5. The July Days in San Francisco, 1877: Prelude to Kearneyism

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In the metropolis of the Far West, the great uprising of 1877 had one significant element in common with events that took place east of the Mississippi. Participants acted out of a strong feeling of antipathy toward the owners of big corporations, but the majority who took to the streets had little idea how to improve or replace a political economy mired in its fifth year of depression.

However, in San Francisco, white rioters lashed out more vehemently against a racial minority than against local employers and merchants. They attacked both Chinese immigrants and businesses that either hired them or transported them to American shores—but rioters injured and killed only the workers from Asia. The violence that occurred on the West Coast in July 1877 had major political consequences: the meteoric rise and rapid fall of a new third party, and then the reformation of strong and durable trade unions, which used the anti-Asian issue to portray themselves as the champions of all Californians with European backgrounds. If these were the wages of whiteness, they were, it must be acknowledged, rather good ones—at least for anti-Chinese labor leaders and the skilled unionists they organized and led.[1]

Railroad workers in California did not follow the lead of their eastern brethren who had touched off the great uprising. On July 22, as the strike wave was cresting elsewhere in the country, the directors of the mighty Central Pacific Railroad in San Francisco rescinded a 10 percent pay reduction they had ordered only a few days before for employees whose wages were more than $2 a day.[2] Most San Francisco dailies praised the railroad's move

as a wise precaution, but it is not clear that a slash in trainmen's pay would have had the same consequence in California as it did in Pittsburgh and Baltimore. Even during the depression, wages on the West Coast were significantly higher—by 20 to 40 percent—than rates for similar occupations in the East, although the prolonged slump had forced a general decline in pay throughout the country.[3] Businessmen in San Francisco recognized that the miners on the rich Comstock Lode in the Sierra Mountains sympathized with the eastern strikers but correctly reasoned that they would not "resort to any violent measures" without a direct provocation from mine owners.[4]

Although no California workers seem to have walked off their jobs in solidarity with the national strike, many residents of the state's largest city did condemn the railroad corporations for the troubles. The two-hundred-member Typographers Union in San Francisco, though not condoning the "willful destruction of property" in the eastern strike, chided railroad owners for not recognizing "that a fair day's wage should be paid for a fair day's work."[5] The local press was almost unanimous in declaring, as the *San Francisco Chronicle* put it, "the bedrock cause of the trouble [is] the general, bad, wasteful, tyrannical, insolent, plundering and corrupt management of the great railway corporations."[6] Beginning with the assertion that the rioters should be crushed and order restored in the cities of the East, every daily newspaper except the conservative *Alta* raised the disturbing question of what had gone wrong in American society to cause such a tumultuous upheaval.[7] In contrast, the *Alta* defended the railroad magnates as a group and, while praising the Central Pacific's rescinding of its pay cut, reminded workers of their debt to the corporation. "The Company has paid out immense sums to laborers and employees," the paper editorialized, "and many a man and family has been made more comfortable thereby. It is hoped that this recent action will be properly appreciated."[8]

The mob violence that did come to San Francisco in July 1877 did not primarily target the property of San Francisco industrialists. It was directed at a different enemy: the almost twenty thousand Chinese immigrants who made up 10 percent of the population and close to one-fourth of the hired labor force in the city.[9] For several days, San Francisco was the scene of battles between whites and Chinese and between white rioters and the formidable police forces arrayed against them.

Although the violence of the "July Days" failed to destroy much of San Francisco's valuable real estate, it did propel the anti-Chinese movement on the West Coast to a new stage of political organization. Two months after the quelling of the mobs in San Francisco, Denis Kearney was chosen president of the newly formed Workingmen's Party of California.[10] Under Kearney's lead-

ership, the WPC elected mayors and other officials in Sacramento, Oakland, and San Francisco and wrote a new state constitution (ratified by the voters in May 1879) that stringently limited the rights of Chinese and attempted to bar their further immigration into California. It also inaugurated an era of state regulation of public utilities and railroad corporations.[11] In 1882, Congress passed a law to exclude Chinese laborers from the country for ten years, for the first time restricting the immigration of people belonging to a specific national group. Whether or not the majority of labor activists desired such a law, national leaders of both major parties only began promoting it after the violent protests on the West Coast.[12]

In this chapter, I offer an interpretive narrative of the July Days in San Francisco and place the riot within the larger context of anti-Chinese politics in late-nineteenth-century America. Although the 1877 turmoil was the only event of its kind in the 150 years since the Gold Rush transformed a decrepit waterside military garrison into a burgeoning metropolis, the riots were but the most prominent (and one of the least deadly) examples of attacks on Chinese immigrants in cities, mining towns, and agricultural settlements throughout the Far West. These occurred from 1850 through the Gilded Age and froze Anglo-Chinese relationships in the region into an ugly mold that cracked only during World War II.[13]

Unfortunately, there is only scanty evidence touching on one of the more intriguing questions about the July Days in San Francisco: who were the rioters? Local observers at the time were unanimous in their opinion that "lawless hoodlums," the majority of them boys in their teens, were responsible for most of the violence. In the East, boys from white working-class families were certainly active in the riots touched off by the railroad strike, though the press there pinned the blame more widely on a "dangerous class" of chronically unemployed men influenced by radical groups like the Workingmen's Party of the United States (WPUS), an affiliate of the First Socialist International.[14] Alexander Saxton, in his pioneering study of labor and the anti-Chinese movement, was skeptical of the "hoodlum theory" as applied to San Francisco. Owing to "the massive character of the rioting and the degree of distress and unemployment"[15] in the city at the time, he believed that many adult working men must have been out on the streets, using stones and torches to drive their low-paid Chinese competitors out of the area.

According to the daily press, only fifty men were arrested for activities connected to the riots.[16] So few transgressors were apprehended because the forces of order were usually too occupied with driving crowds away from their intended targets to stop and make arrests.[17] Therefore, a majority of the men brought into court were caught while alone or in a small group. Only

nine were still living in the city in 1880 when employees of the city directory and the U.S. census came by to record them. Because this sample is far too small to draw conclusions about thousands of riot participants, I have simply included information about various individuals in the body of the essay. A clear majority of those arrested did, however, have addresses in the South of Market Street neighborhood, the center of the unskilled white working class in late-nineteenth-century San Francisco.[18]

We will probably never know whether the majority of rioters were teenagers bent on mayhem or merely unemployed workers out to avenge their frustrated dreams. But the intent of the July Days is clear. In response to unrest documented by telegraph from the faraway East, thousands of San Franciscans took part in a violent attempt to punish those they identified as their enemies. To understand why the Chinese in California became the target of such abuse, one has to examine the particular crisis facing the white working population of San Francisco at the end of the depression of the 1870s.

> From me shanty down on Sixth Street,
> It's meself have jist kim down;
> I've lived there this eighteen year
> It's in what they call Cork Town.
> I'm on the way to the City Hall
> To get a little aid;
> It's meself that has to ax it now
> Since the Chinese ruint the thrade
> —San Francisco song of the 1870s[19]

Before the depression, San Francisco manufacturers had enjoyed a period of rapid growth and high profits. The boom was primarily fueled by capital from the Comstock Lode and the existence of a thriving local market, one that eastern firms could not tap until the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. By 1880, the city had become the ninth largest manufacturing center in the nation, with a factory workforce of 37,475 out of a total population of 233,959.[20]

But the coming of the national railroad utterly transformed the nature of San Francisco's labor market. In addition to the newly unemployed white and Chinese laborers who flocked to the metropolis after the driving of the golden spike at Promontory Point, Utah, more than fifty thousand easterners immigrated to the city immediately before and during 1869, in expectation of good times to come. When the depression broke on the Atlantic Seaboard in 1873 and a grasshopper plague wreaked havoc on the plains of Kansas and

Nebraska, within two years an estimated 154,300 men and women made the trip to California.[21]

Skilled workers who, aided by strong trade unions, had achieved high wages and secure employment in the 1860s were particularly affected by the new surplus of labor. In 1874, the contractor in charge of the mammoth Palace Hotel on Market Street signaled the change by hiring novice carpenters and plasterers instead of experienced union members. As the value of manufacturing output more than doubled in the period from 1870 to 1880, the development of a sizeable class of unemployed and underemployed men transformed what had been a boomtown into a city where the very rich and the desperately poor passed each other on the streets of a congested downtown.[22]

The general crisis of working-class San Francisco was accentuated in the mid-1870s by a regional economic downturn, the magnitude of which was new to the freshly settled Pacific Slope. In the beginning of the decade, speculation in Comstock silver mine stocks had become a feverish sport for anyone in the city who possessed a little free cash. An upper-class resident who was a young boy in the seventies remembered that "[t]here was hardly an individual who was not gambling," and that the hurried greeting in the midst of the brokerage houses on Pine Street was, "How's stocks?"[23] In August 1875, the euphoria was dampened when mining securities declined by $60 million in a single week.

