CHAPTER 21

The Chinese and the Stanfords

Nineteenth-Century America's Fraught Relationship with the China Men

GORDON H. CHANG

A rhetorical question circulates among Chinese Americans: do you know why the tiles of the roofs of Stanford University are colored red?

The answer: because they are stained with the blood of Chinese railroad workers who died while constructing the transcontinental railroad for Leland Stanford.

Simultaneously expressing feelings of anger, of pride for contribution to the nation, and of unpaid debt of blood, the question-as-commentary expresses profound resentment toward the individual who most influenced the lives of Chinese immigrants in nineteenth-century America. More than anyone else, Leland Stanford is held responsible for the mistreatment and exploitation of thousands of Chinese workers in the United States—the enormous wealth he accumulated, in substantial part from their labor during the construction of the first transcontinental rail line, came from the hardship they endured. Stanford personifies the America that victimized them. To this day, there are Chinese Americans who refuse to set foot on the grounds of the university that carries the Stanford name.[1]

Other Chinese Americans hold Stanford in high regard: he is seen as a benefactor, a protector, and an advocate for the Chinese. He and his wife, Jane, it is said to this day, so loved a Chinese youngster in their employ that they sought to adopt him. When Leland Stanford died, many in America saw him and his wife as great friends to the Chinese.

How do we reconcile these very different views of the Stanfords and their relationship to Chinese in America?

We might conclude that the Stanfords were themselves emblematic of nineteenth-century America's own deeply conflicted and often contradictory attitude toward the Chinese who came here. The Stanfords, and America at the time, were neither consistently malevolent nor benevolent toward Chinese—tense, ambivalent, and complex are more appropriate ways to describe their stance toward the Chinese, with whom they engaged in a fraught and complicated relationship.

One of the first white merchants that Chinese immigrants in the 1850s might have encountered in California was Leland Stanford. He grew up in New York State, moved to California, and made his early money by selling dry goods to those who flocked to the gold rush. In 1852, the year that saw the first large influx of Chinese into California, Stanford set up shop in Placer County, a booming center of mining. His store appealed directly to the newcomers from Asia—a sign prominently displayed beneath the Stanford name advertised "This store always has Chinese goods (*bendian changyou tangshan zahuo*)."[2]

In late 1861, soon after the start of the Civil War, Stanford, a Republican, was elected governor of the state of California, and his first official speech in January 1862 is widely cited today as an ugly expression of the prevailing anti-Chinese sentiments of the time, and today these are still his most widely circulated comments on Chinese. Stanford began his short inaugural address by offering thoughts on ways to stimulate the growth of the state's population and then declared:

> While the settlement of our State is of the first importance, the character of those who shall become settlers is worthy of scarcely less consideration. To my mind it is clear, that the settlement among us of an inferior race is to be discouraged, by every legitimate means. Asia, with her numberless millions, sends to our shores the dregs of her population. Large numbers of this class are already here; and, unless we do something early to check their immigration, the question, which of the two tides of immigration, meeting upon the shores of the Pacific, shall be turned back, will be forced upon our consideration, when far more difficult than now of disposal. There can be no doubt but that the presence of numbers among us of a degraded and distinct people must exercise a deleterious influence upon the superior race, and, to a certain extent, repel desirable immigration. It will afford me great pleasure to

> concur with the Legislature in any constitutional action, having for its object the repression of the immigration of the Asiatic races.[3]

Immediately following this declaration, Stanford called for the development of steamship connections with Asia, which would be critical, he said, for the state's economy and future as part of the Union. He would seek Washington's support for promoting transpacific trade, an ambition that Asa Whitney, the early promoter of the construction of a transcontinental rail line, regaled Stanford's father with when Stanford was a youngster. Stanford also called for attention to the urgent need to construct a transcontinental rail line, "the great work of the age," in his words, that would connect the state to the rest of the Union. He betrayed not a glimmer of awareness that closer commercial ties with Asia, China in particular, would inevitably result in more social interaction and further emigration of a "degraded race."

Stanford's anti-Chinese prejudice was rooted in the antislavery, "free soil" logic then popular among many Republicans. Early in his political career, he had declared his opposition to chattel slavery, which in his view hurt the interests of "free white men," whom he said he much preferred over any other people. "I believe," he said, that "the greatest good has been derived by having all the country settled by free white men."[4] White labor, he maintained, could not fairly compete against Africans in chains, and he extended that logic to his public hostility toward Chinese migrants.

