

Acts of Inclusion: How the Quon Family Took Control of Its Story

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Presentation Transcript

1. [TITLE SLIDE]

2. [INTRODUCTION]

Hello. I'm Dede Huang, a family historian working in the Chinese-American space.

Today I'm going to present to you a case study of the Quon family, my maternal grandfather's family, in particular my Great-Great-Uncle Quon Mane.

Quon Mane came to the US in the late 19th century, settled in San Diego, and built up a well-loved retail business purveying Chinese handicrafts that thrived for about 90 years.

As I've discovered, he is the forgotten linchpin in our family - a younger son who, against the odds, became the family's patriarch and fixer.

At the same time, I believe his story will also be of wider interest, whether you're curious about the early years of Chinese Exclusion, California or retail history - or just that age-old question of whether luck or pluck plays a bigger role in determining the course of someone's life.

My story will be in 3 parts:

1. an overview of Quon Mane's life;
2. key challenges he faced during the Chinese Exclusion period; and
3. a short final section about my process and the key sources available for uncovering Chinese-American stories from this time period.

More than a "How To", my main goal is to give inspiration about the kind of visually rich story that can be recreated, one that is highly specific to one family and one trade, and yet also sheds light on its broader era.

3. San Diego 1890s

To get started, I'd like to ask you to travel back in time with me to 1890s San Diego.

The attractions of California are still being discovered and built up:

- We're just past a local boom and bust, driven by the arrival of the railroad.
- The population has in fact shrunk from a few years earlier to about 16,000.
- There's a Chinese community of about 400 that includes a core of Chinese fisherman and shipbuilders - who first arrived in the 1860s, and others working as household servants, cooks, market gardeners, laundrymen, shopkeepers, construction workers, etcetera.

4. Celestial Seen Today!

The local paper - *The San Diego Weekly Union* - has grown from four to eight pages.

On September 7, 1893, a tiny squib appeared in the Union's Page 7* "INTELLIGENCE" column. Let me read it to you, as I find the tone curious, so I think you should consider it for yourself - what might have been the point of the mention, and how it makes you feel:

One of the sights of Fifth street yesterday was a pig-tailed and quilted Celestial astride a bicycle and steering down the street in sublime indifference to cheers or sneers. He was Quon Mane...a Chinese merchant who has money enough to buy a bicycle every day if he likes, and progressive enough to see the utility of the machine.

"Sneers and cheers". A weird looking Chinaman from the "Celestial Kingdom", a name that the Chinese themselves used for their native country, but a Chinaman who has money and was progressive....

For this journalist, were the words "pig-tailed" and "progressive" a contradiction? Or in the new world of California, only a few decades after the Gold Rush, was being rich enough to earn you respect?

I'll let you be the judge. But I think the only thing that's clear about the story is that to make his money, Quon Mane had to become "sublimely indifferent" to a lot of things.

5. A Man & A Brand

So who was Quon Mane and why was he rich?

Quon Mane was a shopkeeper, with a store named after himself. In 1893, he'd been in business for five years. He'd been in San Diego for a decade, and in the US a bit longer than that.

In other words, he arrived well after the better known milestones of the Gold Rush, the Transcontinental Railroad, or the formation of San Francisco's Chinatown.

6. 1882: Chinese Exclusion Act

Indeed, his arrival year, said to be in 1881, meant he came right around the time of *the* biggest Chinese-American milestone: the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

But as someone who grew up knowing little about my family's history, this confused me. If this Act and subsequent legislation shut down Chinese migration for six decades, how was it that the Quons began their lives in America during this time?

I had to get more granular and understand that the Act was a response to working class agitation and therefore theoretically only excluded Chinese who were workers or laborers. However, the way the legislation actually played out, it effectively barred nearly all Chinese, by only allowing in those who fell into a small number of non-laborer and "exempt" categories - that is, specifically, people who could call themselves Merchant, Student, Teacher or Diplomat.

So Chinese Exclusion is the big backdrop for every Chinese-American story, and the first task for every Chinese-American genealogist is to unpack exactly when someone arrived vis-a-vis the key year of 1882, and if after 1882, to figure out into which of these allowable narrow categories they fit themselves.

7. The 0.2 Percent

The late 19th C. was an era that believed obsessively in ideas of race, and other ways of cataloging and stratifying people, as evidenced by this Chinese registration document with all kinds of body measurements.

It would be nice to think that the Exclusion Act was just a momentary accident of history, when fears specific to California and the Western United States were allowed to grip the nation. Indeed, there, in specific industries or localities Chinese sometimes made up as much as 50-75% of the labor force.

