

## Ghosts in the Water†

青山横北郭，白水绕东城。  
此地一为别，孤蓬万里征。

Green hills skirt the northern border,  
White waters gird the eastern town;  
Here we part with each other,  
And you set out like a lonesome wisp of grass,  
Floating across the miles, farther and farther away.

-Li Bai, Tang Dynasty, *Farewell to a Friend*  
(translated by Alice Poon)

Lake Champlain is, historically, a frontier. The indigenous names (*Pitawbagok* and similar) translate roughly to “the water in between” or otherwise suggest a division, specifically between the traditional territories of the Abenaki and the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois). That division line was reproduced by colonial politics, and intensified, since the lake was now transected by a national border, in two places: Missisquoi Bay or “east lake”, and the lower section of the Richelieu, or “west lake”, or simply “the river”.

This jurisdictional geography has been exploited in various ways for centuries. The lake has been a marine vulnerability for America in two different wars, and was fortified at least nine times in seven locations, including the disastrous “Fort Blunder” of 1816<sup>1</sup>. Since the lake crosses the border and forms a straight shot into the Hudson River Valley, it has also been a significant locus of smuggling. This is compounded by the proximity of Akwesasne—a self-governing Mohawk territory straddling both the international border and the St. Lawrence—which has its own long history of smuggling.

Smuggling in this region is often depicted in a rather playful light. There are stories of cows being quasi-legally lured across the border by strategically placed corn, or Queen Lil's “line house” saloon/brothel, where the contraband, customers, and working girls could be quickly moved to the north or south wing, depending which country's police arrived<sup>2</sup>. During the Federal Prohibition era (1920-1933), “rum-running<sup>3</sup>” became a major vocation in the Champlain valley, utilizing all possible forms of transportation: horses, cows<sup>4</sup>, cars, boats, towed “submarines”<sup>5</sup>, ice-boats, prototype motorized

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† This article was originally printed in issue #30 of the private newsletter *Hebdromedary* (7/2/2023). It has been substantially edited since. (This is version 2.1) None of this would be possible without the interviews made by the late Eleanore Kokar Ott, the archival work (and responsiveness) of Andy Kolovos, and the tireless work of my research assistant and collaborator, Evva Dicoivitsky. I'd also like to express my thanks to Robert Lint Sagarena and the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity.

- 1 The American army built an old-school fort, resembling a medieval castle, on the border with Canada. In what is possibly one of the worst surveying failures in history, they built it on the wrong side of the line, not only failing to improve their defenses, but *building their enemies a castle*.
- 2 Yes, they eventually coordinated a raid and took her down, but only briefly.
- 3 The term is unavoidable but inaccurate. A large portion of the local market was Canadian beer, while the local producers (mostly in Barre) sold grappa. Through-trade to New York tended to consist of “Scotch” or downstream products of “whisky blanc”, a 200-proof grain alcohol that would then be diluted, flavored, and labelled to approximate various liquors. Meanwhile, Vermont was a net *recipient* of alcohol smuggled from Boston, arriving from European ships parked in the “Rum Row” off the maritime limit (three miles out until 4/21/1924, thereafter twelve).
- 4 See *Rum Across the Border: The Prohibition Era in Northern New York*, Allan Everest, 1978, p. 26. I feel obliged to mention that the most notorious cow used for smuggling liquor was from Mooers-on-Chazy in New York, and was referred to as the “Mooers cow”.
- 5 St. Albans Daily Messenger 12/4/1926, also an archived interview, #20 in the system indexed below. Variations on the towed submarine allowed it to be recovered in the event that it had to be abandoned. Everest (p. 35) notes the use of rock-salt anchors, which would dissolve over a period of days, letting the bottles float to the surface.

ice boats<sup>6</sup> (which failed), sleighs, and even airplanes<sup>7</sup>. The many stories told about that trade—then and now—fall into an all-in-jest, no-harm-done, *Dukes of Hazzard*, mischief-making good-old-boys sensibility, even when they are discussing violence. The punchline of those stories, quite often, is that the lawmen and the rum-runners would chase each other around back roads in fast cars all day, or around the lake in motorboats all night, but afterwards the lawmen would be seen drinking, since it was really all a big game, after all.

