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26 AUG 91 3:13

Mayor Karen L. R. Vialle
The Mayor's Office (12th Floor)
Tacoma Municipal Building
747 Market Street
Tacoma WA 98402

August 22, 1991

Dear Mayor Vialle:

In reponse to the City Council's request for ideas/recommendations for developing our waterfront and upon Genelle Birk and Michael Sullivan's directions to contact your office with a suggestion presented sometime ago to State Rep Wang and Attorney Robert Mack (and more recently presented to The Citizen Suggestion Awards Office) I have attached that form, and suggestion, to this letter for your consideration.

While progressive development of our waterfront is most essential, there was a sad historical event that, as a city, we have never acknowledged as having been offensive to the members of our Asian Community, and we (as a City) have never publicly apologized for that dark moment when Tacoma's Chinese community was forced from their waterfront homes (see attached article). Subsequently, there is a "moral wound" that has never been healed. Like a family with a hurting member, there must be a time (and place) of reconciliation and healing. I believe that the time and place is before us at this very moment.

Respectfully,

Dr. David Murdoch

✓ enclosures/dm

cc Ms. Birk. Gen Services Director: City of Tacoma.

Mr. Michael Sullivan: Historic Pres. Office, Tacoma.

ps: Mrs. Murdoch, and I, will be leaving for Romania on 9/1 and will be away from Tacoma until 9/27 (in case your office attempts to reach us). Thank You.

dm

City of Tacoma
Citizen Suggestion Award Program

—Please Print or Type—

Subject of suggestion (In brief): AN HISTORICAL MONUMENT & PARK.

I believe this suggestion will (Check one or more):

- ☐ Save time or materials ☐ Improve procedures ☐ Improve methods, tools or equipment
☐ Increase efficiency ☐ Improve productivity ☐ Eliminate safety hazards
☒ Improve the quality of life in Tacoma ☒ Improve public information and community relations
☐ Improve service to the public

What is the problem or condition that needs improvement? ON NOV. 3, 1885, TACOMA (WITH ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE CITY COUNCIL) FORCIBLY & PAINFULLY DROVE THE CHINESE COMMUNITY FROM THEIR HOMES ALONG THE OLD TOWN WATERFRONT. OUR CITY HAS NEVER APOLOGIZED FOR THIS GROSS INJUSTICE & IT WOULD APPEAR OUR CITY, AS A RESULT, HAS SUFFERED (IN MANY WAYS: ESPECIALLY REPUTATION & UNITY).

Describe your proposed solution in detail: SINCE THE EVICTION WAS FROM THE OLD TOWN WATERFRONT, IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO SET ASIDE "AN AREA OF RECONCILIATION" (SMALL PARK W/A CHINESE MOTIF) & A MONUMENT ACKNOWLEDGING THE INCIDENT, NOTING TACOMA'S REGRET & DESIRE TO MOVE AHEAD IN UNITY & RESPECT. A COMMITTEE OF LOCAL CITIZENS (MOST ESSENTIALLY OF CHINESE ANCESTRY) COULD ASSIST IN RECOMMENDATIONS.

Describe the benefits the City would receive from your suggestion: OUR CITY WOULD, MOST CLEARLY, BENEFIT WITH A SENSE OF RENEWAL & UNITY. TACOMA IS ON THE PACIFIC RIM & WILL HAVE A GROWING TRADE EXCHANGE W/ CHINA. YET, IF OLD WOUNDS ARE NOT HEALED, NEW RELATIONSHIPS CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO FLOURISH. MOST OF ALL: OUR CITY WILL HAVE DONE THAT WHICH IS RIGHT!

Estimated cost to implement this suggestion: UNKNOWN

Estimated first year net savings: _____

Attach additional sketches, diagrams or information if necessary.

(see attached News Item)

DR. DAVID MURDOCH
Name

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Phone number

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City State Zip

I hereby agree that my acceptance of an Honored Citizen's Certificate for the use of this suggestion by the City of Tacoma does not constitute payment and precludes any claim against the City by me, my heirs or assigns for the City's use thereof. The City further agrees upon accepting my suggestions, not to claim ownership or object to my future use for commercial or non-profit purposes.