But the reality in 1882 was that the Chinese population of California was only about 25,000, and in the entire United States only about 100,000 - or only 0.2% of the national population. By comparison, over one million Irish had come to the US in the mid-1880s, and a similar number of Germans would immigrate before the turn of the century.

The reality is, after 1882, there would be something like ten additional acts and amendments extending and reinforcing Chinese Exclusion, including barring Chinese from ever naturalizing or becoming citizen because as the 1940 Nationality Act stated, it was believed that citizenship should be reserved for "descendants of races indigenous to the Western Hemisphere".

So if you remember nothing else about this talk, please remember that Exclusion casts a long shadow over not just Chinese-Americans, but over *all* Americans, because Chinese Exclusion was our first attempt to regulate immigration and because Chinese Exclusion was the moment we went from being a nation open to all, to one ready to selectively close the gate.

In the process of restricting the Chinese, we trialed and built up the language, the personnel and the methods that remain the foundation of our immigration system today.

8. Neither Cheers, Nor Sneers

So to return to my story, I want to focus less on how mainstream America saw and treated the Quons and other Chinese - and more on how the Quons presented themselves, and included themselves. It's a story that's neither all cheers, nor all sneers, but hopefully a balanced account, focused on Quon Mane, but one that also reveals a wider network of Quons and sheds light on other Chinese-American journeys.

One final point about Chinese Exclusion: perversely, the continual tracking of Chinese generated a huge paper trail, mostly in the form of "arrival case files", but also merchant partnership records. And these documents are now a really important source for Chinese-American genealogy, and the key source I will highlight today.

9. Sei Yup or 4 Counties

So let's start with some basics. Where did Quon Mane come from?

He was from Hoiping, an inland county, but essentially coastal China. Hoiping was very roughly half the size of Rhode Island. For those new to Chinese-American genealogy, it was one of four counties or districts that

referred to themselves as "The Four Counties" - that's all that Sei Yup means.

It was hilly and had poor farmland, and along with the area around Canton, was basically China's people export hub. This area of South China accounted for perhaps 80% of Chinese emigration for a century, starting from the time of the Gold Rush.

Basically, if you talk to any Chinese-American whose family arrived before the 1970s or 80s, they are most likely from this area.

10. Village Scene, c.1906

In Sei Yup, the Quon family made its living in the farm implements business. My impression is that they came from a lower middle socio-economic bracket, but could take pride in being part of a large and old lineage. Their village was just one in a cluster of several dozen Quon-dominated villages.

As in many parts of China, the late 19th c. in their home region was a period of overpopulation, with too little land, food and work, and oftentimes outright armed unrest, but what set their region apart, is that they were close to well-established trade routes - export channels that, with the newish city of Hong Kong as an engine, now connected to territory opening up in the US, Canada and Australia.

11. 1910 Quon Family Tree

Here's my copy of the Quon Family Tree.

12. Quon Mane: #4 of 5 Brothers

From this tree, we know that Quon Mane was the fourth of five brothers. Within our family, it was known that he came to the US with his younger brother. But what we didn't know, until finding most of their case files, was that *all five* brothers came to the US.

13. Quon Mane: 1 of 18 First Cousins

The tree also tells us that Quon Mane had thirteen first cousins, and according to case files found so far, five of those thirteen also came to the US.

14. [Stars added]

In other words, as indicated by the stars, at least ten of the eighteen Quon brothers and cousins came to the US.

I presume the actual number was higher. It's known that in some villages, all of the men went abroad.

And one correction and important side note: Quon Mane was one of eighteen *male* first cousins. The

family tree provides surnames for wives, but only shows male children.

And something else noteworthy about the case files is that they are in essence the only record we have for quite a few female relatives. For example, here and there, we learn that the five Quon brothers had one sister, [and we learn] her name, and her approximate dates. And so it is with other female family members. This is perhaps the only truly positive thing I can say about the record that the case file interviews and interrogations have left behind!

15. From Laborer to Merchant

With the case files, we can construct this snapshot of the brothers' transformation over time.

It seems it was the #3 Brother who came first in 1876. This would have been close to the time of the death of their father so maybe there was a connection there. He was fifteen or sixteen, so perhaps more available than his older brothers who were likely already married, tied down with kids, and responsible for their mother. At least a few cousins left at a similar time, and one as early as 1860.

Five years later, at a similar age, Quon Mane and his younger brother followed. It was well known that anti-Chinese legislation was in the works. And with so many immigrant relatives ahead of them to provide "intel", it makes sense that they would have been part of the last rush of Chinese before the gate shut.

We don't have as much information for the older brothers, but it seems that their stays in the US were [later and] for a considerably shorter amount of time.