This sentiment would ultimately blur into recreational visions of the spaces occupied by Prohibition-era smuggling. In Appalachia, the backroads “shine running” would directly evolve into stock-car racing and then NASCAR. In Vermont, we find rum-runners (including some of those discussed below) contemporaneously engaged in motorboat racing using the very same boats they hauled alcohol with<sup>8</sup>. Smuggler's Notch ski resort was, indeed, an overland smuggling route. Prohibition-era smuggling, despite the arrests and occasional violence and death, had been remembered felicitously, and easily became an aspect of Vermont's halcyon vision of Lake Champlain.

That attitude appears in innumerable contemporary newspaper articles, and later histories of the era. It also appears in a remarkable series of interviews conducted by the Vermont polymath Eleanore Kokar Ott, in the early 1980s, a small portion of which were later published<sup>9</sup>. With the help of Merrit Carpenter, “Captain of the Seven Seas”, she amazingly managed to track down two of the old-time Champlain-corridor rum-runners, then in their 80s and 90s. I had the good fortune to interview Ott in May of 2023, shortly before her death at 83. Jonathan Kotke speaks of “human wormholes” in history<sup>10</sup>, and this felt like one of those: I got to talk interview Ott, who had interviewed Pete Hanlon, who was personally involved in the events below, a century ago.

Ott's published interviews leaned somewhat in the direction of the “all-a-big-game” narrative of prohibition. “King” Conrad Labelle recalled supplying the champagne for Calvin Coolidge's 1926 visit to Plattsburgh, with the usual punchline about the hypocrisy of prohibition:

There was a big lot of people there that day. I think I brought ten thousand dollar worth of booze there. All kind – the best. Champagne. The president said, “I never drank such good liquor like that. Where's that bootlegger? I want to drink champagne with him.” Then I had the honor to drink a glass of champagne with the president of the United States!

The story might not be true, of course. These were interviews with old ex-cons, after all, reminiscing about their bad-boy youth, decades after the fact. Trying to impress each other, perhaps, or the lady who'd come to interview them. We can't necessarily take them at their word. We can, however, fact-check them at many points. Ott did not fact-check her interview subjects, since her approach was folkloric, not historical. But generally speaking, the historical references that appear in Ott's accounts are borne out by contemporary newspaper records, although some of the names were mangled by memory<sup>11</sup>.

Within these interviews, a much darker sub-theme *repeatedly* emerged. Pete Hanlon, a relatively small-time rum-runner from Burlington Vermont, noted that Chinese immigrants were being smuggled across the border along the same routes as the alcohol smuggling. Labelle confirmed this, while both men noted that they themselves had not been involved with it, although they'd been offered the opportunity to engage. Hanlon added, in a rather casual fashion, that Chinese immigrants were

6 Ott interview #13.

7 [Montreal] Gazette 5/18/1922.

8 Citation pending (\*)

9 In *Visit'n*, (7) November 2001.

10 “Rasputin was my Neighbor' And Other True Tales of Time Travel” Robert Krulwich, *National Public Radio*, (2/8/2012)

11 The interviews actually include at least one discussion of how confusing the names were, with three prominent smugglers who had similar names, and non-smugglers who had to use false names in order to cross the border, since their real names were too similar to those of well-known smugglers.

frequently murdered during this crossing:

Did you ever know that [Irving Valade]<sup>12</sup>...? He used to run a restaurant in Burlington<sup>13</sup>, and he could talk Chinese. He'd smuggle the Chinamen in; he made plenty. He was talking to them, telling them, "if anything should happen, you should jump overboard and I'll take care of you." I don't know how many of them he drowned, but he drowned a lot of them. Got the money and drowned them.

