhood-serving character of commercial uses in predominantly residential areas; controlling proliferation of uses that tend to crowd out needed neighborhood services; guiding a location of tourist-oriented uses away from predominantly residential neighborhood commercial area; and expanding open space opportunities.

Objective five involved retaining and enhancing Chinatown's role as a visitor attraction by maintaining Grant Avenue as the traditional retailing area since an estimated one-third of the 20,000 jobs in Chinatown are related to visitors.

Objective six involved retaining Chinatown's role as a capital city; center of civic, religious and political organizations; and a specialized shopping area for the larger Chinese population of the Bay area.

Objective seven was to manage transportation impacts to stabilize or reduce the difficulties of walking, driving delivering goods, parking or using transit in Chinatown.
The Future of Chinatown:

Unfortunately, the adoption of the Chinatown Master Plan did not eliminate the problems of Chinatown's future. In 1989 the face of Chinatown was visibly altered by the proliferation of tourist T-shirt shops, primarily owned or leased by non-Chinese. On Grant Avenue and Jackson Street, a T-shirt shop replaced what was once the "Italian Market," (these shops are owned by Italians) where Chinese roast ducks, squabs and chickens were sold. The new shop was so transient in appearance that the Italian Market had not yet been removed.

Cheap T-shirt stores dot the face of Chinatown - one on Washington Street across from Portsmouth Square, two on Grant Avenue and Washington Street, two on Grant Avenue near Clay Street and one on Grant Avenue and Pacific Street. Camera and electronics stores also mar the ethnic character of the community; "Camera Express," "One Hour Photo," and "Japan - U.S.A. Europe Connection" signs are obtrusive against the surrounding ethnic businesses.

Among its objectives, the Master Plan called for "retaining the urban role of Chinatown as a residential neighborhood" along with "retain and enhancing Chinatown's role as a visitor attraction." The plan called for locating tourist-oriented uses away from predominantly residential neighborhood areas and maintaining Grant Avenue as the traditional specialty retailing area. The problem is that specialty retailing stores that cater to tourists can vary, ranging from stores that retail items of Chinese character to those that retail items of no cultural relevance. The proliferation of the latter saps Chinatown of its distinctive ethnic character, deprives the Asian American community of culturally appropriate retailing stores, and destroys ethnic consistency in the area.

The delicate balance needed to preserve Chinatown while also providing better housing presents another dilemma. The city's landmark Advisory Board has recommended that all of Chinatown be declared a historic district. Most of the buildings, erected to house the early Chinese immigrants, are standing monuments to that history. At the same time, there is need for more and better housing, which often requires the
demolition of existing buildings. Compatibility of housing needs and preservation needs, or some balance between the two, is the crucial goal that this and many other ethnic communities must achieve if they are to survive.

Summary:

Chinatown residents were much less satisfied with their neighborhood than residents in U. S. neighborhoods overall. From the survey of San Francisco City Planning Office in 1988, 29% of the Chinatown sample were dissatisfied with their neighborhood compared to only 9% of a national sample. Chinatown has the positive attributes of location convenience and cultural homogeneity. But its other attributes of being dirty, crowded, noisy, and congested make the neighborhood far from ideal. 7

If this community is to thrive and survive, there is little margin for planning error. Considering how low neighborhood satisfaction is attention must be focused on retaining those conditions that lead to neighborhood satisfaction while ameliorating those that cause dissatisfaction.

Residents who live in Chinatown, where population density is greatest, were less satisfied with their neighborhood than residents living in the less dense, noncore area. One can deduce that development that leads to increased population density and perceived neighborhood crowding will lower the level of neighborhood satisfaction. Furthermore, since the Chinatown area is a mixed commercial-residential area, increased commercial zoning is likely to exacerbate Chinatown's unattractive environmental qualities of noise, dirt and traffic congestion. The result of unplanned development will be a less livable, more stressful neighborhood for those who have little choice in housing.