16. CAREER

So despite the many details we have of Quon Mane's life, the early years are still full of gaps. He tells us he arrived in San Diego in 1883. We have no idea where he was before. And the earliest job he tells about didn't take place until 1885.

Assuming he arrived in San Diego in 1883, it's likely that he was at least looking for railroad-related work, but we don't have any hard evidence that that's what he found, and we are not even really sure if he and his brother stuck together for all or part of their early time in the United States.

17. Amen for The Stewart Family

We find out from a Stewart descendant, but not Quon Mane himself, that he worked for their family as a so-called "vegetable boy". William Stewart was a major figure in early San Diego history, although his

reputation faded even in Quon Mane's lifetime, so maybe that's why no mentions of the Stewarts survive. Quon Mane supposedly got the job because his uncle was the cook - but it seems more likely that the cook was his #3 Brother, since we know from his case file that that was his trade.

Either way, even as a teenage kitchen boy, Quon Mane made an impression. He became quite close to at least one of the Stewart daughters - we know he later named his own daughters after them. And apparently there was a running joke in the family about his familiar name - "Ah Mane". To the kids, it sounded like "Amen".

Mr. Stewart allegedly took note of Quon Mane, and got him working in his warehouses and exposing him to his commodities business.

18. c.1885: Clearing Coronado

The first job that we know about from Quon Mane was helping to clear Coronado Island of sagebrush. He says that a cousin had the contract for the clearing, but we have not been able to determine which one.

The island in San Diego Bay was being cleared to make way for the Hotel del Coronado that put San Diego on the holiday map.

Many years later "The Del" featured in the movie "Some Like It Hot" (although set in Florida) - so there you have it, less than six degrees of separation between Quon Mane and Marilyn Monroe!

Sources tell us that this was not a long-term job. It would have accounted for less than a year of Quon Mane's life - and maybe, only a few months. Again, the fact that we have information about *this* job, but not others, may have more to do with the hotel's fame than the work's significance in Quon Mane's life.

19. George Marston & His Mother

He says his next job was with the Marston family, which was either a huge stroke of luck, or an opportunity he earned because he really stood out. George Marston ran a dry goods business that in a few years would become a fancy department store, and because he was civic-minded as well as rich, the Marstons would become San Diego's first family.

In specific, Quon Mane worked for Marston's mother as a houseboy. Later, Quon Mane would say:

To Mr. George W. Marston's mother I owe most of my early education....

....that splendid woman...took a great interest in me and among many other things tutored me in the English language for several years.

The timeline is a bit puzzling because we know the Coronado job finished in 1886 and Quon Mane opened his store in 1888. And in between, he made an eight-month trip to China. So for Mrs. Marston to have really taught him for several years, suggests the tutoring continued after he opened his store.

The Marstons apparently taught all their Chinese servants English, and were very involved with the Chinese Mission, but it does seem that Quon Mane had a special relationship with Mrs. Marston - presumably because he learned his English well, and there was clearly a big commitment on both sides.

Anyhow, with these language skills, which probably included coaching in American customs and manners, plus mentoring, or at least some kind of encouragement, from William Stewart and George Marston, Quon Mane was well on his way!

He made his first trip back to China, got married, re-entered the US as a laborer who had been in the country before the Exclusion Act, and with a partner opened a small store that would be his stepping stone to upgrading his status to that of Merchant, and upgrading the status of his brothers.

20. A 10-Foot Room

He says:

I started in a little 10-foot room on Sixth street....It was in 1888, just at the end of one of San Diego's booms....I was in entire command of the whole store, as you may imagine, it being a quite modest business. Our principal trade was from tourists.

With his own work on Coronado, Quon Mane must have been able to see, like others, San Diego's promise as a resort town.

What did the store sell? Well, it seems there was definitely good money in 4th of July fireworks - a seemingly successful blend of American tradition and Chinese technology. In the early years, this is the only time of year that we see store ads. And Quon Mane was not the only Chinese store selling them.

Where did the money come from to get the business started? Family hearsay says that all five Quon brothers were investors, with Quon Mane and his #5 Brother holding larger shares. But an early company partnership

list indicates that the brothers were equal partners, along with two non-family members, with everyone's shares worth \$1000.

Now, \$1000 was the standard amount shown on Chinese merchant partnership lists, so it's often believed to be a meaningless sum, and just a paper value to show to the immigration authorities that you were a merchant.

However in the Quon case at least, I believe the partnership documents represent something real. I now have 10 Quon Mane lists covering a 40-year time period, and they show names and share values evolving in plausible ways: over time, Quon Mane and his younger brother increase their stakes, members of the next generation are brought in, and more ancillary people cycle out.

