

## CHINESE RIOT

### THE EXODUS

#### The Chinese Must Go

Driven out of Rock Springs with rifle and revolver—  
Sixteen killed and many wounded. Chinatown Burned to the Ground.

Today for the first time in a good many years there is not a Chinaman in Rock Springs. The five or six hundred who were working in the mines, have been driven out, and nothing but heaps of smoking ruins mark the spot where Chinatown stood. The feeling against the Chinese has been growing stronger all summer. The fact that the white men had been turned off the sections, and hundreds of white men were seeking in vain for work, while the Chinese were being shipped in by the car load and given work strengthened the feeling against them. It needed but little to incite this feeling into an active crusade against them, and that came yesterday morning at No. 6. All the entries at No. 6 were stopped the first of the month, and Mr. Evans, the foreman marked off a number of rooms in the entries. In No. 5 entry, eight Chinamen were working and four rooms marked off for them. In No. 13, Mr. Whitehouse and Mr. Jenkins were working and Evans told them they could have rooms in that entry or in No. 11 or 5. They chose No. 5 and they went to work Tuesday. Dave Brookman who was acting pit boss in Mr. Francis' absence told them to take the first rooms marked off. He supposed the Chinamen had begun work on their rooms, and that Whitehouse and Jenkins would take the next rooms beyond them. But as the first two rooms of the Chinamen had been commenced, Whitehouse took one, not knowing they had been given to the Chinamen. He went up town in the afternoon and in his absence the two Chinamen came in and began work in the room. Whitehouse had started Wednesday morning when Whitehouse came to work two Chinamen were in possession of what he considered his room. He ordered them out but they wouldn't leave what they thought was their room. High words followed, then blows. The Chinese from other rooms came rushing in as did the whites and a fight

ensued, with picks, shovels, drills and needles for weapons. The Chinamen were worsted, four of them being badly wounded, one of whom has since died. A number of white men were severely out. An attempt was made to settle the matter, but the men were excited and bound to go out, armed themselves with rifles, shotguns, revolvers, to protect themselves from the Chinese, they said, and started up town. After coming through Chinatown they left the guns behind them and marched down the front street and dispersed about noon.

In the meantime all was excitement in Chinatown. The flag was hoisted as a warning, and the Chinamen gathered to their quarters from all parts of the town, being gently urged by chunks of coal and brickbats from a crowd of boys. After dinner all saloons were closed, and a majority of the men from all the mines gathered in the streets. The most of them had fire-arms, although knives, hatchets and clubs were in the hands of some. It was finally decided that John must go then and there, the small army of 60 or 70 men with as many stragglers went down the track toward Chinatown. On the way they routed a number of Chinese section men who fled for Chinatown, followed by a few stray shots. When the crowd got as far as No. 3 Switch they sent forward a committee of three to warn the Chinamen to leave in an hour. Word was received they would go, and very soon there was a running to and fro, and gathering of bundles that showed that John was preparing to move out. But the men grew impatient. They thought John was too slow in getting out, and might be preparing to defend his position. In about half an hour an advance was made on the enemy's works, with much shooting and shouting. The hint was sufficient. Without offering any resistance the Chinamen snatched up whatever they could lay their hands on, and started east on the run. Some were bareheaded and barefooted, others carried a small bundle in a handkerchief, while a number had rolls of bedding. They fled like a flock of frightened sheep, scrambling and tumbling down the steep banks of Bitter Creek, then through the sage brush and over the railroad and up into the hills east of Burning Mountain. Some of the men were engaged in searching the houses and driving out the stray Chinamen,

encouraging their flight with showers of bullets fired over their heads.

All the stores in town were closed and men, women and children were out watching the hurried exit of John Chinaman, and every one seemed glad to see them on the wing. Soon a black smoke was seen issuing from the peak of a house in "Hong Keng", then from another, and very soon eight or ten of the largest houses were in flames. Half choked with fire and smoke, numbers of Chinamen came rushing from their burning buildings, and with blankets and bedquilts over their heads to protect themselves from stray rifle shots, they followed their retreating brothers into the hills at the top of their speed. After completing their work here the crowd came across to Ah Lee's laundry. There was no sign of a Chinaman here at first. But a vigorous search revealed one hidden away in a corner. But he did not dare come out. Then the roof was broken through and shots fired to scare him out, but a shot in return showed the Chinaman was armed. A rush through the door followed, then came a scuffle, and a number of shots, and looking through an opening in the roof a dead Chinaman was seen on the floor with blood and brain oozing from a terrible wound in the back of his head.

