

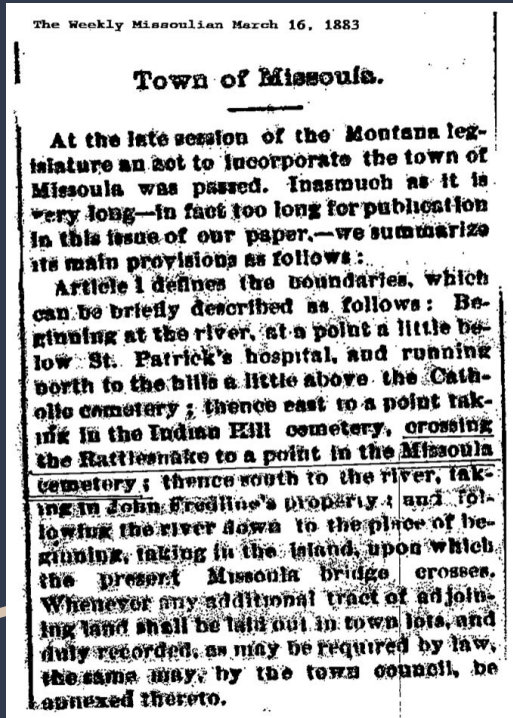
Missoula's Chinese Cemetery

Timeline, context, and efforts to memorialize the site

By Paul Kim



Timeline

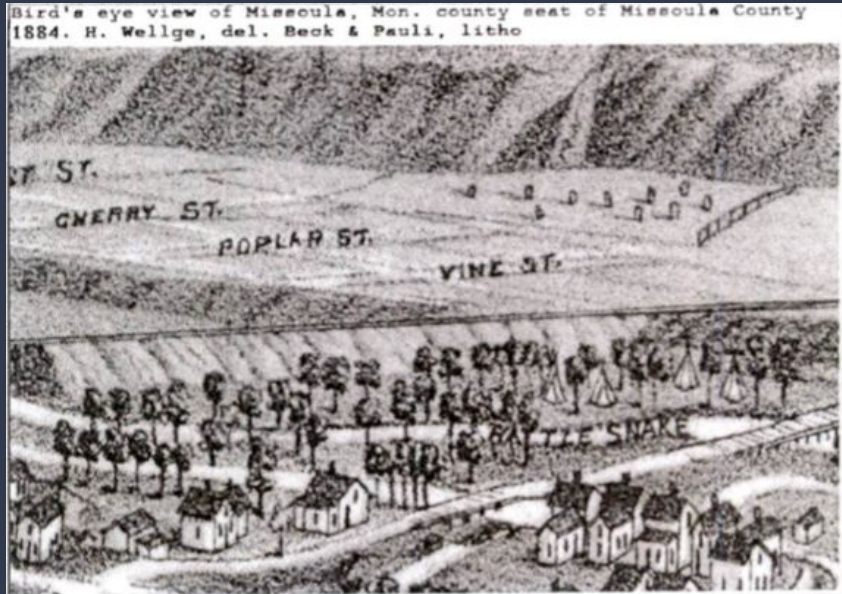


1878 — early Missoula residents host a 'strawberry festival' in order to raise funds to fence the town's cemetery, the first mention of the cemetery in the newspaper record.