What the lists also seem to indicate is that \$1,000 was a plausible amount for someone Chinese to have at his disposal, and that something in the neighborhood of \$7,000 was a plausible sum to rent premises, stock a store, and get started.

21. Store #2: c. 1890-1896

Here's the location of his second store. This would have been his location, when that opening bicycle article was written.

And a few years after the article, there was a report about San Diego's Chinese community that called Quon Mane...

One of the most intelligent Americanized Chinamen I have met...President of the Chinese Sunday School...a person of wealth.

22. [1890s store ads]

In these ads from the time period, we see more specifics about the inventory: including silks, chinaware, screens. Notably, most of the ads were still quite small.

I love the ad for canaries! They were on offer for quite a few months, so I hope that worked out for them.

23. Store #3 1896-1916

Here's the location of Store #3. The store is not in the tall building, but at the far right under the awning. This was the store location for 20 years, so this is when it became something of a San Diego institution.

I've added Quon Mane's brother's photo because even though we don't have that many photos of him, or as many as Quon Mane, he was right at Quon Mane's side for most of this time period, and possibly equally responsible for the business's success. From their travel

dates, we can see they timed their trips so that one of them was always in San Diego while the other was in China.

24. [STORE 3 CLOSEUP]

And here we have a close-up, and as you have probably noticed already, from the beginning they sold Japanese merchandise along with Chinese.

25. [BIKES HIGHLIGHTED]

Did you notice the bicycle[s]?

26. Store #4: 1916-1922

Here we see the next store as a drawing.

The ads have evolved. They're bigger, and more sophisticated. And Quon Mane has the confidence to say that Chinese things can make the American home beautiful.

We also start to see ads highlighting how long the store has been in business. And also note the blurb about candied ginger. Who knew crystallized ginger would be such a hot ticket item? But it becomes quite a fixture in the ads for the next few decades.

27. Store #5: 1922-1935

And then in 1922, Quon Mane upgrades to this location. It's a gorgeous photo and

28. [Store #5 close-up]

...zooming in, you can see a lot of detail of the merchandise - paintings, ceramics, embroideries, and wooden stands. Also an actual pagoda matching the store logo. Two of the employees are Quon Mane's nephews - and one of them is my grandfather.

At the same time, I think this photo is the kind of family treasure that you have to be a bit careful about. With only a few photos passed down, for a long time this photo allowed our family to gloss over a lot of things and, I think, think that success was kind of inevitable, and that "everything was smooth sailing" when it was actually a slog.

Remember, it has taken three or four decades to get to this point.

29. Beautiful Things

Going inside, we get an even lusher look at the Quon Mane enterprise. A female customer - perhaps one of the women pictured in the back - commented: "They sell all sorts of beautiful Chinese goods, curios, silks, linens, etc."

And let's let "beautiful" extend to Quon Mane's nephews, and the other salesmen. They're looking good, and they seem to know it. They'd graduated from the local public high school and must have had much better English than their uncle. We also know by reputation that these two really had the gift of the gab, and they were particularly effective at selling to the ladies.

But as much as the suits are a sign of prosperity and fitting in, they are also, kind of, suits of armor - protection against criticism and misperception. We know that the next generation was constantly reminded to dress well. Two generations on, you still had to look your best - because how you looked and carried yourself would influence people's perceptions about *all* Chinese.

30. Civic-Mindedness

Another important aspect of Quon Mane's public life was that he appears to have been very civic-minded. Perhaps this was expected, or taking a cue from the Marstons, perhaps he took pride in showing he could contribute. He frequently appears in lists of donations and collections, sometimes with all the other Chinese companies, but often he's the only Chinese business on the roster, or he may be donating or lending Chinese artifacts for a special cultural event.

"Pitching in" was very much the spirit of the times, but again, like the suits, you get the feeling that there was pressure to act correctly, so that all Chinese could hold their heads up high.

31. A Place in San Diego Lore

In the end, however much effort it took, it seems that Quon Mane did gain respect on his own terms.

In the 1920s, towards the ends of his life, we see these examples of public recognition. On the left is a feature interview that came out when he opened the 1922 store - the reporter seems to really savor Quon Mane's "back in the day" reminiscences of old San Diego.

On the right, Quon Mane is featured in a 1927 ad campaign for a bank that was building a splashy new headquarters, which you see in the lower right. (The building is still there in San Diego as a deluxe Marriott.)

About twenty people were picked to profile. Each ad had a different size and shape, determined by that person's story and the photos available. The concept was really quite cutting edge.

Out of the twenty, there were two women, and what is notable is that all the people profiled were Euro-American, except for Quon Mane.