Foreman Evans was next visited and told to leave on the evening train. He quietly said he would go. He afterwards asked to be allowed to stay till the next day to get his things ready, but a vote of men decided against allowing this favor, and about four hours Mr. Evans left for the East. The crowd next visited the house of Soo Qui, a boss Chinaman, but Soo had gone to Evanston, and only his wife was in the house. She came to the door much terrified and with tearful eyes and trembling voice said "Soo, he go; I go to him." The assurance of the men that

she could stay in the house and would not be harmed did not calm her fears. She did not like the looks of the armed crowd, and gathering a small amount of household treasures she left and was afterwards taken in by a neighbor. Then a few Chinamen working in No. 1 came out and were hustled up the hills after their fleeing brothers.

"Well gentlemen, the next thing is to give Mr. O'Donnell notice to leave and then go over to No. 1", said one of the men in the crowd. But the crowd was slow in starting on their errand. A large number seemed to think this was going too far, and of the crowd that gathered in front of O'Donnell's store, the majority did not sympathize with the move. But at somebody's order, a note ordering O'Donnell to leave and given to Gottsche, his teamster.

Joe Young, the sheriff, came down from Green River in the evening, and guards were out all night to protect the property of the citizens in case of a disturbance. But everything was quiet in town. Over in Chinatown, however, the rest of the houses were burned, the whole of them numbering about forty, being consumed to the ground. The Chinese section house, and also the houses at No. 6 were burned and Chinamen were chased out of nearly all the burning buildings. All the night long the sound of rifles and revolvers was heard, and the surrounding hills were lit by the glare of burning houses.

A look around the scenes of yesterday's troubles revealed some terrible sights this morning (Thursday). In the smoking cellar of one Chinese house the blackened bodies of three Chinamen were seen. Three others were in the cellar of another, and four more bodies were found nearby. From the position of some of the bodies it would seem as if they had begun to dig a hole in the cellar to hide themselves, but the fire overtook them when about half way in the hole, burning their lower extremities to a crisp and leaving the upper portion of their bodies untouched.

At the East end of Chinatown another body was found, charred by the flames and mutilated by hogs. The smell that arose from the smoking ruins was horribly suggestive of burning flesh. Farther east were the bodies of four more Chinamen, shot down. In their flight one of them had tumbled over the bank, and lay in the creek with face upturned and distorted. Still further another Chinamen was found shot through the hips but still alive. He had been shot just as he came to the bank and had fallen over and lay close to the edge of the bank. He was taken up town and cared for by Dr. Woodruff. Besides this two others were seriously wounded, and many who got away were more slightly hurt. The trains today have picked up a large number of Chinamen on the track and carried them West.

The coroners jury who, with Dr. Woodruff examined the dead bodies of the Chinamen, and returned a verdict that eleven had been burned to death and four shot by parties unknown to the jury. The bodies were put in rough Coffins and buried in the Chinese burying grounds

At noon Governor Warren with a number of the railroad officials came in on a special and took a view of the situation. A quantity of provisions was sent west in the afternoon for a large number of Chinese who were down near Green River.

\* \* \* \* \*

Chris -

Deborah wanted you to  
have a copy of the  
"Chinese Riot"

- She wonders if you  
might be interested in joining  
The Sweetwater County High School  
Association

- Please overlook my  
typing errors - it's not my  
best subject! @?!

- Shary,  
C/2

Eleanor Mussleman Sanna

A Biography

Melanie C. Womack  
12/13/82

## Eleanor Sanna

Eleanor Sanna was born February 18, 1919 to Arthur and Louise Mussleman. She was born in their home in Denver, Colorado with a doctor present. Her mother, a native of Denver, was a housewife. Her father, an elevator Repairman, often allowed Eleanor to accompany him on his rounds to such places as the Colorado State Capitol, The Children's Hospital and St. Joseph's hospital.

