

WANTED: NEW CHINATOWN SITE.

Los Angeles Chinese Quarter as it is and May Soon Be.

Picturesque and Historic Quarter Faces Extinction Under Railroad Commission Plan for Great New Union Railway Terminal at the Plaza.

BY GUY W. FINNEY.

Wanted—A new homelife for Los Angeles Chinatown. Must accommodate a population of at least 3000, be convenient for "blumming parties" and slight-seeing autos, contain architectural beauties in sufficient quantity to suggest tradition and antiquity in the eyes of tourists, and possess a background to guarantee interest to devotees of the "uplift" and nocturnal sciences. Vistas, "views," sunsets, freedom from fog, nearness to the beaches and the customary real estate "selling points" not essential to the arrangement. Property owners, real estate dealers and architects interested in preserving the existing entente cordiale between the people of Los Angeles and their Chinese compatriots, not to forget their peace of mind and domestic tranquillity, will please submit sketches, ideas, offerings, plans and prices to the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, 432 North Los Angeles street, city. All communications treated in strictest confidence.

By all those signs and tokens that foreshadow coming events in the careers of ambitious municipalities, the local Chinatown is due to have a momentous change. Destiny, in the form of a higher decree than was ever foretold in the fess houses of Apablaza and Marchessault streets, is crowding hard on the rundown heels of that ancient district which pivots on the historic Plaza and has its mysterious offshoots in the crooked passages of Juan, Sanchez, Alameda and Aliso streets. And from a reading of this decree it is clear that Chinatown must go. Chinatown, it seems, must prepare itself to take farewell of the "home" in which it has dwelt in peace and war for seventy years. It is booked for a great adventure. A grand "moving day" lies just ahead.

our local Oriental brother, who he has dreamed and straggled, the scene of his marriage, the place of his birth, the battleground of his long wars; the haunt of the nocturnal "blummer," the inviting field of social "uplift." All these memories must go in the discard. Chinatown must soon call the moving van and slip silently to other parts. Progress had no quarrel with Chinatown as long as Chinatown, indifferent to the swift movement of the commercial currents that ebbed and flowed about it, remained beyond the boundary of the city's enlightened path. But destiny had

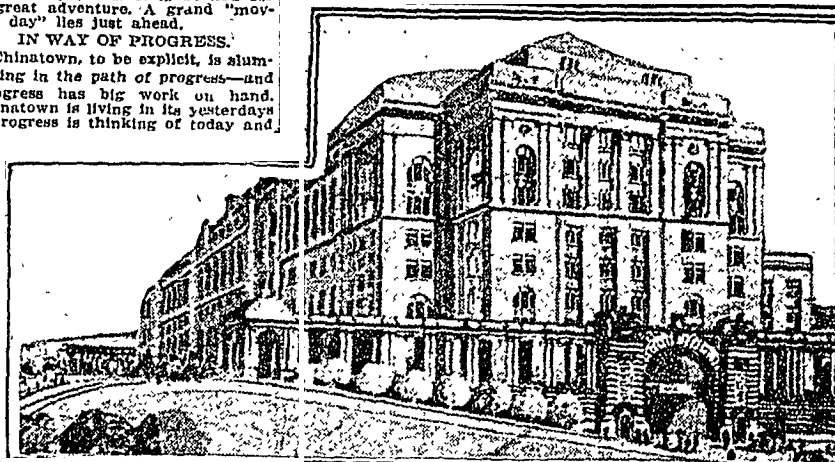
great union passenger terminal, the Railroad Commission decrees, should be placed at the Plaza site. This, as against any other spot, should be made the hub of the city's great future transportation activities, say the commission's engineers, as the result of more than two years of painstaking work. It so happens that Chinatown lies directly in the way of the scheme for great buildings, tracks, warehouses and train sheds needed for this mighty enterprise.

WILL BRING GOOD.

