

A brief tale of three Chinese gangs (1865-1869):

How three different railroad gangs of Chinese workers helped build the last leg of the first transcontinental railroad to the Pacific, from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay

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in Washington Township of Alameda County in the San Francisco Bay Area
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A brief tale of three Chinese gangs (1865-1869):

How three different railroad gangs of Chinese workers helped build the last leg of the first transcontinental railroad to the Pacific, from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay

Many people are familiar with the first transcontinental railroad and how it was “completed” in May 1869 when the rails of Central Pacific from Sacramento and the rails of Union Pacific from Omaha were joined at Promontory Summit in Utah with a golden spike ceremony, accompanied by a lightning-fast telegraphed D.O.N.E. across the nation. However, the transcontinental railroad had not reached the Pacific coast in May 1869 and was not done. This is a story about the building of the westernmost segment of the first transcontinental railroad to the Pacific coast -- the first railroad from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay -- and the three distinct Chinese work gangs who were needed to build it from 1865 to 1869.

Three plaques (1951, 1969, and 1979): Which is correct?

There are three plaques or markers, among many, commemorating this important first railroad from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay, which finally completed the first transcontinental railroad to the Pacific coast. But they are conflicting. The oldest plaque of the three was erected in 1951 at Alameda and read in part: *“On September 6, 1869, the first transcontinental railroad train linking two great oceans... passed here on way to a wharf terminal west of here...”* The second plaque of interest was erected in 1969 (but missing since 2009) at Mossdale in Lathrop near the San Joaquin River railroad bridge and was inscribed as follows: *“The construction of the San Joaquin River Bridge completed the last link of the Transcontinental Railroad. Building had simultaneously proceeded from the Bay Area and Sacramento and met at the San Joaquin River. The first train crossed the bridge on September 8, 1869.”* The last plaque of interest was erected in 1979 at Niles, Fremont (on Niles Boulevard near J Street) and read in part: *“In September the final link between San Francisco and Sacramento was completed near the Flour Mill of Jesús Vallejo, a short distance east of this location.”*

The messages on these three plaques are in mutual tension; this tension has been with us for perhaps forty years, since 1979 when all three were in place. To help sort out this tension, I went back to the news sources of the 1860s, available online through the UC-Riverside California Digital Newspaper Collections, as well as other sources like maps. The following is a brief account of the tale I found that emerged from these sources about the building of the first railroad from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay. Unlike the oft-told epic story of the building of the Central Pacific Railroad through one gigantic Chinese work gang under the charge of J. H. Strobridge, this is a tale of how three distinct Chinese work gangs contributed to build the first Western Pacific Railroad to the Bay. The tale turned out to be new to me with some surprising twists that I have not read elsewhere.¹ For ease of cross checking with various 1860s sources, I use place names commonly used in the 1860s in the story presented here.

¹ I wish to thank two of my Acacia Creek friends, Tau Alpha and Roger Baird, for inspiring me to pursue this story.

1. 1865 Map Interlude: Orientation to the entire line from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay

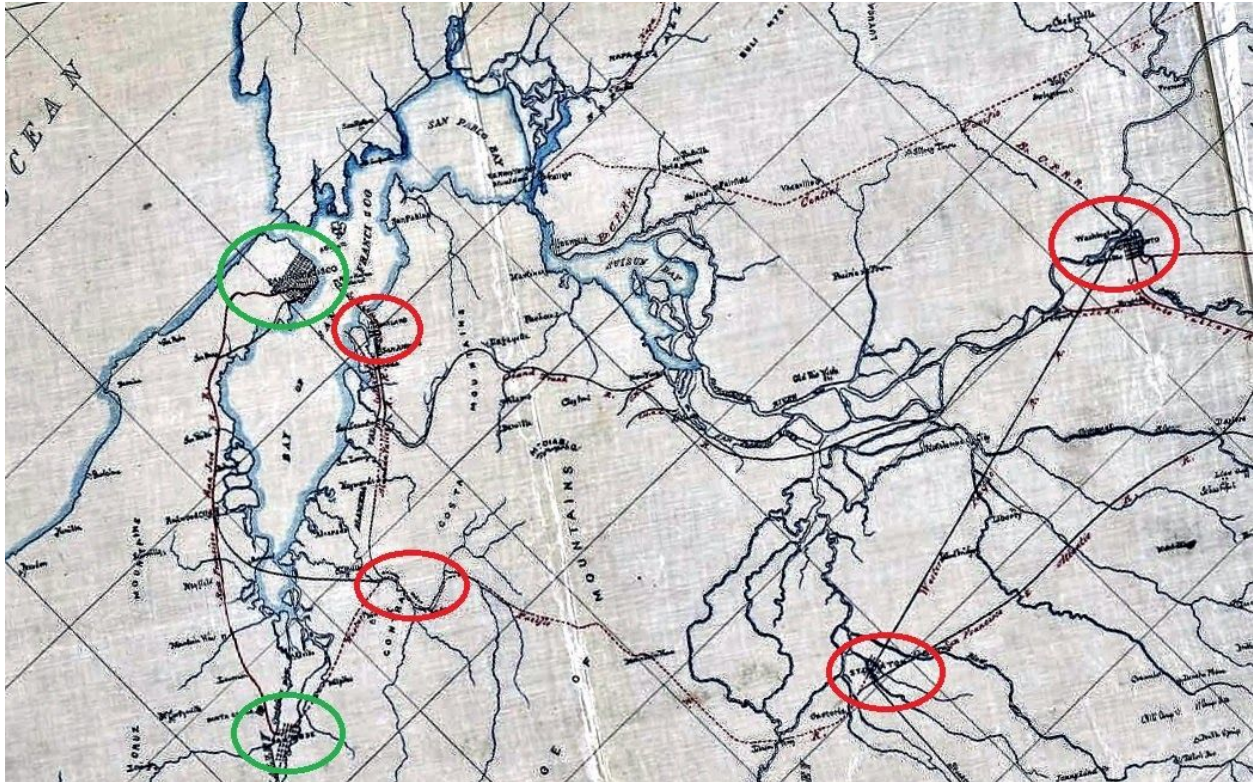


Fig. 1a. First railroad from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay, as projected on an 1865 hand-drawn map.

From right to left, circled in red, are the four "corners" of this U-shaped rail line built in 1865-1869: Sacramento (the eastern terminus), Stockton (first city linked to Sacramento via this line), Alameda Cañon (first core link, now Niles Canyon), and Alameda/Oakland (the two western termini on San Francisco Bay). Note: *The map grid is slanted. North points up the right diagonal of the map grid.* Already constructed before the *First railroad from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay* (1865-1869) was the *San Francisco & San Jose Railroad* (1864), the two termini of which are circled in green.

All maps used here are adapted from the meticulously hand-drawn 1865 *Railroad Map of the Central Part of California and Part of Nevada*, available from the Library of Congress and in the public domain. Caution: "Projected & surveyed railroads" and "Constructed railroads" are both solid lines on the map and are distinguishable from each other only by color, which has faded. See the magnified legend below.

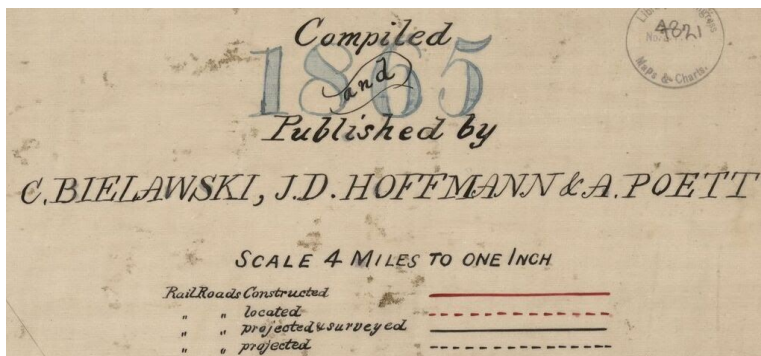


Fig. 1b: Legend of 1865 map.

2. The Cox gang of 1865 February - 1866 September (20 months).

The Cox gang was the first gang of Chinese laborers² on this first railroad to the Bay, working for the Western Pacific (WP) contractor led by Jerome Cox. They were about 500 strong, at times upwards to 900, and built 20 miles of railroad north from San Jose to Vallejo Mills (now Niles) and then east into the Alameda Cañon (now Niles Canyon) to just beyond Farwell. At that point at the end of September 1866, work came to a halt because of a financial dispute between Cox and his boss Charles McLaughlin, who abruptly abandoned the job, leaving behind both equipment and, more disturbing, the work gang, unpaid for their recent months' work.³

At the time, the overall plan was that the connection of the WP road at San Jose with the 1864 San Francisco and San Jose Railroad would provide desired access to San Francisco and its Bay. (See Fig.2) Although the Cox gang went about their work largely unnoticed by the press, they built in 1866 the "heaviest and most expensive"⁴ three-mile stretch of railroad in the canyon, which included the Dresser and Farwell bridges (still standing today on their original stone piers). A year and a half later, this three-mile Alameda Cañon stretch would become the nucleus of the westernmost leg from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay of the first transcontinental railroad to the Pacific coast -- the first core link which each of the two later gangs would have to connect to and build from, starting in the pivotal month of June 1869.