The horrifying paragraph above was published in 2001, over twenty years ago, and more than fifteen years after the last of the interviews. Despite being a claim about mass murder on the ostensibly tranquil waters of Lake Champlain, this passage does not seem to have attracted much attention.

The published version of the interviews omits all of Ott's side of the dialogue, which is unfortunate: the audio files reveal her as a sort of master class in interview technique. But in this instance (and in all but one of the audio files) her silence raises a question: surely a comment about mass murder deserves some type of follow-up question? Such, at least, is my bias as a historian.

When I asked Ott why she hadn't pushed back at Hanlon's descriptions of Valade's killings, she said that she had been "appalled", but offered a two-part rationale. In the first place, she simply didn't know what to say, which seems reasonable enough. And in the second place, she didn't want to derail her interview.

In that regard, Ott was carefully following a methodology she'd studied for folkloric interviews<sup>14</sup>, which flagged the comments above as "ethnographic dynamite" on par with "esoteric beliefs, secret rites, erotic matters...witchcraft, and devil lore." The common theme here is that these are topics which one might gull the interviewee into discussing, but where any direct questioning ran a serious risk of the interviewee losing trust in the interviewer.

And in fact, at one point Ott did question Hanlon about the subject in more depth, which we'll return to later on.

These considerations do not explain, however, how this passage remained unexplored for another four decades. Ott suggested to me that perhaps one of her academic colleagues might have expressed an interest, but he died before pursuing it. There are no other reported instances of a mass killing in the Champlain corridor involving more than four victims, which would seem to be a bare minimum for what Hanlon is suggesting. Yet the story has remained unnoticed to such an extent that the invisibility itself becomes a major element of the story.

The published version of Ott's interviews in *Visit'n* is in fact a tiny sliver of a much larger, fascinating, and disturbing corpus: twenty audio files and one transcript in the Vermont Folklife archives. In those files, there are many different references to Irving Valade and the Chinese immigrant smuggling trade on Lake Champlain. With those as a starting point, Evva Dicovitsky and myself were able to assemble a regional view of this trade from contemporary newspaper accounts. But Ott's interviews remain the most immediate source we have on this now largely forgotten aspect of our history.

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Rum-running on Lake Champlain has attracted a great deal of attention, both from historians and popular culture. But that economy was overlaid on an earlier history of smuggling people—mainly but not entirely Chinese immigrants—and narcotics. Rum-running (like moonshining) was a field open

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12 Ott or her editors used a pseudonym ("Norm T") in the published version of her interview, but I have *personally* chosen not to follow suit. There is no clear directive in the documentation of the interviews to keep the names in the interviews pseudonymous, Ott herself has not objected, Valade died in 1982 (at age 92) and has no direct descendants, and the value of shining some light on this story seems vastly greater than the costs entailed.

13 In fact, the restaurateur was Irving's brother Charles Napoleon Valade. Ott's interview subjects repeatedly confuse the two men, and get Valade's name wrong; in fact it never appears correctly spelled in the transcript.

14 Specifically Kenneth Goldstein's *A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore* (1964).

to amateurs: if you were a farm boy with a decent car, you could make some easy money smuggling liquor, without taking much real risk<sup>15</sup>. But the smuggling of human beings, heroin, and opium was the special province of people with language skills, unusual and dangerous connections, and a comfort with extreme ruthlessness.

