

Malone University

**MEET MINNIE WONG:
THE CREATION OF THE FIRST CHINESE-AMERICAN
AMERICAN GIRL®-STYLE HISTORICAL CHARACTER**

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Abstract

For a few decades now, American Girl® has been a prominent name in not only the toy industry, but also the world of middle-grade historical fiction for girls. Though in recent years the company has made valiant efforts to increase their breadth of racial and ethnic diversity, the historical line of American Girl® dolls has never included an Asian American main character. This is in many ways significant for the way it reflects a general trend in historical education (from elementary school all the way to undergraduate studies) to ignore the stories of pre-World War II Asian American people. Particularly understudied and underexplored are histories of Chinese American families, children, and educational systems. Studies into this field reveal engaging and empowering stories of courageous and inspiring individuals who, even as ordinary people, made a lasting impact on history and culture. Particularly inspiring are the stories of Chinese American children and the missionary tutors that risked much to educate the students who risked even more to attend school. These inspiring stories came to inform my own creative response to American Girl®'s dearth of Asian American representation. This project encompasses not only an academic nonfiction research paper, but also includes my own efforts to create a character that fills the gap I see in historical fiction representation. My own middle-grade historical fiction work, *Meet Minnie: An American Girl*, seeks to mimic the American Girl® style and represent Chinese American history. Finally, I brought my American Girl®-style character, Minnie (*Meimin*) Wong, to life by designing and sewing three historically informed doll-sized outfits. These three different approaches then work together to provide diverse, nuanced answers to the question: What would a nineteenth century Chinese American immigrant American Girl character look like in historical context, in a middle-grade fiction story, and in historically informed toy design?

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Preface

It all started one seemingly insignificant day of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. I was working remotely for my university's history department that summer, and one of my main tasks was transcribing print and audio files. Since both types of files occasionally contained French, Latin, Korean, and various other languages, I frequently ran into a word or phrase that I needed to research in order to transcribe accurately. Not wanting to switch tabs, I reached for my phone and opened Google. A recommended article looked interesting enough to save, and I pinned it to read later: "The 8-Year-Old Chinese American Girl Who Helped Desegregate Schools—in 1885."¹ When I returned to the article that evening, the story of Mamie Tape and her battle for the right to a public education immediately captivated my attention. In that moment I discovered just how little I knew about Chinese American history. As a person who has always had a deep interest in historical study—especially the history of immigration in 19th and 20th century America—I found it odd that I was so comparatively ignorant of the history of Chinese American immigrants.

Over the period of the next few days, I found myself thinking more and more about why I seemed to lack so much knowledge on Chinese American immigration. Then, one day, it suddenly made sense. I realized that my love of history and historical research traced back to childhood when historical fiction books for girls were my springboards into fascination with and interest in different historical times and places. Somewhat surprisingly, not one of the historical fiction series I enjoyed as a child had an Asian American central character. Though large and prominent companies such as American Girl® have rapidly increased the breadth of diversity found in their character population throughout the past few years, American Girl® has yet to

¹ Sarah Pruitt, "The 8-Year-Old Chinese American Girl that Helped Desegregate Schools—in 1885," History.com, A&E Television Network. May 13, 2019, <https://www.history.com/news/chinese-american-segregation-san-francisco-mamie-tape-case>.

have an Asian American main character in their historical line. Although their 1970s character—Julie Albright—had a companion ‘best friend’ who was Chinese American, this character did not have her own storyline and was completely contextually removed from the broader reach of Chinese American history.² Reflecting back on this, I wished that American Girl® would have created an Asian American main character with whom I could have explored the oft-forgotten era of American history within which Mamie Tape’s real-life story took place.

One boring day of pandemic lockdown led to others, and I began to question if I perhaps had the skill set necessary to make my desire for a Chinese American character a reality. Even as a first-year student I was always on the lookout for topics to use for my senior thesis, and this idea fulfilled every desire I had for the outcome of that project. I loved that an undertaking such as this would allow me to explore my dual passion for English and history, and my double major in integrated social studies and integrated language arts provided me with the tools I needed to be successful in both fields. The choice to explore this topic also moved my senior thesis out of the traditional paper category and into the domain of the ‘creative project,’ which is something that I had always found appealing. The more I thought about endeavoring to create a character of my own, the more excited I became.

I was also excited because this project was going to give me the opportunity to integrate my love of sewing into an academic discipline. When I had been asked my freshman year of college what my dream job would be if money, education, or talent were not important, I had responded that I had always been somewhat interested in toy design. At that point I never dreamed that I would have the opportunity to try out that career field while majoring in education.

² Megan McDonald, *Meet Julie*, (Middleton: American Girl Publishing, 2007).

As I began to think more deeply about the possibilities of the project, I also found a third—though in many ways most important—excitement growing. Reflecting on the important part that middle-grade historical fiction played in my own life led me to realize just how important representation is in toy design and story writing. Though I loved American Girl® characters mostly because they were the same age as me and enjoyed many of the same things as I did, I also admitted just how important it was that the characters looked like me and shared somewhat of a cultural background with me. American Girl® has never had a character that perfectly represented my family heritage—I am most rooted in the Italian American side of my family—but I now see that I implicitly always gravitated towards the dolls and fictionalized stories of girls coming from marginalized immigrant communities with lighter complexion. It was probably for this reason that my all-time favorite American Girl® historical characters were Nellie O’Malley (the Irish American immigrant best friend of main character Samantha)³ and Rebecca Rubin (an Eastern European Jewish character).⁴

Becoming more aware of this made me aware of just how frustrating it would be to belong to a minority group that has been ignored or underrepresented. Though I could always find a character that looked somewhat like me, many Asian American children have never had that luxury. Though Barbie® and Disney® occasionally release characters and dolls representing people groups from Southeast Asia, these characters rarely possess realistic, culturally sensitive, and historically meaningful stories. I began to question what this lack of representation might have done for my love of history and wondered how many Asian American girls might have lost interest in history after finding that they were unable to locate stories and characters that

³ Valerie Tripp, *Meet Samantha*, (Middleton: Pleasant Company, 1986).

⁴ Jacqueline D. Greene, *Meet Rebecca*, (Middleton: American Girl Publishing, 2009).

represented them accurately and portrayed them as significant individuals: central, important, and meaningful to the grand narrative of historical study.

With all of this in mind, I decided to attempt a miniature version of this project in my Honors Sophomore Seminar class the fall semester of my second year. Honors Sophomore Seminar is essentially a thesis preparatory course, and so it presented the perfect opportunity to try out this idea and see if it was going to be attainable, meaningful, and enjoyable in the long term. Though some students find that writing the miniature thesis exhausts their interest in a previously chosen project, completing the miniature thesis project only proved to me how much more I had to learn and how important my project was.

And so, with my miniature thesis project complete, the real work began.

Introduction

In the following pages I seek to answer the question: What would a nineteenth century Chinese American immigrant American Girl character look like in historical context, in a middle-grade fiction story, and in historically informed toy design? As all good research questions ought to do, this question became increasingly complex throughout the research and writing process. Though in the following pages I will present the creative and academic products I have constructed in an organized and orderly fashion, the process of completing this project has been anything but linear. I have known for a while that my character's name should be Minnie, that she should live in 1884 San Francisco, and that she should participate in the greater discourse on school integration and access to education; however, most of the other details about her life and experience have come slowly and sporadically. Though the exploration of a question this large was overwhelming at first, the project became more manageable when I broke it down into three distinct parts. This creative thesis project is my attempted effort to answer the different parts of that question through three different mediums: academic nonfiction, middle-grade fiction, and toy design.

First, Asian American history is—in general—an underrepresented topic in undergraduate studies, high school course curricula, and materials for elementary-aged children. While this lack of representation is significant at all stages of learning, it is perhaps most harmful at the younger levels as it potentially prevents children from developing diverse and empathetic schemata about and towards Asian Americans. Particularly understudied are the experiences of Chinese American children during the Exclusion Era, especially Chinese American children not involved in the vast systems of human trafficking that brutalized Chinatowns throughout California. The first part of my project, then, is a research paper that explores the experiences of

Chinese American children, especially relating to their experiences in the public education system. This paper is, in essence, a survey of the impact of missions and mission schools on Chinese American children and ultimately argues that missions and mission schools enabled Chinese American children to take a nontraditional path of resistance against racism and discrimination. In March of 2022 I had the privilege of presenting this paper at the Undergraduate Conference on Faith and History at Baylor University in Texas. This is Part I of the project and provides the historical basis for the rest of my work.

Second, after completing a study of American Girl® authors, I have written a middle-grade fiction story that imagines Minnie as a real character and explores her fictional life. Since I do not consider myself an avid fiction writer, this part of the project was most difficult for me. This section, however, is perhaps the most important because it is the link between the toy and the historical research. American Girl® books serve very much as bridges between history and young girls, and I hope that my attempt at mimicking their style also accomplishes this same goal. This section of the project includes Parts II and III. Part II of the project includes a survey of historical fiction books published by American Girl®, a study of successful Chinese American author Laurence Yep, and a description of my creative process. By far the most labor intensive part of this project, Part III is a manuscript for an American Girl® style historical fiction story for elementary-aged girls. Parts II and III are the heart and center of this project.

Finally, Part IV describes my process of creating historically accurate clothing for my character. While this section was difficult and pushed my creative abilities outside of my comfort zone, it was probably the most enjoyable to complete. The inclusion of a physical product in this project is important because it is often an encounter with physical, material culture that fascinates a child and gets them interested in history. Though I loved the American Girl® books

and used them as portals through which I discovered history, I do not know if I would have loved American Girl® as much as I did if there had not been dresses and shoes and accessories for me to touch and work into my imagination into as I played. It is my hope that the outfits I created become material culture on their own and that they are representative of a modern attempt to understand and accurately represent the lives and experiences of Chinese American girls living during the Chinese Exclusion Era. Part IV of the project, then is a final imaginative culmination of my research and writing.

It is my sincere hope that all of these sections work together in harmony to create a cohesive whole that represents the Chinese American population well and perhaps helps others see history through a new and exciting lens.

**Part I: Educating a Forgotten Population:
Chinese American Mission Schools and Minority Education
In San Francisco During the Era of Chinese Exclusion**

Most Americans of my generation cannot picture life without instant audio-visual communication, on-demand in-home entertainment, and up-to-date news coverage. Fewer can imagine life before word processors, fast food restaurants, and video games. Even more unimaginable for my American peers is a context where certain groups of people are denied education or employment opportunities because they belong to a minority racial or ethnic group. Nevertheless, during certain eras of American history, public schools in some states were legally required to deny students of particular ethnicities access to education. The California School Law of 1860, for example, used particularly racist language to assert that, “Negroes, Mongolians and Indians shall not be admitted into the public schools.”⁵ While segregated schools aimed at assimilation were slowly formed for students of African American and indigenous heritage throughout the 1860s and 1870s,⁶ Asian Americans were not permitted in the public schools until 1885.⁷ Seeing that Chinese American students were among the last ethnic groups to receive the privileges of free and public education in the United States, it is in many ways surprising that scholarship on Asian American studies—specifically Chinese American studies—is rare.

While it is unfortunate that scholarship focusing on Asian American experiences is not as expansive as scholarship focusing on the experiences of other ethnic and racial minorities, there are a few plausible explanations for the relative dearth of Asian American studies, especially at smaller institutions and areas beyond the Western states. First, in comparison to other ethnic

⁵ Mary Louise Buley-Meissner, “Chinese School (San Francisco),” in *Asian American History and Culture: an Encyclopedia*, ed. Huping Ling and Allan Austin (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 160.

⁶ Wendy Rouse, “Challenging Segregation: Chinese Children at School,” in *The Children of Chinatown: Growing Up Chinese American in San Francisco 1850-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 113.

⁷ *Tape v. Hurley*. 66 Cal. 473, No. 9916 (Supreme Court of Cal. 1885).

minorities, Asian Americans have a relatively short history in the United States. Though indigenous people were in North America before the formation of the United States, people of Hispanic descent lived in territories near Mexico before the statehood of much of the Southwest, and Black African Americans had been forcibly brought to both North and South America before the creation of national borders, Asian American families only became an established presence in California in the 1850s.⁸ Secondly, Asian Americans were seen as distinctly different from other immigrant groups by white Americans. Because they were ‘otherized’ so heavily for their different appearance, beliefs, and material culture, Chinese Americans as a whole became the first ethnic group ever to be explicitly banned from entering the United States when the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882.⁹ Despite the odds against them, Asian American students began thriving in the American school system soon after they were allowed to enroll following the “Victory in Japan” at the end of World War II.¹⁰

The introduction of the ‘model minority thesis’ is the third and perhaps most compelling reason for the relative disregard of Asian Americans in studies of discrimination and racism against minorities. Before Asian American students had been integrated into the public schools of the United States for even two decades, sociologist William Petersen wrote an article for the *New York Times Magazine* specifically praising Japanese and Chinese Americans for “[surmounting] racial barriers largely on the strength of pride in their heritage,” excelling in schools, and becoming, in many ways, the poster children for the ‘American Dream.’¹¹ While many believe that this thesis was positive, it is unlikely that the results have always been good

⁸ Joseph Zheng, “Students, Chinese American,” in *Asian American History and Culture: an Encyclopedia*, ed. Huping Ling and Allan Austin (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 233.