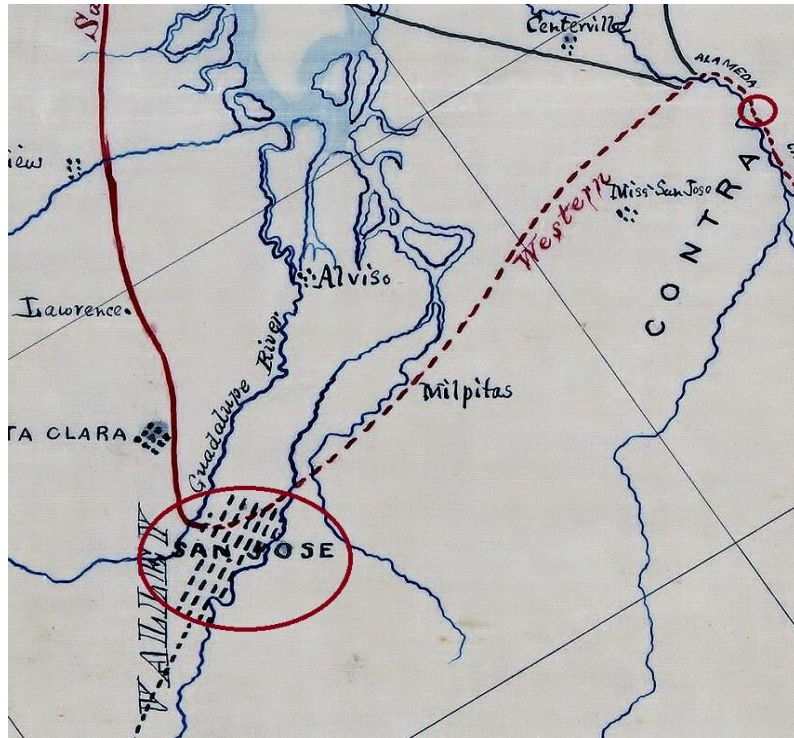


Fig. 2: 1866: the Cox gang finished 20 miles of railroad (diagonal dash line) from San Jose (north is up the right diagonal) to Vallejo Mills (future 1869 junction) and east into the Alameda Cañon, stopping just east of Farwell (circle) at the end of Sept. when work was abruptly halted because of financial problems.

² In the latter half of the 19th century, practically all of the Chinese in America emigrated from the Pearl River Delta, a small region of Guangdong province in southern China, about the size of the San Francisco Bay Area. Most were of modest means, deeply rooted over centuries in various villages in rural Pearl River Delta, located west and south of the city of Canton and the colony of Hong Kong, and spoke some village variant of Cantonese, like Toisanese.

³ "Verdict: Ah Ying *et al.* vs Cox *et al.*," *Sacramento Daily Union*, Volume 34, Number 5219, 19 December 1867.

⁴ *Sacramento Daily Union*, Volume 32, Number 4848, 11 October 1866, quoting from the *San Francisco Bulletin*.

3. The Ryan gang of 1868 February -1869 September (20 months).⁵

In February 1868, the second gang was formed when Turton, Knox & Ryan were given the contract to resume work on the original Western Pacific (WP) alignment, but starting at Sacramento where the main railroad shops were. A large force of Chinese laborers was under the personal supervision of John Ryan (hence the name: the Ryan gang); their first task was to grade the road southward from Sacramento towards Stockton. By Fall 1868, the Ryan gang was given work on its first major civil engineering projects, the Livermore Pass (now Altamont Pass). It involved boring a large 22-ft by 24-ft bore 1,200-ft long tunnel and carving deep cuts, e.g., 1,400-ft long by 42-ft deep, upwards to 100,000 cubic yards -- all done by hand through sandstone and slate rock. By the Spring of 1869, the Ryan gang was given its second major engineering project, the San Joaquin river/slough crossing at Mossdale (nine mile south of Stockton in present-day Lathrop). It consisted of two 150-foot wooden trestle spans and a 75-foot iron work drawbridge along with miles of pilings driven by a steam engine. By this time, the total work force swelled to about 2,000 men, mostly Chinese, and they were deployed along a J-shaped line at three places: (a) south of Sacramento working towards Stockton (see Fig. 3, right top); then (b) around the Livermore Pass tunnel (star on left of Fig. 3); and (c) around the Mossdale crossing of the San Joaquin River (triangle on left bottom of Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. May 1869: the Ryan gang working in three places: (a) Sacramento southward (right top) to Stockton, then (b) the Livermore Pass (star on left), and (c) San Joaquin River crossing (triangle on left bottom, Johnson Ferry).