The inevitable crash came early in 1877. The management of the rich Consolidated Virginia Mines announced that the firm's usual monthly dividend of one million dollars would not be forthcoming. The resulting panic registered a $140 million fall in mining stocks.[24] In late 1878, the value of Comstock shares was one-tenth what it had been three years before.[25]

Severe damage to an important source of California's capital was only one of the regional causes for the depression of the mid-1870s. A severe drought in the winter of 1876–77 cut the state's rainfall by two-thirds, causing massive crop failures and the decimation of cattle herds in the San Joaquin Valley. The volume of trade leaving San Francisco's wharves also dropped precipitously. Local manufacturers, already pinched by vigorous competition from Chicago merchants shipping their cheap goods west, laid off hundreds of workers in an attempt to cut expenses. The local brokerage firm of R. G. Dun & Company reported in late July that "failures have been unusually frequent."[26]

By 1877, the plight of the unemployed had become a constant theme in the San Francisco press. That year, as many as ten thousand people sought help through the private San Francisco Benevolent Association; four thousand applicants sought relief from April to June alone.[27] At least one-fifth of the available labor force was unemployed in the first half of 1877, and there was

a widespread fear that farm workers would flock to the city as the full effects of the drought set in.[28]

The white working men of San Francisco were without a legitimate political remedy for their condition. The Democrats—the party to which the majority bore allegiance—was in power in both the city and the state, but its leaders ignored pleas to create public works jobs or to pass other emergency measures. Labor unions in the city reported only a skeletal membership of 3,835, itself probably an inflated total.[29] Henry George—then a zealous young journalist and Democrat—received a loud and long burst of applause when he charged in a July 4 oration, "Slavery is not dead. . . . The essence of slavery consists in taking from a man all the fruits of his labor, except a bare living; and of how many thousands, miscalled free men, is this the lot?"[30]

In 1877, there was one neighborhood where new and old enlistees in the army of impoverished laborers could find a cheap bed and a semblance of community life. South of Market Street was a tightly packed area of cheap hotels and lodging houses competing for space with the factories and warehouses of the industrial center. Stretching from the "Tar Flat" next to the docks at the foot of Mission and Folsom streets to relatively comfortable wooden houses west of 10th Street, South of Market was continually changing as new waves of migrants joined the jobless throngs.[31]

In the 1870s, South of Market was a predominantly male neighborhood with an even higher proportion of men to women than the 4 to 3 ratio for San Francisco as a whole.[32] This often made for a difficult family life because men hired for short periods and limited tasks often moved elsewhere to find work when a job was finished. In the early seventies, as native-born Protestants moved from the prosperous enclave of Rincon Hill adjacent to Tar Flat to the loftier peaks of Nob Hill, South of Market took on a decidedly Irish character.[33] The building of the churches of St. Rose and St. Patrick affirmed that fact. The thirty thousand Irish immigrants living in San Francisco at the time represented a greater total than in any other city on the West Coast.[34]

Large numbers of German, British, and other European immigrants also lived South of Market. Because four-fifths of San Francisco's common laborers in 1880 were foreign born (and 65 percent of *all* job holders), South of Market quickly became a mixed ethnic ghetto where a man could look for employment and relax at a saloon or corner grocery store owned by one of his countrymen.[35]

With the coming of the depression, many middle-class observers began to see the crowded working-class district as a repository of social evil. In 1876, San Francisco's health inspectors reported that poor drainage and open cesspools in South of Market were breeding outbreaks of diphtheria and

other serious diseases.[36] Gangs of teenage boys, like their counterparts in poor urban neighborhoods throughout the world, roamed the city in search of thrills and cash. A Mexican political refugee, visiting San Francisco in the 1870s, described these "gangs of hoodlums" as daring practitioners of "robbery, seduction, and every kind of wickedness." He wrote of seeing young toughs stripping a "greenhorn" of his valuables after inviting him to a bar and drugging him, all with the tacit connivance of the saloon keeper.[37] Organized gangs even crashed evening performances of Verdi at the Grand Opera House and, according to the opera's manager, "beat [*sic*] themselves among respectable people in various portions of the gallery."[38]

The San Francisco press tended to view the hoodlums as more than teenage pranksters. The *Evening Post,* which sympathized with the plight of South of Market residents, constantly warned about the criminal character of the "thousands of young and desperate men at large in this city." After the conviction of a seventeen-year-old boy for the murder of a police officer, the *Post* counseled whipping for all young toughs and commented that the "average hoodlum" is "selfishness personified, and should be dealt with as the dangerous animal he is." When the burning of the town of Eureka in northern California was blamed on young "incendiaries," the *Post* and other papers predicted that similar attempts would be made in San Francisco.[39] The July Days appeared to be a fulfillment of that prophecy.

Prime targets of the young hoodlums were new and old Chinese residents of the city. New immigrants from Asia told of being "covered with wounds and bruises and blood" by the time they arrived in the comparative safety of Chinatown. Of course, the Chinese had faced informal and legal harassment in California since the Gold Rush; the Miner's Tax of 1850 required non-Mexican foreigners in the gold diggings to pay $20 a month to the state.[40]

The indictment of the "Celestials" had many parts. White Californians accused the Chinese of poisoning the nation's bloodstream through the introduction of "Asiatic germs" and of degrading its morals through gambling and prostitution.[41] But the most common complaint was economic. Chinese immigration, it was charged, imperiled the existence of free labor in the United States and threatened to reduce white workers to permanent pauperism or outright slavery. As San Francisco lawyer Henry Clement asked in 1877, "if one class of enterprises subsists upon cheap labor, is it not madness to suppose that another class, side by side with them, will pay higher wages?"[42]

Perhaps the most significant aspect of California labor history in the nineteenth century was the almost unified wrath of white workers, not against the employers of cheap labor but against Asian laborers themselves.[43] There was little social contact between white and Chinese workers in California.

Keeping to separate communities and following widely differing cultural patterns, the two groups were connected, if at all, only in the types of labor they performed in factories and small workshops producing for the consumer market.[44]

By the mid-1870s, even these common experiences were often lacking. Two of the city's largest industries, facing stiff competition from eastern manufacturers, switched over almost entirely to a Chinese workforce. As a result, the cigarmakers'—who first instituted the union label as an anti-Chinese tactic in an unsuccessful boycott—and the shoemaker's unions became, in effect, "anti-coolie" clubs. In such trades as construction and metal working, where production was geared to a local market, few Chinese were hired, and wage levels remained high. However, the depression of the seventies severely reduced the prosperity and workforce of those industries.[45]

By 1876, anti-Chinese agitation had reached a flash point in San Francisco. White workers may have been unable to find work, but they still could vote, and any politician who wanted to advance in his profession had to promise to fight for legislation to curb the "Mongolian menace." On April 5, the Democratic mayor of San Francisco, Andrew Jackson Bryant, and the Democratic governor of the state, William Irwin, presided over a mass anti-Chinese rally in the city. Irwin declared, "whoever would degrade the white laboring man to a lower level than he now holds is an enemy of his race."[46] With thousands of unemployed in the city and numbers of them filing out of the meeting hall, a riot seemed possible. Though one hundred extra police were sworn in for the rally, and private guards were stationed at the Pioneer and Mission Woolen Mills where many Chinese were employed, no violence occurred. After that point, however, assaults on individual Chinese immigrants increased to such an extent that the usually reticent Six Companies of Chinatown demanded greater police protection for their community.[47]