In fact, well before Prohibition (which began in 1920), the Champlain corridor had become one of the logical spark gaps in a smuggling circuit much, much larger than Vermont or upstate New York. The Chinese exclusion act of 1882 had, uniquely in US history, banned a specific nationality from immigrating to the country. The blatant racism of this policy saturates nearly all white media accounts of Chinese-American activities. Indeed, I have chosen to cite the newspaper articles in this paper only by journal and date, since a distractingly large number of them use ethnic slurs *in the title*, to say nothing of the text. Newspaper accounts of this era only rarely mentioned the names of Chinese individuals, tacitly treating them as an interchangeable mass. This is not simply a matter of prejudice, but also erasure. The tangibility of this dehumanizing approach is evidenced in a 1922 court case in Quebec where the officials became confused between the identify of two different Chinese suspects, whom they could not distinguish visually<sup>16</sup>. Racism is not the entirety of the story here, but it is hard to underestimate the role it played.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, virtually all Chinese immigrants to the US arrived in California. In the face of lethal contempt and indifference from white Americans (e.g. the massacre of 1871 in Los Angeles), early Chinese-Americans leaned heavily on their own social organizations for protection. In a familiar pattern, these ranged from straightforward civil-society organizations, epitomized by the “Six Companies” to secret societies and organized crime, often trailing political divisions from the Old Country. The Tongs—the Chinese-American equivalent of the mafiaexpression of organized crime—largely controlled the trade in Chinese immigration, in defiance of the Exclusion Act, as well as opium, coercive sex trafficking, fan-tan gambling parlors, and the like.

As with many other immigrant organized-crime scenarios, there are dueling biases here for the historian to contend with. The white press and wider media happily viewed the Tongs as fantastically exotic and lurid, in Saidian Orientalist terms. While sex slaves and opium dens figure heavily in this imagery, much of it involved an obsession with the specific vocabulary of violence used by the Tongs: martial arts, rooftop combat, the use of cleavers and hatchets as well as guns. These depictions meshed with the media's de-individualization of Chinese-Americans to depict the Tongs as an army of anonymous assassins, capable of anything, and then capable of melting back into Chinatown. To some extent, we might see this as adaptive: even their internecine conflicts (the various “Tong Wars”) were in some sense performed for a white audience, and unquestionably paid dividends in terms of the potential for intimidation.

At the same time, the Tongs were always the least morally attractive version of the Chinese-American community, repudiated by the benevolent societies and the Six Companies, as well as white moralists and legislators. That sentiment shades into a sort of respectability politics (which is, I think, ongoing) that would happily minimize the role of the Tongs in Chinese-American life during this era, although they were clearly a major provider of certain services, including the illicit immigration networks that are my focus. This same dualism was iconically rendered in Puzo and Coppola's script for *The Godfather*: “You didn't need a friend like me. But now you come to me...”

It's difficult to steer a safe course between these twin sets of bias. What we can say with some assurance is that the Hip Sing Tong occupied a particularly dramatic and performance-focused version

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15 A recurring theme in both Ott's interviews and the newspaper accounts is that the legal sanctions against smuggling alcohol were not nearly enough to create a deterrent effect. Pete Hanlon at one point describes being arrested with some others for selling beer to the soldiers outside Akwesasne, and fined a relatively paltry \$300. And then he adds with a “I wish I may die...” that *while in prison* they arranged to bring up another load of beer since they'd have to come back for the arraignment, anyway.

16 Montreal Star, 10/18/1922.

of organized crime, and to some large extent commanded the authorship of their own mythology. This is not the only option, as we'll see shortly.

In 1906, the San Francisco earthquake obliterated that city's Chinatown, which accelerated both a move of the Tongs to eastern cities such as Chicago, New York, and Boston, and also an increased interest in Chinese migration (still categorically illegal) to the eastern US. But new routes were needed. The San Francisco entry-point was doubly compromised, from the viewpoint of the east-coast Tongs. It was likely to be controlled by rival organizations, and it involved a three-thousand mile overland trip in a country where being visibly Asian was suspect<sup>17</sup>. (Indeed, some smuggling strategies on the New York border involved disguising Chinese immigrants (virtually all of whom were male) as white women, or black men<sup>18</sup>.)