⁵ Too numerous to be individually cited here, more than sixty news sources are collected in a separate compendium, "1868-69 WPRR News", by the author. All quotations used in the text here, however, are individually cited.

After the May 1869 golden spike ceremony, it became clear, especially to Californians, that the transcontinental railroad had reached westward only to Sacramento but not yet to the Pacific coast. When the golden spike was struck in Promontory Summit, the tracks on the 120-mile rail line from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay had progressed from Sacramento to only the Sacramento County Line, just 30 miles of tracks. Also by then the west coast terminus was changed to be the Oakland wharf, with ferry service to San Francisco, which eliminated the dogleg to San Jose. There was an urgent push to finish the road from Sacramento to the Bay.

A tactical pivot or shift in the construction process occurred in June 1869, when the Ryan gang was further split and shifted to enable a fourth locus of work -- a move to speed up the progress. Turton, Knox & Ryan shifted some of the workers near Livermore Pass to the spot in Alameda Cañon, where the 1866 Cox gang had to halt abruptly their track laying just east of Farwell: *"commencing twenty miles from San Jose, at the end of the section completed by the former owners of the franchise, and working up Alameda Canyon into Livermore Valley."*⁶ (See Fig. 4.)

Thus the Ryan gang was building in two different directions along the line from Sacramento to Alameda Cañon: southward from Sacramento towards the Mossdale crossing and eastward from Farwell towards Livermore Pass. By then, the Ryan gang was deployed along the entire 99-mile line under contract to Turton, Knox & Ryan, from Sacramento to Vallejo Mills. With this shift, a track-laying race within the Ryan gang was set in place: the two sets of track-layers would converge towards the middle in the valley, one southward from Sacramento and another eastward from Farwell. Another race had already been implicitly in place between the two major projects, the San Joaquin River bridge and the Livermore tunnel -- each racing towards completion first. Because of their size and complexity, each project could potentially become the controlling point of delay for the entire Western Pacific rail line from Sacramento to Oakland.

Unlike the Cox gang who worked largely unnoticed, the press did notice the Ryan gang, for better and for worse. According to the *Sacramento Bee* in July 1869, for tunnel work at Livermore Pass, white men were paid \$45 per month with board, whereas the Chinese were paid \$37.50 per month and had to board themselves. Exclaiming that the Chinese "do more work, man for man, than the white men!", the editorial went on to proclaim, "The difference in price is, allowing \$5 a week for board, \$29.50 per month, and yet the men who receive the higher sum do less work than those who receive the lower!"⁷

4. The Strobridge gang of 1869 June - October (5 months).

While the June 1869 shift was in play for the Ryan gang, the "finisher" James H. Strobridge was brought in, to build a new final leg from just east of Vallejo Mills to the finish line of the Bay at Oakland, the designated terminus. Fresh from his successful supervision of the gigantic Central

⁶ "AGAIN IN THE FIELD — THE WESTERN PACIFIC RAILROAD." *Sacramento Daily Union*, Volume 37, Number 5676, 5 June 1869. Retrieved 5 December 2019.

⁷ "GIVE THE DEVIL HIS DUE. The *Sacramento Bee* remarks," as reprinted in *Marysville Daily Appeal*, Volume XX, Number 13, 16 July 1869. Retrieved 16 December 2019.

Pacific (CP) gang, through the Sierras to Promontory Summit, Strobridge boarded the steamer *Yosemite* on June 4 at Sacramento headed for San Francisco (and then to Vallejo Mills) with men, grading and camp tools. The Strobridge gang was over 500 Chinese workers strong, which included some veterans from the CP gang. Their task was to build a new rail line of about 25 miles from just east of Vallejo Mills -- the west end of the core rail link built by the Cox gang in Alameda Cañon in 1866 -- to Oakland, the designated terminus on the San Francisco Bay. Thus, in June 1869, the Strobridge gang was building westward from the west end of the core link built in 1866 by the Cox gang, while at the same time the Ryan gang was building eastward towards Livermore Pass from the east end of the same 1866 three-mile core link. (See Fig. 4.) The Ryan and Strobridge gangs were building out back-to-back from the 1866 Cox gang core. Of these three Chinese gangs, the Strobridge gang worked together for the shortest time period, but still had a lasting effect on the Bay Area.

Starting inside the Alameda Cañon on the north side of the creek, the Strobridge gang made a junction of a new rail line with the old WP line built by the Cox gang. The new line ran down the north side of the creek, hugging the northern hills with a gentle sweeping curve above Vallejo's mill at the mouth of the Cañon, and emerged onto the fertile Alameda valley with a straight northwestward line directly to San Leandro and Oakland. (See Fig. 4.)