The exact hour of Chinatown's



Heart of Chinatown, the Doyers St. of Los Angeles



Proposed Union Terminal at Plaza; present site of Chinatown at extreme right.

what lies beyond. Progress cares little or nothing for that mystic element in the fortunes of the city to which its historians refer as "tradition." It remembers only that the thing is outworn, and straightway it makes ready the ground to be re-gan slide. In this instance, progress has turned its back on the Chinatown of other days—Chinatown as the time-honored abiding place of

other things in store. Today Chinatown has been caught in the center of that monumental building project which the California Railroad Commission proposes shall be placed at the Plaza site, to revive and revitalize the historic "gateway" to Los Angeles—and this inevitably swinging of the city's circle of development foretells that Chinatown must go to another section. The

migration or the spot on which the new Chinatown will rise are not told in the records of today. Few who note the signs of the times, however, either doubt that it will come, or that it will be the one "real estate venture" of the generation that will bring the city unquestioned good. Chinatown, already bestirring because of wily signs, may know the day, but Chinatown habitually keeps its secrets. Chinatown is fatalistic; it takes more than a "moving day" however it may uproot and disjoin the habits of a lifetime, to disturb its outward calm. And in this instance Chinatown is deaf to inquiry; it guards its confidence under lock and key. There is much speculative interest here for the ever-watchful real estate dealer, who probably has his own ideas as to where Chinatown should plant its feet. To his mind the march of progress is always welcome. Exodus is the term he best understands.

When Chief Engineer Richard Sachse, who prepared the Railroad Commission's lengthy report on the city's long-needed traffic and transportation improvements, fixed his eye on the Plaza site as the one logical spot for the new-union passenger terminal, he foresaw the vast and necessary change that would come with the elimination of Chinatown from the community's gateway. Not only has he furnished an array of convincing reasons for the construction of this \$10,000,000 project at the city's "front door," but he holds strongly to the belief that until it is done Los Angeles cannot present a smiling front to its great army of visitors. Here is the substance of what Mr. Sachse has to say:

DIVERGING POINT. "Probably the most important argument in favor of the Plaza site is the fact that it is adjacent to the future north and south subway. The Plaza, as has been stated many times, is the diverging point of many important streets. Sunset boulevard, which carries the vehicular traffic to and from Hollywood; North Broadway, over which goes an equally heavy volume of traffic between Los Angeles and Pasadena; Macy street, which is used as the entrance of the Valley boulevard to the city; Los Angeles street, which has a large automobile traffic to and from the business district, and Alameda street, which is the main artery of the industrial district.

It is true that the establishment of a union passenger terminal at this point would improve property values in that vicinity, which are now run down. This improvement would be of advantage to the city on account of the taxes and the increase in its income. This increase, however, would not be offset by an appreciable impairment of established values elsewhere, and it is quite certain that the gain would far outweigh the impairment.

"One of the principal advantages of this site lies in its convenience. It is convenient for the public and convenient for the railroads. It is near to all the railroad entrances to Los Angeles, northern and eastern, which are used by 80 per cent. of the trains and fully 70 per cent. of the passengers.

DESIRABLE SITE. "This particular site appears to be very desirable from an architectural and civic point of view on account of the fact that a monumental station of imposing appearance and fronted by an attractive plaza can be constructed. A station yard at this location will be made of sufficient size to take care of the steam road business for twenty to thirty years to come, beyond which time it is probably unwise to plan. "There is sentimental value attached to the Plaza site. The Plaza is the center of the original boundary of the city of Los Angeles, and the fact that the railroad gateway would be located at this point ap-



Chinese babies go to market.



Wong Ark, the oldest inhabitant. Chinatown and Some of Its Denizens.

peals to many people and seems particularly appropriate. There you have it in a nutshell; and having let its logic sink in, there is hardly room for doubt that from the moment the Railroad Commission put its seal of approval on the Plaza site the fate of Chinatown was fixed. But even though the knell of Chinatown is a welcome thing to those who tune their thoughts to progressive needs of the day, not a few will view with mixed feelings the passing of this sole reminder of the exuberant "youth" of Los Angeles—of those days when Chinatown, the mysterious, inscrutable heart of the local oriental colony, furnished its chapter of thrills and heart-throbs; its passionate resort to pistol and knife to settle its internal troubles and its high play at those games of chance ingrained in Chinese blood.