⁹ Wendy L. Rouse, “Between Two Worlds: Chinese Immigrant Children and the Production of Knowledge in the Era of Chinese Exclusion,” *Know: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* 3, no. 4 (2019): 264.

¹⁰ Zheng, “Students, Chinese American,” 233.

¹¹ Huping Ling, “Model Minority,” in *Asian American History and Culture: an Encyclopedia*, ed. Huping Ling and Allan Austin (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 65.

for Asian American communities: in fact, this “distinction with powerful political implications” may have actually hurt Asian Americans as a whole.¹² Huping Ling, co-editor of *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia* and author of the entry “Model Minority,” wrote about Asian Americans of the late-twentieth century: “Despite documented evidence of limited job opportunities, unhealthy and hazardous working conditions, crowded and substandard housing, and emotional stress, their problems were generally overlooked.”¹³ Thus, when Asian Americans were rebranded as the ‘model minority,’ their history was rewritten to exclude the decades of discrimination they endured before the post-war era.

Other potential causes for the dearth of Asian American scholarship are more social and societal than the previously mentioned issues. The legacy of Asian prostitution and sensuality still pervades American perceptions, and these perceptions have had a lasting influence on the field of Asian American studies. Like the upper class men and women who participated in what was called ‘slum tourism’ or ‘slumming,’ historians and sociologists often become enthralled with the shocking and the sensational: the immoral anomalous situations that simultaneously arouse intense pity and intense interest in their audience.¹⁴ Studying the educational opportunities for Chinese American children is tragic without being exciting, foreign and uncomfortable without being thrilling and exotic. Although the stories of prostitution, abuse, and addiction faced by many Chinese American immigrants during the Exclusion Era should be told, it is important that the experiences of the everyday Chinese American people are just as remembered by history as the exceptional cases.

¹² Ling, 65.

¹³ Ling, 66.

¹⁴ Julia Flynn Siler, *The White Devil's Daughters: The Women Who Fought Slavery in San Francisco's Chinatown* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2019), 55.

One remaining reason that historians may be deterred from studying Chinese American history has to do with the fact that almost all educational opportunities offered to Chinese American students before and during the Exclusion Era stemmed ultimately from Christian mission homes, missionaries, and pastors. Because scholarship on missionary works tends to lean towards hagiography or accusations of cultural imperialism, most people are uncomfortable with tackling the subject for one reason or another. On one hand, the hagiographical view asserts that all missionaries were entirely pure in motive and worked completely and selflessly for the sole good of the populations they served, a view challenged by some missionaries who were not willing to give up their own agendas. Whether or not one believes that missionaries should be venerated, most Christian scholars at least agree to one extent or another that missionaries were the single most significant group willing to advocate for Chinese American children.¹⁵ On the other hand, secular interpretations of history argue that missionaries were just as ethnocentric and bigoted as their less-religious neighbors and that they interacted with Chinese American immigrants for the sole purpose of “christianizing and civilizing.”¹⁶ Researchers not coming from a Christian perspective tend to vary on a continuum of loose support to outright hostility towards missionaries, while one secular author asserts that “the YWCA, the missionaries, and the churches were the most important resources Chinese women had in America,”¹⁷ another claims that the only goal of mission schools was “evangelizing Chinese women and children” and that Chinese parents often found themselves “attempt[ing] to counter some of the negative influences of Christianization.”¹⁸ As is often the case, the truth probably lies somewhere in the

¹⁵ Wesley S. Woo, “Presbyterian Mission: Christianizing and Civilizing the Chinese in Nineteenth Century California,” *American Presbyterian* 68, no. 3 (1990): 171.

¹⁶ Woo, 167.

¹⁷ Rhonda Tintle, “Women, Chinese American,” in *Asian American History and Culture: an Encyclopedia*, ed. Huping Ling and Allan Austin (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 244.

¹⁸ Rouse, “Challenging Segregation,” 123; 111

uncomfortable space between the two poles and must be viewed through the lens of nuance and moderation.

For these reasons and many more, the study of Exclusion Era opportunities for Chinese American children and the men and women who fought for their right to education is all the more important. Mission schools for Chinese Americans are a largely overlooked part of American history, making them significant as a time and space left relatively unexplored. Apart from their basic role of providing Chinese American children the opportunity to learn English, mission schools were the only institutions to give Chinese American boys the chance to continue their education beyond elementary school and the only institution which gave many Chinese American girls the chance to be educated at all.¹⁹ Furthermore, missions and mission schools played a pivotal role in not only rescuing Chinese American girls from sexual slavery but also in providing holistic care that allowed these girls to lead much better and longer lives than they ever would have been able to in their previous circumstances.²⁰ Finally, in teaching Chinese American immigrants how to speak English and survive in a largely Victorian world, missionaries and mission schools provided opportunities for Chinese American people to use actual conformity as a means of resistance against a culture biased against them.²¹

In order to understand the impact of mission schools, one must first understand the world in which they existed. Chinese immigrants first came to America during the California Gold Rush of 1848 and participated in the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad.²² Like most immigrants of that time, Chinese immigrants came to America in order to flee political and

¹⁹ Woo, 173.

²⁰ Siler, 60-61.

²¹ Wendy Rouse Jorae, "The Limits of Dress: Chinese American Childhood, Fashion, and Race in the Exclusion Era," *Western Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2010): 470.

²² At this time, most immigrants coming from China came from southern provinces near Canton and Hong Kong: a port city at that time under British rule. Because of this, most Chinese American immigrants spoke Cantonese as opposed to Mandarin and had an intimate link to western culture through the relative prevalence of British people and products in Hong Kong and the Guangdong Province.

economic turmoil and create better lives for themselves and their families.²³ Chinese immigrants, however, faced discrimination and abuse for the ways that they were unique from these other groups in religious belief and material culture.²⁴ Unlike other immigrant groups that settled during the same time, Chinese people did not come from any form of Christian faith tradition, had possessions that looked nothing like those of European origin, and wore clothing that defied Victorian gender roles. Because people often fear what they do not understand, Chinese immigrants were branded “a moral threat and source of contagion.”²⁵ Fear and anger against the Chinese American population grew so harsh that one white woman asked to donate to a charity supporting abused Chinese women said, “I would not be sorry if all the Chinese women were placed in a pile and burned.”²⁶

Even the other ethnic minorities in San Francisco refused to associate with Chinese immigrants.²⁷ Although a segregated school for Chinese American students was opened in San Francisco in 1859, it was shut down less than a year later as the previously mentioned California School Law of 1860 prohibited all Asian American students from attending public schools in California. This law was not merely a suggestion: “the state superintendent had the authority to withhold funding from any schools that did not comply.”²⁸ Under this environment, mission schools became the only spaces where Chinese American students were permitted to be educated.

²³ Siler, 10.

²⁴ Chinese immigrants were also different from their immigrant peers in that they usually planned to live in America only long enough to make the money that their family needed for a comfortable life in China. Those immigrants who did choose to stay ended up sending most of the money they made back home to their families in China. See: Siler, 10.

²⁵ Rouse, “Challenging Segregation,” 111.

²⁶ Siler, 38.

²⁷ By not associating with Chinese people, Hispanic and Black people won the right to integrated education 5 years before their Chinese peers could even attend segregated schools. See: Rouse, “Challenging Segregation,” 117.

²⁸ Buley-Meissner, 160.

The majority of Chinese American parents wanted their children to receive an American education. Typically, “Chinese immigrant children understood more English than their parents and were therefore able to help them with interpretation.”²⁹ When the state legislature legally prohibited Chinese American children from attending the public schools, Chinese American families knew that they had to find alternative ways to acquire English language skills. For this reason, “children and adults welcomed the educational opportunities provided by missionaries and mission schools.”³⁰ Education at mission schools was as comparable as possible to the segregated public schools created for other minorities. Mission schools strove to standardize their curriculum as much as possible, even to the point of adopting California’s state-sanctioned textbook series.³¹ Despite the inescapable reality of racism, opposition to American education for boys was minimal among Chinese American people. Some parents, however, did object to the education of their female children, and “missionary women [who] attempted to educate Chinese girls often encounter[ed] resistance.”³² This, however, had more to do with Chinese practices than any complaints against the quality of mission education. By offering to tutor girls at home, missionaries were often the first people to bring education to girls whose families believed that it “was ‘no use for girls to read.’”³³

Beyond basic tutoring, missionaries, mission homes, and mission schools had a large impact on the young women of San Francisco’s Chinatown. Girls whose rich, merchant fathers denied them an education can sadly be counted among some of the luckiest Chinese American young women. Chinese American immigrants often arrived under the extremes of immense

²⁹ Rouse, “Between Two Worlds,” 270.

³⁰ Barbara L. Voss, “Every Element of Womanhood with Which to Make Life a Curse of Blessing: Missionary Women’s Accounts of Chinese American Women’s Lives in Nineteenth-Century Pre-Exclusion California,” in *Journal of Asian American Studies* 21, no.1 (2018): 113.

³¹ Rouse, “Challenging Segregation,” 124; 126-127.

³² Rouse, “Challenging Segregation,” 121.

³³ Voss, 118.

wealth or devastating poverty. According to patriarchal custom and tradition, it was the right of a father to do whatever he wished with his female relatives; it was not considered wrong or unjust for a man to sell his daughters into slavery during hard times. Young women were expected to accept their fate with meekness and unquestioning submission. Other young women—usually poor and destitute with no future prospects—were abducted by slave traders.³⁴ When large numbers of workers began to immigrate to the United States, human trafficking organizations saw that the bachelor society and strict antimiscegenation laws of San Francisco made the area a profitable location for brothels. Because prostitution was not technically illegal, in 1870 over 70% of Chinese American San Franciscan women reported prostitution as their official occupation.³⁵ In response to the growing plight of trafficked women, missionaries opened the first rescue home for Chinese American women and girls a full 15 years before Jane Addams founded what is now almost universally considered the ‘first’ settlement mission home.³⁶ As more missionaries began to move into the area and work among Chinese Americans, missions began to specialize in making their mission houses feel like homes, providing education for all children, tutoring merchants’ daughters, or holding revival meetings and street preaching events.³⁷

Through this system, rescued women and girls were often sent to live in mission homes that specialized in helping young Chinese American women build stable lives following substantial trauma. The Presbyterian Mission House embraced an especially holistic system of care that sought to provide for the women’s physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. Although the earliest superintendents of the mission home had little experience with Chinese

³⁴ Siler, 81-82.

³⁵ Siler, 11.

³⁶ Siler, xi.

³⁷ Woo, 172.

culture and little desire to learn,³⁸ the superintendents that served after³⁹ were simultaneously more structured and more compassionate, serving tea instead of coffee and filling the house with comfortable furniture.⁴⁰ When a missionary's niece came to visit one summer, the residents "dressed her up in Chinese clothes for fun," something that would have been considered shocking and 'contaminating' for a young white woman to do at that time.⁴¹ Group photos of residents show the girls dressed in simple Chinese-style outfits.⁴² In what is now considered a controversial status quo of the nineteenth century, mission home residents were instructed in Christian and Victorian values on top of their academic studies.⁴³ All of these accommodations woven together—the permission to wear Chinese clothes, the allowance of ethnically appropriate food and drink, the provision of academic and vocational education, and the presence of close spiritual mentorship—created the framework for a fundamentally radical approach to loving and serving groups of people otherwise ignored. The fact that white missionary women agreed to live with rescued Chinese American prostitutes is itself extremely countercultural.⁴⁴ Though entire books could and have been written about Chinese American prostitute- and post-prostitute-life in San Francisco, it is justifiable to claim that residents of mission homes and other Chinese American students received roughly an equivalent education.

Beyond and within the specific situation of residential mission homes, missionaries and mission schools generally helped the Chinese American population begin the process of

³⁸ Siler, 43.

³⁹ Notable superintendents include Margaret Culbertson and her successor Donaldina Cameron. Both of these women were known for their discipline, kindness, and skill with missionary work. Although they are little known historical figures, they were both simultaneously compassionate caretakers and ruthless freedom fighters. Their stories are detailed in Julia Flynn Siler's book, *The White Devil's Daughters*.

⁴⁰ Siler, 51.

⁴¹ Siler, 60.

⁴² Judy Yung and the Chinese Historical Society of America, "Tong Yun Fow: 1848-1906," in *Images of America: San Francisco's Chinatown* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2016): 31.

⁴³ Siler, 51; 92.