The Strobridge gang refined Vallejo's flour mill by rebuilding the wooden flume that powered the mill. More importantly, months later, Vallejo's mill was redefined by the construction just west of the flour mill itself of a new junction in the valley, outside of the Alameda Cañon, to provide a cutoff for a railroad line from Oakland to the original WP line to San Jose. In time, perhaps late November 1869,⁸ Central Pacific renamed the operating junction in the area as Niles Junction, after the Central Pacific attorney/stockholder and Nevada County judge, Addison C. Niles, who went on to serve in 1872-1880 on the State Supreme Court.⁹

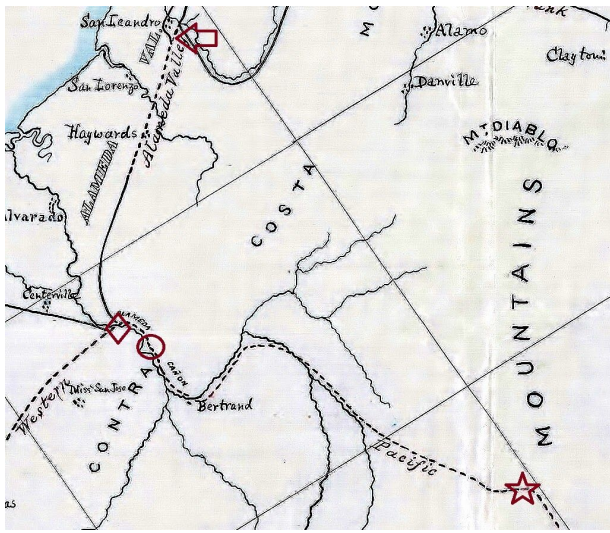


Fig. 4. June 1869: Ryan gang building from just east of Farwell (circle, left) eastward to Livermore Pass (star, right bottom) and Strobridge gang building from Vallejo Mills (diamond, left) northwestward to San Leandro (arrow, top left).

⁸ Probably between the opening date of the Western Pacific Railroad from Sacramento to Oakland, November 8, and December 3, the earliest use of the name "Niles Junction" found in *Daily Alta California*.

⁹ "A tale of two junctions: the birthing of Niles, 4 June 1869 to 28 April 1870", Victor K. Wong, December 2020.

5. Racing to finish (1869 August - September).

By mid-Summer 1869, Gov. Stanford made known his hopes that the Western Pacific line from Sacramento to San Francisco via Oakland would be completed in time for the 1869 State Fair at Sacramento to accommodate Bay Area visitors to the Fair. In this manner, he set, perhaps inadvertently, a single target date -- Monday, September 6, the State Fair's opening date¹⁰ -- for all the sundry and diverse pieces of the railroad under construction. And the race was on!

For the two major projects of the Ryan gang, the Mossdale bridge crossing and the Livermore tunnel, the race as to which one might be finished first, and thus not be the controlling point of delay, kept flip-flopping. At the end of May the tunnel was thought to be the laggard; in June the bridge; in July the tunnel; and in August the bridge. On August 18, the tunnel was timbered out; the tunnelers started to return to San Francisco on crowded stage coaches and some on foot. On August 24, the iron work for the drawbridge was completed at the company's Sacramento shops and began its journey to the San Joaquin River at Mossdale. A week later, on September 1, the first passenger train passed through the completed Livermore tunnel (See Fig. 5). This race was over: "*the only delay... is the unfinished bridge over the San Joaquin river*".¹¹

Fig. 5: Livermore Tunnel, probably taken in August 1869 after the tunnel was completed. Note the timber used to line the tunnel.

At 1,200-ft long, the Livermore tunnel was second in length only to the famous Donner Summit Tunnel #6 in the Sierra Nevada. In September 1868, the Ryan gang took over the Livermore Pass job from another contractor (previous to Turton, Knox & Ryan), who had failed to carry on its work. The Ryan gang labored for almost one year on this tunnel and its associated "deep cut" to finish this race.



¹⁰ Technically there were two State Fairs at Sacramento in 1869: *The State Agricultural and Mechanics' Institute Fairs*, opening on the 6th and 14th of September, respectively.

¹¹ "*THE FIRST TRAIN THROUGH THE TUNNEL*. The *Oakland News* says," as reprinted in *Morning Union*, Volume 6, Number 864, 4 September 1869. Retrieved 19 December 2019.