In July 1877, when almost 1,400 Chinese arrived in San Francisco in the middle of another summer of discontent, white men took to the streets in mobs, echoing the sentiments of a popular ditty:

> Twelve hundred honest laboring men,
> Thrown out of work today,
> By the landing of these Chinamen
> In San Francisco Bay . . .
> But strife will be in every town
> Throughout the Pacific Shore,
> And the cry of old and young shall be,
> "O, Damn, Twelve Hundred More."[48]

San Francisco was seemingly well equipped to handle a major riot in the summer of 1877. Though only 150 police patrolled the city, they were backed up by a state militia of 1,200 men divided into three regiments of infantry and one battalion each of cavalry and light artillery.[49] Thirty miles northeast in Benicia lay a major arsenal and the headquarters of the U.S. Army Department of the Pacific, with several thousand troops under the command of Gen. Irwin McDowell. At Mare Island, north of the city in San Rafael Bay, warships docked frequently to resupply and give their sailors shore leave.

Beneath this well-armed surface, however, lay some potential problems. Both the police force and militia were dominated by Irish immigrants, many of whom probably had family ties or friends in the South of Market area. One-third of the police force in 1877 was born in Ireland, and a clear majority of officers possessed Irish surnames.[50] In addition, seven of the twenty-two militia companies were entirely composed of Irish Americans. With the exception of the German-dominated companies, Irishmen were also active in the rest.[51] With a mayor elected largely on the strength of his anti-Chinese and pro-labor opinions and with the Board of Supervisors (the equivalent of a city council) dominated by Irish Democrats who identified politically with the grievances of their poorer countrymen, it is not surprising that San Francisco businessmen from English Protestant backgrounds feared for the safety of the city in the event of an anti-Chinese uprising.[52]

The spark that set off the July Days in San Francisco was struck in Pittsburgh on July 21. When news came by telegraph of the killing of forty men and women in the Pittsburgh streets at the hands of a Philadelphia militia detachment, a "whirlwind of excitement" hit the California city.[53] On Sunday the twenty-second, the Executive Committee of the local chapter of the Workingmen's Party of the United States called for a mass rally to be held the following night on the sandlots in front of the partially completed city hall between McAllister and Larkin streets off Market. The published notice of the meeting contained no reference to anti-Chinese sentiments, declaring the intention only "to express . . . sympathy and take other action in regard to [our] fellow workmen at Pittsburgh and Baltimore."[54]

By the morning of the twenty-third, it was clear that the rally would be large and potentially violent. The day before, police had arrested a peddler for walking through the downtown streets carrying a large sign advertising the gathering, which read, "To Sympathize with the Strikers in the East." After confiscating the "objectionable" notice, the man was released.[55] Rumors that "hoodlums" were planning to kill all the residents of Chinatown, to blow up a Chinese theater during a performance, and to assassinate several unnamed "railroad magnates" provoked Mayor Bryant to order the entire police force

to be ready for action and convinced the state militia commander, Gen. John McComb, to summon his men to their armories.[56] Members of the avowedly anti-capitalist W.P.U.S. had been active in the rail strike in Chicago (headquarters of the socialist group) and in other cities, and San Francisco officials saw the specter of the Paris Commune in the pronouncements of party leaders.[57]

By half-past seven on the evening of the twenty-third, from eight to ten thousand people gathered in the sandlots.[58] As the audience buzzed expectantly, the meeting was called to order with typical Gilded Age formality. "A thin brass band" played "The Star-Spangled Banner," and a WPUS official named James D'Arcy—a part-time plasterer and full-time party activist—called the gathering to order and began the speeches. D'Arcy immediately warned his listeners that the meeting was not called to oppose Chinese immigration or for the "purpose of encouraging riot and incendiarism."[59] Then he went on to discuss the great strike and riots in the East. Violence was to be deplored, D'Arcy said, but some disruption was unavoidable owing to three million unemployed in the nation and "the political parties . . . the slaves of the money ring, the tools of monopolists."[60]

After D'Arcy spoke for about twenty minutes, seven other members or supporters of the WPUS took to the podium. A Dr. Swain quoted from ancient Greek in lambasting the government for not providing relief to the jobless. A Mrs. Laura Kendrick ended the speeches about 9 P.M. by urging the workingmen present to share their earnings with their wives, remarking that the depression was hurting women and children as badly as male wage earners. The daily press tended to assume that only men were activists in the overlapping ranks of the labor and anti-Chinese movements. But, on occasion, a female voice like Kendrick's revealed that both genders were represented in the working-class insurgency, and that women had their own reasons to promote the cause.[61]

As Kendrick's husband (his first name unreported) began to propose resolutions condemning the railroad corporations and criticizing the use of the military to quell strikes, three shots rang out from a second-story window behind the crowd on McAllister Street. After a few seconds of confusion, police located the apartment from which the gunfire had come. They quickly arrested a drunken suspect named John Griffin, just before the angry audience could avenge the wounding of three of its members.

However, some members of the already uneasy crowd took the shots as an excuse to raise the most popular local grievance. "Clean out the coolies!" one man shouted, and there were cries for a committee to be appointed to demand that the Central Pacific Railroad fire all its Chinese employees and

hire whites in their places. D'Arcy took the podium again to repeat that the rally was not an anti-Chinese gathering, but members of the crowd persisted in their protests.

Minutes later, as the crowd passed Mr. Kendrick's resolutions, in a rather desultory mood, a colorful band approached the stage. It played loudly and was led by two men carrying huge transparencies that read "Workingmen, Protect Your Families" and "Self-Preservation is the First Law of Nature."[62] Instantly recognized as the musical contingent of the city's Anti-Coolie Clubs, who had been holding a convention that same evening, the horns and cymbals ended any remaining order in the mass meeting.

An anonymous man then jumped to the platform and suggested a raid on Chinatown in "a month or two . . . when the officers of the law and the Chinese are off their guard."[63] As he was speaking, a police officer saw a white teenager knock down a passing Chinese man and ran over to arrest the assailant. The prisoner yelled for help from his friends, and more than one hundred young whites from the crowd answered the call. In the first of many confrontations between rioters and uniformed keepers of order, they rescued him from the policeman's grasp. During the struggle, many of the departing spectators rushed to the scene. To the cry of "For Chinatown, boys; let's go for Chinatown!" as many as one thousand men and boys ran north up Leavenworth Street, "yelling like madmen."[64]

For the next four hours, the mob ran through the streets to the west of Chinatown, stoning and breaking into twelve Chinese "washhouses" (laundries) and attacking other targets they could identify as linked to the Asian population. These included a Presbyterian Mission on Washington Street at the edge of the Chinese quarter. Chief of police Henry Ellis, assuming the rioters would head for Chinatown, stationed the majority of his men there, leaving the growing mob to run almost at will through the rest of the central city. Here and there, an isolated officer attempted to scare the crowd away from a washhouse, but the rioters were moving too swiftly to be contained by a single policeman. Most often, officers could only force the attackers to split into smaller groups and alter their routes, making them even harder to suppress.

The next day, several reporters commented that the rioters seemed more bent on destroying property than hurting individual Chinese. One grisly exception to this, however, occurred in the sacking of a washhouse on the corner of Greenwich and Divisadero, in the northwest corner of town. The one-story laundry was charged by a gang of fifteen men and boys carrying cans of coal oil. They ran through a barrage of bullets from the eight employees inside, beat up the defenders, seized $150 from the cash box, poured

their flammable liquid around the shop, and then ran down to Divisadero as the wooden structure began to burn. The next day, searchers found the charred body of a Chinese worker who had failed to escape the fire.

