

11. MODERN LIFE

WITH FRANK AND MAMIE living in the Pacific Northwest, the rest of the Tape family in Berkeley settled into a life of comfort and small pleasures, but also one in which happiness was unevenly spread.

The good life was based, foremost, on Joseph Tape's expanding business interests. He had already done well with his express company and the baggage-handling privilege that he held for the Pacific Mail and Southern Pacific, in addition to myriad other concessions. As the Chinese passenger ticket agent for the steamship and railroad companies, Joseph received a commission on every ticket he sold. Although Chinese were not required to purchase their tickets from Tape, common language, convenience, and trust meant that nearly all did. In 1913, a \$99 ticket from Chicago to Hong Kong via the Southern Pacific and Pacific Mail brought a commission of \$7.50. We do not have any records of Joseph's business accounts, but we can estimate that he earned several hundred dollars each month in commissions (upwards of \$10,000 today) from this piece alone.

Joseph soon became involved in bonding. Under the exclusion laws, bonds were required of Chinese when they were in the United States temporarily. The bond was meant to serve as a guarantee that

they would not stay indefinitely or permanently. The bond policy was imposed after the courts ruled against the immigration bureau's efforts to exclude all Chinese who sought temporary admission. One type of bonding was for Chinese who arrived at a U.S. port but whose final destination was another country, typically Mexico or Cuba. These "transit" passengers had to post a bond to ensure that they would, in fact, proceed to their final destination. Others who required bonding included Chinese working at the world's fairs and, after a policy decision based on the immigration bureau's unsettling experience at the fairs, actors on tour in the United States. The government also required Chinese crew members working on ships putting into American ports to post a bond as a condition for shore leave.

Joseph Tape brokered bonds for all of these people. He entered the business—one that required substantial capitalization—step by step. He began, simply enough, by delivering the bonding paperwork from the ships at the Pacific Mail's wharf to the downtown office of William H. Thornley, a customs house agent and bondsman, then to the immigration office, and back to the ship. Soon he did the paperwork himself, relieving a ship's officer of the chore. He would go to each department of the ship, ask who wanted to go ashore, and help crew members fill out the application. He then brought their applications to the ship's officer for signature.

At first Joseph may have received a modest gratuity for delivering the paperwork, but one imagines that very quickly he charged a fee for his service, although it is not clear whether he was paid by the steamship company or the bondsman (or both). Sometime around 1910, Joseph became an agent for Thornley and began handling bonds for Chinese crew members on the Pacific Mail and Toyo Kisen Kaisha steamship lines. Together these two lines handled ninety-five percent of Chinese passenger traffic across the Pacific. As an agent, Joseph would have made a direct commission on each bond, a portion of Thornley's take. By the late teens or early twenties, he had amassed sufficient capital to broker bonds directly. Typically, he

bonded thirty or so crew members per ship. If he charged ten percent for each bond, he would have made \$50 on each \$500 bond, upwards of \$1,500 per ship if thirty members went ashore. With at least one landing a month, he would have earned a handsome income of \$18,000 a year (\$375,000 today) from this piece of his business alone.

To serve his diversified interests, Tape opened a second office at 804 Clay Street in Chinatown, which handled ticketing and bonding for Chinese crewmen and transit passengers. (His express office had relocated to 755 Grant Avenue, formerly Dupont Street, after the earthquake.) Joseph's expanding businesses show how experienced he had become at seizing opportunities to broker parts of the immigration process. The increments of commissions and fees added up to make him a wealthy man.

In 1906, Joseph and Mary built a new house at 2121 Russell Street, at the back of their lot, next to the family's first Berkeley home. The following year, they built a duplex in the adjacent lot, at 2119 Russell—a large, clapboard Colonial revival with a corner bay and two six-room flats. Joseph's mini-building boom was part of Berkeley's expansion in the aftermath of the San Francisco earthquake and fire, when tens of thousands of people left the city and settled permanently in the East Bay.