In June 1869, two track-laying races were set in place, one for each gang. The Ryan track-laying gang started from the two ends of their 99-mile line and raced towards the middle in the valley -- one from Sacramento southward and other from Farwell in Alameda Cañon eastward. On August 8, the first passenger train made its way from Sacramento down to Stockton; three days later, 2,500 folks from Sacramento traveled on a single train half-mile long to Stockton for a huge celebration. From the Alameda Cañon end, track layers working eastward reached Pleasanton by August 16 and two days later Laddsville (now part of Livermore). By August 26, the eastward track reached the Livermore tunnel, while the westward track was laid to the San Joaquin river. At the end of August, six days before the State Fair opening, the eastward track entered the San Joaquin County to within 13 miles away from the river and the westward track. This valley track-laying race was heading to the wire.

For the Strobridge gang, the bayside race was simply to get the tracks down to the Bay. On August 7, the track layers reached a point three miles northwest of Vallejo Mills, with the graders out near San Lorenzo. By the end of August, the northwestward track apparently reached San Leandro, heading directly towards Oakland, when unexpected news sprang from an unlikely source, *Carter's San Francisco Real Estate Circular*. On Wednesday, September 1, the *Circular* broke the news that, through a yet-to-be-built junction with the existing Alameda Railroad track at San Lorenzo, train passengers from Sacramento would be able to travel on the Alameda Railroad track to Alameda Wharf and thence catch a ferry to San Francisco -- all to be done in time for the State Fair. A few days later, Gov. Stanford confirmed this new temporary twist no one else foresaw, but misidentified the junction to be at Hayward. With just one day to go, on Sunday, September 5, the Strobridge gang worked into the evening to get the junction, which turned out to be at the bay side of San Leandro, finished in time before the opening. (See Fig. 5)

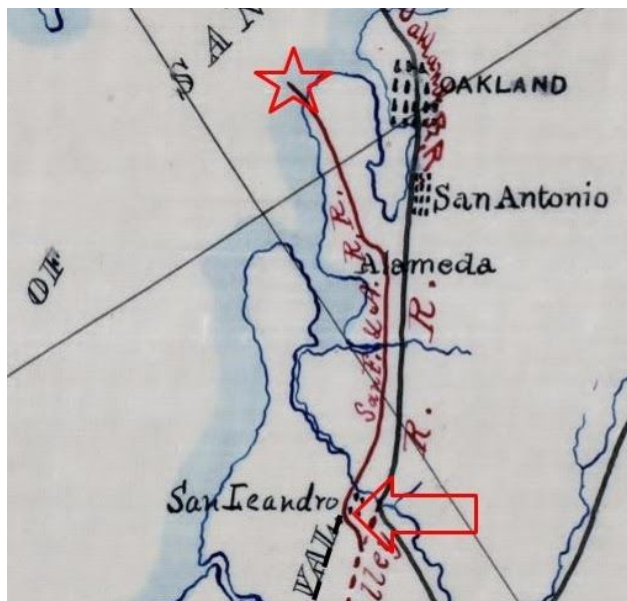


Fig. 6. Sunday, Sept. 5, 1869, evening: Strobridge gang finished the junction at San Leandro (arrow), joining Western Pacific with the old Alameda RR lines, to reach the Alameda Wharf on the Bay (star). [The maroon colored line on the map indicated the existing, constructed Alameda Railroad, as of 1865.]

As the sun rose the next day -- the grand opening day of the 1869 State Fair at Sacramento, Monday, September 6 -- the Ryan gang at Mossdale crossing prepared for their own opening. The bridge had still not been finished quite yet! It had apparently become the controlling link of the entire line from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay. The San Francisco *Call* portrayed the Mossdale final hour of reckoning at 3 o'clock Monday afternoon with the following word picture:

*"At the hour above named, the workmen had finished laying both ends of the track, and had reached the draw upon the bridge across the San Joaquin river. The train from Sacramento was coming across the plain, when the foremen of the workmen hurried them up with the last rails. They were placed in position, and in a moment more, the sledge fell upon the spikes, and they were driven home. The last rail was laid, the last spike was driven, and the workmen, instead of throwing up their hats and giving way to excitement, stepped back and contemplated their work, while the train came up and passed over the bridge."*¹²

Thus, on Monday, September 6, 1869, the first through train from Sacramento to San Francisco Bay, which left Sacramento at 10am, arrived at Alameda Wharf late, about 9 or 10pm, to an immense crowd waiting and joyously cheering. According to the San Francisco *Bulletin*, the first through train "was delayed at Stockton, and again at the crossing of the San Joaquin river for several hours, the drawbridge at the latter point not being in thorough readiness."¹³ Nonetheless, Alameda emerged as the surprise winner of the race to the Bay.

Two months later, on Monday, November 8, 1869, the first through train from Sacramento to the permanent west coast terminus arrived at Oakland to yet another round of grand celebration. By then and, for some, long before then, the three Chinese work gangs -- over 3,000 young men in total -- had all found and gone their own separate ways.