Eleanor's childhood was a happy one. She and her older sister, along with their friends, enjoyed such games as "Kick The Can" and "Hide and Seek". The two sisters would sneak home during "Hide and Seek" change clothes and tag "home" before being recognized.

Most of the toys she had, ranging from doll house furniture and wooden Sleighs, were made by her father. The doll house furniture, made with a lathe and a jigsaw, has the appearance of painstaking care in the cutting, staining and assembly of each piece. These are highly treasured items today as they were then.

Holiday celebrations were big events in those days. With twenty-five relatives gathering at the Mussleman home for a big turkey dinner, Christmas was always a busy and happy event. Christmas eve Eleanor's father would play Santa Claus.

On one such Christmas, one of Eleanor's older cousins—a budding photographer, attempted to photograph the group. In those days black powder was used in the process. When the powder went off it created such a bright flash and a small explosion, a lamp shade went flying toward the ceiling. The picture captured a look of wide-eyed total fright on the surprised group.

4th of July was another favorite holiday season. outdoor skyrockets being the main attraction.

Eleanor and her sister grew up in East Denver in a large house surrounded by four lots. They were north of City Park and to the immediate East was prairie.

Even though the depression made life a little hard for the Musslemans, her father always managed to have a job. Though, there were times that many people neglected to pay him. The inborn thrift of this German family sustained them through these hard times. Their shoes were half-soled. Louise Mussleman converted her old coats and dresses into wearable clothes for the girls. Nothing was discarded; they saved even strings and paper bags.

Their home, located three or four miles from the railroad tracks, was a frequent stop for the less fortunate, who came to the back door begging for food. Though never allowed inside the house, Eleanor's mother would always prepare them a lunch.

The most impressionable part of this period to Eleanor was the Dust Bowl. On many days one would find the sun and sky <sup>completely</sup> obscured from view.



One reason the Musslemans always had sufficient food was due to the success of their garden, almost a "small farm", thriving on the two lots behind their house. This garden yielded a good supply of corn, sweetpies, tomatoes, squash and strawberries. They also had many varieties of fruit trees, such as plum, cherry, apple and peach. Mother and daughters spent many an hour during the summer canning food in preparation for the winter months ahead.

Despite the usual discipline problems, teachers were treated with respect in the schools. From early parental training, a child knew exactly what was expected and stayed within those boundaries. Eleanor had an eighteen block walk to Junior High School and a fourteen block walk to High School. Taking the family car to school was not even considered by parents or youths--regardless of the weather conditions.

Pioneer Days was one school event much looked forward to. Both teachers and students dressed appropriately for the occasion. Students participated in games and competitive sports.

Eleanor was active in her church group. She was a member of the Unilateral Church, a branch of the Unitarian Church. They had many weekend sojourns up to a friend's cabin in the Mountains. They were always chaperoned, even in the college days.

Eleanor graduated in the depression. The apparent lack of jobs created a problem for her and her friends. For instance, to work at the telephone company, either one must have a widowed mother or be the only "breadwinner" in the family. Eleanor went on to college after much encouragement by her mother. Louise Mussleman was forced to quit school at an early age. Her mother had died and there were younger children to be raised. She did not want her own personal regret to someday be Eleanor's regret, so Eleanor was enrolled in the University of Denver School of Commerce. She took secretarial courses there for two years.

Some of her first jobs included working at May D&F, helping in Beauty Shops, Secretary for a dental office, and "demonstrating Hams"--a new practice in those days of offering free samples in hopes of tempting the customer into buying the product. Her salaries for these jobs ranged from \$30 to \$60 a month.