The new houses were roomier than the old Victorian. Joseph and Mary moved first to the duplex at 2119, renting out their houses at 2121 and 2123, and some years later to 2121, after moving the house to the front of the lot and renovating it. The interior of 2121 was conventional, with a fireplace, a high wainscot, and floral wallpaper in the living room. The furniture was of its time—a velvet sofa, a floor lamp with a thickly fringed shade, Mission-style rockers. There were some nice touches, such as a ceiling light fixture and matching wall sconces made of tinted glass. Mary's paintings hung on the walls.

The rental properties generated income for the Tapes for many years. During the 1910s and 1920s, their tenants—who were all white people—included a real estate broker, a master carpenter, and the

driver of a milk wagon, who surely brought to Joseph and Mary memories of their first meeting and courtship.

Around 1910, Joseph bought a large house in the Haywards (present-day Hayward and Castro Valley), a rural area in the foothills of the Contra Costa mountain range, about twenty miles south of Berkeley. The area was favored by San Francisco and Oakland elites as a summer resort, with its mild weather and commanding views of "unsurpassed loveliness over a large extent of territory." The Tapes called their property "the ranch." It had a white, two-story, wood-framed house with a wraparound porch and ample room for the extended family. It was a lovely spot, with a garden and shade trees, close to woods and fields for walking and gathering wildflowers and to Lake Chabot for fishing. During this era of extraordinary prosperity, Joseph also purchased a large piece of property, likely several hundred acres, in Mendocino County, near Ukiah, where he built a hunting lodge, and some land on the San Joaquin River, as a fishing retreat.

The Tapes also began to acquire automobiles. In 1910, they bought an E-M-F roadster and then, in the years following, a Buick and various grand touring cars, including a Cadillac and a Peerless seven-passenger car that was marketed for women (both Emily and Gertrude drove). It was fitting that the family, whose fortune had been made in the business of transportation, was so enamored with driving. To be sure, the automobile was *the* status symbol of the day. It embodied all that was new and modern: it compressed time and space, enlarging the physical realm of one's freedom, and was a marvel of new technology. To reflect this status, contemporaries called automobiles "machines." Driving made it easier for the Tapes to get to the Haywards ranch and to take excursions, especially in the South Bay area—to Marsh Creek and the water temple at Sunol—as well as down to the beaches at Santa Cruz and Pacific Grove. In the early 1900s, the Tapes' vacations at Camp Meeker near the Russian River had required travel by train and a greater commitment of time. Now, with a car, they took frequent day and weekend trips.

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It is unclear how much Mary Tape enjoyed these pleasures of upper-middle-class life. Her health seems to have continued to decline during the 1910s. Photographs of her from this period show her appearing sickly and depressed. Mary often appears in photographs with her daughter Emily, who also looks unwell, possibly both as a result of diabetes. Emily also may have been lonely; her husband, Robert Park, seems not to have been much of a family man but was, rather, consumed with work, business, and civic activity. Robert almost never appears in photographs of Tape family gatherings. Emily's closest companions were her son, Frank; her mother; and her girlhood friend and sister-in-law, Florence Park. Perhaps at Mary's urging, Emily took up painting porcelain. Mary may have installed a kiln at the ranch; one imagines mother and daughter spending time together firing, painting, and gilding china pieces.

Mary's and Emily's poor health, perhaps even depression, contrasted with Gertrude's blossoming in the 1910s. The baby of the family (she was ten years younger than Emily), Gertrude was only four when the Tapes moved to Berkeley. Unlike her siblings, she never learned to speak Chinese. More than they, she grew up in material comfort. Although she studied typing and shorthand at Berkeley's Commercial High School, she did not work. She played the piano and as a young woman performed at her friends' parties and weddings and may have given some recitals. Gertrude grew up as a socialite, destined to get married, have children, and lead a life of leisure.