On Tuesday morning, the twenty-fourth, the pro-business *Alta* blamed "the lawless classes" who "are here, as they are in all great cities," for causing $20,000 worth of damage to private property.[65] After perfunctory praises for the night's police work, all three morning papers (the *Chronicle, Call,* and *Alta*) bemoaned "the deplorable insufficiency" of the force that had enabled the rioters to roam so freely. Meanwhile, prominent citizen were preparing their own response.

At two P.M. that day, more than two hundred of "the solid men of San Francisco" met at the Chamber of Commerce to revive the vigilante tradition of the Gold Rush era. They were responding to a call circulated around the city's largest businesses by General McComb of the state militia. The gathering—which included such notables as clothing merchant Levi Strauss, silver tycoon James C. Flood, sugar refinery president Claus Spreckels, and Mayor Bryant—selected William Tell Coleman to chair a new Citizen's Committee of Safety. Coleman was a wealthy import/export merchant whose operation did more than $100 million of business annually. More important, he had been a leader of the Vigilance Committees of 1851 and 1856, which were credited with stemming crime in the Gold Rush city, albeit through extralegal means. Now in his late fifties, Coleman was respected both for his political flexibility—he was a pro-war Democrat during the Civil War, then worked with the Freedmen's Bureau in the early years of Reconstruction, and became a moderate Republican in the 1870s—and his military experience.[66]

In his first statement as chairman, Coleman analyzed the violence and predicted the speedy suppression of the rioters. He wisely praised the great majority of the town's citizens as "staid, sober, honest, and industrious people" and blamed the previous night's violence on "a rough-scuff element of wild, reckless young men who are ripe for any mischief." Coleman expansively declared that twenty thousand "armed supporters of the law" could be organized in half an hour to make San Francisco "an unhealthy place for a mob."[67] After Mayor Bryant reported that the leaders of the WPUS would hold no more meetings until tensions had cooled, and would try to stop any violence by their supporters (an implicit retort to the "hoodlum" theory), Coleman outlined the organization of the Committee of Safety. Volunteers would be grouped by ward in companies of one hundred and would elect their own officers, subject to the confirmation of the chairman. The cavernous Horticultural Hall would be the general headquarters for the committee, but all companies would patrol their own wards unless needed to suppress a major

concentration of rioters. The meeting of businessmen ended with twelve of the richest individuals in the city pledging an initial sum of $48,000 to pay members of the Committee of Safety.

Recruits were not slow to join. By nightfall, the committee reported that more than one thousand had signed up—including a self-employed drayman named Denis Kearney! Coleman then got busy securing weapons and potential reinforcements for his volunteer army. Avoiding the use of the militia, which was proving in eastern cities to be either too friendly with the rioters or too bloodthirsty, Coleman also decided to use firearms only as reserve weapons. He ordered the requisition of six thousand two-foot-long hickory pick handles and provided each man with both a club and a revolver.

Guns and ammunition seemed to be in short supply in the city. As Coleman wrote later, "[T]he larger part . . . had been bought up during the previous week by unknown persons."[68] So the chairman shot off telegrams to the governor in Sacramento and to General McDowell at the arsenal in Benicia, requesting the shipment of several thousand weapons and ammunition of all kinds. By the next day, the Committee of Safety had received 2,300 rifles, ample rounds, and the news that three warships from Mare Island would lay anchor in San Francisco Bay with fully armed contingents of marines aboard.

The city establishment also prepared psychologically for further rioting. In an ingenious argument, the *Alta* warned workingmen that they should help keep order because most of the money they had saved in local banks was lent on real estate, and fires would cause many of those loans to default.[69] The *Daily Stock Report* attempted to reassure the business community that "Every precaution is taken to avoid the enrollment of an unreliable person, so that the Committee [of] Safety . . . will form the most influential organization San Francisco has ever known."[70] Every paper appealed to the laboring population to separate itself from "the hoodlum fringe" while at the same time reporting that "a large majority of the workingmen" had no interest in violence.[71] Only the *Post* ventured even the mildest criticism of the forces of order. The paper endorsed the forming of the committee but reminded "the men of property and standing" that if they did not "restore to this city and the Pacific slope something like a healthy industrial and social tone," the rioting would recur.[72]

The evening of July 24 was quieter than the night before, though a few small groups of young men raided washhouses in the South of Market and beat up any Chinese unlucky enough to be in the area after dark.

But Coleman was preparing for bigger outbreaks. On the twenty-fifth, he let it be known that he was considering the arrest of up to 1,500 *potential* lawbreakers and confining them on naval ships waiting in the harbor. He

also proposed ferrying hundreds more to tiny Goat Island, where small boats would circle and apprehend any would-be escapee as soon as he hit the water. Coleman later wrote that he abandoned the idea of prior detention because of "complications" and the "immediate legal action" that would have been brought on behalf of the prisoners. But the rumors of such measures, according to Coleman, did have the intended effect. Many a "rough and lawless man" left San Francisco for small towns on the surrounding peninsula to avoid arrest.[73]

Nevertheless, on the night of the twenty-fifth, official San Francisco was primed for trouble on a major scale. During the day, faithful Catholics had distributed copies of a statement by Archbishop Joseph Alemany that called on "all good citizens, the Catholics in particular, to stand by authority." The archbishop acknowledged that many of his flock had "suffered greatly" from the immigration of Chinese. But he counseled that "the remedy lies not in the mad torch of anarchy."[74] At 8 P.M., more than 1,500 members of the Committee of Safety jammed into Horticultural Hall, where their commander ordered them to "use your clubs on the heads of your opponents" and to protect fire hoses from mobs of arsonists.[75]

As William Coleman spoke, an unauthorized meeting that had none of the amenities of the mass gathering of two days before was taking place under a full moon at the city hall sandlot. An inebriated real estate agent, N. P. Brock, exhorted a crowd of eight hundred men to blow the ships of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company out of the water before they could discharge another cargo of Chinese laborers in San Francisco. The audience received Brock's dramatic suggestion with derision and drove him off the stand with stones. Two other speakers who advised the crowd to use legal channels to restrict Chinese immigration were trying to finish their own statements through the brickbats when the attention of the crowd was distracted by shimmering tongues of flame coming from the wharf area near Rincon Hill.

The fire had started a few minutes after 8 P.M. on the Beale Street wharf, where several lumber warehouses were located. It was probably an attempt to destroy the Pacific Mail dock, which lay right next to large stacks of milled wood. The steamship company enjoyed a virtual monopoly on the lucrative sea routes between East Asia and San Francisco, owned forty-six ocean vessels, and boasted the only wharf in the city equipped with a warehouse and gates instead of the open-planked structures of less profitable concerns.[76]

Such prominence bought protection. As thousands of dollars' worth of cedar and fir planks burned to ashes, private guards and city firemen surrounding the Pacific Mail dock made sure that the flames did not reach the company's property. Inside the warehouse, PMS Company employees stood

ready with loaded cannons and repeating rifles in case a rioter somehow managed to break through the human barricade at the entrance.[77]

By 9:30, thousands of anti-Chinese rioters from around the city had converged at the foot of Brannan Street to watch the flames and harass the firemen trying to put them out. Earlier in the evening, several large gangs had marched through downtown and the South of Market, smashing windows of deserted Chinese washhouses and battling regular officers and Committee of Safety men at numerous locations. One mob was reportedly commanded by "a young man dressed in a black beaver suit, cleanly shaven and respectable appearing" who pointed out targets to more than one hundred boys and older men but committed no act of destruction himself.[78]

When news of the fire reached Horticultural Hall, Coleman quickly dispatched seven hundred men to aid the regular police. A few minutes after they arrived, the men charged the crowd, which was drawing closer to the Pacific Mail wharf. As the fire raged behind them, a phalanx of safety committee men with pick handles held high drove the jeering mob back up Rincon Hill. In the middle of the retreat, a woman stepped from one of the alleys off First Street and, "in full light," shot five times at the rioters. The crowd stopped and angrily rushed back down the hill.