Dr. David Murdoch
Signature (If submitted by a group, all members must sign)

2-11-91
Date

(X) ALL MAIL TO OUR P.O. Box :
P.O. Box 877
TACOMA WA 98401

Please submit your suggestion in person or send by U.S. Mail to:

CITIZEN SUGGESTION AWARD BOARD
c/o City Clerk's Office
Tacoma Municipal Building
747 Market Street, Room 1144
Tacoma, Washington 98402-3764

Nation hears story of Tacoma's 'Chinese problem'

On Nov. 5, 1885, New Yorkers awoke to find two stories in the morning paper about a town they had never heard of before. The news was shocking. In a place called Tacoma, in Washington Territory, a mob had run the entire Chinese population out of town — forced them out of their homes and put them on a southbound train.

Worse, it wasn't just any run-of-the-mill mob, but some of the town's most upstanding citizens — including the mayor and the local judge.

On the editorial page, The New York Times called the Tacoma vigilantes "reckless, worthless agitators ... a far greater curse to the community which they infest than the other class of people." The Times recommended the Tacoma ruffians be harshly dealt with by the law.

Viewed from the eastern side of the continent, the source of all money and power at the time, the mob action was an outrage. Inside the Tacoma city limits, however, the expulsion of the Chinese was viewed much as a successful pest-eradication program might have been. After the leaders of the mob were given a symbolic scolding at the U.S. District Court in Vancouver, they were welcomed home as heroes. A parade was held in their honor, complete with marching bands and booming cannons.

Tacoma's "Chinese problem" began with the construction of West Coast railroads in the 1870s. Desperate for quick, cheap labor, construction companies imported thousands of young men from Canton in the Kwangtung province of China. In Kwangtung, where too many people and too little food made living conditions unbearable, there was no shortage of volunteers.

By 1880, there were more than 3,000 Chinese in Washington Territory, where, on the railroads and in mines, they did work that few white people were willing to do, at wages few white people were willing to accept.

After the railroad construction boom was over, the Chinese workers gravitated to cities, both for protection against random acts of violence and for jobs. The competition they gave to white working men was viewed as unfair by labor organizations.

Fueling the outrage was the prevailing opinion of the day that Asians were subhuman creatures — and that opinion was held not just in isolated racist pockets, but by the society at large, including scholars, teachers and politicians.

The 1848 Encyclopedia Britannica, as historian Murray Morgan notes in his book, "Puget's Sound," testified that "The Chinese is cold, cunning and distrustful; always ready to take advantage of those he has to deal with; extremely covetous and deceitful; quarrelsome, vindictive, but timid and dastardly. A Chinaman in office is a strange compound of insolence and meanness. All ranks and conditions have a total disregard for the truth."

In Tacoma, a Chinese population of some 700 people congregated on the waterfront in the vicinity below



Tacoma's 27, the persons indicted as a result of the Chinese expulsion, pose for a group portrait.

what is now Stadium Way, and near Old Town, where they lived in shanties suspended on pilings over Commencement Bay. Their dress, their diet, their rumored use of opium and their standards of personal cleanliness led Tacomans to regard them as a scourge — their presence was thought to be not only different but dirty and, quite likely dangerous.

The Tacoma Ledger, one of three daily newspapers in the city at the time, took a tough and virulent anti-Chinese stance, exhorting over and over again during 1884 and 1885 the slogan: "The Chinese Must Go!"