In 1913, Gertrude married Herbert Chan, the son of a wealthy Chinatown merchant, Chin Fook Cheung. Chin had been a labor contractor in the 1880s and then a partner of the import firm and bazaar Wing Sing Lung/Yokohama Company, one of several Chinese-Japanese bazaars on Dupont Street in San Francisco that sold silks, porcelain, art objects, and other Oriental goods to Euro-American customers.

Herbert, whose Chinese name was Chan Bok Hong (Chen Buotang), was the third of eleven children born to Chin Fook Cheung

and Wong Fun. His older brother and sister died when they were young, so Herbert became the eldest when he was four years old. In 1903, when Herbert was twelve, his parents returned to China, to his father's village in Xinning. It is not clear why they went back. Perhaps Chin's parents needed him, or perhaps he went to acquire goods for his store. They took their children with them—at the time, four—save for Herbert, who did not get along with his parents and did not want to go to China. Before leaving, Chin Fook Cheung took Herbert to Sacramento and arranged for him to attend the Chinese mission school there. Herbert lived with Mrs. Martha Page, a widow who taught at the school and took in young men, both Chinese and white, as boarders.

Five years later, Chin Fook Cheung returned to California with his wife and children, now numbering six. They moved to Oakland, as San Francisco was still recovering from the earthquake and fire. Chin reinvested in businesses in San Francisco's Chinatown, including the Gawk Gah (Guojia), or Republic Drugstore on Grant Avenue. Herbert was not interested in returning to his father's home in Oakland. He had become close to Mrs. Page and stayed in Sacramento until he completed high school.

Herbert's concession to his father was to study pharmacy. In 1913, he enrolled in the California College of Pharmacy in San Francisco, which was affiliated with the University of California. This was an unusual move. During the 1910s, Chinatown residents still, in the main, relied on traditional Chinese herbal medicines; Western medicine was barely practiced in Chinatown. The Tung Wah (Donghua) Dispensary, a small clinic that had opened in 1900, was destroyed in the earthquake, and although there was talk about building another, it was not until 1923 that Chinese Hospital opened. Herbert was looking to the future, planning for a modern career and a modern business. He was one of a handful of Chinese and Japanese students at the College of Pharmacy, which graduated only nine Asians during the 1910s.

The training of pharmacists had become more rigorous in the

early twentieth century in response to the industrial production of drugs around the turn of the century and the advent of federal regulations in 1906 governing their manufacture. Pharmacy education emphasized lectures and laboratory work in chemistry, botany, toxicology, bacteriology, and the like, as well as "pharmacy jurisprudence" and business. The requirement for "drug store experience" was dropped, another indication of pharmacy's shift from an apprenticed trade to a profession.

Herbert studied pharmacy for two years. Actually, he took the first year of study twice, failing to advance both times. He was not academically inclined and probably fared poorly in classes such as organic chemistry. He did not graduate. He did, however, circulate among Chinese and Chinese American college students at Berkeley and Stanford. Both universities enrolled very few Chinese students before World War I. Berkeley graduated five Chinese in 1912, two from Shanghai, two from Guangzhou, and one Chinese American. Herbert joined a Chinese student club at Berkeley. Two of his closest friends, also sons of Chinatown merchants, were students at Stanford. One, Wah S. Lee, was active in the Cosmopolitan Club and later the Chinese Students Club, which formed after a white student threw a Chinese student down the stairs of University Hall. They were all part of a social circle of Chinese students from Berkeley and Stanford that held joint social events, often in Oakland, with eating, singing, and dancing. All the students were male, but their parties included young Chinese American women known through the various networks of Protestant churches and the well-to-do Chinese merchant families.

Herbert and Gertrude may have met at one of these socials. Or they may have met directly through mission church circles. In fact, these social worlds overlapped a great deal, the college students comprising one age cohort of mission society. Gertrude became close to W. S. Lee's fiancée, Daisy, and the two couples went on outings together.