⁴⁴ Rouse, "Challenging Segregation," 114.

assimilation into American society. While it is disputed whether or not assimilation is a net positive for immigrant communities, assimilation is most likely what most Chinese Americans wanted most. The public Chinese American concern for quality English education began in 1859 when William Speer offered to furnish a Chinese American school out of the basement of the Presbyterian Church if the San Francisco Board of Education would support the salary of a teacher.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, the California School Law of 1860 made sure that this project was exceedingly short-lived.⁴⁶ Despite the new law, missionaries continued to interact with Chinese Americans in their homes, churches and public buildings. Missionary women sacrificed conventional Victorian lives to teach and care for the vulnerable. Missionaries that worked among Chinese American populations were ostracized nearly as sharply as Chinese American people themselves, and it was made clear that anyone who associated with a mission teacher ran the risks of contracting deadly diseases that were “[shared] by contact.”⁴⁷

Although students and mission workers were sometimes threatened, missionaries persisted in teaching and Chinese American students persisted in coming to school.⁴⁸ Like Linda Brown and the Little Rock Nine of the Black American Civil Rights movement, Chinese American boys and girls asserted their rights to acquire the English language and academic skills they needed to succeed in the United States. For Chinese Americans, education created a path for resistance to racism and discrimination in a way that was not only fundamentally different, but in some ways was entirely paradoxical to the methods of rebellion used by members of other ethnic and racial minorities. Prominent social historian and social scientist Wendy Rouse’s eloquent

⁴⁵ Joseph Zheng, “Commodore Stockton School,” in *Asian American History and Culture: an Encyclopedia*, ed. Huping Ling and Allan Austin (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 162.

⁴⁶ Buley-Meissner, 160.

⁴⁷ Rouse, “Challenging Segregation,” 114.

⁴⁸ Woo, 172.

theory on fashion, assimilation, and rebellion translates well into the field of education. Rouse argues that:

Unlike Mexican American and African American teenagers, who adopted an openly flamboyant and defiant fashion style that reflected their protest against white culture and its discriminatory policies towards people of color, second-generation Chinese American youth... envisioned clothing as a way to ensure their acceptance into mainstream American culture and sought to re-fashion their identities as Americans. For American-born Chinese, the decision to abandon ethnic fashion should not be interpreted as merely a passive accommodationist strategy but as an act of rebellion of its own sort, especially since white society portrayed Chinese as foreigners incapable and unwilling to assimilate.⁴⁹

In light of Rouse's words, it is reasonable to conclude that participation in American education was in some ways the ultimate rebellion of Chinese Americans against a society that told them they were too dumb, too stubborn, and too immoral to become true Americans.

Mission schools were thus uniquely equipped to provide Chinese American children with the tools necessary to conform as an expression of rebellion against racism. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the differences that divided both Chinese and other Asian Americans from both the white majority and all other ethnic and racial minorities were considered insurmountable. In a world where it was common to believe that isolation of Chinese American communities was needed to prevent "contamination and pollution by a race reeking with the vices of the Orient," English education was considered futile; white Americans saw little need to push the doctrine of assimilation on Chinese Americans because most white Americans believed that all people of Chinese origin were beyond any 'powers of redemption.'⁵⁰ It was considered acceptable to taunt people of Chinese origin in the attempt to push them out of the country. It was within and against this culture that Christian missionaries claimed that Chinese American children could and would learn, could and would succeed, and could and

⁴⁹ Jorae, 470.

⁵⁰ Rouse, "Between Two Worlds," 275.

would become productive and profitable members of American society.⁵¹ Thus, the single action of attending school was a radical declaration of resistance against racism and discrimination for Exclusion Era Californian Chinese American children, a declaration that said they were willing to learn, capable of learning, and fully able to adapt, change, and become what they needed to be to be successful.

The last assertion is what made the Chinese American experience unique.⁵² Prominent white American leaders did not have enough respect for Chinese Americans to add to their propaganda what would happen if Chinese Americans did successfully assimilate. Where Black and African Americans, Hispanic and Latino or Latina Americans, Eastern European Americans, and Catholic Americans were told during the the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that they would not be allowed to enter high society whether or not they assimilated, Chinese Americans were the only group that were told that they would not be able to assimilate no matter how hard they tried. For this reason, the tactics of flamboyant resistance used by other groups would not have been resistance at all: to refuse to assimilate would be to give in to anti-Chinese propaganda. Instead, Chinese American people rebelled against the racist assumptions that threatened to keep them uneducated and unaccepted by choosing instead to conform as a means of rebellion.⁵³

In summary, the relationship between Chinese Americans and the American education system is more complex than most realize. Pervasive stereotypes have in many places overtaken all other remembrances of the Asian American experience and have led to a dearth of scholarship on pre-World War II Asian American studies. As other minority groups have recently been

⁵¹ Woo, 172

⁵² This statement is not included to imply that Anglo-Americans now see Chinese Americans as full citizens and peers, but to highlight the resilience and perseverance of the Chinese American communities that refused to allow stereotypes to make them second-class citizens. Unfortunately, many Americans not of Asian descent still see Chinese Americans as completely ‘otherized’ and somehow fundamentally different from other American peoples.

⁵³ Jorae, 470.

brought into the public eye for the ways that discrimination has disadvantaged them through systems of education and employment, pre-World War II Asian American stories remain largely untold. Though education for Chinese Americans before World War II is perhaps one of the least explored topics of history, it is also rich in nuance, ambiguity, and inspiration. Studies of the great obstacles Chinese American children overcame to go to school and assimilate into American culture reveal relatively unexplored stories of discriminatory lawmakers fixated on keeping children of Chinese descent out of the education system, determined missionaries set on bringing education to children barred from public schools, and persistent children intent on challenging the status quo and successfully assimilating into American culture. A deep look into Chinese American history will reveal a gripping story of strong resistance in the face of racism and a somewhat paradoxical rebellion through the path of conformity. Most of all, like all other stories that took place among real people and real places, the stories of Chinese American children and the risks that they took to obtain Western education deserve to be remembered.

Part II: Middle-grade Fiction and the American Girl® Formula:

Valerie Tripp, Laurence Yep, and the Characters Shaping Generations

Having completed the first part of my tripartite project—the historical background research paper—I began to research information relating explicitly to the creation process of American Girl® and middle-grade fiction in general. This research ultimately culminated in the construction of my own original American Girl® style story, which can be found in the next section. This process required me to participate in research on three key topics: the patterns and common features that exist between all American Girl® books (henceforth referred to as ‘the American Girl® Formula’), the specific effects of culture and conformity on the style of Chinese American authors, and the general cultural experience of Chinese American families when it came to naming practices and family life.

First, I researched the general format, layout, and story arc of typical American Girl® characters. Although other authors have been involved and have played significant parts in the creation of American Girl® stories, Valerie Tripp is perhaps the most well-known and well-loved American Girl® author. Writing *Meet Felicity*, *Meet Josefina*, *Meet Molly*, and *Meet Samantha* (among other books), Valerie Tripp was the author of nearly all of the books published under the original Pleasant Company⁵⁴ and thus the originator of what I am now calling the American Girl® Formula.⁵⁵ The first thing that becomes apparent as one reads an American Girl® book written by Valerie Tripp is that, while the characters are deeply rooted in history, they are not fully immersed in the action of the time period. Tripp’s characters are all alive at important times in American history, but as characters they are all allowed to exist as 8- to 12-year-old girls:

⁵⁴ American Girl® was first known as Pleasant Company when it was founded in 1986. The Pleasant Company was renamed American Girl® after it was fully acquired by Mattel, Inc. in 1999.

⁵⁵ References to all of these books are made in the bibliography. Any generalizations referring to Valerie Tripp’s writing for American Girl® refer back to patterns and general plot structures of these four books.

sometimes directly affected by the social and political climate of their times and other times stepping away from the action to simply be children. American Girl® characters are also not perfect: at least once per book a main character faces a flaw—sometimes fear, sometimes a shortcoming of character, sometimes a poor decision—and has to learn how to deal with it in a constructive and healthy manner. While the specific details of the character’s situation are rooted in the historical context of the book, the dilemmas faced by Tripp’s characters are often struggles common to most developing children in the 8- to 12- year old advertised market.

On the periphery of these main themes, a few other trends emerge when other American Girl® historical authors are considered. First, it was important for me to note that structure-wise, most American Girl® books include sections at the beginning listing each character’s family and friends. Along with this character map of sorts, books featuring ethnically and linguistically diverse characters often included a note about the language readers were about to encounter and a promise that a glossary in the back of the book would explain any words in that language that readers did not understand.⁵⁶ From this, I decided that my story should also feature these two important opening materials, as well as a glossary.

Next, I studied the middle-grade fiction writing of Laurence Yep, a Chinese American author who has written numerous books; including a few for American Girl®. Within this author study, I focused mostly on *Mia*, a work that Yep created for the American Girl® Girl of the Year line in 2008; *Ribbons*, a contemporary story of a Chinese American Girl living in San Francisco; and *Spring Pearl: The Last Flower*, a book written for the now-discontinued ‘Girls of Many Lands’ American Girl® spin-off series.⁵⁷ Most notably, I learned from his work how to

⁵⁶ For these character maps and notes on language, please see the unnumbered opening pages of *Meet Cecile*, *Meet Josefina*, *Meet Melody*, and *Meet Rebecca*. All of these sources and their full citations can be found in the bibliography.

⁵⁷ Again, all of these mentioned books can be found with full citations in the bibliography.

accurately and effectively describe elements of Eastern culture that may be unfamiliar to Western readers.

While I noticed that Yep usually writes in the first person perspective of the protagonist, all historical American Girl® books have been written in the limited third person perspective of the protagonist. For me as a writer, this posed a dilemma: do I write in the point of view most used by Yep, or that most used in the American Girl® historical fiction line? I ultimately decided to write in the limited third person perspective partially because I wanted to be as authentic to the American Girl® Formula as possible, and partially because I felt it would allow young girls to relate better to my character while also acknowledging gaps of time and space. This is because the first person perspective encourages a reader to see the character as ‘I, myself.’ This works effectively for the American Girl® Girl of the Year line because all of the characters are contemporaries of the readership. Even if the reader cannot place him or herself in the exact location, family situation, or ethnic identity as the character, American readers still find themselves facing the same current events, experiencing a similar cultural context, and sharing a relative material culture with the characters in the stories. The limited third person perspective, however, encourages a reader to see the character as ‘her, my friend.’ This helps readers develop empathy and inclusive mindsets without forcing them to ‘become’ the character they are reading about. As readers encounter the stories of diverse characters, they learn to listen to others and develop a deeper understanding of the importance of empathizing with the story of ‘her, my friend:’ even if their own experiences do not allow them to access every element of that story. Reading these stories as an elementary-aged child, I did not know what it was like to be an upper-class Edwardian lady like Samantha or a New Mexican, latina girl like Josefina, but reading their stories taught me how to listen to and appreciate the stories of others.

A study of Yep's work also led me to a greater understanding of the breadth and depth of middle-grade fiction. Although middle-grade is a term familiar to many in the publishing industry, it is a term often misunderstood by the general public. Many people in the general population mistakenly assume that middle-grade fiction is either the same thing as young adult literature or fiction for early readers. Middle-grade fiction is also commonly referred to as a genre when it is instead supposed to be a label communicating a work's appropriateness for a specific market. Middle-grade fiction author N.D. Wilson compares the terms 'middle-grade' and 'young adult' to the MPAA rating system for movies.⁵⁸ Just as there are movies with G, PG, PG-13, and R ratings across all genres of film, there are books with Children's Literature, Middle-Grade, Young Adult, and Adult market labels across all genres of fiction. Thus, calling American Girl® books 'middle-grade historical fiction' communicates both a market label (generally appropriate for 8- to 12-year-olds) and a genre distinction (a story focusing on the fictionalized account of life in a past time).

Labeling my work in such a way, however, required me to be especially intentional about the content I included in the story I was crafting. To better understand the best ways to tackle difficult subjects in middle-grade fiction books, I examined the story of the 1864 American Girl® character, Addy Walker. Everyday scenes from Chinatown in Exclusion Era San Francisco—as described above—would not earn a PG rating through the MPAA, nor would it pass content screening for the middle-grade market. Though the horrors of slavery were different and in scope and scale than the horrors of Exclusion Era Chinatown, Addy is one of the only characters that exists in a context intense enough to provide a model for writing a story about life in San Francisco's Chinatown in the 1880s. Through this study, I decided that it would be

⁵⁸ Brian Kohl and N.D. Wilson, "8:100 Cupboards," January, 2021, in *Stories are Soul Food*, produced by Canon Press, podcast, MP3 audio, 16:25, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/5YxFKVy290Aci1RgOtqRL9?si=1586ecb706304b17>.

appropriate—and was indeed somewhat necessary—to include subtle hints to the organized criminal violence of Chinese *tongs*, but to also keep these references restrained and few. This fits the American Girl® Formula because most American Girl® books contain references that jump right over younger readers' heads, but signal allusions to adult themes for more mature readers and parents. For the sake of historical accuracy, I also thought that it was necessary for my character to have bound feet. Though I struggled for a long time with whether or not an American Girl® character could have her feet bound, I realized that it was culturally significant enough to include. If, for historical accuracy, Addy could watch her brother be sold away and be forced by a cruel overseer to eat live worms, then my character could have her feet bound, as long as I handled the issue in an age-appropriate, culturally sensitive fashion.

Finally, I used a plethora of common knowledge sources to deduce the answers to the final outstanding questions I had about Chinese American culture after writing the historical paper. While that research served its purpose of defining the cultural, political, and social framework of the story I was attempting to write, it did not touch on other important elements of culture: such as examples of how Chinese American families named their children and which words were most frequently used between Cantonese and English. For advice on this aspect of writing and developing an accurate cultural framework in general, I owe a heavy debt of gratitude to my project advisor, Dr. Jacalynn Stuckey.

The American Girl Formula® researched and better understood, I finally sat down to begin writing my fiction piece.