Coleman's strictures against firearms were forgotten as committee men and police emptied their pistols wildly into the mass of yelling stone throwers. The shooting was so erratic that a confused eyewitness later wrote, "Whether any of the retreating crowd were wounded could not be told."[79] But within a few minutes, the forces of order had dispersed the rioters. The next day, newspapers reported that five men had been killed, all but one by gunfire. Only one of the dead was identified as a rioter.[80]

The day following the big fire was full of official activity. The Committee of Safety was flooded with applications to join; by nightfall, more than four thousand men had received their badges as special police and their distinctive white pick handle clubs. Coleman also organized a "Veterans Brigade" of eight hundred ex-Union and -Confederate soldiers and gave it a separate headquarters next to the Committee of Safety. More than ten thousand additional firearms were delivered from the Benicia Arsenal. On that night, with more men and weaponry ready than available in any eastern city, only two small fires were set, and both were quickly extinguished.

On the twenty-eighth, a force of several hundred police and Safety men with fixed bayonets escorted, from the dock to Chinatown, 138 Chinese who had just arrived on a Pacific Mail steamship. The "extra-ordinary pageant" attracted large crowds as it made its way through downtown streets, but it provoked no violence. On Sunday the twenty-ninth, Coleman relieved thou-

sands of bored vigilantes from duty. Contingents of five men and an officer remained on call in each ward for another week. The "insurrection" was over, and only isolated acts of arson continued through the rest of the summer.

The end of the violence touched off a fierce debate about the merits of what had been done to quell the mob. As long as the city seemed in peril, political unity had prevailed. But in the final days of July, criticism of official actions began. Republican papers grumbled that lawbreakers were treated far too leniently. The *Chronicle* charged that Chief Ellis and William Coleman had allowed "several anti-coolie agitators" to join the Committee of Safety.[81] The *Alta* complained that only fifty rioters had been arrested, and questioned whether the presiding judge, Davis Louderback, whose anti-Chinese sentiments were notorious, would act to convict the guilty.[82]

On the other side, Democratic organs and others that spoke for the Anti-Coolie Clubs and trade unions belittled the seriousness of the riots and accused both Coleman and General McComb of seeking to increase their own power at the expense of the city's finances and patience. The *Post* took the city's incumbent Democratic administration to task for "surrendering by far too much . . . of their responsibility and their rights . . . to the hands of a body of men who . . . are in the eyes of the law irresponsible and without authority."[83] Questioning whether the Committee of Safety had even been necessary, the *Post* accused anonymous "civic captains" of shooting at unarmed crowds without attempting other methods of controlling them, a clear reference to the battle of Rincon Hill. The weekly *Illustrated Wasp,* in an article that staff member Ambrose Bierce may have written, commented wearily, "[N]ever was San Francisco so Committeed as during the past week." From inside the overcrowded and decrepit city jail, the anonymous reporter commented that it was "hardly right that persons charged with petty offences should suffer capital punishment."[84] Furthermore, a number of the "troops" were growing restless. A group of forty-eight Civil War veterans demanded to know when they would get paid.[85]

While white men were fighting to destroy or protect their property, the majority of the twenty thousand Chinese residents of San Francisco waited inside the narrow stores and apartments of Chinatown for the violence to end. The day of the Beale Street fire, a reporter from the *Chronicle* went to the Chinese district to interview some of the more prosperous members of the community. The whole neighborhood was boarded up, he wrote, and all money had been transferred to hiding places. Leaders of the Six Companies advised their contract workers to fight if attacked in Chinatown. An angry Chinese merchant told the reporter that the rioters were cowards. "They could attack a wash-shop in strength . . . and murder inoffensive Chinamen when

they were twenty to one," the *Chronicle* man wrote, "but if they come to the Chinese quarter the Chinamen will not run."[86] Following the first night of violence, the Six Companies had purchased hundreds of rifles and hatchets for their men, and few rioters ventured into Chinatown during the entire week.

The only sign that the Chinese population of San Francisco was buckling under the strain was a sharp increase in the number of passengers returning to Asia on Pacific Mail steamships. In the last four months of 1877, more than twice as many Chinese returned home than had sailed back in the previous third of a year. And in September, as Denis Kearney began his oratorical offensive in the city hall sandlots, only ninety-four Chinese arrived in San Francisco, less than one-tenth the number of immigrants who had come from that country in July. Many more would depart over the next few years.[87]

The turbulence in the state's largest city frightened elected authorities and leading businessmen elsewhere in urban California. Across the bay in Oakland, thousands of unemployed workers gathered at nightly rallies on July 23 and 24, but no violence occurred. Nevertheless, that city's mayor and council set up their own Committee of Safety and recruited more than four thousand men to patrol the streets of what was the western terminus of the transcontinental railroad. The *Daily Stock Report* noted proudly that one company of Oakland's committee "numbers about 100 men and represents $10,000,000."[88] Before the end of the week, similar groups had been formed in San Diego, San Jose, and Sacramento—all with the generous support of local businesses. In none of the cities were there more than scattered attacks against Chinese immigrants.

The events in San Francisco had clearly provoked the fears and kindled the imaginations of many Californians. A letter writer from the small town of Vallejo, north of Oakland, reported on July 25 that "we can see on the street corners, narrow but compact groups of fours and fives attentively listening to the reading of the latest news from the Riot . . . which came with its murders and incendiarism, to make *even us* smell blood."[89]

* * *

What was the meaning of the July Days? Torn by conflict between two self-defined classes of whites and a Chinese population that appeared to be unified in its self-defense, San Franciscans tended to be vociferous in their opinions and strongly partisan in their politics. Their newspapers both engendered and reflected the passions of the time, as they did in other cities where the press had no rival as a forum for political debate, gossip, and innuendo. The seven English-language dailies were fiercely competitive in their zeal to give both a full report of the July Days and to explain what had happened and who

was at fault. A contemporary business writer evaluated the press's impact in terms that might sound quaint to anyone raised in an era of instantly televised content: "Newspapers are, in truth, contemporary history," wrote Fred Hackett, "not always accurate, but none the less history . . . a terse newspaper paragraph is often quoted from Eastport to San Francisco and stirs up the hearts of millions."[90]

The majority of San Francisco dailies in the late 1870s took their ideology from the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian tradition of the Democratic Party. Democrats had often controlled California politics since statehood and had governed the city since 1873. But their press still spoke in the discourse of outsiders, blaming entrenched monopolies and plutocrats for grinding down the common man. This stance was particularly popular among white male wage earners. However, by the fall of 1877, many white workingmen were disgusted with the failure of the Democrats in power in city hall and the state house to lessen the pain they were feeling from Nob Hill businessmen and their Chinese employees. Stirrings that resulted in the formation of the Workingmen's Party of California later in the year were in the air by early August, and the Democratic press was responding to that as much as it was expounding a deeply felt perspective on recent events.

Democratic papers apologized for the riots, both in the East and the West, as the inevitable result of unjust treatment. On July 23, George Hearst's *Examiner,* the official organ of the party, commented, "when men are driven to desperation at the sight always before them of famishing women and children, they become as ravening as wolves." After unrest had gripped San Francisco and then subsided, the paper continued to blame big employers for provoking the violence. Behind the depression, the *Examiner* charged, was "the sinister influence of moneyed, landed and bonded plutocrats, in guilty partnership with venal and faithless representatives of the people," who, by their own policies, "have sown the dragon's teeth of civil commotion and possible revolution."[91]

The Democratic press consistently condemned the acts of the lawless while defending their beliefs. The July Days, they stated, should teach the employing class that Chinese labor would never be welcome in California. The weekly *Argonaut,* bewailing the armed escorting of Chinese laborers from their ship on July 28, was appalled that "the military . . . were held in readiness to shoot down our citizens, in event of interference with the immigrants." A Republican government, the magazine prophesied, could only survive as long as the native working class it ruled was content. "The government that does not provide work," intoned the *Argonaut,* "will be overthrown."[92]