The pro-development perspective does not reflect the views of the majority of residents. Height and density limit and commercial zoning controls are necessary to preserve the residential community.
Development of the community into a first-class Chinatown could easily transform the area into a commercial tourist center. Development at high market rates would eliminate Chinatown's ethnically homogeneous residential base by displacing Chinese immigrants and elderly. Low-income residents would be forced out by rising rents, condominium conversions, or commercial takeovers of residential areas.

Once an ethnic residential community, nearby San Francisco's Japantown now functions largely as a commercial and tourist center. Chinatown will follow suit if a larger population of Chinese immigrants are displaced from the community. Without controls on development, there may well be a loss of home and community to thousands of Chinese immigrants.

There are lessons here for other cities and other neighborhoods, for it is unlikely that the findings in this neighborhood differ much from others. Neighborhoods that serve important functions need a Master Plan if they are to be preserved, for one can not rely on the invisible hand of the open market to protect an area's ethnic character, scale, residential value to its current residents, neighborhood-serving base, and multiple roles. Indeed, this nearly instant proliferation of retail stores that destroy ethnic consistency, dilute the ethnic character, and reduce the overall quality of an area were not curtailed.

On the issue of development versus preservation, uncontrolled development without planning has costs. It costs are neighborhood satisfaction and ultimately, the survival of the residential ethnic community.
Appendix A:

Some important Immigrant Laws

Burlingame Treaty of 1868: This bill recognized the “inalienable” right of man to free migration and emigration from one country to another “for the purpose of curiosity, of trade, or as permanent residents.” It further established the principle of reciprocity in privileges, immunities, and exemptions between citizens of China and the United States living or traveling in each other’s country.

Chinese Exclusion Act of May 8, 1882: This act suspended the immigration of Chinese of Chinese laborers, both skilled and unskilled, for ten years. Teachers, students merchants, and travelers were, however, exempted from exclusion. It formally prohibited the naturalization of Chinese in the United States. The act was extended and additional ten years by the Geary Act of May 5, 1892. On April 27, 1904, the exclusion of Chinese laborers from the United States was extended indefinitely.

Scott Act of October 1, 1888: This act prohibited the return of any Chinese laborers who had departed from the United States. At the time it was passed, over 20,000 Chinese laborers had temporarily left the United States for China with reentry certificates. The reentry permits were declared void.

Immigration Act of 1924: Under the terms of this act no Chinese women were allowed to enter the United States for the purpose of permanent residence. Previous to the passing of this act, wives of Chinese merchants and American-born Chinese were allowed to enter the country, although wives of Chinese laborers were barred.

Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Acts in 1943: On December 13, 1943, Franklin D. Roosevelt signed this act which repealed the acts related to the exclusion and deportation of Chinese aliens. This act granted for the first time naturalization right to Chinese aliens. It set an immigration quota
of 105 per year for people of Chinese race (defined as any person with as much as one-half Chinese blood, regardless of country of origin.

**War Brides Act of December 28, 1945:** This act facilitated the entry of wives of men in the American armed forces to the United States. Approximately 6,000 Chinese women entered the United States as "displaced persons."

**Refugee Relief Act of 1953:** Allowed the entry of 2,777 refugees of the Chinese revolution, the majority of whom were Chinese. It further granted a total of 2,000 visas to Chinese whose passports had been endorsed by the Chinese Nationalist Government for entry to the United States.

**Act of September 11, 1957:** With this act "paper sons" who obtained entry visas by fraud and misrepresentation could not be deported if a spouse, parent, or child was a citizen of the United States of a permanent resident alien.

**Presidential Directive of May 25, 1962:** This directive signed by President John F. Kennedy permitted Hong Kong refugees to enter the United States immediately as "parolees." By June 30, 1955, 15,111 Chinese refugees were admitted. By the end of fiscal 1966, 9,126 of them were given permanent resident status.

**The Act Of October 3, 1965:** The historic act was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson at the foot of Statue of Liberty. It abolished the national origin quota system on July 1, 1968. Each independent country outside of the Western Hemisphere has a quota of up to 20,000 per year. Further, the quota is accounted to the alien's country of birth, not nationality or race. Persons born in Hong Kong, however, are charged to Great Britain's quota. The entry of these people is not to exceed one percent of the total visas issued to Great Britain in one year.

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