CHINATOWN HISTORY. Chinatown began to lay its civic fabric as long ago as 1850, according to local historians. In that year came to this "pueblo" the first of our Chinese citizens, who chose

what was then "Nigger Alley" (now a section of North Los Angeles street) as their quarter of the town. Around these first comers grew the Chinatown of today. It has flourished through more than half a century. In its heyday it supplied much of a brand of tabasco excitement that strongly appeals to the municipality's boisterous spirits and provides that color and movement which students of folly and moon-beam philosophers call "night life." But the Chinatown of today is as

unlike that of its hectic prime as the poles of the earth are far apart. The lottery is gone; fan tan has been supplanted by dominoes; the demon run, under the same edict which banished him elsewhere, is in disgrace and tea is today's liquid standby. This social denaturing process has robbed Chinatown of even its credit as being the city's sole survivor of the "good old days." Along with the general spoliation the Chinese tong-man, who in other times flourished as among the hardest trouble-makers hereabouts, has been "friked" of his gun and knife, and now, when warfare impends, he either finds cover in one of the labyrinth of Chinatown's darkened alleys or raises his hands in token of apology.

THE NEW SPIRIT. Chinatown today presents only a dim shadow of its one-time glory and is aware of this. But there is a new spirit among its people which it is important to consider in view of the coming "moving day." While no change is to be noted in the exterior of those two-storied shabby brick structures which have stood in unkept rows along its narrow, unpaved streets for all of thirty years, the soul of the ancient denizens who made the florid spirit of the old-time Chinatown is dead.

The new spirit of today's Chinatown is in the ascendancy. It is found chiefly in the present generation; in the Chinese young men, garbed in up-to-date suits, snappy and enterprising in their way, and in their sisters—mostly they are Broadway, 1920 models, who have mastered the gentle art of feminine make-up and wear their hair in the

(Continued on Third Page.)

CHINATOWN BLOCKS WAY OF PROGRESS; MUST GO.

Lifetime Habits to be Uprooted When Inhabitants of Historic Quarter Find New Oriental Center.

(Continued from First Page.)

OUR CHINATOWN IN A NUTSHELL.

Chinatown includes the district extending from the Plaza along Los Angeles and Alameda streets to Aliso street, with the addition of Marchessault, Apapalaza, Napier, Juan and Sanchez streets, and Ferguson, August, China and Gayetano alleys.

First Chinese settlers came to Los Angeles about 1850.

Present Chinese population about 3000.

Oldest Chinese resident is Wong Ark, aged 78 years.

Youngest Chinese is 3-months-old son of Wong Sai Fec.

Longest resident is Fong Yen Wing, who settled in Chinatown sixty years ago.

Wealthiest Chinese citizen is Dr. T. Leung.

Leading Chinese merchant is F. Sule One, proprietor of four stores in Los Angeles and Pasadena; has an American wife and three children.

Leading mercantile organization is the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, clearinghouse of Chinatown's business activities.

Most important Chinese citizen is Low Sing Kai, president of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

Unofficial "mayor" of Chinatown is Wong Sam Ying, secretary of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

About 15 per cent. of the residents of Chinatown are natives of California.

Population of Chinatown has increased 10 per cent. in last three years.

Principal business of Chinatown is the importation and sale of Chinese products.

Most popular foods are chicken and chop suey.

Most popular beverage is tea.

Most popular game (excluding lotteries) is dominoes.

late occidental modes. They are a long leap ahead of their backward parents, marked deeply. It would appear, by the influence of the public schools. More than 15 per cent. of the old generation of Chinatown, the records show, are natives of California; while virtually all the present generation claim either Los Angeles or San Francisco as their birthplace. This, in itself, explains the metamorphosis of Chinatown.

In the hidden recesses of Chinatown's homes the mothers of the past generation are content to remain. With the patriarchal fathers of that day, whose chief occupation is basking in the sun, they are "waiting for the end." Time has sped on and left them forgotten by all save their own. With them there are but two outstanding events in the history of Chinatown that are worth a place in memory. One is Chinatown's feat—a thing of Chinese splendor and made at painstaking labor and great cost—that won a prize in the memorable Fiesta of Los Angeles in 1895. This is recalled today with joy. The other event is only thought of with bitterness.

BLOT ON RECORD.