Eleanor met her future husband, Joseph Sanna--also of German descent, in Denver. Joseph was from Pennsylvania. He was the recipient of a scholarship to the Colorado School of Mines. That year, this was the only scholarship offered by the State of Pennsylvania to this school. He received a professional Engineering Degree and went to work as a Petroleum Engineer. His monthly salary was \$150, a sufficient sum in considering the cost of living (loaf of bread-10¢, qt of milk-10¢, lb of hamburger meat-10¢/lb, sirloin steak-37¢/lb--Upon reaching 40¢/lb, it was left off many a shopping list. Even a ride to town on the street car was only 10 ¢)

Joseph and Eleanor Sanna were married in Denver on October 5, 1941. In February of 1942, Joseph joined the services as an army reserve officer attached to the air force. He helped build airstrips in the Alluetians and in Okenowa. Joseph spent four years in the service. While still overseas their first son, John, was born. Eleanor's total hospital bill at Fitzsimmons Hospital was \$13.

After the war, their second son, Russ was born at St Joseph's Hospital in Denver. Later they moved to Vernal, Utah, when the Rangely oil field was being developed. After nine months, they moved to an oil field camp ten miles outside Rangely, Colorado. In an oil field camp, each family had their own house. It was set up like a compound. There was one general store. Other businesses were opened in tents. Your neighbors were also your fellow employees. Being in close daily contact with the same people tended to strain friendships, making life there at times uncomfortable. Besides this and the lack of stores and shops, the mud around an oil field camp and on the rig roads was always a problem then, as it is today.

After nine months. they moved to another oil field camp. Wilson Creek, located between Craig and Meeker, Colorado, had an elevation of 8,000 feet- one of the highest oil fields in the world at that time. The frequent and dense snow, common to that area and altitude in the winter, necessitated the constant grading of the roads. Two men ran a "24 hour patrol" in an attempt to keep the roads open. Despite their efforts, getting snowed in did happen occasionally.

Each house had a fourteen-party telephone line. Stores were twenty-two miles away. With the closest doctor fifty miles away in Craig and the closest hospital being eighty miles from camp, people "didn't get sick." The road into Meeker was called the "boomer road", due to the large holes and ruts created by the daily passage of oil field trucks.

There was a one teacher-one room school. The teacher had six grades to teach. Eleanor's sons would each day toboggen down the hill to school. They were towed back <sup>home</sup> ~~back~~ during the lunch hour and after school by their father's jeep.

The wildlife, particularly deer and squirrels, were plentiful in this area. For a time, they even had a pet porcupine.

From Wilson Creek, the ~~Stans~~ moved to Salt lake City; Stayed four years and moved to Rock Springs, Wyoming. Their first stay in Rock Springs, in 1952, only lasted six months. They spent a year in Church Buttes, another oil field camp. Russ and John went to the school in Lyman, Wyoming. Eleanor could call in her grocery order to the Union Merc in Rock Springs and have it delivered to her back door. The Union Merc was a general store located downtown on "K" Street. It has been closed for about four years.

Their final move, to Rock Springs, was in 1953. Joseph was employed with Mountain Fuel. Mines were still opened then. One could always expect to hear the Mine whistle at noon. On Friday evenings, trains pulling cars loaded with coal would be seen along the side tracks between Grant Street and the main line. They were also parked in the side tracks beside the depot. By Monday morning they would be gone. Most of these cars came from Stansbury and Reliance.

In 1953, steam trains of one hundred cars or more could still be seen passing through Rock Springs. They were soon replaced by turbine engines. The noise these created completely stopped all conversations in the vicinity until the train had moved on. There were twenty passenger trains passing through and stopping in Rock Springs a day, compared to our present once a day passenger train.

In August 1953 the mines closed. "An exodus out of this town" began. Many families in search of other jobs moved into states like Idaho, Washington, Colorado and Southern Utah. The population before the mine shutdown was 12,000. 2,000 people moved out.

There were three or four lights(traffic) in town. The east end of town ended with the liberty Motel. Rock Springs was a typical small town of that era, having a telephone operator in whom one could rely on for community news and gossip.

There were few houses for sale or rent at that time. There was only one realtor in town. The ~~Sommas~~ were able to find a house on Willow street to rent, having learned of it from a friend at the Chamber of Commerce. The present renter was relocating. They bought ~~his~~ furniture for \$750 and moved in. Shortly after they bought their present home at 806 Young Ave. To the South of their house was sagebrush—a great place for children to spend their time.