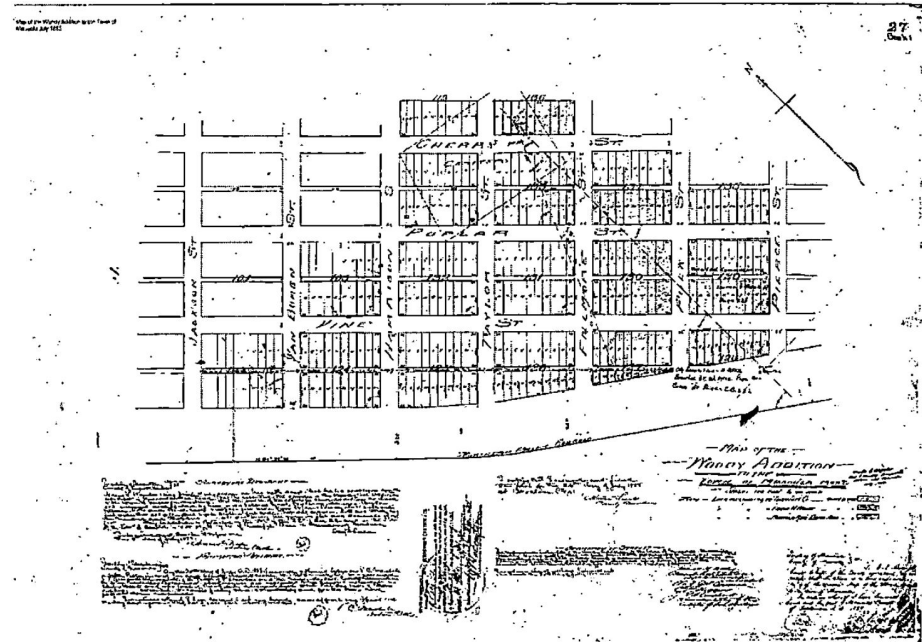
—Burials at this point include some of the town's first settlers, including Frank Worden, but few if any Chinese.

1883 — Missoula is incorporated as a town by the Montana legislature. In enumerating the town boundaries, the legislature refers to the Missoula cemetery.

Timeline



1884/1885 – Cemetery begins to fall into disarray due to vandalism and neglect. City council tasks a committee of Missoulians concerned with the upkeep of the cemetery.



Missoulain 8-14-1885

We understand that some parties, possibly thoughtless boys, have been desecrating the graveyard east of Rattlesnake, breaking tombstones, etc. It is to be hoped there will be no more of such actions and that any person indulging in such sport will be caught and severely punished. The old graveyard seems to be going to rack and ruin pretty rapidly and it is time that those who have friends buried there should take steps either to remove the bodies to the new cemetery or else fix up the old. It does not speak well for a community to let a burial place be in the condition the old cemetery is in now and we hope to see early action taken in regard to the matter.

As White Missoulians begin to remove bodies to the new cemetery, Chinese people comprise the majority of new burials at the old cemetery

Timeline

noon.
THE DEAD MONGOL.
Impressive Ceremonies Held Yesterday Over a Celestial's Grave.
The Chinese funeral held Sunday was a gorgeous affair, participated in by about 500 Chinese and witnessed by nearly the entire population of Missoula. The Mascot band was engaged for the purpose which with the assistance of the unearthly tom-toms of the Celestial musicians succeeded in making all the noise desired. Mourners were numerous, many of whom, adorned with Fourth of July draperies, managed admirably in frightening every horse in the street. The usual supply of pig and other mysterious edibles was on hand and a liberal quantity of "scare em devil" had been provided. The cortege wended its way through the mud, (there was no dust, neither sewerage), arriving at the grave in due time. Here lamentations were numerous; a dyspeptic looking Chinaman played on the flageolet until exhausted and the band played "Johnnie When You Die, Will Me Your Whiskers." All the personal effects of the deceased were burned, thereby obviating any possibility of their being wrangled over by the many heirs present. The body was planted and whatever grub remained was devoured with avidity by the hungry Indians loitering about the premises.

—As the cemetery falls into neglect, it becomes increasingly used by Missoula's Chinese, who observed the traditional burial practice of exhumation.

—Remains were intended to be returned back to the deceased's ancestral homelands in Southern China traveling on a global web of commerce which connected Montana and China

are numerous foot stumps and bridges.
21. The SITE OF THE CHINESE CEMETERY, SE. end of Cherry St. between Harrison and Fillmore Sts., has known few Chinamen, dead or alive, for a generation. In 1865 many Chinese came in from the Cedar Creek placer diggings, but left after four of their number were killed by white laborers in 1892. The cemetery was used only temporarily, the bones of the dead being exhumed after 12 years and shipped to China, in accordance with custom. A newspaper item (1891) tells of a funeral in which 500 Chinese took part while most of the white population

FUNERAL OF TONG ME DUCK.