This is vividly remembered by older residents of Los Angeles even today. It is a blot on the city's record. Historically it is called the "Chinese Massacre" of 1871, an act of unbridled mob violence that resulted in the death of nineteen denizens of Chinatown and brought the United States government into an international complication with the government of China. Starting as a tong war in Chinatown, it involved the police and a mob of citizens, enraged at the killing of a white man, and produced a reign of terror while the battle raged. Here is the story as told by Harris Newmark in his "Sixty Years in Southern California":

"About the twenty-first of October a 'war' broke out near Nigger Alley between two rival factions of the Chinese on account of the forcible carrying off of one of the companies' female members. The steamer California soon brought a batch of Chinamen from San Francisco, sent down, it is claimed, to help wreak vengeance on the abductors. On Monday, October 23, some of the contestants were arrested, brought before Justice Gray and released on bail. It was expected that this would end the trouble; but at 5 o'clock the next day the factional strife broke loose again, and officers, accompanied by citizens, rushed to the place to attempt an arrest. The Chinese resisted and Officer Jesus Bidderrain was shot in the right shoulder and wrist, while his 15-year-old brother received a ball in the right leg. Robert Thompson, a citizen, who sprang to Bidderrain's assistance, was met by a Chinaman with two revolvers and shot to death. Other shots from Chinese barricaded behind some iron shutters wounded a number of bystanders.

FRENZIED MOB.

"News of the attacks and counter-attacks spread like wildfire, and a mob of a thousand or more, frenzied beyond control, armed with pistols, guns, knives and ropes, and determined to avenge Thompson's murder, assembled in the neighborhood of the disturbance. While this solid phalanx was being formed around Nigger Alley, a Chinaman, waving a hatchet, was seen trying to escape across Los Angeles street; and Romo Sortorol, at the expense of some ugly cuts on the hand, captured him. Emil Harris then rescued the Mongolian; but a detachment of the crowd, yelling 'Hang him! Shoot him!' overpowered Harris at Temple and Spring streets, and dragged the trembling wretch up Temple street to New High street, where the familiar framework of the corral gates suggested its use as a gallows. With the first suspension the rope broke; but the second attempt to hang the prisoner was successful. Other Chinamen, whose roofs had been smashed in, were rushed down Los Angeles street to the south side of Commercial, and there, near Collier's wagon shop, between wagons stood on end, were hanged. Alarmed at the safety of their tool, Sing Toy, the Juan Lanfranco hid the Mongolian for a week, until the excitement had subsided.

"Henry T. Hazard was rolling comfortably in a shaving saloon, under the luxurious lather of the barber, when he heard of the riot; and, arriving on the scene, he mounted a barrel and attempted to remonstrate with the crowd. Some friends soon pulled him down, warning him that he might be shot. A J. King was at supper when word was brought to him that Chinese were slaughtering white people, and he responded by seizing his rifle and two revolvers. In trying one of the latter, however, it was prematurely discharged, taking the tin off a finger and putting him hors de combat. Sheriff Burns could not reach the scene until an hour after the row started and many Chinamen had already taken their celestial flight. When he arrived, he called for a posse comitatus to assist him in handling the situation; but no one responded. He also demanded from the leader of the mob and others that they disperse; but

with the same negative result. At that time, a party of rioters started with a Chinaman up Commercial street to Main, evidently bent on hanging him, and when Burns promised to attempt a rescue if he had but two volunteers, Judge R. M. Widney and James Goldsworthy responded and the Chinaman was taken from his tormentors, and lodged in jail.

"On October 25, when Coroner Joseph Kirtz impanelled his jury, nineteen bodies of Chinamen alone were in evidence and the verdict was: 'Death through strangulation by persons unknown to the jury.' Following this massacre, the Chinese government made such a vigorous protest to the United States that the Washington authorities finally paid a large indemnity."

"NO WORRY—NO CARE."

Chinatown stands virtually the same today as on the day this historic crime was enacted, though its spirit is vastly changed—chastened, as it may be, by that inescapable process which, in the making of a city, grinds on with the force of a great mill, fashioning the works of some into powder and others into enduring stone.

Being curious to know how Chinatown regarded its prospects, I broke in on the meditations yesterday of Wong Ark, Chinatown's oldest inhabitant, as he sat smoking and sunning himself in his doorway on Marchessault street. As he comprehended my point-blank question as to whether Chinatown would go and when, he shrugged his patriarchal shoulders, shifted his ancient pipe between the cleft of his two remaining teeth, and said:

"Maybe so—maybe not. Me no say—no worry—no care. Me like this place—me stay."

You can't beat Chinatown for dependence on the will of the fates. Chinatown, on the day its "new home" is selected, will simply pack its trunk, call the moving man, and compose itself to think well of its new neighborhood.