¹² "THE LAYING OF THE LAST RAIL. —San Francisco *Call*, September 8th.— On Monday afternoon [September 6] at 3 o'clock, the iron wedding of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans took place." as reprinted in *Russian River Flag*, Volume I, Number 44, 16 September 1869. Retrieved 21 December 2019.

¹³ "OPENING OF THE WESTERN PACIFIC.—Under this caption the *Bulletin* of last evening [Sept 7] thus refers, in a leading editorial, to the road and the arrival of the first through train at Alameda on Monday evening last [Sept 6]:" as reprinted in *Stockton Independent*, Volume XVII, Number 33, 8 September 1869. Retrieved 21 December 2019.

A. Appendix: 1870 Census of Washington Township, Alameda County, California¹⁴

Page No. 68 Inquiries numbered 7, 16, and 17 are not to be asked in respect to infants. Inquiries numbered 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are to be answered (if at all) merely by an affirmative mark, as /.

SCHEDULE I.—Inhabitants in Washington Township, in the County of Alameda, State of California, enumerated by me on the 9th day of July, 1870.

Post Office: Centerville Charles Barton, Ass't Marshal.

1	2	3	4			7	8		10	11		13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
			AGE	SEX	COLORED		Value of Real Estate owned	Value of Personal Estate		Place of Birth, naming State or Territory of U. S.; or the Country, if of foreign birth.	Parents of foreign birth								
		Balle Manuel	47 M	A					Mexico	/	/								
		Marya	6 F	A					Mexico	/	/								
49	48	Joseph Joaquin	47 M	A		Farmer-Laborer			Portugal	/	/					/	/		
		Mary	30 F	A		Washing Machine			Portugal	/	/								
49	48	Sung Kock	21 M	C		Laborer RR			China	/	/								
		Cong a	25 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Cong Ah	30 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Kong	30 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Sung Joo	32 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Kong Choo	33 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Ki Yu	24 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Sung Joo	44 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Ye Ah	19 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Kie Yu	33 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Kock Ah	28 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Way Sam	26 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
49	48	Lie Ah	34 M	C		Laborer RR			Do	/	/								
		Son Yu	18 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Lo Kie	22 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Su Sang	23 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Yat Ah	21 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Sip Yu	17 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Chim	35 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Soo Chi	25 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Yom Ah	22 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Su Yu	27 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Lo Kock	19 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Son Pea	18 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Sung Kock	24 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
49	48	Soo Joo	21 M	C		Laborer RR			Do	/	/								
		Choo Ah	37 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Yoo Sang	22 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Yum Ah	27 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Chim	29 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Yoo Chim	33 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Ye Ah	32 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Sung Joo	41 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Soo Ah	19 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Soo Chim	22 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								
		Way Kock	34 M	C		Do			Do	/	/								

No. of dwellings, 4 No. of white females, 2 No. of males, foreign born, 28
 " " families, 4 " " colored males, 26 " " females, " " 2
 " " white males, 2 " " " females, " " blind, " " "

The July 1870 census recorded 36 Chinese RR laborers in the area covered by the Post Office of Centerville, which probably included at that time the Vallejo Mills area. Ages of the Chinese RR workers ranged from 18 to 40.

It is not clear if any of them were veterans of the 1869 Strobridge gang or the gang that worked on the new junction in the valley just west of Vallejo's mill leading to the beginnings of Niles.

¹⁴ I wish to thank Janet Barton for bringing this 1870 census to my attention. Starting back in 1857, the town of Centerville in Washington Township was the Post Office for Vallejo Mills.

B. Fantasy Appendix: Three Plaques for the three Chinese Gangs. Read at your own risk!

With tongue firmly in cheek and with the free spirit of an awards fantasy, I'm presenting today three imaginary awards to the three Chinese gangs to recognize their superb service more than 150 years ago.

(1) The first imaginary award goes to the last Chinese gang to appear on the scene of the first railroad from Sacramento to the Bay -- the Strobridge gang! (Applause!) It's hard to get all 588 of you onto the stage, but it's fun to imagine. And you look so cool in your formal attire. The 1951 Alameda plaque (See Fig. 7) is being presented to you for your timely service, for working late on Sunday evening before the Monday opening and getting the junction at the bay side of San Leandro done in time for the opening of the State Fair, and for your part in making Alameda the surprise winner of the race to the Bay.



Fig. 7. The 1951 Alameda plaque, now at the northwest corner of Lincoln Ave and Webster St, to the Strobridge gang!

Back in 1869, this would be Railroad Ave and Euclid St; and the first through train from Sacramento would have chugged down Railroad (Lincoln) Ave to the cheers of the crowd on September 6th.