Joseph Tape probably did not arrange Herbert and Gertrude's

marriage—the couple was too modern, too independent for that—but he certainly would have approved of it, as Herbert's father was a wealthy and prominent member of the community. The couple wed at a lavish event at the Hotel St. Mark in Oakland. They exchanged vows in a Christian ceremony, which was followed by a banquet for 150 people in the ballroom. The *Oakland Tribune* ran a story with the headline "Occident and Orient Are Wed," focusing attention on the Americanization of the Chinese couple. It remarked that "throughout the entire ceremony the English language was employed" and that "the American custom prevailed in the dress as well as in the service," even though most of the guests were Chinese. It misrepresented Herbert as a model minority student, calling him "one of the brilliant Chinese graduates of the class of 1912 of the University of California" and one of the "wealthy and intellectual class of Chinese students." The couple's elite standing was conveyed by conventions that would have been familiar to readers of the society page: the groom's party, his fraternity brothers, were all attired in tuxedos; Florence and Edward Park's little girls threw Cecile Brunner roses in the bride's path; the newlyweds spent their honeymoon at Lake Tahoe.

In these ways, the story distanced Herbert and Gertrude from the "Chinese-ness" of the immigrant generation. The article barely mentioned Gertrude's parents and made no mention at all of Herbert's. It gave the groom's name as "Herbert Page Chan," suggesting that Herbert's mission teacher was his maternal figure. It was as though Gertrude and Herbert had sprung forth as fully formed Chinese Americans—and wealthy and educated ones, at that—disconnected from the experiences of their immigrant parents and, by implication, from all Chinese immigrants.

The newlyweds settled into a Craftsman-style bungalow at 2125 Russell Street, next door to Joseph and Mary's first home on the block. There were now five Tape-owned houses on Russell: the elder Tapes', Emily and Robert's, Gertrude and Herbert's, and two that were rented out. Herbert worked at the Gawk Gah drugstore in San Fran-

cisco but did not stay there long; without a degree and a license, there would be no career in pharmacy. So Herbert joined Joseph's bonding business, accompanying him to the ships, taking photographs of the crewmen for their bonds, and delivering paperwork here and there.

In 1916, Herbert and Gertrude attended W. S. Lee's graduation from Stanford. Shortly thereafter, W. S. and Daisy got married and moved to Berkeley, to the same neighborhood as Edward and Florence Park. The couples formed a tight circle. The women especially spent much time together. Gertrude was a beloved auntie to Florence's daughters, Bernice and Winifred. The women took the girls on trips to the beaches in Monterey and Pacific Grove or up to Sacramento, and often to the Haywards ranch. They were very fashion-conscious, wearing the latest styles of dresses and hats and permanent waves in their hair. On occasion, they donned Chinese dress—for fun, not for going out. But here, too, they knew the latest styles. Gertrude and Daisy posed in the haute couture of republican China in the 1910s—narrowly cut tunics with high, standup collars worn over straight-legged pants—called the *xinhai* style after the Chinese designation for the year 1911, the year of the republican revolution.

For Gertrude, the first four or five years of her marriage seem to have been a particularly happy time. She led a life of ease and privilege, although she does not seem to have had a spoiled nature. Gertrude kept photograph albums as a way of cherishing fond memories and narrating a life made meaningful by family and friends. She wrote captions that were loving and playful: "our bunk" (2125 Russell), "Dais and Gook" (with Daisy), "some bunch!" (family group photo), "my car?" (sitting in a Cadillac), "a Yama Yama kid" (Bernice in a Halloween clown costume). Most of the photographs are from 1914 to 1917, then they stop. What in Gertrude's life changed that she no longer wanted to record it for posterity?

For one, Gertrude was unable to get pregnant. Whatever the precise reason, it must have saddened her enormously not to have children and a family of her own. Depression and frustration also might have strained her marriage. In the late teens, Herbert took a position

as "secretary" of the Western Canning Company, a Chinese-owned firm in nearby Emeryville. In 1920 or 1921, the couple moved to Oakland, to a house on Walavista Avenue, in a middle-class neighborhood near the Oakland-Piedmont line. It is unclear why they left Berkeley. If their marriage was strained, that may account for why Herbert stopped working for Joseph. It is also possible that Herbert's mother, who lived in Oakland, wanted him close by. Moving to Oakland would have distanced Gertrude not only from her family but also from her friends, who were moving away, too.