Also, the copy doesn't call Quon Mane remarkable "for a Chinaman". He's notable in his own right. A pioneer even! What could be more American than that!

So let's take a pause, and linger over the fact that Quon Mane made it!

32. Responsibilities

But before you get too comfortable, I want to switch gears to Quon Mane's personal life, where things are less neat and tidy, and where we begin to bump up against the challenges he faced, which were very much the challenges that all Chinese faced.

It's kind of the opposite of Tolstoy's quote about happy families being happy in the same way. It's in their unhappiness that Chinese-American stories have so many similarities.

33. 1904: Wife & Daughters Depart

Now, according to the rules of Exclusion, Chinese merchants had the right to bring over family members. This was a significant difference and advantage to being a Merchant rather than a Laborer.

But a major personal problem for Quon Mane was that for a long time he didn't have any children to bring over. In some ways this is hardly surprising since he and his wife lived half a world apart. After going back to get married, it was four years till his next trip.

Now in his early thirties, despite being a prosperous Gold Mountain merchant, he was still childless. Even his younger brother already had two sons.

By Chinese custom, it was okay for him to take another wife, but the next problem was, there just weren't many Chinese women in the US. In 1900, there were still about 100 Chinese men migrating for every Chinese woman. And twenty years later, the proportion would still be about four to one.

Not only did women face all the usual Exclusion barriers, but other legislation of the time had planted the notion that Chinese women seeking to migrate were likely to be prostitutes, an unhelpful taint that lingered on for a long time.

However, Exclusion cannot bear the full blame for the extreme gender imbalance. Many Chinese did think their stays would be temporary; and even in China, when men traveled for work, they normally left their wives at home. Among other things, it was a wife's duty to look after her in-laws.

So about 1900, Quon Mane asks his #2 Brother to send him a second wife, who is the lovely lady who you see here...

#33A [SMALL IMAGES ADDED]

...and more clearly *here*. And she comes over and bears him 2 children.

It's quite touching: Quon Mane names his girls Katherine and Mary, after two of the Stewart daughters.

But family hearsay says this wife was not a good pick for America, a bit too pampered and flighty, and so after having two daughters, although we don't know the exact reasons, it seems that Quon Mane thought it best to take them back to China - quite likely out of a reasonable concern that three females would be isolated and/or attract too much attention in mainly male Chinese-America.

Taking them back was Quon Mane's third trip, and he only made one more. On average, four trips was considered pretty good. But you can imagine that the separations were hard on a marriage.

34. More Nephews Than Sons

So the females departing is in stark contrast to the many male relatives arriving. And the ones in this picture are only some of the most immediate family members we know about - the sons of either brothers or first cousins.

Thinking about the ages at which they came over, it's hard to imagine it wasn't a very difficult transition, no matter how much these boys knew they would eventually go to the US, or how much they were even looking forward to it.

For one, this attic or storage space, regardless of how good all the suits and screens look, is also where all these young men lived for at least some part of their lives.

35. The Chinese Mission

If they did not live above or behind the store, then they lived in the dorm of the Chinese Mission, which was a combined church, school and social service center. The Mission received a lot of support from the Marston family over the years, and it seems to have been an excellent institution. Nice ladies like Marston's mother or the woman pictured helped many generations of Quons and other Chinese learn English and fit in.

But it can't be denied that the US living arrangements of these boys and young men was make-shift. And this holds for Quon Mane too. Until the late '20s when he

lived for a few years in a house with one of his daughters, we don't know of any truly domestic space that he or any of these young men occupied.

36. Quon Mane...& Sons?

Quon Mane did eventually have two sons. But they were born relatively late, when he was in his forties, and they only came to the US when he was in his fifties

So besides the fact that his boys hardly knew him, there was a real point of tension in that the sons of Quon Mane's younger brother were significantly older than his own sons, and perhaps more capable.

I think things got more complicated after Quon Mane's younger brother died, in about 1915. As we understand, it was a considerable worry to Quon Mane, about whether and how his boys would be able to take over what he had built up.

37. Long Har: Also A Lopsided World

Meanwhile back "home" in the village, things were also out of kilter.

Yes, families had become more prosperous, a lot more prosperous, and there were other new opportunities, as the country transitioned from a monarchy to a republic. But Sei Yup society was lopsided, not just because of the gender and age imbalance, with so many men overseas, but because this very superficial remittance lifestyle had also developed.

There was great pressure to show off and share your Gold Mountain wealth, by hosting meals for everyone, building a new house, or buying your wife fancy clothes. For men who had not succeeded like the Quons, sometimes they could not or did not want to go back, because of the expense and the pressure.