Part III: *Meet Minnie: An American Girl*

*Author's Note: Like other families that immigrated from the Guangdong Province of China, Minnie and her family spoke both English and a Chinese language called Cantonese. Chinese languages are not written with letters like English, but use symbols called characters to represent each syllable in a word. Since most people outside of China do not know how to read Cantonese characters, academics have tried to figure out what letters each character would represent in English. Throughout this book, you will see Cantonese words written in what is known as the Pinyin style.. Cantonese words are written in *italics* each time they are used, and you can find translations of those words in the Glossary on page 61.

Minnie's Family and Friends:

Minnie (Meimin) Wong: A shy, intelligent 9-year-old girl who loves to learn.

Dau: Minnie's father, who is a merchant.

Ma: Minnie's mother.

Henry (Hangyan) Wong: Minnie's 12-year-old brother.

Alice (Meilai) Wong: Minnie's 5-year-old sister.

Maggie (Minghui) Zuo: Minnie's best friend, who lives next door.

Weixiu: Minnie's family's 13-year-old maid.

Elsie Wilson: A missionary who offered to tutor Maggie in reading and writing English.

Chapter 1:

Nine-year-old Minnie Wong squinted her eyes and searched the page for a word she recognized. She was leaning over the back of her older brother Henry's chair and trying to find words she understood in the book he was reading. Henry's tutor was teaching him how to read and write both in the family's native Cantonese and in English.

Sometimes Henry tried to teach Minnie a little bit of what he was learning in his lessons. He had taught her that English was written with letters, and that Cantonese was written in symbols called characters. Minnie and all of her family members knew how to speak both Cantonese and English because Mr. Wong had done business with both Chinese and American merchants for most of his life.

"Those are the characters for *Hangyan!*" Minnie smiled as she pointed to two characters side by side in Henry's book. Like most Chinese Americans, all of the members of the Wong family had both Chinese and American names. Henry's name in Cantonese was Hangyan, and their little sister Alice's name was *Meilai*. Minnie liked the beautiful sound of her Chinese name: *Meimin*.

"*Jeng!* Very good!" Henry said as he looked up from his book. "Do you remember what Hangyan means in English?"

"Hmmm," Minnie hesitated. Henry was proud of the meaning of his Chinese name and talked about it every time he was given the chance. She tapped her lips and pretended to be thinking really hard. "I don't know. What does Hangyan mean?"

Henry looked surprised, but in a few seconds he understood the joke and grinned.

“I’m just teasing,” Minnie laughed. “I know Hangyan means ‘prosperous man.’” Even though she loved teasing Henry, Minnie looked up to him and thought he was a really great big brother.

“Someday you’re going to be the richest, most successful person in all of San Francisco.” Minnie beamed with pride. “You’ll go to the theater every night, and order embroidered silk all the way from China, and live in a mansion on Nob Hill with a golden staircase.”

At the mention of the Nob Hill neighborhood Henry’s mouth tightened into a straight line and his forehead wrinkled into a million angry crinkles.

“You know just as well as I do that no one who looks like us will ever be allowed to buy a house on Nob Hill,” Henry said, gesturing to his dark, almond-shaped eyes and shiny black *queue*.

Minnie’s face clouded with thought. She opened her mouth to answer, then closed it again. She knew that San Francisco had strict laws about where certain groups of people could and could not live, but she also knew that if anyone could change people’s minds it would be Henry.

“Come look at the sky with me!” Minnie’s 5-year-old sister Alice begged from the other side of the room.

“It is beautiful today, *meimei*,” Minnie said as she walked across the parlor to stand with Alice by the window.

Minnie and her family lived above their father’s store on the second floor of a building like many of the others found on Sacramento Street. In the evening the girls liked to watch the

colors of the sunset splash bright pink and golden light onto the wooden buildings and storefronts. Colorful lanterns bobbed in the breeze from the strings that held them up in the sky.

In a building just down the street a merchant was unhooking rows of seaweed and spices from his outdoor display. Alice waved at the man who lived across the street, Mr. Wu, as he walked home from his job at the girls' favorite restaurant. His crisp shoes made clippy-clacky noises on the sidewalk and the dusty cobblestone streets.

As the last colors began to fade, the children from the poorer end of the city finished their street games and headed home along Dupont Street.

"I think," Alice began, "that we have to have the prettiest window for sunsets in all of San Francisco. If I could buy a house anywhere, I don't think I could find a better one for sunsets than ours."

Like most of the young girls Minnie knew, Alice loved pretty things. Alice's Chinese name meant "beautiful silk," and Minnie didn't know anyone who loved new silk clothes and gold buttons as much as her sister Alice.

I wonder what it looks like to see a sunset from the outside, Minnie wondered. Though Minnie went often to visit her friend Maggie in the house next door, she and Alice were rarely allowed to go outside unless the entire family was going to the theater or a restaurant.

Minnie understood why she and Alice were not allowed outside without a chaperone. She knew that even if Americans thought that it was *mianzi* for women to be seen in public, that was considered not *mianzi* in China and could ruin a family's reputation. Minnie's mother had told her that it was not safe for girls to be outside, and Minnie knew that even her mother only went outside on special family occasions.

Still, all of that knowing did not keep Minnie from thinking and wondering what it would be like to play outdoors and go to school with other children.

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“Tell us the story about how you came to America,” Minnie asked the family maid, Weixiu, as the girls were getting ready to go to bed. Minnie had changed out of the bright silk jacket she had worn that day and was helping Alice comb the knots out of her short, silky hair.

“Sit on the *kang* while I heat up the coals, Meimin,” Weixiu whispered. “And then I will tell you and Meilai the story again.”

Minnie adjusted the quilts on the brick kang bed and made a place for Alice to sit at her feet. Minnie knew that Weixiu would probably be getting married soon and that she herself was getting too old for bedtime stories. Still, Minnie loved every second of listening to Weixiu’s stories of magical objects, silly animals, and her short childhood in China. She wished that she knew how to write so she could always have Weixiu’s stories with her.

Unlike Minnie, Weixiu had been born in China and made the journey to the United States all alone when she was seven years old. Minnie enjoyed listening to Weixiu talk about her brothers and sisters, her life in the village living on a farm, and her experiences on the boat that brought her to the United States, which Weixiu and other Chinese people called *Gam Saan*: the Gold Mountain.

“Where would you like me to start?” Weixiu asked as she placed the coals carefully in the compartment under the kang and grabbed a jade comb off of the low teak wood table.

“Start at the beginning,” Minnie said, “when the mysterious man came to your house.”

Weixiu sat behind Minnie on the kang. “I was six years old, and it was right before the beginning of our big lunar New Year celebration,” she began as she gently undid Minnie’s long braids.

“My parents called me in from the gardens, and they were talking to a man I had never seen before. He was questioning my father, and he asked me to spin in a slow circle and to pour tea.”

“Was that when he took you to the big boat?” Alice turned around to face Minnie and Weixiu.

“He didn’t take me to the boat yet,” Weixiu said, “but my parents told me that I was going to leave on a boat very soon, just after the start of the New Year. A few days later my mother gave me a beautiful new red jacket to wear: red because she wanted me to have extra special good luck as I traveled to Gam Saan.”

“Did the jacket have pretty patterns sewn into it?” Alice loved to ask questions, and she always wanted Weixiu to describe the fancy jacket she had worn on her journey to America.

“It was very beautiful, Alice,” Weixiu smiled and she closed her eyes as if she were picturing something she could no longer see.

“My mother stitched little patterns all over the jacket with blue thread to symbolize health and prosperity for the journey. One morning the man came to the house again. My parents gave me a tied up piece of cloth with food in it and told me to go with him.

“My father stayed inside, but I remember my mother waving until we turned a corner of the path and I couldn’t see her anymore. She told me to be brave, but there were tears running down her cheeks as well. The man and I walked for a long time before we came to the boat.”

“Were you scared?” Alice asked. Minnie looked at Alice and scowled. She wanted to hear Weiniu tell the story and didn’t like it when Alice interrupted.

“I was very scared,” Weixiu said, “especially because I had heard my parents whispering about other little girls that had gone to Gam Saan and been kidnapped by the *tongs*.”

“What are tongs?” Alice was now laying on her stomach and balancing her round face on both tiny fists.

“Bad groups of men who take little girls and make them slaves. That’s why *ma* doesn’t want us to go outside,” Minnie said with a sigh, “Because she’s afraid that someone from a tong might try to take us.”

“That’s right, Meimin,” Weixiu looked down into Minnie’s eyes, and Minnie knew that Weixiu saw how frustrated Minnie was that she had to stay inside.

“I wish the tongs would all just go away.” Minnie crossed her arms and sat up straight on the kang. “Then we would all be able to go outside, and play with our friends, and go to school whenever we wanted.”

“One step at a time,” Weixiu whispered as she smoothed the front pieces of Minnie’s hair. “Soon you will be a woman and it won’t be proper for you to be outside anyway.”

Minnie thought Weixiu looked sad, but hopeful: like there was something uncertain in the future but that it might just turn out all right. “Well, that’s enough of that,” Weixiu smiled, “I think it’s time for bed.”

“I want to hear the rest of the story!” Alice whined.

“Another time, Meilai. If Meimin keeps snooping over Henry’s shoulder while he’s doing his lessons soon *je* will learn to write down anything we say.” Weixiu smiled at Minnie before

speaking once again to Alice, “Then you will have all of your favorite stories with you to read whenever you want.”

Minnie laid down next to Alice and snuggled deeply into the warm quilts. Though Alice’s steady breathing told her that her sister was asleep within minutes, Minnie’s mind was full of China, and tongs, and thoughts of the world outside her own little neighborhood.

As she finally fell fast asleep, she dreamed of blue patterns on red silk and of writing Weixiu’s stories so they could be with her forever.

Chapter 2:

A few days later, Minnie stepped out the door with Weixiu. She closed her eyes and breathed in the warm smell of hanging spices. Though Minnie was only going next door to visit with her friend Maggie Zuo, she liked to take advantage of every second of freedom she was given.

The affair of walking from one building to the next was a lengthy undertaking for Minnie because her feet had been bound in silk ribbons a few years earlier to bend them into the shape of a perfect, three-inch, “golden lotus.”

The process was painful, but many upper- and middle-class Chinese men wouldn’t marry a bride with unbound feet. Minnie knew that her parents had made the choice to bind her feet out of love for her, even if she often wished that she could run and walk without pain like the daughters of working-class parents.

Since her feet had been bound when she was four years old, the excruciating pain had dimmed to a dull ache that sometimes she hardly noticed at all. Minnie felt bad for her sister

Alice, whose feet had been bound less than a year before. As Alice's feet adjusted to the bindings, Weixiu carried her anywhere she needed to go.

As Minnie looked in the windows of her father's store, she beamed with pride. Her father sold the most beautiful silk in all of San Francisco. Her and Maggie's fathers were both merchants who imported only the best goods all the way from Canton in China. Like Minnie, Maggie lived on the second floor of the store her father owned.

Taking a few more steps, Minnie passed the fragrant display shelf of Maggie's father's store. It looked like he had just gotten a new shipment of spices and tea. The Zuo's store was always full of good things to eat and drink, and Minnie thought it always smelled like her favorite *chai*.

As Minnie turned and continued up the stairs to the Zuo family's apartment, she watched Weixiu make her way to the front counter. *Fresh spiced broth for dinner!* Minnie thought excitedly.

She arrived at the top of the stairs and knocked politely on the red, carved door. The Zuo's maid smiled as she opened the door for Minnie.

"You're here to see *Zuo Minghui*?" she asked as she escorted Minnie inside.

"Yes, please," Minnie said as she stepped into the Zuo family's main room.

Minnie knew that if she was visiting in the evening or during a time when the Zuo family was expecting male company, it would not be proper for the two young girls to be seen in the main room. At those times, she and Maggie would sit together and practice the fancy stitches they were learning to embroider in one of the Zuo's back rooms.

Taking out her needle and silk thread, Minnie settled into a teak chair and waited for Maggie. Unlike Minnie, Maggie didn't have any brothers or sisters and was often lonely for someone her own age to talk to.

If Minnie was outspoken and determined, she was also somewhat shy. Maggie was the total opposite: Maggie was extroverted and fun-loving, yet she rarely had any opinions at all about the things that Minnie thought were important. Minnie always thought that she and Maggie were like *yin* and *yang*, the symbol for two complementary things that balance each other in perfect harmony. She thought that she and Maggie were a little bit like purple embroidery on a yellow jacket or red berries hidden in green leaves. They were different, but they brought out the best in each other.

"Minnie!" Maggie practically shouted as she ran towards her friend. "I'm so glad you came. I have so much to tell you!"

Maggie didn't wait for her friend to respond: "Two days ago, around this same time, a strange woman walked into *Dau's* shop." Minnie recognized the mysterious tone in Maggie's voice and knew that this was going to be a really good story.

"She had blond hair twisted up in a tight bun on the very top of her head, and green eyes, and tons and tons of freckles.

"She walked right up to the counter and introduced herself to the worker at the counter. She said her name was Elsie Wilson, and she asked if my mother was at home."

"How did she know your mother?" Minnie asked, fully immersed in the story.

