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“The 1900 census gives a snapshot of Portland’s immigrant population. Chinese were the largest contingent of foreign-born residents, with a count of 6,943” (Abbott 59). Chinese people came to Portland many years ago for many purposes. Some came for a better living. Some came for a business. It was hard to accept a new culture in the past so a racism happened. The story of Chinese people in Portland is a story of labor, business, and racism.

Portland had a big community of Chinese. It’s a part of the city which has own district. “Portland had the second largest chinatown in America in 1900” (OHS exhibit). In the early years, some Portlanders did not want Chinese to be a part of a community. There was a protest against Chinese people. “Chinese came to the US as voluntary emigrants, but many white Americans mischaracterized as “coolie” labor” (OHS exhibit). Some immigrants were not equally treated. They were divided into classes.“The Chinese Exclusion Act marked the first time the US explicitly restricted immigration based on race and class” (OHS exhibit). Family pictures that I saw on the wall at the museum had many children. On the other hand, Chinese family now can only have one child.

Even though I am half Thai and Chinese, I do not know a lot about Chinese culture since I grew up in Thailand. I have learned from going to Oregon History Society that Chinese and Thai people have similar cultures. “There were no recreational activities for women. Day in and day out, eat and sleep. I must have cried a bowlful of tears at Angel island” - Lee Puey You, detained in 1939. In the past, men had more rights than women. Women would be the ones who needed to follow men. A wife should be at home, and she would do all the housework while her husband was at work. A husband who had responsibility to make money and he could be compared to a head of a family. However, women need to follow men culture now has changed. Women have equal rights as men. Women can be the ones who raise a family. “In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act erect additional barriers. Since women had no access to the few categories exempt from exclusion, they could only gain via their male relatives” (OHS exhibit).

“Portland’s Chinatown in 1890 was second in size only to San Francisco’s. The Chinese came to Oregon originally to construct railroads, but as those jobs dried up, more and more settled permanently in Portland” (Abbott 57). A number of Chinese people has gained more over the years. “The city’s Chinese population grew from 1,700 in 1880 to 4,400 in 1890 and 7,800 in 1900. The center for Portland’s Chinese neighborhood was Second and Alder” (Abbott 57). When new people come, new culture will happen. If humans and landscape are together, then culture occurs. Culture is a tool for living with other people. Cultural geography can be anything in the world. Humans make cultural landscape. “The building will be a more evocative source than any written records” (Hayden 33). Visiting a real place let people learn about the place better than only reading out from a website. An experience has people remember well about an individual place. I learn and remember better when I go to Oregon Historical Society. The axioms are rules that help people read the landscape (Lewis 3). According to Lewis on the axiom of landscape as clue to culture, the landscape is great resource of a recorder of what humans did, and do, and will do in the future. When I went to the Oregon Historical Society, there was an old identity document for Chinese people who came to the US in the early year. A museum is a resource that collects different sources of data. When people settle down, they would start to find money for themselves and family. The popular businesses also show people what “The Chinese operated more than a hundred businesses by the late 1880s, but most were laborers, dishwashers, cooks, and laundrymen. Hundreds commuted seasonally to farms, lumber camps, and salmon-packing pants on the Columbia River” (Abbott 57).

Portland has a large population of Chinese people. They had the second largest chinatown in 1900s. Chinese people spread their culture to a different community like Portland. It was new in that era to learn and accept new culture. Learning about Chinese culture is more than learning a culture. It is related to history ,and geography. Future of Chinese culture in Portland will keep develop ,and people will learn more as they grow.

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