At the same time, however, Leland and his wife, Jane, developed a very different personal relationship with Chinese, one that was remarkably close and affectionate and stood in sharp contrast to his public position. In the summer of 1861, before he was elected governor, Leland and Jane purchased a ramshackle mansion in downtown Sacramento and staffed it with a number of homeworkers, including a Chinese cook named Moy Jin Kee, who introduced his younger brother, Moy Jin Mun, to the couple. Jin Mun had recently arrived from China and began working for the Stanfords. According to several accounts, Jane Stanford, childless at the time, became especially fond of the youngster and sought to adopt him formally into the family. The older brother, Moy Jin Kee, opposed the idea because he and his brother were not orphans—the parents of the brothers were still alive in China—and because of the deep social and racial divide between them and the Stanfords. When Moy Jin Mun left the Stanfords' employment a few years later, in the mid-1860s, Jane gave him a gold ring with his name engraved on it for remembrance. He cherished

the keepsake for his entire, long life, according to the biographical information provided by his son, and he proudly wore it for the next seventy years, until his death in 1936. According to the family history, Moy Jin Mun worked as a foreman for Chinese workers on the Central Pacific Railroad in the 1870s.[5]

Moy Jin Kee, for his part, also played a critical role in the life of the Stanford family. In 1862, the same year that Leland Stanford called for efforts to rid the state of Chinese, Jane Stanford developed a serious illness that threatened her life. When Western medical practices failed to improve her condition, Moy Jin Kee introduced her to Yee Fung Cheung, a Chinese traditional doctor who had arrived in California in 1850 and lived in Sacramento's Chinese quarter. Yee used Chinese remedies to treat Jane and restored her to full health. He later treated Chinese and white workers on the Central Pacific Railroad and became one of the most prominent Chinese medical practitioners in California.[6]

Also in 1862 Stanford assumed the presidency of the newly formed Central Pacific Railroad Company (CPRR), which the United States government soon selected to build, with the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), the rail line that would help span the continent. Heading the CPRR would enormously enrich Stanford and establish him as the individual who most influenced the destinies of Chinese in nineteenth-century America.

Stanford turned the first shovel of dirt in a Sacramento ceremony to start the work of the CPRR in January 1863, but because of funding issues and the difficulty in obtaining sufficient numbers of workers for the massive project, the company made very slow progress. It hired only whites at first, but far fewer than the number needed signed on to work. Stanford confessed to the federal government that "labor is scarce and dear in this State." Desperate, the company turned to hiring Chinese in early 1864.[7] Chinese in significant numbers had been living in the state since the early 1850s and had become an important labor force in mining and agriculture. They had also worked on local rail construction projects around the San Francisco Bay Area. Stanford himself and a close associate, E. B. Crocker, the older brother of Charles Crocker, one of the other directors of the company, might have first proposed the idea of employing Chinese on the construction project. Other accounts attribute the idea to Charles Crocker's capable manservant, Ah Ling, with Crocker then raising the idea to his business partners.[8] Whatever the details of the story, the controversial decision to employ Chinese was made at the highest levels of the Big Four—Stanford, Crocker, Mark Hopkins, and Collis P.

Huntington. They wondered whether Chinese were physically fit for railroad work and whether whites would agree to work with them.

The Chinese quickly proved themselves to be excellent workers, and the CPRR dramatically increased its Chinese workforce into the thousands. Stanford himself, in a July 1865 report to company stockholders, highlighted the crucial role Chinese were playing for the company. They were already "an important element of labor," Stanford stated, and they numbered about 2,000 out of a total of 2,500 workers. The number of Chinese on the CPRR would continue to grow. At their most numerous, they constituted 90 percent of the CPRR construction workforce and numbered more than 12,000 workers. Because of turnover, perhaps 20,000 Chinese actually worked on the CPRR, with thousands more working afterward on northern and southern transcontinental lines, trunk lines throughout the country, and the Canadian transcontinental railroad.[9]

In an October 1865 public report to President Andrew Johnson on the progress of the Central Pacific, Stanford expressed an opinion about Chinese that signified a dramatic change of heart:

> As a class they are quiet, peaceable, patient, industrious and economical. Ready and apt to learn all the different kinds of work required in railroad building, they soon become as efficient as white laborers. More prudent and economical, they are contented with less wages. We find them organized into societies for mutual aid and assistance. These societies can count their numbers by thousands, are conducted by shrewd intelligent business men who promptly advise their subordinates where employment can be found on most favorable terms. No system similar to slavery, serfdom or peonage prevails among these laborers.

Stanford noted that "a large majority of the white laboring class" preferred employment other than in railroad work, and thus the "greater portion" of the company's workers were Chinese. "Without them," Stanford bluntly stated, "it would be impossible to complete the western portion of this great national enterprise, within the time required by the Acts of Congress."[10]

Completely absent from Stanford's statement was his avowed preference for white workers over an allegedly inferior people. Instead, Stanford offered warm praise for the physical abilities and social qualities of the Chinese workers, and, as he noted at the end of his report, Chinese workers were a force "that could be increased to any extent required." He anticipated hiring far greater numbers of Chinese in the near future. His business partners were

in full agreement: a few months later, in private correspondence with his partner in charge of labor recruitment, Charles Crocker, Stanford considered hiring fifteen thousand more Chinese workers for the project, a number that "leading Chinese merchants" could easily supply, he claimed.[11] In an even more expansive mood, Stanford's close railroad associates E. B. Crocker and Collis P. Huntington mused that California would greatly benefit if there were one hundred thousand, or, in Huntington's words, "a half million [Chinese]" in the state, a staggering number considering that the total population of the state in 1860 was under four hundred thousand.[12]