38. BARRIERS

So let's get into some of the day-to-day mechanics of Chinese Exclusion management, recognizing that Quon Mane was pretty much a best-case scenario, given his savvy and resources.

39. Singled Out

The Chinese were singled out for unprecedented forms of regulation, not just at US ports of entry, but at all times. Notably, they were required to register for certificates of residence, carry identification papers, and apply for permission to re-enter any time they left the country, always with the threat of deportation. These regulations applied equally to the small number of

Chinese who were citizens because they had been born in the US.

A 1909 study estimated it cost fifty or sixty times more to process Chinese immigrants than non-Chinese. Prior to the Chinese Exclusion Act, there was no Immigration Bureau or any immigration personnel, and so a system grew up piecemeal to enforce the Exclusion laws that Congress had passed.

The specialized role of "Chinese Inspector" was created. The key tool these inspectors relied on was the interview or interrogation, resulting in the transcripts which are at the core of the case files.

Before a merchant like Quon Mane made a trip to China, he had to apply for a re-entry permit. He would make a statement to an inspector with the details of his business, and he could call various witnesses to bolster his case. But what was essential was that two of them be "reliable white witnesses". That was the standard phrase, the assumption baked into the system being that a Chinese witness was not reliable.

Arriving at a port of entry, the new or returning migrant would go through fresh questioning, which generally revolved around details of family members and the physical features of their village, often in minute, or one could say impossible, detail. A migrant might be asked if a particular room had two or three windows, or if the walls were brick or tile.

The testimony was taken with the help of translators and a stenographer, and would then be cross-checked against statements by other family members, sometimes from previous case files archived from years before. Much of this was information about which Chinese inspectors could have no firsthand knowledge and that had no bearing on a person's eligibility.

To assess identities and relationships, the inspectors often seemed to be arbitrarily generating a body of material, which they then with wide discretion gauged for internal consistency. In other words, they were often going with their gut.

This is also why such details from case files need to be handled with care. Did the Quon village really have 100 houses, as was said over and over by various Quons, or was that just an agreed-upon easy number? Even honest-dealing families refined their family histories and prepped for these interviews.

40. Inside Track

Looking at Quon Mane's file and documents from multiple trips, it appears that the arrival procedures for someone like him had bedded down into a process that was relatively pro forma. But we also know that Quon Mane had as much of an inside track as possible.

Again, because of his English, he served for many years as an interpreter for the Customs Bureau, which was the original home of the Immigration Service. So you could say that he was part of the Exclusion machinery, or that his role was an important mitigating or bridging role. We don't know if his work gave him any leeway to help family members, or other Chinese.

His boss, William Bowers, a future congressman and yet another prominent contact, is on record attesting to Quon Mane's good reputation.

41. No Guarantees

In short, there were no guarantees, regardless of who you were.

When Quon Mane finally brings his son over in 1918, there are a few heart-stopping moments: Quon Mane had proactively applied months in advance for pre-clearance, and the San Diego inspectors readily confirmed his merchant status was "legit". But when Ben gets to Angel Island, he's not waved through by the San Francisco inspectors. Ben was already older than he appears in these application photos, but he's still only about eleven. He's in his first days on American soil after a long journey, traveling with a relative he probably did not know very well.

He is asked about a hundred questions about his father and uncles, their travel dates, whether his aunts have bound feet, how many children they have, their ages, which row, which house is so-and-so's. That kind of thing. The relative Ben is traveling with also testifies, and Quon Mane is questioned twice. There are delays as the San Diego office is asked to find files relating to the arrival of Ben's mother in 1900 and Quon Mane's travel in the 1890s.

You can see Quon Mane getting nervous: the days are dragging on. He's hired a lawyer, which was actually pretty common. He gets the editor of the biggest Chinese paper to write a letter, which you see on the left.

In the end, Ben's case is approved in about three weeks, which is actually very fast compared to a lot of cases. But I think Quon Mane is really shaken. He himself does not ever go back to China again - although that could be for other reasons. And when he brings his next

son - I'm still investigating this, it appears he uses the Paper Son route. That is, paying to have a Chinese person who is a citizen claim Quon Mane's son as his own.

It seems a sad state of affairs if Quon Mane feels his legal right to bring over his family is unreliable, and that it's better secured by illegal means. Or maybe he thinks, "If my second son has to run this gauntlet, he might as well get citizenship out of it."

42. Attic Skeletons

In fact, we do know that Quon Mane had bent the rules before.

Let's return to this photo which you saw earlier. Well, it turns out that Quon Mane personally brought in his #2 Brother's son under the guise of being his #5 Brother's son. Brother #2 had been a merchant in the US, but was back in China when it was decided that this son should come over. It's possible - although again, I'm still investigating - that Brother #2 was not in the US because he had been denied re-entry.

