

Participation of Chinese Pioneers in British Columbia Salmon Canneries, 1880's to 1920's

Rudy M.T. Chiang

Abstract: It is generally accepted that the salmon canning industry in British Columbia could not have functioned without Chinese labourers. This study examines the economic contribution of Chinese workers, measured by their labour input for each carton of canned salmon produced. The period of study, from 1880's to 1920's, covers a time when canning was labour intensive. Salmon catch had to be discarded at peak season due to labour shortage. Short seasons and unsteady employment made experienced hands hard to retain. This gave rise to the Chinese contract system. To add a human dimension to the Chinese cannery pioneers, the names and the deeds of some Chinese contractors and their workers are presented.

Key Words: Salmon Cannery, Chinese labourer, Chinese contractor, Yip Sang (葉永生), Lam Tung (林棠), Chung Nye(蔣奈,字經可), Lee Coy (李衢,字祐樞), Charlie Suey (曾瑞,字雲峰), Moy Kwok Village (梅閣鄉), Sa Duoy Village (沙堆鄉), Sun Woy County (新會縣), Kong Chow Benevolent Association (岡州總會館), New Westminster (二埠), Chinese Times (大漢公報).