The funeral of Tong Me Duck, the Chinese vegetable peddler who died Thursday of Chinese consumption, was held yesterday afternoon at 2 o'clock from J. M. Lucy's chapel. The ceremonies were marked by festivities in true Chinese style.

After the services at the chapel, another ceremony was held at the grave. All of the possessions of the departed were burned in a huge fire, while the fellowmen sat around eating roast pig, which had been cooked whole, and fried chicken. Interment was in the Chinese cemetery.

CRANKY SAM'S BURIAL IS SOLEMN OBSERVANCE

With all the ceremonies and funeral rites Wung (Cranky) Sam, who died at the home of friends on the island several days ago, was yesterday buried in the Chinese cemetery up the Rattlesnake. The ceremonies were conducted by the officials of the Mongolian colony and were largely attended. The earth which covered all that was mortal of the notorious Missoula character was plentifully bestrewn with ritualistic emblems and ceremonial symbols, and although the man whose funeral was being conducted was regarded as a social outcast by the local Chinese, he was given a burial that was in perfect harmony with that ordained for one of the yellow race having a higher standing.

RY MISSOULA TO MOVE FRED WORDEN'S GRAVE

VE CITY WILL TRANSFER REMAINS
OF PIONEER CITIZEN FROM
DESERTED CEMETERY.

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The city council yesterday morning decided to remove the body of Fred Worden, one of the first settlers in Missoula, from the old graveyard on Cherry street, now desecrated by the crowding city, to the new city cemetery. The burial grounds on Cherry street was established while Missoula still clung close to the original town-site, now known as "The Island." Until 10 years ago it was kept in good condition. Then the expanding city began to jostle its pioneer dead and one by one the bodies of all whose descendants lived in the city were moved to newer and more secure resting places. The graveyard fell into disrepair and as the boundaries were obliterated the city crept in. Houses were built over all remaining graves, (most of them unmarked) save that of Fred Worden. Now, as a mark of respect to one of the city's pioneers, the council will have the bones moved. The Cemetery

1914 — Burials no longer occur at the gravesite.

"Houses were built over all remaining graves, (most of them unmarked) save that of Fred Worden."

Bones reemerge through the years

COFFIN AND SKELETON UNCOVERED BY DIGGERS

Sewer machinery working in the block bounded by Poplar, Cherry, Harrison and Taylor streets in the Rattlesnake district, uncovered a coffin yesterday morning. The dirt was removed from the side of the box, but neither the coffin nor the skeleton in it was damaged in the least. The sewer men marked the place where the discovery was made and went ahead, after reburying the box and bones. The alley in which the coffin was uncovered crosses a former graveyard.