While viewing the mass violence as a political lesson, the same publications

paradoxically dismissed the size and seriousness of the riots. The *Argonaut* called them the "malicious mischief" of "a few hundred vicious boys,"[93] while the *Post* sought to refute the notion that any workingmen had belonged to a mob. "The disorders in this city have no class bias," the paper protested, "and the foolish talk which is too constantly going on does gross wrong to the industrial thousands upon whom rests . . . the whole fabric of material and economic society." Furthermore, it was claimed, San Francisco workingmen had no reason to disrupt the dominant order. Several papers stated that as many as 90 percent of the city's wage earners owned their own homes, and the *Post* invoked the image of the California dream when it claimed "a call for a meeting of laboring men in this city brings together men who would be classed among capitalists in any other city in the Union."[94]

Though their columns during the violence had been filled with details of fires and deaths, afterward, the Democratic press took pains to fault the Committee of Safety and the wealthy men who had initiated and supported it. In early August, the *Post* published a long eyewitness account of "Three Nights in the Ranks of the Safety Committee," written by a member of a Tenth Ward company. The anonymous correspondent had earnestly joined the "Pick-Handle Brigade," only to discover that his duties consisted of marching from place to place, hunting scarce rioters, and trying to stay awake on a diet of coffee and hardtack. He depicted his officers as pompous and incompetent. He and his fellow volunteers spent long hours discussing how their leaders would misuse the $70,000 that was donated for committee expenses. "I vote that Coleman has it for a senatorial fight," contributed one man, while the disgruntled group drank cold coffee with the grounds still in it served by Chinese servants, whom they detested. In a more serious tone, the *Post* inveighed against the bloodthirsty attitudes of prominent officers: "Mobocratic feelings displayed by men in broadcloth," the paper concluded, "are just as reprehensible as when they are displayed by men and boys in fustian and rags."[95]

Democratic officeholders and the workingmen's organizations they claimed to represent rushed to agree with such sentiments. Mayor Bryant, Governor Irwin, the Mechanics' State Council (which tried to coordinate the anti-Chinese activities of the area's troubled unions), and the local Anti-Coolie Clubs all depicted the riots as the actions of "thieves, idlers, and tramps" and denied that any of their constituents or members had been involved.[96] The "hoodlums" may have responded to anti-Chinese rhetoric, it was granted, but they did not help the cause of immigration restriction by their violent acts.

In sharp contrast, the two avowedly Republican papers in San Francisco—the *Alta* and the *Daily Stock Report*—proudly hailed the methods by which the riot was suppressed. Aware that they spoke for a majority of businessmen

but for only a minority of voters, the two dailies saw the Committee of Safety as the necessary arm of solid citizens threatened by a half-crazed rabble interested only in anarchy and destruction. The *Stock Report* recommended that Coleman's organization be made permanent and that the police force should be vastly increased in size. It was indeed doubled that fall.

The Republican press saw the return to vigilantism in San Francisco as a model for the rest of the nation. "If all our cities are beset with considerable numbers of Communists, ready at the first opportunity to imitate the horrors of Paris," the *Alta* wrote, referring to the Commune of 1871, "they must be met with firmness."[97] The *Stock Report* lectured the authorities of Pittsburgh and Chicago on their failure to keep in check the railroad riots in their cities. If Committees of Safety had been organized in the East, the business paper admonished, the divisive effects of the militia would have been avoided. Several years later, William Coleman affirmed this position and then went on to contrast the welcome legitimacy of his committee of 1877 with the dubious legal standing of the vigilantes in 1856: "The greatest satisfaction given to Californians," Coleman wrote, "was that they had disproved the assertion often made that the Vigilance Committee was mobocratic and that Californians necessarily acted in an extra-judicial manner."[98]

Unlike the Democratic press, which denied that adult laborers had taken to the streets, conservative opinion makers directly attacked the manual working class directly. Hubert Howe Bancroft, historian and chronicler of the lives of California millionaires, blamed the unrest of the seventies on the unemployed, who "were, almost to a man, of foreign birth, and rarely of much intelligence."[99] Wealthy novelist Gertrude Atherton echoed Bancroft's opinion and added the charge that labor leaders were revolutionaries in search of a popular issue. "They were quite willing to appropriate all the capital in the state," she charged, "but as that drastic measure presented difficulties they concentrated on the unfortunate Mongolian."[100] In her account of the July Days, Atherton evinced no doubt that the riots were "to be a portentous uprising of the proletariat." Only the timely actions of "the superior class of citizens," she wrote, had stymied the evil designs of "the demagogues and their mistaken followers."[101]

The Republican press in 1877 was fighting to "civilize" a society that, since its birth, had been disorderly and rent with class and racial divisions. The merchants and manufacturers of San Francisco—the core of the party's support—agreed that Chinese restriction was inevitable; even the *Stock Report* felt the need to state its opposition to "the further introduction of Chinese."[102] But the nativist upsurge could not be allowed to disrupt moral discipline and civic peace. Thus, the minister of the opulent First Unitarian Church

preached on the first Sunday after the riots that "the underground class . . . that do little else than burn and rob and howl and vote" was "the natural enemy of civilized man."[103] Thus, Committee of Safety leaders blamed skilled craftsmen for the participation of jobless boys in the riots, arguing that adult workers refused them training in order to keep wages high. According to the *Alta,* an unemployed youth automatically became a candidate for a life of hoodlumism, but, "Give the young employment, and they are like the bay that communicates with the healthy and purifying sea."[104]

There was a rational current to the anxieties of the newspapers, regardless of which major party they supported. White workers were quite serious about opposing politicians who did not move forcefully to curb Chinese competition and to stop new Asian immigrants from arriving. In the immediate aftermath of the violence, a thicket of small political groups briefly sprouted up in white working-class neighborhoods. There was a Workingmen's Party of San Francisco, a Workingmen's Municipal Convention, a Workingmen's Trade and Labor Union, and a National Labor Party (which, in spite of its grandiose name, was purely local in origin). Two months later, plebeian voters found a better vehicle to express their class antagonisms and to advocate a blatantly racist solution to their problems. The Workingmen's Party of California—led by the bombastic oratory of Denis Kearney—offered men from the South of Market neighborhood what one historian succinctly calls "a social movement which entered politics to achieve its objectives."[105] Though spokesmen for both major parties feared that the success of the WPC would initiate new and larger riots, the ascendancy of Kearney's organization, by legitimating the politics of white laborers, probably helped dissolve the frustrations that had led to the July Days.[106]

In 1879, pro-business residents of San Francisco viewed the mayoral victory of WPC nominee Isaac Kalloch as "the capture of the City by the enemy."[107] Ironically, the election was actually the Kearneyites' last hurrah. By 1880, after a series of spectacular trials, they faded away, bequeathing the legacy of a labor bloc that would elect candidates and promote pro-union legislation in San Francisco well into the twentieth century.[108]

In the history of mass violence in the nineteenth-century United States, the July Days of 1877 in San Francisco occupy a unique place. In contrast to the strike-inspired riot in Pittsburgh in 1877 and the draft riot in New York City in 1863, the toll of life and property in San Francisco was minimal. However, the western mob was remarkable for its single-mindedness of purpose and the impact its actions had on the ultimate success of its objectives.[109] Anti-Chinese riots had flared up before in California and the Far West and would again after 1877, particularly in rural areas. But because the July Days

occurred in the unrivaled metropolis of the region, their significance was magnified. By inspiring the creation of a strong opposition to the major parties, the riots fused California politicians into an almost united body in the energetic movement for Chinese restriction.

Only a handful of labor activists spoke out for a different solution, arguing that the white working-class boys and men of San Francisco should turn their anger away from the relatively powerless Chinese and train it exclusively on major white employers. During the July Days, Patrick Healy, an organizer for the WPUS, counseled his class brethren to do just that in a letter to the *Post*. Healy blamed the "anti-coolie demagogues of this city" for inciting the poor to attack Chinese, and blamed the opportunistic rhetoric of Mayor Bryant, Governor Irwin, and "various other men in place and power" for inspiring violence against San Francisco's Asian minority.