"Well, she didn't exactly know my mother," Maggie continued, "She just asked if there was a merchant's family that lived above the store and if she could speak to the lady of the

house. She came upstairs and talked with my mother for a few minutes before my mother invited her to come visit at our house again the next day.”

“So she came back yesterday,” Minnie added. “What did she have to say?”

“When she knocked on the door, I was sitting here in the main room. I was hoping that Ma would forget to send me away since company was coming, and that I would get to stay and listen to the conversation. But right before she knocked, Ma remembered and sent me to the back rooms behind the *pingfeng*.”

Maggie motioned towards the beautifully carved panels that separated the family’s part of the house from the main room. Minnie always thought blank, bland Western walls (even those covered in wallpaper) were not nearly as beautiful as the intricate pingfeng panels that could be found in almost every living space in Chinatown.

“I left the main room when Ma asked me to,” Maggie’s eyes sparkled with mischief, “but I didn’t go any further than behind the first pingfeng.”

Minnie laughed. She knew her friend couldn’t stand being left out of conversations, and that very few things could keep her from listening even when she wasn’t allowed to participate.

“Miss Wilson knocked on the door, and my mother escorted her inside. From the cracks in the pingfeng I saw that she was wearing a plain navy skirt and a white and yellow striped blouse. She didn’t have a parasol, but she brought a gift of eight apples, which she carefully gave to Ma with both hands.”

“Someone must have taught her good manners,” Minnie commented.

“Ma said the very same thing to her, and she said that she’s lived here for a few years and has learned as much as she could about our culture.”

“Does her husband do business in the city?” Minnie accidentally wondered out loud.

“No. She is unmarried and lives at the Mission on *Tong Yun Gai* just past Stockton Street. Only she called Tong Yun Gai ‘Sacramento Street’ like Dau says they print it on American maps,” Maggie stopped for a breath.

“She told my mother that she had been wanting to begin making visits down the street a while ago, but had been occupied with other things every day at the mission until yesterday.”

Partway into the story, Minnie’s mind had begun to wander. Each delicate tapestry and rug in the Zuo’s house was perfectly placed.

Xui, elegance, she thought. *Like Weixiu’s name and the characters Henry taught me.* Maggie pictured herself writing the strokes of that character with gentle, elegant penmanship.

“Miss Wilson said that the purpose of her visit yesterday,” Maggie continued, “was to ask my mother if she could begin tutoring me in how to read and write in English!”

Minnie’s attention snapped back to Maggie and her story.

I must have heard incorrectly, Minnie thought. *Surely Maggie didn’t say that a missionary woman had offered to tutor her?*

“Wait, what did you say?” Minnie’s gaze fixed on Maggie in disbelief.

“I know!” Maggie responded with a laugh, “It’s so exciting, and I never would have thought that my parents would actually let Miss Wilson teach me!”

“Your parents agreed to it?” Minnie’s mouth almost fell open with disbelief. It was unheard of for a Chinese merchant’s daughter to be given a tutor, and Minnie didn’t know any girls—or women—who knew how to read and write in English.

Maggie’s smile faded slightly.

“They said that they would only agree on the condition that I wouldn’t make reading more important than my house work: which of course I said I would do.

“Ma said that we’re Americans now, and American daughters learn to read. Dau just thinks that reading will keep me out of trouble while Ma is managing the rest of the household. Since I don’t have any brothers, they probably don’t think we have anything to lose.

“Besides, since my feet aren’t bound my father doesn’t think I’ll be able to make a good, traditional, Chinese marriage match anyway.”

Minnie looked down at her own bound feet in silence.

“Last night, Dau said: ‘I suppose any man that does not care about Minghui’s unbound feet will not care about her ability to read English either.’” Minnie laughed at Maggie’s imitation of her father’s deep voice. “‘We live in Gam Saan now, maybe learning to read English will be just as good as learning to speak it,’ he said.”

The girls collapsed in giggles in their chairs. No matter how sad Minnie was that her parents would probably never allow her to have an American tutor, she couldn’t help laughing at the funny voices Maggie always used to imitate other adults and children.

“Weixiu has come to tell you it’s time to go home, Meimin,” the Zuo’s maid said as she came in the door.

“You’re so lucky, Maggie,” Minnie said as she gathered up her needle and threads to go home. “I want to learn to write more than anything in the world!”

“Maybe a missionary tutor will come visit at your house too,” Maggie whispered as Minnie walked out the door. “Or maybe your parents would let me teach you.”

No, Minnie thought as she stepped down the stairs. As long as they have Henry to build their hopes on, my parents will never want for me to read.

Later that afternoon, Minnie sat on the floor of the Wong family's main room playing dolls with Alice. Their father had received a few dolls in one of his shipments from China a few months earlier, and he allowed his two daughters to each pick the one they liked the most.

Like many Chinese dolls, the heads and limbs were made of white porcelain and had bright black eyes and cherry red lips painted on the face. Minnie's doll wore a yellow jacket and brown pants, and Alice's had a purple outfit.

Minnie knew that when they had picked their dolls Alice had wanted one that looked like hers and had a yellow outfit. Their father, however, had not let Alice pick that doll because yellow was one of her unlucky colors according to the Chinese Zodiac.

As an Earth Rabbit, Alice was expected to choose a doll that wore an outfit in one of her lucky colors: red, pink, purple, or blue. Since Minnie was born in 1875—the year of the Wood Pig—she knew that her lucky colors were yellow, brown, gray, and gold.

Gam, Minnie thought. *I love gold lace and gold jewelry.*

Minnie drew the Cantonese character for *gam* in her mind. Henry had taught her the symbol because he knew that it was her favorite color and that the symbol would be easy to memorize.

“*Je*, you need to take care of the baby,” Alice demanded.

Alice's doll was holding the little gray and blue pillow the girls had sewn in the shape of a swaddled baby.

“What were you thinking about?” she asked.

Minnie told Alice that she wasn't thinking about anything and moved on with their game, taking the little pillow in her own doll's two arms.

Alice wouldn't understand, Minnie thought, she's too little to care about getting a tutor.

“Does the baby need to be changed?” Alice asked in the high-pitched voice she had chosen for her doll.

Minnie positioned her doll to look like it was rocking the baby in its arms.

“I don't believe so,” Minnie said in the quiet voice that she used to try to make her doll sound like a very sophisticated woman, “perhaps you would like to check?”

Minnie carefully handed the little pillow to Alice's doll and carefully positioned it in Alice's doll's arms.

Chapter 3:

A few days later, Minnie's father told the family that they would be going to the theater together to watch a new play. Minnie loved going to the theater and listening to the music that played in the background of every scene. She was especially excited to go that evening because her father said that the actors would be performing shadow puppetry that night.

Shadow puppetry was Minnie's favorite kind of theater because the shadow puppets were able to do all kinds of flips, tricks, and synchronized dance moves from behind a screen.

Sometimes the characters were animals, and the actors would perform to only instrumental music. In other plays, the puppets would portray human characters and the actors would sing a story along with the music.

As they all walked to the theater together, Minnie decided that the plays with human characters were her favorite because she liked listening to the actors singing.

“I hope the puppet show is one of the legendary stories about an emperor from a long time ago,” Minnie said.

“I agree,” said Henry. “Those stories always have the best battle scenes and the most exciting music.”

“I want to watch a play about animals,” Alice said. “The long plays about the emperors are so boring!”

Minnie turned to Alice and scowled. *Why can't Alice ever agree with the rest of us?* she thought.

“One time, they did a play about monkeys,” Alice continued, “and they were so funny! I hope this group of actors bring monkey puppets and do a show like that.”

Minnie hadn't liked the monkey play because the show didn't have any story at all.

Henry turned towards Minnie: “Maybe the puppeteers will have new signs with Chinese characters on them and I can teach you what they mean.”

Minnie smiled. Henry always knew how to cheer her up when Alice was being difficult.

As the family walked down a street lined with restaurants, Minnie closed her eyes and inhaled the sharp smell of spiced broth, the sweet aroma of dumplings, and syrupy scent of fresh vegetables stir fried in soy sauce and rice vinegar. When her nose caught a whiff of doughy noodles soaking in her favorite garlic onion broth, Minnie knew that they were close to Mr. Wu's restaurant.

Minnie opened her eyes and looked in the front windows. Mr. Wu was behind the counter and smiled at Minnie, Henry, and Alice as they walked by. Minnie smiled back.

Minnie took a few more steps down the sidewalk and leaned side to side trying to see the signs in front of the theater.

I really want the puppeteers to do a play with human characters, Minnie thought.

A few minutes later, Minnie first saw the signs for the theater. She recognized the characters representing the words ‘puppet,’ ‘music,’ and ‘king,’ but didn’t know what any of the others said.

“Well, it looks like you both got your wish,” Henry laughed. “The puppet play today is called *Journey to the West: The Monkey King.*”

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“I love our family box!” Alice said as soon as everyone had taken their seats inside the theater.

Whenever the Wong family went to see a play they reserved one of the balcony boxes that jutted out from the side wall of the theater. From the box it was not only easy to see everything that happened on stage, but also to watch all of the other inner workings of the theater and all of the splendor of the building’s interior itself.

Though a man would lose his family honor, his *mianzi*, if the female members of his household were seen in public, family box seating in the theater kept women and female children far enough out of the public eye. Though there were very few women in the general seating below the boxes, Minnie saw other families with children in the boxes across from them.

Some families had also brought young servant girls to tend to the littlest ones, even though Minnie thought that some of the servant girls didn’t look much older than her.

As she usually did, Minnie saw a group of white American tourists clustered near the center of general seating. The men were dressed in nicely tailored suits, and the women wore

long silk dresses that were draped in ribbons and lace and supported with large, round hoops. The women also had with them an assortment of accessories: parasols, gloves, and fans they waved with vigorous enthusiasm in front of their faces.

I wonder what they'll think of the show. Minnie thought. American tourists were not usually able to understand the music, and they usually left the theater looking significantly less excited than they had appeared coming in. Seeing a particularly excited woman with rosy cheeks and a bright hat, Minnie giggled.

Turning around, Minnie saw Henry smiling too. She knew that he must have been thinking the exact same thing. This group of tourists seemed particularly naive and silly.

“When is the play going to start?” Alice asked.

“Soon,” Minnie answered quickly before turning back to face Henry. *Why is Alice so impatient?* she complained to herself.

Minnie glanced at the banner above the puppet stage and looked for a word she recognized. The last character was the first that Henry had ever taught her: ‘king’ in English and *wong* in Cantonese. The character was a tall, straight line with three shorter lines crossed through it at perfect right angles. Minnie loved the proud simplicity of the character that represented her family’s name.

“I know the character for ‘king,’ but is that the character for ‘west?’” Minnie asked. Henry had been teaching her the character for each of the cardinal directions, but sometimes she got them confused with other words.

“Yes,” Henry whispered as the music began.

A lamp shone brightly through a screen, making it easy to see the shapes of each of the multicolored puppets. Sometimes the instruments played together in loud, exciting music. Other times, individual instruments played notes that were quieter and more mysterious.

The play did turn out to be the perfect combination of what each sibling wanted to watch. Minnie enjoyed the music and the exciting story, and she knew that Henry enjoyed the action and adventure. From the smile on Alice's face, Minnie could tell that she was enjoying the silly antics of the monkey characters.

Looking out into the crowd at the end of the play, Minnie laughed. The tourist with the rosy cheeks and bright hat looked like she hadn't understood or enjoyed the show at all.

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Back at home for the rest of the evening, Minnie and her family sat down for dinner. Since they had been at the theater for most of the afternoon, they had ordered food from Mr. Wu's restaurant on the way home.

Minnie was particularly excited that evening because her family had ordered the noodles with garlic onion broth that she had smelled earlier.

Restaurants like Mr. Wu's frequently brought freshly cooked meals to customer's homes so that families could all eat together without exposing the women and children to the outside world. Minnie loved watching the workers carry trays of food above their heads. That evening she was hungry, and she and Alice watched the workers outside her window even more carefully.

"*Ma*, he's here!" Alice exclaimed as a worker carrying a tray marked for Mr. Wu's restaurant approached their door.

“Thank you Alice,” Minnie’s mother said, “but next time please speak more softly, *meimei*, a woman should never be heard shouting.”

As Minnie heard her father greet the delivery worker at the door, she moved to peek over Henry’s shoulder as he worked on his lessons for the day. When she saw that he was reading English she was disappointed. Though she could sometimes find characters he had taught her in his Cantonese books, Henry had not taught her to read any English.

Maggie is so lucky, Minnie thought, she’s going to know how to read English long before I do.

Though Minnie was happy for her friend, she was also jealous of Maggie. She was jealous that Miss Wilson had come to Maggie’s house first, and she was jealous that Maggie’s parents were allowing her to have a tutor.

“Will you teach me a word in English, Henry?” Minnie asked.

“Learning English doesn’t start with words or characters,” Henry said. “To read English you have to learn the alphabet first.”

“How do I learn the alphabet?” Minnie countered.

“I’ll show you another time, Minnie,” Henry answered, “I have too much to do tonight and the alphabet takes a long time to explain.”

Minnie stood up as tall as she could and crossed her arms.

“But I want to learn, Henry,” she said firmly and somewhat sulkily.

“I know you do, but I really don’t have time tonight. Maybe I’ll have time to write it down for you to copy tomorrow.”