(2) The second imaginary award goes to the second Chinese gang to arrive on the scene, and that's the Ryan gang, the biggest of the bunch. (More applause!) Make way for all 1,888 of the Ryan gang. The coveted 1969 Mossdale plaque is being presented to you... Oh yeah, I know, it's missing, but that's okay, it's really imaginary. (See the hologram of Fig. 8). As I was saying... the 1969 Mossdale plaque is being presented to you for your versatility -- no other gang has done so much for so little -- you completed the second longest tunnel in the entire first transcontinental line from the Atlantic to the Pacific -- you held us all in suspense as you drove the last spike on the San Joaquin bridge at Mossdale at the last moment at, uh, "high noon", well, it was really "high 3 o'clock", with the first through train from Sacramento staring down your eyes. By the way, just read the date "September 8" on the plaque (See Fig. 8) as "September 6". This way, Gov. Stanford won't lose, uh, 2 days from enjoying his road.

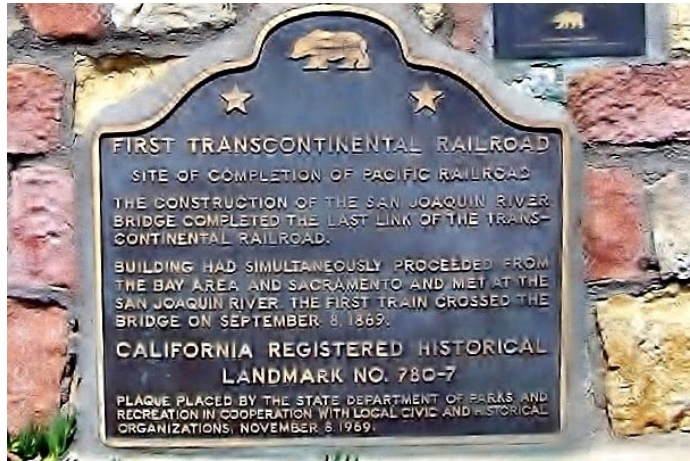


Fig. 8. Coveted 1969 Mossdale plaque, with "September 8" as "September 6", to the Ryan gang!

(3) The last imaginary award is of course to the first Chinese gang on the scene, the sometimes unnoticed Cox gang! (Applause!) Oh, *Ah Ying* is leading you all up here... and congratulations on your class action lawsuit for back pay from Cox et al. Simply Amazing! With only 688 of you, there's plenty of room up on the stage. The 1979 Niles plaque is being presented to you for working wonders without recognition and -- Alas -- working in 1866 in Alameda canyon without pay. You are the ones that gave us, uh, the "heaviest and most expensive" three miles of railroad in the canyon -- the first link in 1866 of the last leg of the first transcontinental railroad to the Pacific -- which includes the original stone abutments of the Dresser and Farwell bridges, still standing today as monuments to your lasting masonry skills. By the way, just read the "Final link" on the plaque (See Fig. 9) as "First link". Remember, you're the First! (Wild applause !!!)

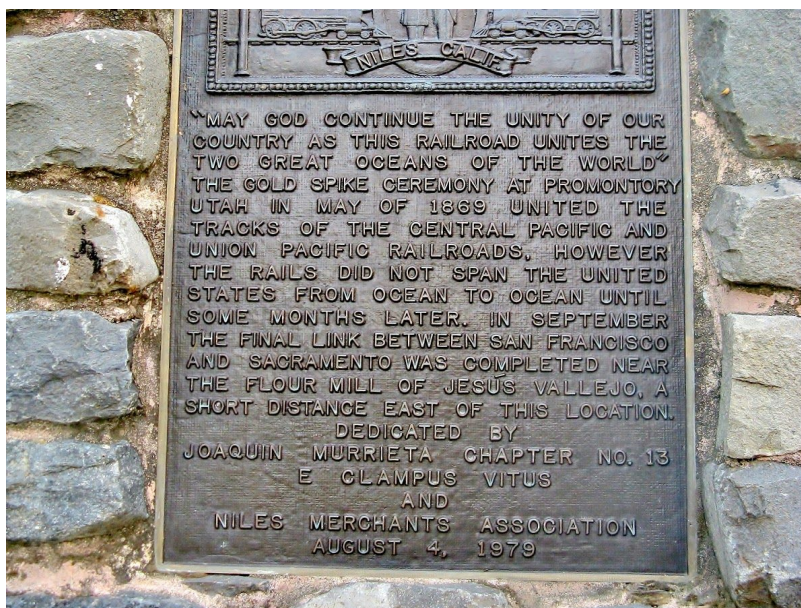


Fig. 9. The 1979 Niles plaque, with "Final link" as "First link", to the Cox gang!