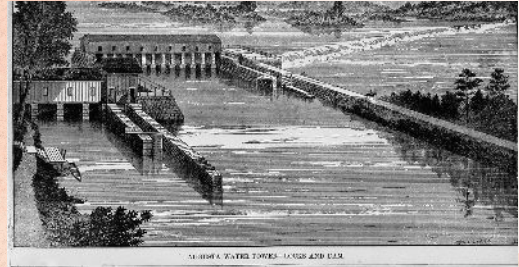


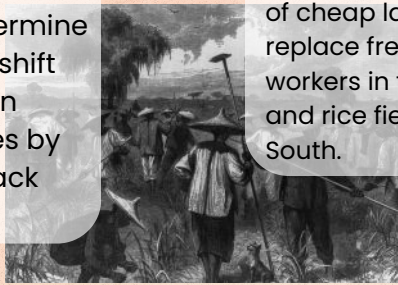
# Early Asian Americans in Georgia

- Did you know that Chinese workers came to Georgia in **1873** and built the Augusta Canal?
- Some of them chose to settle and build a Chinese American community



## -HERE'S A FORGOTTEN STORY OF EARLY-CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN GA.

During the Reconstruction, dominant whites in the South sought to undermine the changing power shift between freed African Americans and whites by encouraging non-Black migration.



They viewed the Chinese as a source of cheap labor to replace freed Black workers in the cotton and rice fields of the South.

The Augusta Canal, originally constructed in 1845, provided water to the city, power to textile mills and factories, and transportation for canal craft.

In 1873, 35 Chinese men from Indianapolis were recruited as cheap labor to deepen and widen the Augusta Canal in Augusta, Georgia. By 1875, 165 Chinese laborers resided in Augusta.

When the canal project was completed 2 years later, most of the Chinese men left to find work elsewhere. But some remained and opened grocery stores or laundries.

### -And so the Chinese population in-Georgia began to grow

The 1880 Census reported 10 Chinese people living in Augusta (out of a total of 17 in Georgia) and 8 Chinese grocery stores.

The 1900 Census reported 41 Chinese people living in Augusta with 29 Chinese-run grocery stores and 8 laundries.

Although small, the Chinese American community in Augusta was the largest Chinese population in Georgia until the 1960s when anti-Asian immigration laws were repealed and skilled workers from various Asian countries were favored to immigrate to the US.

The 1940 Census reported a Chinese population of 224 and 63 grocery stores.

The slow increase of Chinese residents in the city was due to the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), which barred the immigration of Chinese laborers until its repeal in 1943.

Also, it was this law that the Chinese who settled turned to start small businesses because the law allowed merchants, not laborers, to immigrate and settle in the US.





# Early Asian Americans in GA Part II

- What was life like for Chinese immigrants in the late 1800s and early 1900s GA?
- Where did they fit within the white and Black spectrum of the Jim Crow South?
- Put another way, where did Asian immigrants/Americans sit on the segregated bus?



Because of their small population, white residents didn't view Chinese immigrants as a threat to them.

As long as the Chinese immigrants kept to themselves and did not attempt to intervene too directly in white society, they would be tolerated.

**But this does not mean that they were treated as equally or they were always tolerated**

In 1882, for example, William Loo Chong, a successful Chinese merchant in Augusta, married Denise Fulcher, a white woman, and moved to Waynesboro, Georgia. He wanted to open a farmer's market and grocery store there.

When white residents found out Loo Chong was married to a white woman, they threatened them with physical violence and told them to leave town.

Their small population also allowed some privileges that Georgia's Black population and Asian immigrants in other states couldn't.

### Such as...

- attending white schools
- riding in the white sections of railroad cars
- being classified as white on state-issued driver's licenses

Also, in 1884, GA legislators attempted to change the 1865 Georgia anti-miscegenation law, which prohibited white and Black marriages, by including provisions for "marriages between persons of Mongolian descent and persons of the white race."

The bill failed to pass in the Georgia House of Representatives because outside Augusta there were not enough Chinese men to stir public concern.

## A HISTORY OF Chinese Settlement in AUGUSTA, GEORGIA



However, with the growing anti-Asian sentiment in the 1920s, Georgia legislators successfully passed a bill that added "Mongolians" and "Asiatics" to the growing list of those who were barred from intermarrying with whites in 1927.

In addition, white Augustan merchants petitioned city officials to ban Chinese residents from acquiring business licenses in 1885.