“Okay,” Minnie said.

As *Ma* called everyone over to the dinner table, Minnie swatted hot tears away from her eyes and determined to learn to read and write no matter how hard it was.

Chapter 4:

The next day, Minnie was sitting in her family's main room and practicing a new and difficult embroidery stitch. Weixiu had offered to teach both Minnie and Alice how to make clothes for their dolls out of scrap fabric from their father's store.

Alice was easily distracted and had decided to make only a simple jacket, but Minnie was determined to make her doll a beautiful outfit covered in delicate embroidery. The pattern was a complex arrangement of lotus blossoms and twisting leaves. Though she had correctly sewn a few flowers onto her practice fabric, none of them were the exact same size or shape.

Before shifting to another section of fabric to start over, Minnie sewed the Cantonese character for *Wong* or 'king' in the middle. She tried to remember the strokes that created the symbol for 'west' and stitched it also into the fabric.

She wasn't exactly sure if she had translated the strokes into stitches correctly, and she looked at her fabric with a sigh.

"Weixiu," Minnie said, "I don't think that I'm doing this right."

"You're right that it isn't perfect yet," Weixiu answered, "but you are improving, *Meimin*. Keep trying and I'm sure that with practice you will make something truly beautiful."

Minnie hesitated.

"But it will never be a perfect lotus pattern if you keep writing with the thread." Weixiu looked at Minnie with a laugh in her eyes.

“Your time will come, *je*,” she continued. “Focus on becoming a lady that brings *mianzi* to your family and trust that someday if you are patient you will get the opportunities you want.”

“But what if I never get to learn to write?” Minnie asked. “What if Henry and Maggie never get the chance to teach me and I spend the rest of my life stuck inside sewing and taking care of babies?”

Weixiu lowered her eyes and stared blankly at the corner of the chair she was sitting in.

“Be patient, Meimin,” she whispered. “You already have had so much luck in your life that you will likely have more.”

Minnie frowned at her thread, and devoted herself to untangling the thread that had managed to tangle itself in the few minutes she was distracted.

“And you never know,” Weixiu turned her face back towards Minnie with a smile, “maybe someday you’ll even be able to go to school. Here in *Gam Saan* things are different: some girls are already attending school with the boys, and there are rumors that someday Chinese students may be allowed to go to American school with everyone else.”

With that, Weixiu focused once again on her sewing. Minnie noticed that Weixiu’s stitching was fast and precise and that her needle flashed swiftly in and out of the light pink silk she was patching. Minnie had caught the sleeve of her favorite jacket on the corner of the *kang*, and Weixiu was quick at repairing clothing.

Minnie turned back to her own project and felt her needle and gray thread move haltingly in and out of the light brown fabric she had selected. She wondered if Maggie had started her tutoring sessions with Miss Wilson yet. She wondered if Maggie was learning the alphabet that Henry didn’t have time to teach her and if Maggie would have time to help her after she had learned.

As Minnie was daydreaming about going to school and learning the alphabet with Maggie, there was a knock at the door.

“Were we expecting any visitors today?” Minnie asked.

“I don’t think so,” Weixiu answered. “Go to one of the back rooms while I answer it.”

Minnie stepped behind the first *pingfeng* and waited to hear who had come to see them. Though it seemed unlikely, Minnie hoped that Maggie had come to visit. She hoped that Miss Wilson had taught Maggie the first part of the alphabet and that Maggie was there to teach her.

“Hello.” Minnie heard Weixiu greet the unexpected visitor.

“*Nei hou*,” replied an unfamiliar voice. “Is the lady of this house at home?”

Minnie peeked between the slats of the *pingfeng* and caught a glimpse of a slender white woman with a tight blond bun and freckled face. Though she wasn’t close enough to see if the mysterious visitor had green eyes, she was almost certain that the visitor was Miss Elsie Wilson.

“Yes, she is in the back room with her youngest daughter,” Weixiu answered. “I will go get her.”

Weixiu walked around the *pingfeng* and caught Minnie spying. Though she first smiled at her and stifled a laugh, she motioned for Minnie to follow her to the back of the house. Weixiu didn’t have to say anything for Minnie to know why she needed to move.

An honorable lady never snoops into others’ affairs, she thought to herself. With a frustrated breath and exaggerated sigh she picked up her embroidery materials and followed Weixiu all the way to the back room where her mother and Alice were sitting on the *kang*.

As Minnie sat down, Weixiu told everyone about the strange visitor. Minnie’s mother stood up and prepared to greet Miss Wilson. Minnie knew that if she was really, really quiet they might still be able to hear the conversation.

“Why would a white lady come here?” Alice asked.

“Shhh,” Minnie whispered. “I’m trying to listen.”

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For the rest of the morning, Minnie was cranky. Alice had talked and played through most of their mother’s conversation with Miss Wilson, and Minnie hadn’t been able to hear anything.

After lunch, Minnie decided to ask for her mother’s permission to go see Maggie next door. Minnie knew that it wouldn’t be respectful to ask her mother directly about her conversation with Miss Wilson. She knew that she would have to wait and see if her mother would bring it up to her.

“Ma, may I go visit Maggie this afternoon?” Minnie asked.

“Not today,” Minnie’s mother responded. “I need you to play with Alice while Weixiu and I finish the housework.”

“But I played with Alice all morning!” Minnie complained. “Why can’t Henry play with Alice today?”

“Henry has to finish his lessons for the day, Minnie, and I need you to stay home today. You can go visit with Maggie tomorrow like we had planned.”

“Yes, ma,” Minnie said to her mother.

I never get to do what I want to! It’s so unfair! Minnie thought as she stomped away. *I never get to see Maggie, and I never get to go outside our little house, and I’ll never get to learn to write.*

“Do you want to play with our dolls, Minnie?” Alice asked eagerly.

“You can play with your own doll,” Minnie growled as she looked at Alice with a stormy expression on her face. “You’re big enough to entertain yourself.”

“But I want to play with you,” Alice begged. “It’s not fun to play by myself.”

“We don’t always get what we want, Alice,” Minnie said angrily as she searched in her trunk for the papers she had carefully found and saved to use to write down the few Cantonese characters Henry had taught her. She hoped to find an unused piece to give to Henry so he could write out the English alphabet for her.

She found it at the bottom of her trunk and began sorting through the pieces. Two of them were covered in characters Henry had taught her: the names of all of her family members; city words like ‘street,’ ‘building,’ and ‘restaurant; and the cardinal directions.

The rest of the sheets of paper were blank, but she thought that many of them were too small to fit an entire alphabet of letters.

“Come play, Minnie. I’m bored,” Alice whined.

“I don’t feel like playing,” Minnie responded. “I’m going to practice my embroidery by the window for a little while.”

“That sounds like fun! I’ll come with you,” Alice said excitedly.

“No!” Minnie snapped, “I want to sew by myself.”

Leaving her blank papers on top of her trunk, Minnie grabbed her embroidery off of the *kang* and started walking towards the window on the other side of the *pingfeng*.

“But,” Alice looked at Minnie with tears in her eyes, “what can I do?”

“I don’t care,” Minnie answered as she turned to leave, “just find something to play with here.”

Minnie didn't stay in the room long enough for Alice to respond. Instead she stalked over to the window and began to embroider a new piece of practice fabric. Creating her own pattern out of the characters that formed her own name.

She thought it was pretty, but when she was finished she thought it was missing something she couldn't quite identify. Minnie thought about it for a long time before finally shrugging her shoulders in indifference. Sitting by the window had cooled her down, and she no longer felt as angry and frustrated as she did before.

Minnie felt bad about the way she had treated Alice, but shrugged that off as well. *She's so little she probably won't even remember tomorrow.* Minnie thought.

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Later that evening, as they were eating dinner, Minnie remembered the paper she had saved and Henry's promise to write out the English alphabet for her. As soon as the family finished, she saw him walk towards the desk in the corner of the main room to finish his lessons for the day.

"Henry," Minnie said, "will you write out the alphabet for me tonight?"

"Maybe," Henry replied, "I still have a little while until I'm done, but I think I'll have time to write it down soon. If you bring me some of the paper you've saved I'll try to make time tonight."

"Thank you!" Minnie said as she walked quickly around the maze of *pingfeng* to find her trunk.

As she made the final turn, she stopped suddenly, and then walked as fast as she could towards the back wall. The papers were no longer on top of her trunk.

Where are they? she wondered, almost in a panic. *I left them right here on top.*

Minnie opened the trunk and searched. She found her used papers right away near the bottom, but didn't see the blank sheets anywhere.

Stepping back, she surveyed the room. She noticed that Alice's doll was wearing a new, oddly-fitting tan outfit. The outfit was made in the same shape as the pants and jacket pattern Weixiu had made, but the material looks stiffer than usual.

As Minnie stepped closer, she realized that the outfit wasn't made of tan fabric, but paper. The outfit was made of her paper.

Minnie snatched the doll off of Alice's trunk, tearing one of the paper sleeves in the process. With a fierce look in her eyes, she stalked into the main room.

"Isn't my doll's new outfit pretty, Minnie?" Alice asked. Her eyes lit up and she smiled proudly. "I made it all by myself like you told me to."

"You stole my paper," Minnie screamed. "You're a thief!"

"*Wong Meimin!*" *Ma* scolded, "you know better than to speak to your sister like that."

"But *Ma*," Minnie argued back, "Alice stole my paper that I've been saving for weeks and made a dress for her doll with it. It didn't belong to her and she ruined it!"

"I...I didn't mean to," Alice whimpered from the floor, "you told me to find something to play with in our room, and I thought you left the paper out for me on purpose. You've always kept the paper in your trunk when you didn't want me to use it before. I'm sorry, *je*. I can try to find you some new paper." Minnie's eyes glared darts at Alice, and Alice began to cry.

“I don’t want new paper,” Minnie said as she looked at the floor in contempt of Alice’s apology, “I needed paper tonight and you ruined it.”

“Minnie,” her mother said, “did you leave Alice alone this afternoon?”

“Well...” Minnie began, still looking at the floor. She knew that the conversation was quickly heading in a different direction than she wanted. If her mother found out that she hadn’t looked after Alice like she was told to, she would be the one in trouble.

“Minnie,” her mother said with disappointment in her voice and a strict expression on her face, “I told you that I needed you to take care of Alice this afternoon.”

“I know, but...” Minnie pleaded. She watched her mother’s face remain calm, but stern.

“There was a young American woman today who asked if she could tutor you in reading and writing English today,” *Ma* began.

“Can she, *Ma*?” Minnie begged. She forgot all about the argument and Alice’s doll landed smoothly on the floor.

“I don’t know,” Minnie’s mother continued, “I told her that I would speak to your father and that she should come again in about a week.” Minnie’s delighted smile froze on her face as her mother continued, “After what just happened tonight, I don’t know if you’re ready. You’re already neglecting your duties as a young girl without a tutor.”

“Oh, I promise I’ll do anything you ask from now on!” Minnie blurted, “I’ll watch Alice all the time, and I’ll practice pouring tea without complaining, and I’ll never get mad about not being able to visit Maggie ever again. Just let me meet with the tutor,” Minnie said in a tone of desperation.

“*Meimin*,” Minnie’s mother said in a stern voice that was also balanced with a gentler tone, “listen to what you’re saying. You think writing is more important than your family and

friends? That is not *mianzi*, *Meimin*. When you learn a sense of honor and prove you have set your priorities right, then may you have a tutor.”

Minnie lowered her face and felt hot tears run down her cheeks. Her head bowed in shame, sadness, and anger, Minnie walked to bed and cried herself to sleep.

Chapter 5

The next few days were miserable for Minnie. Minnie was frustrated not with her mother, but with herself for acting so shamefully and ruining what little chances she had of learning to read and write English.

She was angry that Alice had taken her paper and gotten away with it, but she was angrier still that she had allowed herself to take her anger out on her sister. She knew that blaming someone else for your own faults was not *mianzi*, and she was old enough to know that leaving her paper outside of her trunk in front of Alice was her own fault.

She spent most of her time in front of the window, practicing the embroidery stitches Weixiu had been teaching her.

On a particularly dreary day, Minnie was watching the red and yellow lanterns bob in the breeze outside her window as she skillfully moved her needle in and out of the fabric she was embroidering.

“*Jeng!* You’ve improved, *Meimin*,” Minnie heard Weixiu say from behind her.

Though she hadn’t been paying attention to the increased evenness of her stitches or the precision of her patterns, Minnie suddenly realized that Weixiu was right: each flower and petal were identical and placed in even rows.

Minnie sighed.

“I guess you’re right,” she replied drearily, “but I wish I could fix my other mistakes as easily as I learned to fix my stitches.”

Weixiu sat with Minnie and joined her in looking out the window for a while.

“Look at your stitches,” Weixiu said after a long pause.

Minnie looked down at the fabric and thread in her lap.

“How did they get to be so even and perfectly placed?”

“I don’t know,” Minnie admitted. “I haven’t tried anything particularly special, and today I wasn’t even thinking about it.”

“That’s right,” Weixiu responded, “and I have a feeling that everything else you could ever want to learn to do in life is just like that.”

“What do you mean?” Minnie asked.

“You’ve spent a lot of time practicing your embroidery in the past few days,” Weixiu began. “The first pieces don’t look as good as the last ones, but your practice made it so easy to stitch the pattern that you don’t even have to think about it anymore.”