Healy was hoping to change the subject. It was industrial capitalism itself that was the problem, he charged. With "labor-saving machinery," the Irish American bootmaker remarked, "the proprietors of large factories . . . can go on grinding out shoes and calico regardless of who had given years of their life to the acquirement of the technical knowledge necessary to follow such occupations in an individual capacity."[110] Healy was too realistic to propose an alliance between Chinese and white labor, but he did try to turn the attention of white working-class readers to changes in the political economy that he believed were largely responsible for their condition.

The opinions of Patrick Healy were never embodied in a significant political movement in late-nineteenth-century San Francisco. They provided no clear solution to the frustration and hunger for immediate relief that exploded in the streets of the city that July. White workingmen, many of whom had come to California from cities to the east and from Europe in search of a second chance, were unwilling to regard their misfortune as more than a temporary aberration.[111] In an environment long saturated with racialist ideology, the paucity of jobs and the miseries of daily life could easily be blamed on an alien people who worked for meager wages in shops and factories where whites had formerly been employed.

The widespread belief that Chinese "coolies" were the virtual slaves of their mercantile countrymen, rendering them passive and mentally inferior, motivated the righteous anger of men who took pride in their self-definition as "free laborers." By emphasizing Chinese restriction, white workers could retain the vision of an equality for members of their race alone, a notion that had ripened during the Jacksonian era and emerged strengthened after the divisive traumas of the Civil War. By blaming a group lower in status than themselves, the rioters of July convinced themselves that they were acting in

the interests of an aggrieved majority. In so doing, they continued a tradition as old as the Democratic Party itself. They also presaged the right-wing populism of later groups of working- and middle-class white Americans. When, in 1968, George Wallace suggested that furious factory workers "with about a tenth-grade education" would make better governors than "genteel" politicians who coddled welfare mothers and sabotaged neighborhood schools, he was singing Denis Kearney's tune.[112]

Notes

1. This point is discussed in more detail in my article, "The Great Exception Revisited: Organized Labor and Politics in San Francisco and Los Angeles, 1870–1940," *Pacific Historical Review* 55 (August 1986): 382–84, and my book, *Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 162–71. On the concept of "whiteness" in labor history (inspired by David Roediger's well-known 1991 book, *The Wages of Whiteness*), see Eric Arnesen, "Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (fall 2001): 3–32, and responses by Eric Foner, Barbara Fields, James Barrett, and other distinguished scholars.

2. *San Francisco Alta California* (hereafter cited as *Alta*), July 23, 1877.

3. John Garraty, in his *The New Commonwealth, 1877–1890* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 130, claims wages on the West Coast were 40 percent higher than in the East; while Neal L. Shumsky, "Tar Flat and Nob Hill: A Social History of Industrial San Francisco During the 1870s" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1972), quotes Department of Labor figures for various trades in San Francisco and New York for 1870 and 1880 that show an average differential of 20 percent. See also Shumsky, *The Evolution of Political Protest and the Workingmen's Party of California* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991).

4. *San Francisco Daily Stock Report* (hereafter cited as *Stock Report*), July 27, 1877.

5. *San Francisco Evening Post* (hereafter cited as *Post*), July 24, 1877.

6. *San Francisco Chronicle* (hereafter cited as *Chronicle*), July 23, 1877.

7. See *Post,* July 23, 1877; *Illustrated Wasp* (hereafter cited as *Wasp*) 1, no. 52 (July 28, 1877): 2.

8. *Alta,* July 23, 1877.

9. Figures from U.S. Census, cited in Shumsky, "Tar Flat and Nob Hill," 49.

10. Ira B. Cross, *A History of the Labor Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1935), 96.

11. There is a large literature on the Workingmen's Party of California and Kearney's part in it. Illuminating accounts include Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 113–56; Cross, *Labor Movement,* 88–129; Shumsky, *Evolution of Political Protest;* Philip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 242–86.

12. Andrew Gyory argues that politicians in Washington seized on the issue of Chinese

exclusion as a way to mollify workers in California and elsewhere in the wake of the 1877 strike wave. Few white labor activists, he claims, demanded such a law. But the measure quickly became a staple of union legislative programs, both for the Knights of Labor and the new American Federation of Labor. See Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

13. For briefer accounts of the July Days, see Cross, *Labor Movement,* 89–93, and Shumsky, *Evolution of Political Protest,* 13–14, 131–39. On anti-Chinese violence, see Saxton, *Indispensable Enemy,* passim, and the forthcoming study by Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: Roundups and Resistance of Chinese People in Rural California, 1850–1906.* My research was limited to accounts in the English-language press.

14. For a typical eastern description of the rioters, see *New York Times,* July 26, 1877; for the WPUS, see Howard H. Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1953), 13–15. Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 10, agrees that most rioters were not "self-conscious wage-earners." On the brief but intense "Red scare" of late 1877 and 1878, see Gyory, *Closing the Gate,* 105.

15. Saxton, *Indispensable Enemy,* 115.

16. The individual arrest records, which would presumably be more authoritative than journalistic accounts, were destroyed in the massive fire that gutted San Francisco's City Hall just after the earthquake of 1906.

17. The official aggregate police arrest records for 1877 do exist in *San Francisco Municipal Reports for Fiscal Year 1877–78* (San Francisco: Board of Supervisors, 1878). They show that the total number of arrests for July 1877 was only slightly higher than the number for the following month of August—in which there were no riots. Only fourteen people were charged with "riot, rout, and unlawful assembly" in July 1877. It is possible that the police records only count persons arrested by the 150 members of the regular city force and not arrests by the more than three thousand "special officers" of the Committee of Safety. However, the newspapers record only fifty arrests by any authority.

18. The remaining eight men lived in several different neighborhoods north of Market Street. I could verify occupations for only eighteen of the men, ranging from a milkman to three common laborers. There was no correlation between occupation and residence (as many low-status job-holders lived north of Market as south of it).

19. From *In Their Place: White America Defines Her Minorities, 1850–1950,* eds. Lewis H. Carlson and George A. Colburn (New York: Wiley, 1972), 169–70; attributed to an Irish immigrant (no date given).

20. Shumsky, "Tar Flat and Nob Hill," 22.

21. Cross, *Labor Movement,* 60–61, 69. Cross states that one-fourth of the immigrants were trained only as unskilled factory hands.

22. Shumsky, "Tar Flat and Nob Hill," 23–24, 120. Gunther Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), passim.

23. Anson S. Blake, "A San Francisco Boyhood, 1874–1884," *California Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (September 1958): 218–19.

24. Cross, *Labor Movement,* 69–71.

25. Shumsky, "Tar Flat and Nob Hill," 118.

26. *Stock Report,* July 26, 1877.

27. Cross, *Labor Movement,* 71; Frances Cahn and Valeska Barry, *Welfare Activities of Federal, State, and Local Governments in California, 1850–1934* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), 199.

28. Saxton, *Indispensable Enemy,* 106.

29. See the union-by-union account in the pro-labor *Post,* July 21, 1877.

30. *San Francisco Morning Call* (hereafter cited as *Call*), July 5, 1877.

31. Alvin Averbach, "San Francisco's South of Market District, 1858–1958: The Emergence of a Skid Row," *California Historical Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (fall 1973): 197–99.

32. Shumsky, "Tar Flat and Nob Hill," 141.

33. Albert Shumate, "A Visit to Rincon Hill and South Park" (San Francisco: privately printed, 1963), 15–17. The invention of the cable car made possible the development of Nob Hill as a wealthy residential neighborhood.

34. Shumsky, "Tar Flat and Nob Hill," 137.

35. Ibid., 143.

36. Ibid., 139.

37. Guillermo Prieto, *San Francisco in the Seventies: The City as Viewed by a Mexican Political Exile* (in Spanish), trans. and ed. Edwin S. Morby (San Francisco: J. H. Nash, 1938), 75–76.

38. Letter of A. C. Ranger to Chief Henry H. Ellis, October 13, 1876, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

39. *Post,* July 21, 23, and 25, 1877.

40. Quote from Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History* (New York: Viking, 2003), 126.

41. Stuart C. Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785–1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 163–65.