Reports from the field kept Stanford fully informed on the progress of construction and the company's reliance on Chinese labor. The workers completed the staggering task of cutting the line through the intimidating Sierra Nevada, across the burning Nevada deserts, and to the Great Salt Lake in Utah. On his regular tours of the line, Stanford personally witnessed thousands of Chinese tunneling, shoveling snow, building snow tunnels, and laying the roadbed and track. On May 10, 1869, at Promontory Summit, Utah Territory, more than nine hundred miles from where the CPRR began its work, the CPRR and UPRR held a grand ceremony to mark the completion of the transcontinental rail line. There, Stanford encountered Chinese workers laying the last rails, ties, and spikes. After Stanford and Thomas Durant, representing the Union Pacific, spoke and used ceremonial tools to symbolize the hard work, Chinese workers, dressed in "denim pantaloons and jackets," returned to replace the ceremonial spikes and ties with permanent pieces.[13]

Stanford had once referred to the then-popular cultural spectacle of the "Siamese twins" when he declared that the transcontinental line helped form the "ligament" "that binds the Eastern Eng and Western Chang together."[14] At Promontory Summit, however, he made no mention of Asians in his formal remarks, but journalists who recorded the historic event for posterity noted their central presence at the ceremony. "The Chinese really laid the last tie and drove the last spike," one journalist wrote. After the festivities concluded, the laborers gathered ceremonial material left behind by others. "The ever-watchful Chinamen then took up the remains, sawed [them] into small pieces and distributed it among them." James Strobridge, the construction boss, invited leaders of the Chinese to dine in his personal train car, and when they entered, the guests "cheered them as the chosen representatives of the race which have greatly helped to build the road—a tribute they well deserved, and which evidently gave them much pleasure."[15]

The Central Pacific made Stanford a very, very wealthy man, and in the years after Promontory he accumulated vast holdings of land throughout the state. In 1869 he began to purchase hundreds of acres in Alameda County for his wine-making ambition. Not satisfied, he eventually amassed 55,000 acres for his sprawling Vina Ranch in the northern Sacramento Valley, where he thought he could produce Bordeaux-quality wine. In 1874 he moved his residence from Sacramento to San Francisco's Nob Hill, where he built the largest private residence in the state, and in 1876 he started what became his Palo Alto stock farm of 8,800 acres. This "summer home" would become the site of Stanford University. A few years later, Stanford purchased 20,000 acres in Butte County, forming his Gridley Farm. He controlled tens of thousands more acres in California through his many companies. In all of these sites and projects, Stanford hired hundreds of Chinese workers, including an estimated four hundred to one thousand on his Vina Ranch, where they tended to the vineyards and built miles of irrigation works, dams, and canals. In his several palatial homes and estates, Chinese served as domestic workers and groundskeepers.[16] An estimated fifty Chinese were employed at his Palo Alto family residence alone. Many of them were former railroad workers.[17]

There was a China presence even in the most personal of spaces of the Stanford family. In 1876, when Leland, Jane, and their son, eight-year-old Leland Jr., attended the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Stanford tried to purchase elaborate bedroom furniture featured at the China exhibition. Chinese officials refused to accept money for the pieces and instead offered them to the Stanfords as gifts, in the words of Jane's personal secretary and biographer, "in appreciation of his fair treatment and protection of the Chinese in California." The furniture and several rolls of the "finest silk brocade" later decorated what was called the "Chinese Room" in their opulent San Francisco residence.[18] Six years later, when Leland Jr. died of typhoid fever while touring Europe with his parents, a "trusted Chinese houseboy, who had been long in the family," accompanied his body on the long, sad train ride back across the country. He sat "throughout the nights by the side of the bier, broken-hearted," according to Jane's assistant. When the funeral was held at Grace Church, a towering tribute occupied a central position: a white cross of flowers stood in the central aisle and "reached up into the vaulted ceiling." It was from the Chinese gardeners at the Palo Alto residence who had transported it to the church. A card from them read, "For little Leland, from the Governor's Chinese boys." On Easter mornings afterward, Chinese gardeners placed a replica of it at the

front of Leland Jr.'s tomb and trimmed it with white flowers they had grown.[19] Other Chinese employees left rice bowls and other food vessels next to the crypt for Leland Jr.'s use in the afterlife.[20]