Minnie didn’t quite know where Weixiu was going with her lesson, but she thought that something was starting to make sense.

“So when you want to get better at something like embroidery,” Weixiu smiled, “or writing, or living with *mianzi*, you need to do it all the time until you don’t even know you’re trying anymore. *Mianzi* isn’t a single action, *je*, it’s something you practice for your entire life.”

Minnie felt Weixiu lay her strong hand on Minnie’s shoulder before she stood up and walked back towards the kitchen.

For the rest of that afternoon, Minnie thought and thought about practicing *mianzi*.

More than anything, Minnie knew that she wanted to live with *mianzi* and be honored by others. Partway through the afternoon, she started to come up with a plan.

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The next morning, Minnie woke up and dressed herself in her favorite pink pants and jacket. She dug through her trunk to find new fabric scraps and thread, and saw down in the main room to sew.

“*Ma*,” Minnie said when her mother entered the room, “would you like for me to watch Alice today?”

“Yes, I am going to need you to keep her busy today,” Minnie’s mother responded positively, but expectantly. Minnie had been hoping that her mother would be more appreciative of her changed efforts, but Weixiu’s quick smile fueled Minnie with just the encouragement that she needed to go through with her plan.

“Do you want to learn how to embroider, Alice?” Minnie asked.

As Alice sat in Minnie’s lap and Alice began to clumsily mimic Minnie’s dainty stitches, Minnie knew that no matter what happened—no matter whether or not she got more paper for Henry to copy the alphabet, whether or not Miss Wilson was able to tutor her, and whether or not she ever learned to write down the stories that she loved—that everything would turn out right if she had patience and dedicated herself to steady practice of whatever she wanted to learn.

Glossary of Cantonese Words:

- Dau: Dad (Informal)
- Chai: A Chinese black tea mixed with spices like cinnamon and cloves.
- Gam Lin Fa: Golden Lotus Flower, or a symbol of great beauty
- Gam Saan: Gold Mountain, or the United States
- Gai: Street
- Je: Elder Sister
- Jeng: “Very good!”
- Kang: Chinese style bed usually made of bricks with a hearth or stove inside to help a family stay warm on cold nights.
- Ma: Mother
- Meimei: Younger sister
- Nei: Girl
- Pingfeng: Carved and embroidered paneled screen used to divide a large room into multiple parts
- Queue: Hairstyle worn by Chinese boys and men.
- Tong: Chinese criminal gangs of rich and powerful men who often did illegal things and were cruel to women and children.
- Yin and Yang: Chinese symbol of balance and harmony between two different complementary elements. Examples are the moon and sun, sweet and sour tastes, and the colors red and green.

Part IV: Representation and Red Silk:

Recreating Chinese American Fashion for 18-Inch Dolls

While culture cannot be defined by the single elements of art, clothing, religion, or language, each of these components and more combine together to create a complex synthesis. This means that all aspects of a culture are important and should be both explored and represented by history, social science, and even popular culture. Therefore, when I decided to pursue the creation of a Chinese American American Girl® as my undergraduate thesis project, I realized that researching and creating historically and culturally accurate clothing for a physical doll product was just as important as researching and writing a historically and culturally accurate story. Including this in my project was especially enjoyable and meaningful for me, as I have enjoyed sewing since I was young and first learned to sew by designing and creating very amateur outfits for my dolls. This research—which ultimately led to the creation of three distinct Chinese-American, Victorian Era, American Girl® outfits—increased my understanding not only of the particular subsection of fashion I was studying, but also increased my overall awareness of the part that fashion and clothing play in one’s expression of culture and sense of identity.

While clothing is important to immigrants of all races and ethnicities, it has been especially important to immigrants from East Asia. Articles of clothing are not merely an outward expression of ethnic identity: “they also reveal the specific strategies Chinese children used to survive and thrive in American society.”⁵⁹ Chinese-American children often found themselves balancing precariously between two worlds: their heritage in the East and their home in the West. Because of this, the clothing of Chinese-American children became “a symbolic

⁵⁹ Wendy Rouse Jorae, “The Limits of Dress: Chinese American Childhood, Fashion, and Race in the Exclusion Era,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 41 (Winter 2010): 452.

representation of not only who the person is, but also who the person wants to be.”⁶⁰ Asian American children especially created unique blends between the clothing of their native culture and new culture.

In light of the unique relationship that existed between Chinese American children and their clothing, I decided to create three distinct outfits that serve three distinct purposes: one to represent the everyday clothing that a Chinese American girl would have worn, one to represent the desire of most Chinese American children to assimilate into American culture, and one to represent the beauty and luxury of upper- and middle- class Chinese ceremonial clothing. Although each of these outfits are mostly grounded in either Eastern or Western fashion, they all include at least one symbolic element that represents the broader syncretism of ideas and culture that took place in young Chinese American hearts and homes during the Exclusion Era.

Though I studied a plethora of historical photographs and museum images before designing each outfit, one of the images that consistently piqued my curiosity was “Chinese Family Portrait:” an image taken of a Chinese-American family in 1920.⁶¹ In the image, the male children wear Western suits, but the female children wear traditional Chinese clothing with one exception: the two youngest girls also wear large, Victorian-style bows. Thus, the bow became the consistent motif of Western influence throughout the entirety of this toy design portfolio. Audiences will notice that every outfit—regardless of whether that outfit is largely inspired by Eastern or Western fashion—is accessorized with a large, Victorian-style hairbow.

In a similar vein, color became the consistent symbol of Eastern influence. While red is widely known to be an important symbol of luck and good fortune in Chinese culture, other colors also took on special meanings for certain groups or individuals during certain time

⁶⁰ Saba Safdar, Kimberley Goh, and Melisa Choubak, “Clothing, Identity, and Acculturation: The Significance of Immigrants’ Clothing Choices,” *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science* 52, no. 1 (2020): 37.

⁶¹ Jorae, “The Limits of Dress,” 469.

periods. Each dynasty would choose a color to represent their regime, and individuals also had lucky colors based on the years of their birth. Since my character, Minnie, would have been born in 1875, yellow and gold would have been two of her lucky colors: colors that were coincidentally the symbolic colors of the Chinese regime in power at the time of her story.⁶² For this reason, Minnie's Chinese heritage is reflected by the presence of gold or yellow fabrics, trims, or ornaments within each outfit.

After intentional motifs were established and sketches were drawn of each outfit, the next



Figure 1: Pattern Pieces for Chinese Style Outfits

task became designing and creating working patterns for each piece of clothing. Pattern creation was perhaps simultaneously the most frustrating and rewarding part of the entire process of this project. Fortunately, I was able to find a few existing pattern books for dresses designed and sold for the Pleasant Company, which was the forerunner of American Girl®. Two of these pattern books—those created for the 1864 character Addy⁶³ and the 1904 character Samantha⁶⁴—contained patterns for dresses that I blended and adapted to create the style and pattern for Minnie's

Western dress. Creating patterns for the other two outfits, however, was a difficult process of trial and error. Since American Girl® has not ever had a Chinese American historical character, no patterns exist for the creation of historically accurate Chinese American clothes. Thus, I relied

⁶² The Qing dynasty was in power in China from 1644-1912, meaning they were the dynasty in power during Minnie's story in 1884. Though the Qing Dynasty first operated under an eight banner system symbolically adorned with eight different colors, by 1862 a centralized, sovereign Qing flag recognized yellow as the official color of the Qing Empire.

Jingyi Gao, "Official Colours of Chinese Regimes: A Panchronic, Philological Study with Historical Accounts of China," *TRAMES* 26 (2012): 272.

⁶³ Holly Easland and Heather Leidich, *Addy's Pretty Clothes* (Middleton: Pleasant Company, 1994), 36.

⁶⁴ Nancy J. Martin, *Samantha's Pretty Clothes* (Middleton: Pleasant Company, 1990) 22.

heavily on a specific image of a tunic top on the National Costume Museum of Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology website. Fortunately, this website included detailed representations of the fabric structures Chinese American women may have used to sew clothes at that time, which was instrumental for me as I created the structure of my own pattern.⁶⁵ Figure 1 is a photograph of my final pattern piece designs for the Chinese-style outfits. I was also inspired by a photograph entitled *Mrs. Minnie Chan Chung*, as she is pictured wearing long loose pants and a loose tunic of rich silk fabric.⁶⁶ The photograph was alluring not only because the subject shared a name with my character, but also because it was clear enough for me to see and examine detail and intricacy. This photograph is reproduced in Appendix C.



Figure 2: Minnie's Meet Outfit

The first outfit created and marketed by American Girl® for each character is popularly called the “Meet Outfit” because it is the outfit sold with the original doll and book: the title of which almost always is *Meet _____*.⁶⁷ Because the ‘Meet Outfit’ is the original clothing that the doll can be purchased in, it usually has a lot to say about that doll’s origins, culture, and story. For this reason, I chose to create for Minnie a standard yet traditional Chinese American everyday outfit consisting of a matching plain silk tunic and pants. The pink color of this outfit

⁶⁵ *Blue Satin Multicolored Embroidered Twelve Groups of Characters Pattern Wide-Sleeved Women's Jacket*. National Costume Museum of Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, Beijing.

⁶⁶Houseworth, Thomas. *Mrs. Minnie Chan Chung*. 1890. Chinese American Museum, Los Angeles.

⁶⁷ When I say that each book was titled *Meet _____* the blank stands for a character’s name. For further examples, see *Meet Addy*, *Meet Josefina*, *Meet Kirsten*, *Meet Rebecca*, *Meet Molly*, *Meet Felicity*, and *Meet Julie* in the bibliography section.

was inspired by a recolored image I found online of the girls who lived at the Occidental Board



Figure 3: Sketch of Minnie's Chinese New Year Outfit

Mission in 1907.⁶⁸ This recolored photograph is included in Appendix B. The outfit contains both previously mentioned motifs in that it is fastened with two gold buttons and is accessorized with two large bows. Minnie's Meet Outfit can be seen in Figure 2.

Next, using the same basic pattern I developed for Minnie's Meet Outfit, I created Minnie's Chinese New Year Outfit. Since red is the traditional color of luck and good fortune and therefore very important to Chinese New Year, I chose this color for the main fabric of

this outfit. Since both yellow and gold are not only symbolic of my intentional Chinese American motif, but are also colors widely used during Chinese New Year, I decided to include them both. As can be seen in Figures 3 and 4, this outfit also features a prominent western-style hair bow.

Finally, I created my own unique pattern for Minnie's Western Dress by combining and modifying two different Pleasant Company



Figure 4: Minnie's Chinese New Year Outfit

⁶⁸ *Recolored Image: Occidental Board Presbyterian Mission House Circa 1907*, 2017, Monterey County Historical Society.

patterns. This outfit is mostly inspired by a photograph entitled *Pupils of the Methodist Mission Home, c. 1906*⁶⁹ and another photograph entitled *Margaret Jessie Chung at Age 3*.⁷⁰ Both of these photographs are of Chinese American girls wearing Western-style clothing. Though this is a Western style dress, its yellow fabric fits the outfit into the larger Eastern motifs present in the entire collection. As this is a Western style dress, it naturally follows that it includes matching a

large matching hair bow. This outfit can be seen in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Minnie's Western Dress

Though the process of creating these three outfits was often difficult, it was also extremely rewarding. As I was sketching and sewing these outfits I was reminded just how important these historically accurate dresses were to my imaginative play as a child, and this only increased my excitement at getting to model the process of toy design that had so large an impact on my childhood. It was this passion that sharpened my attention to detail and

encouraged me to keep striving to make my pieces better, no matter how challenging that was. Overall, this section of the project really stretched my sewing abilities and taught me that I am capable of more than I initially believed. Furthermore, this section turned out to be not only the most fun, but also—in many ways—the most meaningful, as I hope that my steps towards the creation of this physical character might one day help young Chinese American girls see themselves and their culture represented as significant in history.

⁶⁹ Judy Yung and the Chinese Historical Society, *Images of America*, 35.

⁷⁰ *Margaret Jessie Chung at Age 3*, 1893, Chinese American Museum, Los Angeles.

Conclusion

My tripartite project has sought to use academic nonfiction, middle-grade historical fiction, and toy design to create a picture of what it would look like for a company such as American Girl® to adopt or create a Chinese American character rooted in historical Chinese American culture and representative of the Chinese American story. While each of these sections speak in a different voice and make differently nuanced arguments, they also work together to create one cohesive whole.

First, my academic nonfiction paper—“Educating a Forgotten Population”—explores the experiences of Chinese American children during the Exclusion Era and argues for the importance of including this history in the wider narrative of American history. Furthermore, this paper acknowledges the important role that missions and mission schools played in providing quality education to Chinese American children and seeks to bring to light the courage of the missionary teachers and Chinese students who worked against all odds to participate in school.

Second, my middle-grade fiction story introduces the reader to nine-year-old Minnie Wong, a Chinese American girl growing up in San Francisco during the Chinese Exclusion Era. Minnie takes readers through Chinatown and into the daily lives of 1884 Chinese American girls. Following the typical American Girl® Formula, Minnie participates in a journey of moral- and self-discovery which leads her to embrace both her Chinese and American identities.