42. Special Committee on Chinese Immigration of the California State Senate, *Chinese Immigration: Its Social, Moral, and Political Effect* (Sacramento, Calif.: F. P. Thompson, 1878), 271.

43. Saxton, *Indispensable Enemy,* details the history of the early California labor movement in relation to the Chinese. Pioneer labor historian John Commons reflected the inaccuracy as well as the racism of many white workers when he commented in 1918: "The anti-Chinese agitation in California was . . . doubtless the most important single factor in the history of American labor, for without it, the entire country might have been overrun by Mongolian labor, and the labour movement might have become a conflict of races instead of one of classes." Quoted in Isabella Black, "American Labour and Chinese Immigration," *Past and Present* 25 (July 1963): 73.

44. Cross, *Labor Movement,* 136.

45. Saxton, *Indispensable Enemy,* 75–76.

46. Quoted in Elmer C. Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1939), 59. On taking office on December 4, 1875, Bryant had pushed through the Board of Supervisors a host of anti-Chinese measures later found unconstitutional (as with most such laws passed since 1850). Bryant's restrictions included a 2 A.M. curfew on San Francisco sidewalks. See Oscar Lewis, *San Francisco: Mission to Metropolis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 139.

47. Victor G. and Brett de Bary Nee, *Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 47.

48. Quoted in Carlson and Colburn, *In Their Place,* 170–71.

49. *S.F. Municipal Reports,* 1877–78, 59–60; Henry G. Langley, *The San Francisco Directory for the Year Commencing March, 1877* (San Francisco: privately published, 1877), 1082–83.

50. *S.F. Municipal Reports, 1877–78,* 73–82.

51. 1877 *City Directory,* 1082–83; Hugh Quigley, *The Irish Race in California and on the Pacific Coast* (San Francisco: A. Roman and Co., 1878), 265.

52. Quigley, *Irish Race,* 264–65.

53. Frank Roney, *An Autobiography,* ed. Ira B. Cross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1931), 268. Roney was a prominent socialist and trade-unionist in late-nineteenth-century San Francisco.

54. *Call,* July 23, 1877.

55. *Call,* July 24, 1877; *Post,* July 23, 1877.

56. *Chronicle,* July 24, 1877; Cross, *Labor Movement,* 89.

57. *Alta,* July 26, 1877; Quint, *Forging,* 14.

58. The following narrative is based on accounts published in San Francisco's daily newspapers and the secondary sources already cited, including Cross, *Labor Movement,* 89–93; Roney, *Autobiography,* 268–69; and Bruce, *1877: Year of Violence,* 267–68. In order to retain the flow of the narrative, citations will be provided only for additional sources or for a direct quotation.

59. *Alta,* July 24, 1877.

60. *Call,* July 24, 1877.

61. See Martha Mabie Gardner, "Working on White Womanhood: White Working Women in the San Francisco Anti-Chinese Movement, 1877–1890," *Journal of Social History* 33 (1999): 73–95.

62. Ibid.

63. *Chronicle,* July 24, 1877.

64. *Call,* July 24, 1877.

65. *Alta,* July 24, 1877.

66. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of the Life of William T. Coleman: A Character Study* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1891), 350–51; Ethington, *The Public City,* 106–8, 144–45.

67. *Call,* July 25, 1877.

68. William Coleman, "San Francisco Vigilance Committee," *Century Magazine* 43 (November 1891): 133–50, published in *The San Francisco Vigilance Committee of 1856: Three Views,* ed. Doyce B. Nunis Jr. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Westerners, 1971), 40.

69. *Alta,* July 25, 1877.

70. *Stock Report,* July 25, 1877.

71. *Alta,* July 25, 1877.

72. *Post,* July 25, 1877.

73. Coleman/Nunis, *S.F. Vigilance Committee,* 40.

74. *Chronicle,* July 26, 1877.

75. *Post,* July 26, 1877.

76. 1878 *City Directory* for San Francisco, 23; Blake, "A San Francisco Boyhood," 219.

77. *The Spark* (weekly), July 29, 1877, 2.

78. *Call,* July 26, 1877.

79. Ibid.

80. The fullest report of casualties is in the *Post,* July 26, 1877. Of the twenty-five reported wounded from the Rincon Hill battle (there were probably many more), seventeen were injured by gunfire and the rest by rocks.

81. *Chronicle,* July 26, 1877.

82. *Alta,* July 28, 1877; for Louderback's vehement racism, see his testimony in California State Senate, *Chinese Immigration,* 158–59. In fact, the majority of the accused were convicted, though no rioter was sentenced to more than a year in jail.

83. *Post,* July 30, 1877.

84. *Wasp,* August 4, 1877, 12. The back page of the same issue contains a pastel drawing of the Beale Street fire of July 25, 1877.

85. Letter from C. Mason Kinne (officer in the state militia) to Chief Henry H. Ellis, July 30, 1877, Mss. #657, Ellis Papers, California Historical Society, San Francisco.

86. *Chronicle,* July 26, 1877.

87. *S.F. Municipal Reports, 1877–78,* 258; Chang, *Chinese in America,* 128.

88. *Stock Report,* July 28, 1877.

89. *The Spark,* July 28, 1877, 2.

90. Hackett, *Industries of San Francisco,* 50.

91. *San Francisco Examiner,* July 23, 28, 1877.

92. *Argonaut* (weekly) 1, no. 20 (August 4, 1877): 4.

93. Ibid.

94. *Post,* July 26, 28, 1877. Also see *Argonaut* 1, no. 19 (July 28, 1877): 4.

95. *Post,* August 4, July 27, 1877.

96. Heintz, *San Francisco's Mayors,* 102–3; Saxton, *Indispensable Enemy,* 115; *Call,* July 29, 1877; *Post,* July 26, 1877. As Saxton notes, Coleman agreed with these views as well. Though a "hard-liner," he was too smart a politician to condemn, even indirectly, a majority of the voting population.

97. *Alta,* July 26, 1877.

98. Nunis/Coleman, *S. F. Vigilance Committee,* 43.

99. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California,* vol. 7 (San Francisco: History Company, 1890), 351.

100. Gertrude Atherton, *California: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1914), 289.

101. Ibid., 294.

102. *Stock Report,* July 31, 1877.

103. Sermon of Reverend Horatio Stebbins, quoted in *Call,* July 30, 1877. The 1877 City Directory called Stebbins's $115,000 church "one of the most beautiful structures our city contains, and is remarkable for the purity of its architectural design and its interior beauty"(1054). No Protestant church in the city cost as much to build. Richard Hofstader describes the Protestant clergy as being "bloodthirsty in its reaction" to the 1877 strikes and riots; Richard Hofstadter, *Age of Reform* (New York: Knopf, 1955), 150.

104. *Alta,* July 28, 1877.

105. Shumsky, "Tar Flat and Nob Hill," 252.

106. Ibid., 310. Shumsky finds that the WPC was a unifying force in San Francisco because it "released the energy which produced the July riots."

107. Blake, "A San Francisco Boyhood," 224.

108. See Saxton, *Indispensable Enemy,* 139–52, and my *Barons of Labor: The San Francisco Building Trades and Union Power in the Progressive Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

109. According to the *Chronicle,* July 29, 1877, forty-one washhouses in all were raided, accounting for $50,000 of damage to Chinese property. Materials and buildings destroyed on the night of July 25 on the Beale Street wharf amounted to about $100,000 in value. As far as we know, seven people were killed during the riots in San Francisco. In contrast, the violence in Pittsburgh caused $5,000,000 damage to railroad property alone, and more than fifty people were killed. In the 1863 New York draft riots, several hundred were killed, and property destruction was in the millions of dollars.

110. Letter to *Post,* July 25, 1877.

111. See the discussion on this point in Shumsky, "Tar Flat and Nob Hill," 17–18.

112. See the classic arguments on this point in regard to blacks in George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 130–64, and in Saxton, *Indispensable Enemy,* 19–45. For a discussion of Wallace and his ilk, see my *The Populist Persuasion: An American History,* rev. ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), 220–42.