Although Leland Stanford pandered to anti-Chinese public sentiment in his early political career, anti-Chinese extremists targeted him in the 1870s after the completion of the rail line when an economic depression hit the country. Agitators held Stanford, and other railroad barons, responsible for the presence of Chinese laborers who allegedly took work away from deserving whites. The Chinese were a thoroughly degraded and undesirable race in California, agitators declared, using words Stanford himself had employed earlier. The "Chinese must go" movement, identified with the demagogue Denis Kearney, sought to rid the state of the Chinese presence by whatever means necessary, including the possible use of violence. The transcontinental line, built in substantial part by Chinese, enabled thousands of whites to migrate to the West and settle, and newcomers, such as Kearney, who was himself an immigrant, believed their future well-being depended on the expulsion of Chinese. Stanford, "the millionaire, the banker and the land monopolist, the railroad king and the false politician," and his ilk, Kearney charged, used the Chinese against the white working man. Deadly anti-Chinese violence swept the West: in 1871 a mob in Los Angeles tortured and lynched eighteen Chinese. It was the largest mass lynching in American history.[21]

This anti-Chinese movement reached its height over several days in the summer and fall of 1877, when thousands of whites took to the streets in San Francisco to protest business monopoly and the Chinese. Extreme rhetoric escalated into open violence. Rioters threatened to torch the docks of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, which brought Chinese to the port, and they destroyed Chinese businesses in the city. Even the Chinese Methodist Church was stoned. Kearney, who helped found the so-called Workingmen's Party, which had become influential in California, expressed typical anti-Chinese, anti-monopoly sentiment in an October 29, 1877, speech before several thousand at the top of Nob Hill, where the residences of Stanford and other elites stood.

"The Central Pacific Railroad men are thieves," Kearney declared, "and will soon feel the power of the workingmen." Kearney pledged to rid the city of corrupt officials and police and said he would give "the Central Pacific just

three months to discharge their Chinamen." If they did not comply, "Stanford and his crowd will have to take the consequences."[22] Speakers denounced Stanford by name and threatened open violence if the Chinese remained. Stanford was so disturbed about the threats against him that he personally wrote to the chief of police of San Francisco requesting special protection for his Nob Hill mansion. "Chief Ellis," Stanford wrote, "I know the mobs have considered the question of burning my house," and "their threats may be serious. I would be glad to have you detail a proper guard." The forces of law and order soon suppressed the rioters, and left four dead and more than a dozen wounded.[23]

The next year Kearney took to the road to make his anti-Chinese, anti-capitalist campaign a national crusade. In speeches throughout the East and Midwest he repeatedly vilified the "railroad robbers," Stanford being the most prominent, and Chinese. Kearney helped popularize the image of Stanford as a patron of the Chinese, and not the Sinophobe he was in earlier times.[24] In the East, Stanford was in fact viewed as a defender of Chinese against the threat of violence from the mob. A writer for the *New York Times* who traveled to the West described Stanford's position as one of "sturdy championship of the Chinese." Stanford was supposedly fearless "in demanding for them simple justice and humane consideration" and for employing them in his enterprises and in his homes. Stanford, from his own practical experience, the writer observed, appreciated the Chinese worker as "the most reliable and in the end the most efficient."[25]

Still, Stanford maintained connections with the anti-Chinese movement that continued to grow in the country. Newspaper articles reported that Kearney and Stanford held private discussions in 1878 during which they reportedly resolved differences and found common ground regarding Chinese labor. Kearney was said to have announced publicly that he found Stanford to be a "much smarter man than he had supposed" and believed that Stanford would even vote in favor of Kearney's Workingmen's Party in the next election. Stanford reportedly told Kearney that he had to hire cheaper Chinese labor because he had to accumulate funds to bribe Sacramento officials. But if "honest workingmen," like those Kearney said he represented, held office, then Stanford said there would be no need to pay the bribes and he could follow "the instincts of his great labor-loving heart." Stanford reportedly said that then "none but Caucasians would be employed in running and extending railways."[26]

Although Stanford's friends refuted what Kearney said to the press,

Stanford himself never disavowed the reports, and he continued to pander to racist grievances. In 1886, for example, white hostility to Stanford's use of Chinese workers at his sprawling Vina Ranch escalated, and the Citizens' Anti-Coolie League of Red Bluff demanded that he discharge all his Chinese workers. A provoked Stanford defended his hiring practices as a matter of principle, saying it was his "right" to handle his affairs as he saw fit for himself and his legitimate business interests, within the dictates of the law. But he also declared that as a matter of "my race prejudice," he was inclined to favor "my own people" and give them his "preference." He acknowledged that "a very large portion of the people of our State" opposed the employment of Chinese and therefore ordered his Vina foreman "to direct that the preference for white labor be carefully exerted," in response to the Anti-Coolie League and "in harmony with my own inclinations." The Vina Ranch steadily discharged hundreds of Chinese, and by 1890 all his Vina workers were whites except for a few Chinese, who did the work that "whites refuse to do," according to a local newspaper.[27]

In the mid-1880s Stanford turned from his business interests to pursue political ambitions once again. He successfully ran for the US Senate from California in 1885 and was reelected in 1891, and his name was openly circulated as a possible presidential contender. He publicly supported federal restrictions on Chinese immigration, endorsed the 1882 Chinese Restriction Act, and backed further legislation against Chinese immigration, unlike his former business partner Collis P. Huntington, who opposed anti-Chinese measures and endorsed further Chinese immigration. Stanford never advocated violence against Chinese, but his public political positions kept in step with the anti-Chinese vitriol in the country.[28]