Finally, my design and creation of three distinct historically accurate doll-sized outfits bring history to life for children by giving them tangible pieces of material culture with which to interact, explore, and learn. These outfits are full of symbolism, meaning, and reference to historical and cultural clothing trends of the time period, and they are created with the American Girl® style in mind.

This honors thesis is easily the most unique, challenging, and rewarding academic project I have undertaken thus far. For the past two years I have spent countless hours seeking to answer the question: What would a nineteenth century Chinese American immigrant American Girl character look like in historical context, in a middle-grade fiction story, and in historically informed toy design? Although good writers and researchers know that a project is never fully done but only due, I can honestly say that I am proud of the product I have created and am grateful for all that I have learned about myself, the academic community, and the world through this research endeavor.

From sewing in my dorm room, emailing museums in California, writing my first full-length fiction manuscript, and presenting at my first academic conference, this project pushed me to do things I never would have thought possible only a few years ago. Academically, I grew in my ability to research and find primary sources, write more effectively, and prepare for formal research presentations. Creatively, I grew in my artistic confidence when it comes to designing, sewing, and writing fiction. Personally, I learned lessons of perseverance, endurance, and patience.

In the end, I hope that this project ultimately helps others see the importance of seeking to understand those who are different from themselves and of representing people of all backgrounds, races, and ethnicities in books and other media. Like the missionary teachers that gave up their lives to teach the children who were not otherwise given opportunities to learn and the Chinese American children that fought a long and hard battle for their right to an education, I pray that we would all have the courage to stand up for the vulnerable and give voices to the stories that history has ignored.

**Appendix A:
Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)**

An Act to execute certain treaty stipulations relating to Chinese.

Whereas in the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities within the territory thereof: Therefore,

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That from and after the expiration of ninety days next after the passage of this act, and until the expiration of ten years next after the passage of this act, the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States be, and the same is hereby, suspended; and during such suspension it shall not be lawful for any Chinese laborer to come, or having so come after the expiration of said ninety days to remain within the United States.

SEC. 2. That the master of any vessel who shall knowingly bring within the United States on such vessel, and land or permit to be landed, any Chinese laborer, from any foreign port or place, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars for each and every such Chinese laborer so brought, and maybe also imprisoned for a term not exceeding one year.

SEC. 3. That the two foregoing sections shall not apply to Chinese laborers who were in the United States on the seventeenth day of November, eighteen hundred and eighty, or who shall have come into the same before the expiration of ninety days next after the passage of this act, and who shall produce to such master before going on board such vessel, and shall produce to the collector of the port in the United States at which such vessel shall arrive, the evidence hereinafter in this act required of his being one of the laborers in this section mentioned; nor shall the two foregoing sections apply to the case of any master whose vessel, being bound to a port not within the United States, shall come within the jurisdiction of the United States by reason of being in distress or in stress of weather, or touching at any port of the United States on its voyage to any foreign port or place: Provided, That all Chinese laborers brought on such vessel shall depart with the vessel on leaving port.

SEC. 4. That for the purpose of properly identifying Chinese laborers who were in the United States on the seventeenth day of November eighteen hundred and eighty, or who shall have come into the same before the expiration of ninety days next after the passage of this act, and in order to furnish them with the proper evidence of their right to go from and come to the United States of their free will and accord, as provided by the treaty between the United States and China dated November seventeenth, eighteen hundred and eighty, the collector of customs of the district from which any such Chinese laborer shall depart from the United States shall, in person or by deputy, go on board each vessel having on board any such Chinese laborers and cleared or about to sail from his district for a foreign port, and on such vessel make a list of all such Chinese laborers, which shall be entered in registry-books to be kept for that purpose, in which shall be stated the name, age, occupation, last place of residence, physical marks of peculiarities, and all facts necessary for the identification of each of such Chinese laborers, which books shall be safely kept in the custom-house.; and every such Chinese laborer so departing from the United States shall be entitled to, and shall receive, free of any charge or cost upon application therefor, from

the collector or his deputy, at the time such list is taken, a certificate, signed by the collector or his deputy and attested by his seal of office, in such form as the Secretary of the Treasury shall prescribe, which certificate shall contain a statement of the name, age, occupation, last place of residence, persona description, and facts of identification of the Chinese laborer to whom the certificate is issued, corresponding with the said list and registry in all particulars. In case any Chinese laborer after having received such certificate shall leave such vessel before her departure he shall deliver his certificate to the master of the vessel, and if such Chinese laborer shall fail to return to such vessel before her departure from port the certificate shall be delivered by the master to the collector of customs for cancellation. The certificate herein provided for shall entitle the Chinese laborer to whom the same is issued to return to and re-enter the United States upon producing and delivering the same to the collector of customs of the district at which such Chinese laborer shall seek to re-enter; and upon delivery of such certificate by such Chinese laborer to the collector of customs at the time of re-entry in the United States said collector shall cause the same to be filed in the custom-house anti duly canceled.

SEC. 5. That any Chinese laborer mentioned in section four of this act being in the United States, and desiring to depart from the United States by land, shall have the right to demand and receive, free of charge or cost, a certificate of identification similar to that provided for in section four of this act to be issued to such Chinese laborers as may desire to leave the United States by water; and it is hereby made the duty of the collector of customs of the district next adjoining the foreign country to which said Chinese laborer desires to go to issue such certificate, free of charge or cost, upon application by such Chinese laborer, and to enter the same upon registry-books to be kept by him for the purpose, as provided for in section four of this act.

SEC. 6. That in order to the faithful execution of articles one and two of the treaty in this act before mentioned, every Chinese person other than a laborer who may be entitled by said treaty and this act to come within the United States, and who shall be about to come to the United States, shall be identified as so entitled by the Chinese Government in each case, such identity to be evidenced by a certificate issued under the authority of said government, which certificate shall be in the English language or (if not in the English language) accompanied by a translation into English, stating such right to come, and which certificate shall state the name, title or official rank, if any, the age, height, and all physical peculiarities, former and present occupation or profession, and place of residence in China of the person to whom the certificate is issued and that such person is entitled, conformably to the treaty in this act mentioned to come within the United States. Such certificate shall be prima-facie evidence of the fact set forth therein, and shall be produced to the collector of customs, or his deputy, of the port in the district in the United States at which the person named therein shall arrive.

SEC.7. That any person who shall knowingly and falsely alter or substitute any name for the name written in such certificate or forge any such certificate, or knowingly utter any forged or fraudulent certificate, or falsely personate any person named in any such certificate, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor; and upon conviction thereof shall be fined in a sum not exceeding one thousand dollars, and imprisoned in a penitentiary for a term of not more than five years.

SEC.8. That the master of any vessel arriving in the United States from any foreign port or place shall, at the same time he delivers a manifest of the cargo, and if there be no cargo, then at the time of making a report of the entry of the vessel pursuant to law, in addition to the other matter

required to be reported, and before landing, or permitting to land, any Chinese passengers, deliver and report to the collector of customs of the district in which such vessels shall have arrived a separate list of all Chinese passengers taken on board his vessel at any foreign port or place, and all such passengers on board the vessel at that time. Such list shall show the names of such passengers (and if accredited officers of the Chinese Government traveling on the business of that government, or their servants, with a note of such facts), and the names and other particulars, as shown by their respective certificates; and such list shall be sworn to by the master in the manner required by law in relation to the manifest of the cargo. Any willful refusal or neglect of any such master to comply with the provisions of this section shall incur the same penalties and forfeiture as are provided for a refusal or neglect to report and deliver a manifest of the cargo.

SEC. 9. That before any Chinese passengers are landed from any such line vessel, the collector, or his deputy, shall proceed to examine such passenger, comparing the certificate with the list and with the passengers ; and no passenger shall be allowed to land in the United States from such vessel in violation of law.

SEC.10. That every vessel whose master shall knowingly violate any of the provisions of this act shall be deemed forfeited to the United States, and shall be liable to seizure and condemnation in any district of the United States into which such vessel may enter or in which she may be found.

SEC. 11. That any person who shall knowingly bring into or cause to be brought into the United States by land, or who shall knowingly aid or abet the same, or aid or abet the landing in the United States from any vessel of any Chinese person not lawfully entitled to enter the United States, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall, on conviction thereof, be fined in a sum not exceeding one thousand dollars, and imprisoned for a term not exceeding one year.

SEC. 12. That no Chinese person shall be permitted to enter the United States by land without producing to the proper officer of customs the certificate in this act required of Chinese persons seeking to land from a vessel. And any Chinese person found unlawfully within the United States shall be caused to be removed therefrom to the country from whence he came, by direction of the President of the United States, and at the cost of the United States, after being brought before some justice, judge, or commissioner of a court of the United States and found to be one not lawfully entitled to be or remain in the United States.

SEC.13. That this act shall not apply to diplomatic and other officers of the Chinese Government traveling upon the business of that govern- ment, whose credentials shall be taken as equivalent to the certificate in this act mentioned, and shall exempt them and their body and house- hold servants from the provisions of this act as to other Chinese persons.

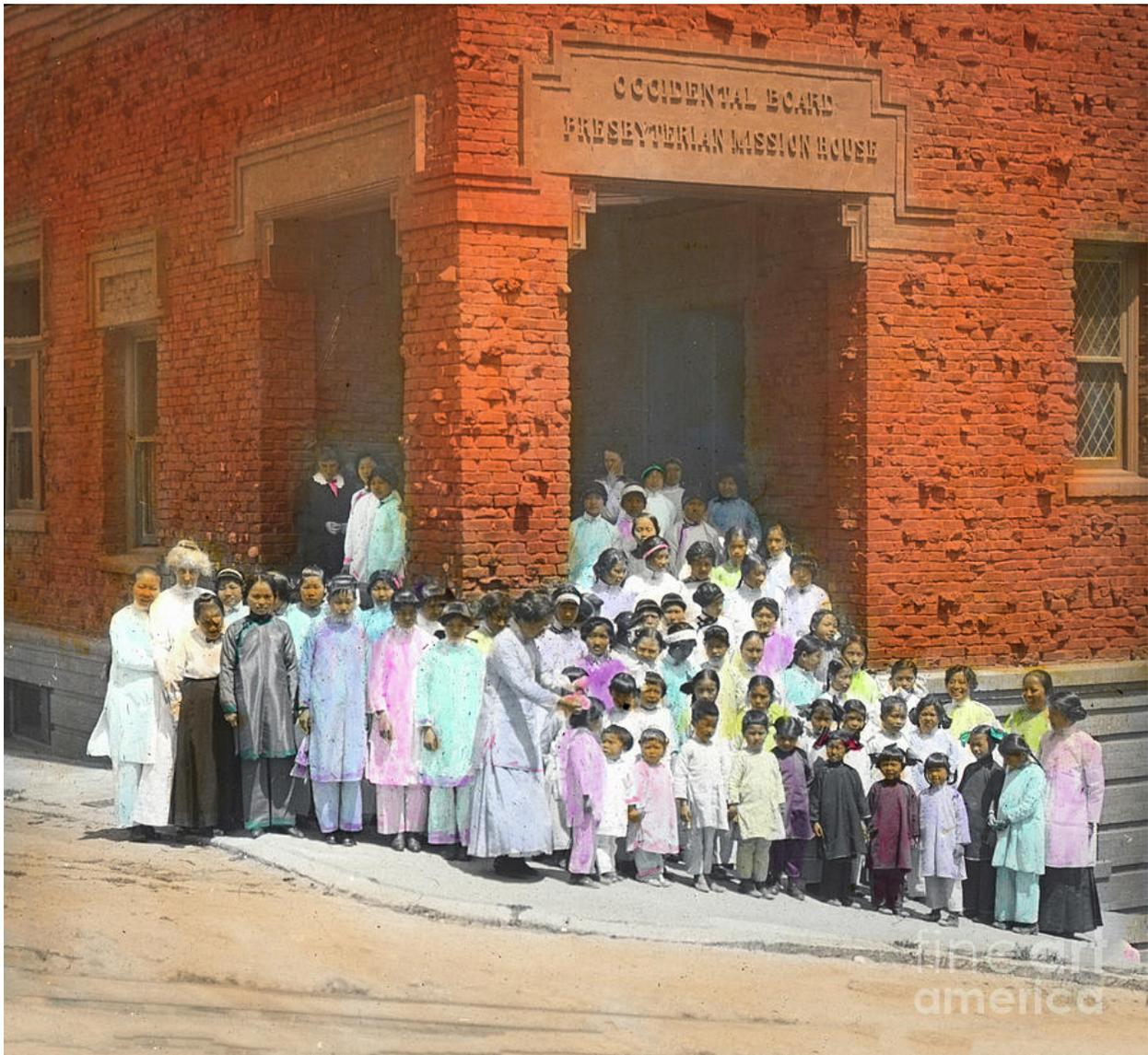
SEC. 14. That hereafter no State court or court of the United States shall admit Chinese to citizenship; and all laws in conflict with this act are hereby repealed.

SEC.15. That the words "Chinese laborers", wherever used in this act shall be construed to mean both skilled and unskilled laborers and Chinese employed in mining.

Approved, May 6, 1882.

Appendix B:

Recolored Image: Occidental Board Presbyterian Mission House Circa 1907 (2017)



Appendix C:
Mrs. Minnie Chan Chung (1890)



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