The town had two volunteer fire departments. Fires were always a "big deal", an event not to be ignored. The fire whistle would blow to alert the part of town involved. All residents had a card listing the whistle patterns and which section they were for. Nine out of ten people stopped what they were doing, looked up the whistle code and drove toward that area, in search of the fire.

When Eleanor first moved to Rock Springs, prostitution openly thrived. It was an accepted practice, a necessary evil. Prostitutes' names were listed in the phone book like every one else, except theirs would be in dark print, enabling prospective customers to skim telephone pages for the one closest to them. The police knew who they were and they were required to have periodic medical examinations. They were "kept Clean". ~~Later~~ A few members of the ministerial profession took a dim ~~look at~~ <sup>view of</sup> these practices and eventually the prostitutes were force "underground" and have been there since.

In the 1950's there were fifty-two nationalities living here. At this time no real ethnic majority prevailed. One would find Tyroleans, Czechoslavacians, Danes, Welch, Chinese, Japanese, Slavs and Italians. Slavs and Italians held their annual grape festivals here—an effort to keep a culture intact. These ethnic groups peacefully co-existed, living side by side often intermarrying., allowing for the blending and mixing of cultures.

Rock Springs had few blacks, ~~except~~ <sup>(is)</sup> for the Sweets and the Carters.) They were generally accepted here, especially in the school sports programs. One of the homecoming events, was the election of the Tiger and Tigerette. In one year the Tiger elected by the High School was a black student. However, with the advent of Black Civil Rights movement, resentment surfaced. One black youth at football practice started "spouting off his mouth". He was punished by being thrown, clothes and all, into the school's whirl pool bath. The two students who did this are now prominent doctors in this town. "Having brought the boy down a notch or two, then he behaved himself after that. It was fine as long as he didn't spout off."

At this period in time there were very few teenage marriages. Girls that got pregnant were not allowed to go to school. "Kids did not think of doing what young people are doing today"(drugs, alcohol, etc.), regardless of peer pressure. Eleanor raised her sons as she had been raised, each knowing the extent of his freedom.

You will find many lots in Rock Springs with two houses on them- the large one in the front and the small one in the back. These are not unique to Rock Springs but quite common over the country in the older communities. The small house in the back was intended for young married couples living under the protective eye of their relatives.

Summertime picnics were favorite diversions for Eleanor and her family and friends. Out of town, among the cedars, each family would bring a pot of stew, eat, enjoy each others company while the children romped over the country side.

In the census year of 1960, Eleanor worked as a census taker. She was surprised to find a lack of young married adults. Later in the '60's, when FMC began to develop more and expand their operations, the influx of married people began again. Eleanor saw this as a good sign, a means of avoiding stagnation.

The boom period of the fifties and sixties was not particularly appreciated by the longtime residents. Eleanor, having experienced the same negative attitudes of natives toward her and her family, felt compassion for these transients and could empathize with their predicament. One cannot stop a town from changing and as Eleanor puts it, "The only thing that remains constant is change itself." There is no choice but to adapt to each situation and finding the good that is there.

In Eleanor's mind, more good came out of the boom period than bad. We now have a junior college, new schools, a new hospital and a nice variety of good people.

As we all do, Eleanor may have glossed over, or forgotten, the less pleasant aspects of her life. She is still as thrift conscious as she was as a girl growing up in that German household. (As we walked through her house looking at each room, there was never more than one light on at a time.)

Eleanor's husband, Joseph, lives at the Veteran's Hospital in Sheridan, Wyoming. He is suffering from Parkerton's disease among other ailments. He is not expected to live another five years.

Eleanor is almost 64. At work she is strictly professional-an efficient, meticulous, well organized secretary. She works for the Faler Agency and takes care of the Insurance Business, while the rest of the employees handle the Real Estate part. She is a much needed and appreciated part of the agency.

Eleanor is a member of the Sweetwater County Historical Society. She usually refers to this as the "hysterical" society in such a manner, that the listener assumes this to be an unconscious slip, rather than a glint of humor.

Eleanor is well-known and liked in this community. She can be described as a warm, fun-loving and a "very much alive human being".