Stanford carefully positioned himself in the debate about further restricting Chinese entry into the country. He recognized that Californians felt passionately about the issue, and he supported measures that he thought addressed their concerns. At the same time, he still acknowledged the important contributions Chinese had made to the state, including to his own business ventures. "The Chinamen," Stanford declared, "have played an important part in the development of that section of the country by the work they have done in the building up of railroads and in other improvements, as well as manufactures; but the limit of their usefulness has been reached." Therefore, no further Chinese should be allowed into the country, he announced, and those already here should gradually return to China. On other occasions, he accepted the

legitimacy of anti-Chinese sentiments, while downplaying their urgency. Chinese, he observed, were neither troublesome nor "fecund," and, with federal controls on them, they would not become a serious problem. White workers should not fear the Chinese as labor competitors, he claimed, as opportunities were readily available to them all.[29]

Extremists, however, were unsatisfied, and they continued to accuse Stanford of being soft on Chinese immigration. Stanford fired back with a vigorous defense of his racial credentials and personal character as an advocate for the white working man. He reaffirmed his support for restriction of Chinese immigration, claiming he recognized that "our people on the Pacific Coast" opposed it and because the Chinese, for racial and religious reasons, could not "be absorbed by our own people." He then added a strangely worded thought that revealed frustration with the complexity of the "race" question in America: "I would be very glad if all colored people of the United States became white people. I think an unmixed race of white people is better than mixed ones."[30]

With the campaign for his reelection on the horizon, Stanford wanted nothing to be said that suggested he was weak on the Chinese question. In early 1889 Stanford reminded white voters that he had been among the first in California to oppose the immigration of Chinese into the state and that he had adamantly and consistently opposed the presence of Chinese in California soon after he had moved there. The Chinese, he reportedly declared, were a "most undesirable class," and he favored the "very much more desirable class of people," the "white population." Stanford adamantly maintained that he had "and always shall do all in his power to keep out of California an unhomogeneous class," by which he meant Chinese.[31] It was the most stridently anti-Chinese message since his gubernatorial inaugural address in 1862 and clearly contradicted his praise of Chinese workers as railroad workers, and his own personal ties with the hundreds of Chinese workers in his homes and estates. In the election of 1890, Stanford was reelected US senator, with his position on Chinese immigration winning him broad support among whites.[32] But his position would shift again one final time.

In early 1893, which would be the last year of Stanford's life, he inexplicably and dramatically altered his public position on the Chinese. A Chicago newspaper reported that Stanford, during a discussion of a variety of issues, offered an aside that surprised the reporter. Stanford reportedly expressed "rather a good opinion of the Chinese," such a view being "a strange thing in a

Californian." Stanford was said to have praised the work ethic of Chinese and maintained that there was no danger of "their trying to overrun the country, as eventually they all want to get back to their own."[33]

Then, in May, just weeks before he died, Leland Stanford offered his most extensive comments on Chinese in America. From a comfortable seat on the porch of his Palo Alto ranch on a lovely spring day, likely within earshot of the Chinese workers who were in his employ, Stanford condemned the recent federal legislation known as the Geary Act of 1892, which required all Chinese in the country to obtain and then carry on their body at all times an authorized certificate of residence in the United States. This was an unprecedented development in American history. The certificate included a photograph and a physical description of the resident. No other immigrant group in the country was required to carry anything similar, and a Chinese found without such a certificate faced deportation or a year of hard labor. Stanford condemned the act, named for his fellow Californian, Congressman Thomas H. Geary, and declared:

> There should never have been a restriction law passed in the first place, and the Geary law, which has followed, is an outrage. I did not oppose it, for it appeared that some of the people at any rate wanted it. I will admit that at one time I had some fears of the Chinese overrunning this country, but for some years I have had none. . . .
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> Then there is another thing. We need the Chinese here to work in our fields, vineyards and orchards and gather our fruit and do the common labor of the country. I do not know what we would do without them, and I undertake to say that they are the most quiet, industrious and altogether commendable class of foreigners who come here. There is no other class so quick to learn and so faithful, and who can do the kind of work we have for them to do. I am persuaded, too, notwithstanding all that has been said about the majority of the people being opposed to the Chinese, that they are not opposed to them. It is only the few. Our intelligent businessmen are not opposed to them. Neither are the mechanics, because Chinese do not take up the trades. They do simply the commonest kind of work, and in doing so they do not really come into competition with white labor. The white men are, as a result, promoted to a better and more paying kind of labor.[34]