In the scheme of things, this is perhaps a relatively minor falsification. It's also one that Quon Mane might well have thought justified if he thought his brother was unfairly barred from re-entering the US. But it did mean that in successive paperwork, these cousins then had to perpetuate the lie and continue to cite each other as brothers. (This definitely threw me for a loop in the records till I realized what was going on.)

And, in a further twist, we also know there had to be another Quon subterfuge because Brother #5 eventually really did have three sons. But by the time it was the youngest boy's time to come to the US, Brother #5 had died. So I'm still trying to figure out how they made that travel [and] arrival possible.

So now it is very possible that you will now think less of the Quon family, or perhaps you will excuse them and the other Chinese who flouted a system that they felt did not give them a fair shake.

43. Harsh Irony

I'd like to note one final irony in the system. Here is part of a witness statement by Nicholas Steinmetz, a property and insurance agent, who testified many times for the Quons.

He's asked, "What's your name? Where are you from? How long have you lived in San Diego?" Well, it turns out that he's originally from Germany and has been in the US for fewer years than Quon Mane. But he has

naturalized as a US citizen, something Quon Mane cannot do.

Steinmetz does his very best to give Quon Mane his highest recommendation, calling him, "A high-class citizen".

44. San Diego "Citizen"

Ironically, when Quon Mane dies in 1929, at the age of sixty-five after a brief illness, "citizen" is again the word that the San Diego papers use in his obituary.

Quon Mane was fit enough to be a leading citizen of San Diego, but never a citizen of the United States.

Well, you might take some comfort in knowing that "Miss Kate" from the Stewart family visited Quon Mane in the hospital before he died and "she was a mass of ruins because she adored him".

45. "There Are a Great Many Very Fine People"

So let me give the last word to Quon Mane himself. These come from that article of 1922 when he opened his last store, and he describes himself as having been "young and ambitious". He says: "There are a great many very fine people in this country, and they have been mighty good to me and I appreciate it deeply."

46. LEGACIES

So what of Quon Mane's legacy?

47. Public Legacy

After he died, his nephews stepped up and ran the business until his sons were old enough to do so. One of the first things the nephews did was open a branch store in La Jolla, which you can see at the center of this slide. It was the first of several branch stores in the San Diego area. And after the immediate and more distant nephews moved on from Quon Mane, quite a few opened copycat or related businesses.

In the end, there were Quon Mane stores into the 1970s, so for almost ninety years. And I still run across or receive fan messages from people who remember the stores fondly.

I note that the ads continued to evolve. Here in the '30s, we see on the one hand an appeal to high fashion, with Chinese silk mixed with French design. On the other, a Pigtailed Celestial was introduced. For the next revamp of the main store, which you see on the right, the nephews hired the architect of Grauman's Chinese

Theater to do the facade with "authentic" turned-up roofs.

I would love to know if the second generation of Quons believed in this look, or were simply playing to their market!

48. Direct Descendants

In any case, the known family circle was pretty much limited to the immediate descendants of Quon Mane and his younger brother - the five sons and nephews, plus one daughter.

They kept in touch intermittently, but frankly there were personality differences, possibly some financial disputes, and fairly soon, everyone went off in their own direction.

Add the fact that father-son relationships were not the closest, and the details of Quon Mane's own life and that of his younger brother were pretty much lost....

49. A Bigger Picture

...never mind knowledge of the other brothers, and cousins, and their descendants.

But by bringing together all the modern resources at our disposal, I'm slowly uncovering a much more complex story. Even my portrait of Quon Mane today has perhaps made him out to be more of a rugged individual than he really was, once we see the larger network around him.

50. Excavating the Story

So I hope in future to have more stories for you!

Now to finish up, I'd like to spend a few minutes highlighting the key resources that made today's story possible

51. San Diego Sources

The San Diego Union was clearly a huge source for me. I just want to mention that I accessed it via Genealogy Bank. Also, many photos that might seem like family photos actually came from the San Diego History Center. I still don't really know why they have photos that my family does not, but so be it.

Also, I've been surprised by the number of theses and books I've found that are specifically about San Diego or Hoiping, and sometimes even mention Quons. All by way of saying that people research the darndest things. So even for someone without all the direct mentions of a Quon Mane, I do believe there is always material to

be found that describes the world that our ancestors lived in.

52. Timeline with Tweaks

Timelines: anyone who's been doing genealogy for a little while, will attest to the power of a simple chronological timeline.