The editor of the Ledger likened the Tacoma situation to what had happened in San Francisco, where: "The Chinamen swarmed in like rats, where the original rat had piloted the way and let them in. Hundreds of these creatures were crowded into these filthy tenements; packed in their sleeping apartments and in their noisome dens of opium joints and pestilent prostitution, like decaying dog-salmon boxed up for shipment. Why permit an army of leprosy, prosperity-sucking, progress-blasting Asiatics to befoul our thoroughfares, degrade the city, re-



Chin Gee-hee was a labor broker amid the race hostility of the late 1800s on Puget Sound.

pel immigration, drive out our people, break up our homes, take employment from our countrymen, corrupt the morals of our youth, establish opium joints, buy or steal the babe of poverty or slave, and taint with their brothels the lives of our young men? ... If no other method of keeping them at a distance from our people can be found, let the citizens furnish them with lots on the waterfront, three fathoms below high tide."

The Tacoma city fathers took an equally effective step: Under the enthusiastic leadership of Tacoma Mayor Jacob Weisbach, the Tacoma Anti-Chinese League set a deadline of Nov. 1 for all Chinese to be out of town.

Some of the Chinese left Tacoma voluntarily before the deadline, most of them going either to Portland or Victoria. But on Nov. 2, the day after the deadline, some 200 Chinese still remained in town.

The next morning at 9:30, at the signal of a shrieking factory whistle, between 200 and 300 men gathered on Pacific Avenue and marched to the Chinese quarter, on the waterfront near the Northern Pacific

freightyards. Leaders included Probate Judge James Wickersham, Fire Chief Jacob Ralph and City Councilman Dolph Hannah.

The main mob stayed in the street, counting on their enormous presence for intimidation. Smaller groups of five or six men approached Chinese homes and businesses and pounded on the doors. "You had your warning," they said. "Now get out!"

The mob worked its way under the bluff, then moved on to Old Town, where a number of Chinese lived on the water in a settlement known as Little Canton. Again they went house to house, delivering their messages, and according to affidavits signed by Chinese later, drew pistols, smashed furniture and dragged people bodily from houses.

The Chinese were herded together and marched by armed guards to the railroad station at Lakeview, the first station south of town, crying, cold and carrying or dragging their possessions behind them.

Those with money were issued tickets to Portland. The others were loaded in boxcars and sent south on empty freight cars.

Supporters of the mob crowded about the successful routing the next day, pointing out that the deed had been done with no violence. Technically, that seemed to be the case. No deaths or injuries were reported. There was very little property damage either — until the following day, that is, when the largest collections of Chinese dwellings mysteriously caught fire and burned to the ground.

A question that has intrigued historians over the years since then is, why was Tacoma the only city on the West Coast that handled the situation in such a way? San Francisco, Portland and Seattle all had large populations of Chinese as well, but in those cities, there were strong humanitarian factions in the white majority who kept the anti-Chinese under control.

Robert Mack, a Tacoma attorney who wrote his thesis at Harvard on Washington's anti-Chinese movement, says he believes it was because, at that point, Tacoma was still basically a one-company town — the Northern Pacific Railroad — and citizens nearly unanimously feared their economic well-being was threatened by cheap foreign labor. Seattle and the other cities, Mack argues, were more diversified by then and had citizens who eloquently argued an opposing point of view.

Whatever the reason, national (and international) reaction to Tacoma's solution plagued the city for decades by giving it a reputation as a lawless, rough-and-tumble town — a bad risk for venture capital.

Another consequence, Mack notes: Tacoma still has no Chinese community of any size — a cultural deficit which, as the economic importance of Pacific Rim trade grows in the coming decades, may continue to put the city at a disadvantage.

Tacoma scolded by NY Times

The Government has by no means done its duty in respect to the protection of Chinamen on the Pacific Coast. It is now announced that an indictment will be found under the statutes and the treaty with China against persons who have been intimidating the Chinese in Oregon. This threat might put a stop to intimidation if there were good reasons for believing that the Government meant what it said. But on the same

day with this report comes another from Washington Territory describing how the Chinese were driven out of Tacoma for no reason except that the mob objected to them. Nor can anybody have forgotten that for no other reason a number of Chinamen were not long ago murdered by a mob in Wyoming. So long as these murders are unavenged it is idle to expect that less violent forms of intimidation will be discontinued." — Editorial in The New York Times, Nov. 5, 1885.