Stanford believed that the Geary Act was receiving "universal condemnation" and that Americans "will support the Chinese in defiance of the deportation provision." Ninety-six percent of the Chinese in the country

themselves protested by not registering for the certificates by the government deadline. Stanford charged that the Geary Act and other insults against Chinese immigrants would damage vital American business interests in transpacific trade and in the development of the West. "The people of the ranches and contractors of railroad lines and other public improvements," he observed, "are always ready to employ the Chinese and without them they could be scarcely able to get along." Stanford also recalled his experience in leading the CPRR and argued that white workers, rather than being displaced by Chinese, benefited from their employment. The company early in the project hired "600 white men," he said, but they were unreliable and frequently ran off to pursue a speculative venture. The company was then forced to hire Chinese "in self-defense" and eventually had as many as 15,000. The company retained the 600 white men, who were then promoted to "positions of teamsters and bosses" and "had better wages" and then hired even more whites, increasing the number to 2,000, "all in superior places and all making more money than the Chinese."[35]

Remarkably, the abstemious Stanford provocatively and favorably compared Chinese as workers and residents of the country to whites in the state. "Who ever heard," he observed, "of a single Chinaman of all the 400,000,000 in China, being drunks. They are sober, hard-working, and in all respects admirable laborers." In contrast, Stanford continued, thousands of "white persons" were running bars and selling liquor rather than working productively in America. Stanford estimated that "there is $1,000,000,000 spent in America every year for drink. In some respects, therefore, we might emulate the Chinese." Driving home his point, Stanford suggested, "Do I put this too strong?"[36]

These would be Stanford's last words on the Chinese question, and they attracted widespread attention. The *San Francisco Chronicle* evinced surprise, while commentators on the East Coast again offered high, eloquent praise to the senator. The *Washington Post* called the anti-Chinese movement a product of "fanatics, demagogues, and schemers" and saluted Stanford for bravely exerting "his own exalted manhood and the dignity of this enlightened age in denouncing the contemplated outrage," referring to the expansion of exclusion efforts then in Congress. Stanford "deserves the thanks of every humane and patriotic and self-respecting citizen of the Republic" for his forthright comments. The paper called on all others "of high character and broad intelligence" to go on record as Stanford did. "The vicious, the ignorant, and the credulous should not be left to monopolize the controversy."[37]

Stanford died in June 1893 at his residence in Palo Alto. Chinese workers from what had become the university campus and from his personal home attended his funeral in full force and in their finest clothes. They contributed flowers and memorials, including a broken wheel and pillow of flowers, as expressions of their grief. As they had at Junior's death years before, Chinese gardeners brought a huge, elaborate flower arrangement to his mausoleum. In San Francisco the Chinese Six Companies, the association of the most important Chinese civic organizations, formally honored Stanford with the greatest respect. A local newspaper observed that they displayed their sorrow in a most conspicuous way: they flew the flag of China and their own organization banners at half-mast. The only other time they had done so "upon the death of a Caucasian" was for President James A. Garfield when he died from wounds from an assassination attempt in 1881. Garfield was known to be sympathetic to Chinese immigration.[38]

To be clear, Stanford's final praise of the Chinese focused on their utility as workers, as those whom he and others employed in the many enterprises that enriched them. As he once mused, hostility toward the Chinese was "not due to their vices, but to their virtues. They are cleanly and are willing to work seven days a week if permitted to. I have employed a great many Chinese. They are willing to work for less and longer hours than any other people." The Chinese had contributed to the greater good, Stanford indicated, and in that way, all Californians, including white workingmen, should appreciate the work of Chinese.[39]

Beyond his praise of Chinese as workers, Stanford rarely offered positive public comments about Chinese as people deserving of equal rights and respect. His praise for their sobriety was one of the exceptions. In contrast, he supported extending the right to vote for African Americans in the South after the Civil War (if for nothing else than to offset the political hostility of the defeated white population toward his Republican Party) and for women. He never expressed support for extending citizenship and the political franchise to Chinese immigrants, unlike political leaders such as Radical Republican Charles Sumner, and he never endorsed racial integration.[40]

Many Chinese businessmen and homeworkers themselves developed remarkably genuine respect and affection for the Stanfords.

During his career in San Francisco and Sacramento, Stanford regularly

appeared in public in friendly association with Chinese merchants and spoke on the same podium with them. In January 1867, for example, Stanford was one of the featured speakers at a large celebration of the inaugural voyage of the first ship of the newly formed Pacific Mail Steamship Company. Chinese merchants joined two hundred other business, military, and government leaders and heard Stanford declare that in San Francisco "the commerce of the Pacific [will] find its entrepôt." Following Stanford on the podium were several Chinese merchants who echoed his sentiments about the bright future in America-China relations. One of these was a man identified as Fung Tang, who said he represented the Chinese merchants of the city. He proudly declared that he looked forward to the time when San Francisco would become "one of the greatest cities of the world" and thanked the local business community. "They have always treated the Chinese merchants with great kindness," he said, saying that he had "a good many acquaintances among the first merchants and business men" of the city. Stanford maintained his ties with Chinese merchants through the following years.[41]