You may know a sequence of events in your head, but it's really worth writing down a very simple chronological list. When you tie events to calendar years and ages, it's really amazing the insights you might find. You may find gaps that need more research, just discover that the same life event takes on a different weight when you really think about the fact that it happened during wartime versus peacetime, or when a person was twenty vs. being forty.

53. Timeline Sample

In my case, I found it really helpful to set up a timeline spreadsheet customized for Chinese-America. I used Google Sheets. The first thing I did was set up columns for Western dates and their Chinese equivalent. That equivalent is based on the name and reign year of each emperor.

Somewhat surprisingly, a lot of dates in case files only use Chinese dates, which is kind of interesting. The Chinese inspectors definitely had to get familiar with that aspect of Chinese culture.

I also found it useful to separate out life events that took place in China versus the US, since everybody was regularly traveling back and forth. Knowing when a husband and wife were together certainly helped with verifying children's ages; and in the Quon Mane case, it was useful to be able to see which brothers were in San Diego minding the shop, while others were back in China.

Adding in dates of key Exclusion legislation could also be helpful so that you would know if a certain type of identity document might exist for someone.

54. NARA Arrival Case Files

I really can't say enough about the Chinese Exclusion Case files. What I most want to emphasize is their very large number, their great value, and the fact that you don't need to visit a NARA archive in person to access them.

And even if YOU don't do Chinese research, you may have friends with such an interest, and they may not be aware of the value of these records.

54A. Finding Case Files

The National Archives' own catalog or Ancestry's index are good starting points to see if a case file exists for an ancestor and then you can request the file from NARA. Or you can simply write to NARA San Bruno, or other relevant branch. However, this assumes you already have some good basic knowledge about that person - not least, the usual spelling for their name (the romanization of the Chinese), and probably some idea of the time of their first or subsequent arrival to the US.

If you're not sure about these basics, or are new to genealogy, my handout has suggestions about where to learn more in more detail, and I'm also happy to respond to inquiries.

I'd also like to mention that I've only been exploring NARA files since Covid, and I have found the staff incredibly responsive by email. It might take two or three weeks to get a reply, but I've often had a reply within a day or two. And do note that there is usually a \$25 minimum fee to receive a copy of a file or a set of files.

55. NARA Partnership Records...in Combination with "Jiapu"

Another set of records that NARA keeps are related to the category of Chinese merchants. In theory, merchants were supposed to file partnership lists every year. They certainly needed to produce them to apply for re-entry permits.

If you're familiar with the term "FAN Club" - meaning "Friends, Associates & Neighbors", a partnership list is basically a list of a Chinese ancestor's "FANs" or some significant FANs. Yes, business partners tended to be family and extended family, but that was not always the case. And conversely, a family tree although it's supposed to mainly be about blood ties, when it comes to a large lineage like the Quons, many relatives were more like friends and neighbors who just happened to have the same surname. And "jiapu" or "zupu" is the term for a family tree in Chinese.

I was able to get more out of both types of document by cross-referencing them. And you may have noticed that my own family tree has quite a lot of insect damage. But I was fortunate I was able to find a more recent version of the Quon tree on the My China Roots website, which is a great resource for quite a lot of Chinese research. Their tree filled in the gaps in my tree, and because it was published almost a century later, it included a lot more descendants.

56. Partnership Examples

This slide gives some examples both of what you can find on FamilySearch, in terms of sort of indexes to the partnership material, and then what I found in the Quon Mane-specific file. The Family Search material includes things that are information in their own right, as well as things that will just point you in the right direction. Frankly I found it quite challenging to navigate at first because the material comes in so many different formats. There is a finding guide, but it kind of only helped me in retrospect. And I would say, it's quite important to understand the word "index" as genealogists use it in order to find your way through.

On average, the partnership files are smaller than arrival files, but I've still found some great photos and other gems and clues. And as you can see, I'm beginning to uncover a next-level understanding about Chinese-American networks, in particular by finding some cross-holdings that run across more than one company and more than one city.

Anyhow, this is an area I would be particularly willing to answer questions and exchange ideas about, as I have found many fewer webinars or other resources for this body of material.

57. [CLOSER]

That wraps up my presentation today. Thanks for listening, and thank you to SCGS for this Jamboree platform. My only regret is that this is NOT a dialogue format.

But I would be delighted to hear from you. So if you have questions, comments, or constructive criticism, please don't hesitate to be in touch.

And if you go to my website, you'll find an updated version of the presentation handout, as well as all my sources for this presentation - and plenty more Quon stories. In particular, you might have wondered what happened to Quon Mane's wife after she went back to China. The story is movingly told by one of Quon Mane's nephews.

I look forward to hearing from you.