



The Quan Family Legacy of China Camp

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Henry Quan was the patriarch of China Camp's second generation of shrimp and fishing families that made the secluded cove near Pt. San Pedro their home. He came to the area with his family in the late 1890s as a young child when China Camp still had a thriving shrimp-fishing industry. His father, Quan Hong Quock, had resettled his family from San Francisco and was running a general store at the cove. Since the 1880s, China Camp fishermen had been selling shrimp to San Francisco restaurants and exporting millions of tons of dried shrimp to China every year. It has been estimated that more than 3,000 Chinese immigrants lived in and around China Camp during that time period. Most had come to Marin to escape the virulent anti-Chinese sentiment and violence that plagued Chinatown in San Francisco culminating in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. John McNear, the owner of the land, helped bring many of the first immigrant families to Pt. San Pedro in his own ship and employed some at his quarry while charging \$1 a year rent to each resident of China Camp.

However, by 1911 racially-motivated laws that discriminated against the shrimping operation devastated the industry and the way of life for those living at China Camp. Initially, shrimp fishing was banned during the peak months along with the lucrative sale of

dried shrimp for export to China. The final blow was the state ban on traditional bag-nets that the Chinese used with such great success. Many residents of China Camp left the area, but the Quan family stayed. In 1924, a new type of net was designed and Henry and his brother George began taking hundreds of pounds of shrimp from the bay on a daily basis. The Quan brothers started the Diamond Fish Company delivering shrimp around the bay. That same year Henry married Grace, a Caucasian woman who had been raised by a Chinese family. The couple had to travel to Reno, Nevada in order to marry as California law prohibited inter-racial marriages. The couple had three sons and a daughter who worked at the family's store and eventually ran the business after Henry's death in 1951. According to older son Frank, diversion of Sacramento River water to Southern California made the bay too salty to support the dwindling shrimp population so the Quan's expanded their rental boat business for anglers who came to China Camp to fish for striped bass. Grace would become the matriarch and center of life at China Camp running the store, bait shop and café. In the 1960s, plans to turn China Camp into a resort by Hawaiian developer, Chinn Ho, never materialized and the land was eventually donated to California for a state park. Grace died in 1971 and Frank became the last surviving member to work the family business. He died in 2016, at the age of 91 in a house on the cove in which he had been born and worked all his life.

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