In Palo Alto the Stanfords conducted regular dealings with local Chinese farmers, leasing them land, purchasing their produce, and hiring them for many kinds of work. Hundreds of Chinese from the 1870s to the 1890s worked on the huge estate to build and maintain an infrastructure of canals and waterworks, tend to an extensive farm, staff the large stable and stock farm, cultivate gardens, and meet the many demands of their employers' home life and entertaining. The records are incomplete and unclear about the actual numbers of hired Chinese, but they were everywhere on the property for years. One of Stanford's bookkeepers responded to a private inquiry in 1884 about employment for a white job seeker, saying that "there [are] very few places at the ranch for white 'laborers.' As a rule all the plain laboring work is done by Chinese." But the Chinese could also be found in "skilled" work around the estate. They are listed in the family records as carpenters, painters, teamsters and drivers, horsemen, gardeners, vineyard tenders, and vegetable growers. Many lived in boardinghouses right on the property that now is the heart of the university campus.[42]

Stanford was part owner with Charles Crocker of the first true resort destination in the United States. Their Pacific Improvement Company constructed the Hotel Del Monte, which opened in 1880 in Monterey, to attract railroad passenger traffic from the East. A mostly Chinese workforce developed the extensive grounds, which included more than 125 acres of gardens, a racetrack,

polo grounds, and a golf course, as well as the sumptuous hotel. They also worked the nearby 7,000-acre forest that became known as Pebble Beach, where they constructed the road now known as the famed 17-Mile Drive, which linked the resort to Carmel, and a twenty-five-mile-long pipeline and reservoir to supply water. Hotel managers and reporters regularly praised the Chinese, who numbered some 1,250 on the reservoir project alone, according to one report, for their low cost, hard work, and disciplined habits.[43]

In 1885 when the Stanfords began construction of the university, they employed large numbers of Chinese in the effort. The first university architect, Charles Hodges, recalled, "The Senator was a great advocate of Chinese labour." Hundreds of them were employed to help construct the early building foundations of the university. They built the early infrastructure of the university, including its famed Palm Drive, and planted its signature palm trees. As late as 1893, there were still more than one hundred Chinese employees at the university.[44]

The Stanfords also lived with "China" all around themselves, as was the case with many of California's elite. Chinese furniture, objets d'art, ceramics, and wall decorations filled their homes, including one in Washington, DC. There they selected for their residence a grand house that had previously served as the legation of China. Chinese decor remained on abundant display to visitors. The Stanfords planned on amassing Chinese art that would be displayed in the university museum.[45]

The couple ate food not only prepared by Chinese cooks but prepared in the Chinese style. One newspaper noted curiously that Jane Stanford, one of the richest women in the world, who brought four Chinese cooks with her when she and Leland moved to the capital, served bird's nest soup, a special Chinese dish reportedly "much talked of" among the Washington social and political crowd at her high-society dinners. She circulated the recipe for it to a reporter. During dinners, pet birds, such as doves and parrots, reportedly flew around freely through the entire house. One of her house workers was fond of birds, which were popular among Chinese hobbyists, and Jane appears to have been similarly captivated. Even Leland during his lunch was said to have doves "perched on either side of his chair." An aquarium with goldfish decorated the reception area, and songbirds enlivened the couple's bedroom. A column on Jane in the *Ladies' Home Journal* reported that "the Chinese have her sympathy and she considers them somewhat abused," and in turn it was said "her retinue of servants have the greatest affection for her."[46]

In addition to the special relationship with the Moys, as noted earlier, the

Stanfords developed other business and personal ties with Chinese in the Palo Alto area. Jim Mok Jew You, known as Ah Jim, contracted to work forty prime acres in the main area of the Stanford estate in the 1870s to 1890s. Ah Jim and his family lived on the property, and Jane Stanford became fond of his children, who were all born on the property. When a son came along in 1891, Jane nicknamed him "Palo Alto," and the Stanfords gave the family a silver mug, knife, fork, spoon, and gold-lined cup engraved with the child's name and birth information: "Mock Who Ham, Palo Alto, July 7, 1891."[47] A few years later Jane supplied a notarized affidavit confirming the American nativity of Ah Jim's children and the fact they "are citizens of the United States." The family needed the evidence to help them reenter the United States after they visited China. She served as the unimpeachable and necessary "white witness" for Ah Jim's family.[48] Jane remembered several Chinese workers in her last will and left them money.[49]

Among the most poignant evidence of the Chinese employees' affection for Jane Stanford and, to a lesser degree, Leland is testimonies and memoirs that expressed gratitude to the Stanfords not only for employment but for their solicitude, generosity, and even protection in a hostile environment.