After living in Berkeley for only a few years, Daisy and W. S. Lee moved to Texas, where W. S. worked only briefly. Lee had a master's degree in engineering from Stanford, but it was not easy for Chinese Americans to find professional employment in the United States. In the late teens, like many college-educated Chinese Americans at the time, he and Daisy moved to Hong Kong. The move offered Lee professional opportunity and allowed him to answer the call to serve the new Chinese republic.

Indeed, opportunities for Chinese American college graduates were limited in the United States. Chinese American physicians, dentists, and pharmacists could practice only in Chinatown. Outside of the ethnic economy, the only good-paying mainstream jobs were in public and private institutions that served the Chinese population, such as the government offices and transportation companies that had provided the Tapes with such an extraordinary living. These jobs were rare, and so jealously guarded, with those who held them hoping to pass them on to their own relatives.

For most Chinese who came to California in the 1860s and 1870s, whether laborers or merchants, Chinatown was their social universe. Born and raised in these families, Herman Lowe, Robert Park, and Herbert Chan were typical of the first nonimmigrant generation. Their parents were not Christians, but they had known that the missionaries were trustworthy bridges to white society and that the services they provided were useful, especially for the education of

their children. With some exceptions, the first generation of Chinese Americans, those born in the United States, can be considered "secular Christians." They were not religiously devout but were acculturated to mainstream Protestant social conventions and mores. Their collegiate and fraternal associations built on the mission church networks from their childhood and adolescence. These Chinese Americans were educated and self-consciously modern, following trends in American popular culture, consumption, and slang.

The acculturation of these Chinese Americans distinguished them from the immigrants, yet the persistence of racism in America also distinguished them from the mainstream of white society. They did have Euro-American friends: Martha Page and her family visited the Chans at Russell Street, and Florence Eveleth Fontecilla, who knew the Tape children from birth, moved to Berkeley in the 1910s and renewed her friendship with the family. But in the main, middle-class Chinese Americans who came of age during the first decades of the twentieth century developed their own ethnic social circles. They all lived in white, middle-class areas but remained connected to Chinatown through employment, business, and the mission churches. Although they may have gone to school with white children, their marriage partners and their closest adult friends were other Chinese Americans like themselves, with whom they formed their own fraternities, athletic leagues, music groups, and charity organizations.

Such was the social world of the Tapes in the 1910s. Gertrude's photographs show it to be a world of material success and ethnic camaraderie. Having had a head start of one generation, the Tapes were quintessential figures of the new Chinese American middle class. Beneath the trappings of wealth and ethnic sociability, though, they nursed the hurts of poor health, loneliness, and marital discord.

12. THE TRIAL

FRANK ARRIVED IN SEATTLE in the autumn of 1908 with a reputation as a "detective" and a "trusted employee of the department." But his standing in the district office began to erode within the year. His colleagues' suspicion that he was a confidential agent of the commissioner general generated resentment, and there was conjecture over whether the source of his extra income was his father, his wife, or graft. However, Frank had the support of Ellis De Bruler, who served as the district commissioner from 1909 to 1913. De Bruler considered Tape "a good interpreter and a good detective . . . [whose] general work was all right, no complaint." He believed that the gossip about Tape was part of an atmosphere of whispering and "tattling" that pervaded the office.

But rumors that Tape was involved in "irregular" work continued and became "most persistent" by 1911, coinciding with his relationship with Lena Sutherland and his growing extravagance—the Kissel, a chauffeur and maid, hunting and fishing trips, the gold he always had in his pocket. In the fall of 1913, Henry White was appointed district commissioner in Seattle, replacing De Bruler. White