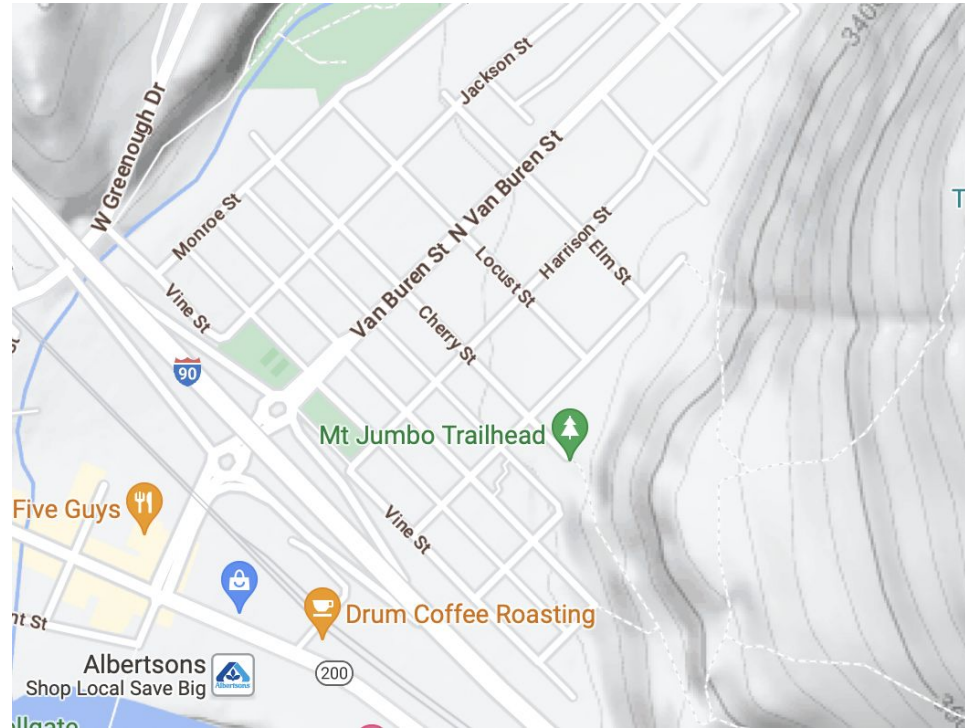
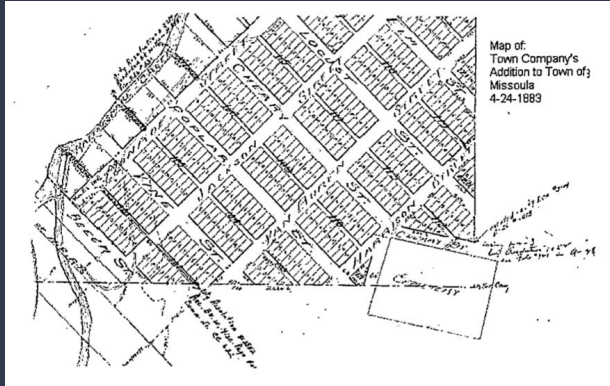
Most of Skeleton Is Uncovered

Ed Terry of 1119 Cherry St. found most of a skeleton while excavating near his home Monday afternoon.

Missoula County Coroner Larry Livingston said Terry was doing the excavating so he could add onto his home. Livingston said the bones were probably of a Chinese person buried during the 1890s. The area used to be used as a Chinese cemetery, according to Livingston.

The anthropology department of the University of Montana has been contacted to see if they are interested in the bones, Livingston said.

Memorialization



Memorialization

City Resolution _____
County Resolution _____

A joint resolution of the City Council for the city of Missoula and the Missoula County Board of County Commissioners recognizing Missoula's historic Chinese community and providing for its commemoration

WHEREAS, Montana once had a robust Chinese population across the state, peaking at over 10% of the territory's early population; and

WHEREAS, Montana's Chinese population was vital to the creation of the state's cities, railroads, and communities; and

WHEREAS, Missoula had a bustling Chinese community with laundries, restaurants, grocery stores, and gardens frequented by White patrons; and

WHEREAS, Missoula's Chinese community maintained a graveyard in the lower Rattlesnake neighborhood and held large funeral processions, bringing out crowds of White residents, and in this graveyard currently sits unmarked graves beneath residential units; and

WHEREAS, in 1892 Missoula's Chinese community peaked in population but rapidly declined after the murder of four Chinese men by White laborers; and

WHEREAS, the racial composition of Montana did not emerge naturally, but rather as a result of deliberate efforts to reduce Montana's nonwhite population; and

WHEREAS, these efforts consisted of explicit legal exclusion and targeted racial violence against Montana's Chinese population; and

WHEREAS, Montana's Chinese were driven out by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Geary Act, and other laws and local ordinances which sought to control and repress the freedom of movement, the ability to work, and, ultimately, the livelihoods of Chinese in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Montana politicians across the political spectrum continue to fearmonger and scapegoat Asians and Asian Americans; and

WHEREAS, the City and County of Missoula has made a formal commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, in order to confront the structural and systemic inequalities resulting in disparate outcomes for marginalized people; and

WHEREAS, Missoula's historical Chinese community has not been recognized by the City and County of Missoula; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the City and County of Missoula commit to supporting local community efforts to recognize and reckon with the history of Missoula's Chinese community, including establishing and funding a historical marker in memorialization of this community's cemetery.

Passed and adopted this ____ day of ____.

City of Missoula