In the late 1960s a longtime Chinese resident of Santa Clara County offered this story about the Stanfords:

> There is an old Chinese story of aid to the Chinese. A Mr. Milbra presented Mr. Leland Stanford, Sr. a document for his signature to oust the Chinese from the state of California. When Mr. Stanford was about to sign, Mrs. Stanford interposed and related to her husband that the Chinese people have been good to him. The Chinese had helped him in the building of the transcontinental railroad, in building the university, and in many other ways. Why should they force the Chinese to leave? Mr. Stanford then refused to sign and walked away. This proved the fact that Mrs. Stanford held a great love for the Chinese people.[50]

Connie Young Yu, one of the leading community historians of Chinese American history, recalls that her own father remembered the Stanfords with great affection. John Young told her that he recalled hearing stories from the old railroad workers who visited his San Jose store in the early twentieth century. The railroad workers told of the times when white gangs attacked them and Stanford hired guards to protect them. Connie's mother also heard about the Stanfords' providing employment to Chinese and protecting them. Connie's father was proud to have later graduated from the university and "always

spoke of Leland Stanford and Mrs. Stanford with respect and reverence." Local Chinese close to the Stanfords honored Leland by calling him "Great Master [or Great Teacher] Stanford [*shidanfo dalaoshi*]."[51]

One of the most poignant testimonials about the Stanfords is a remarkable letter sent from China from one of Jane's devoted homeworkers. Ah Wing worked for the Stanfords for more than twenty years, beginning in the early 1880s. He had come from Taishan County, in Guangdong Province, and had worked as a cook for the Stanfords. After years of employment he became manager of the entire Chinese staff in the Stanford homes in San Francisco and Palo Alto. When US immigration officials prevented his reentry into the country after he visited China, despite his possession of a valid registration certificate as required by the 1892 Geary Act, he eventually was allowed back in because of his connections with the Stanfords. Jane named him in her will, bequeathing him $1,000 upon her death in March 1905.[52]

After the 1906 earthquake and the destruction of the Stanford mansion in San Francisco in the fire, Ah Wing returned to China for good. A few years later, he was asked to submit his recollection of the destruction of the city and the end of the Stanford mansion in San Francisco. In a long letter Ah Wing wrote sorrowfully of feeling the earthquake of April 18, 1906, and the ensuing firestorm that destroyed the Nob Hill mansions and much of the rest of the city. He told of watching the fire gather force as it came up from the waterfront area and consumed the heights where those of wealth resided. He watched the Stanford mansion burn and collapse. Despondent and bereft, he traveled back to the Palo Alto estate, where he worked for a few months in the university's museum. He sadly recalled that his beloved Stanford employers "were gone. Their house at San Francisco was completely burned. There was only one-half of the old house [in Palo Alto] left. All these were too great a blow to me. I could not stay here in this country any longer to entertain such awful truths." On the morning of his departure for China, he recalled that he brought a bouquet of flowers to Jane Stanford's tomb. Ah Wing cited Confucius when he thought of Jane: "Treat the deceased as if they were still living. This is the utmost state of filial piety." When Jane Stanford was elderly, he wrote, "[it was] natural for me to serve her as I would treat my own mother." He ended his letter expressing his sincere wish: "May the university be prosperous, the trustees be guided with wisdom and strength, that the name of Stanford may live forever throughout the world. May the Stanfords find everlasting pleasures and gladness in heaven."[53]

Today, long after the day when Ah Wing honored the Stanfords and the university, a score of Chinese American families can claim two and even three generations of proud alumni. Many express personal gratitude to the university for their educations and the opportunities they enjoyed because of their connection to the institution. Some current Chinese American employees at the university proudly trace their own roots back to the construction of the transcontinental railroad.

The name *Stanford* continues to hold a special power among many Chinese Americans, and not simply because of the university, with its elite status in the educational world today. *Stanford* occupies a unique and emotional place in their social history. Leland Stanford is reviled as a racist, exploitative robber baron, and political opportunist who used Chinese workers to enrich himself and get himself elected to office by pandering to public prejudices. But the Stanfords, especially Jane, are also remembered for their generosity and protection against a violent and hostile society. They were reliable employers and helped individual Chinese immigrants with personal and business matters.

Of course, the varying opinions of individual Chinese Americans toward the Stanfords can be explained by their relationships with the powerful and wealthy couple. Chinese who held favorable views often benefited from their connections. Crass ambition can account for Leland's racial comments, often made for a voting public or for fellow government officials. He was sensitive to public opinion as a prominent and controversial businessman and opportunistic politician. But even with these considerations, the historical record on the Stanfords and Chinese defies simple characterization.

The Stanfords' connection with the Chinese in America was a long and complicated one that was conflicted, even contradictory. This study of Leland and Jane's relationship with the Chinese does not speak to issues of the Stanfords' intelligence or personal integrity that occupy the attention of other scholars. These are not central concerns here, as considering the relationship of the Stanfords and Chinese actually opens up a much wider and more interesting discussion. The fraught relationship is emblematic of the general experience of the Chinese in nineteenth-century America as a place for them that was both "Gold Mountain" and a "land without ghosts," a soulless place of tragedy, humiliation, and cruelty.[54] The name *Stanford* will continue to evoke powerful feelings of anger and respect, of resentment as well as appreciation, just as America itself has very different meanings to the many Chinese who came here.