After 1914, the Panama Canal allowed Chinese immigrants entry-points via Cuba and Jamaica, among other ports, which seem to have been heavily utilized. Well prior to that, however, a route via Canada emerged, which we have news accounts, court records and oral history documenting. Immigrants would land in Vancouver<sup>19</sup>, and then travel cross-country<sup>20</sup> either to Toronto or Montreal. From Toronto, they would typically proceed to Hamilton and then across Lake Niagara to Buffalo, and then to New York. A related route branched back to the west, aimed at Detroit and Chicago<sup>21</sup>. From Montreal, they could cross northern Vermont and the Champlain corridor to New York or Boston, or continue east as far as Halifax, and then take a second ocean voyage to reach those ports by sea<sup>22</sup>.

By 1910 or so the Hip Sing Tong had largely monopolized New York's Chinatown and the receiver-side logistics for smuggling people and narcotics. The Tongs fronted most of the individual's transit costs, in a version of what is called the "credit-ticket" system<sup>23</sup>, in return for various types of indentured labor, including opium and heroin smuggling while *en route*. This, clearly, has numerous parallels in other historical and current illicit immigration economies.

The logistics of this operation involved somewhat intermediaries who were somewhat ethnically exempted, if that's the right phrase. William Dingman (alias Banks) was allegedly the only white man ever inducted into a tong, or into the Chinese Freemasons. Irving Valade is a similar example. Valade was from Burlington, Vermont, the son of a white French-Canadian blacksmith. There is no genealogical reason to think of him as anything but a white man who spoke some Chinese. But Hanlon routinely referred to him as "a Chinaman" or "an Indian", and at one point suggested that he had had facial surgery.

Perhaps this was simply otherness-by-association, but it seems telling. Rum-runners saw themselves, and were widely seen by the press and the public, as evading a "bum law": their actions

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17 The freedom-of-movement of Chinese-Americans in this era is a little unclear, across multiple scales. Cities like San Francisco and New York seem to have attempted to ghettoize the Chinese-American community by various policies and norms, but also seem to have been relatively unable to do so. Long-distance travel is both reported and implied, though in at least one instance, three men were arrested for violating the Exclusion Act, with the immediate evidence simply being that they were Chinese, on a train, and talking to a white man. (Norwood News 11/10/1920)

18 Burlington Daily News, 9/21/1910, Montreal Star, 6/12/1912. The Caledonian-Record 4/10/1925 mentions sunglasses as a disguise.

19 Canada through at least most of this era allowed Chinese nationals to land after paying a \$500 head tax, which the customs officers of Vancouver at least once tried to collect from a man who died before arriving in Canada. (Montreal Gazette, 10/26/1907).

20 An informative legal case is described in the Montreal Star, 9/11/1903: contracts had been sold for bringing men from Hong Kong to Boston, crossing Canada via rail.

21 All evidence suggests that Chinese immigrants aiming for the midwest were typically crossing Canada at least as far eastwards as Toronto.

22 Personal communication from descendants. Other routes in the area were probably used, and the upstate New York authorities in 1920 believed that Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica were all entry-points, as well as Buffalo ([Ogdensburg] Republican-Journal, 6/11/1920).

23 Burlington Free Press, 6/18/1925. However, there are also accounts of family members already in the US paying for the transit.

were, if not entirely heroic, at least compatible with some kind of patriotic ethos. But Chinese smugglers were seen as damaging the country, and undermining white supremacy in any era that had few qualms about its virtues. Rum-runners in general seem to have kept their distance from men like Dingman and Valade, and Hanlon's reflexive notion that Valade *was* Chinese echoes this distinction.



*Sai Wing Mock, known for being impeccably dressed—over chain-mail body armor*

The Hip Sing Tong was run, in this era, by Sai Wing Mock (known as [Young] Mock Duck) (1879-1941) who maintained a legendary reputation for violence, and both physical and legal invulnerability, in keeping with what we'd now call mafia and *wuxia* mythology. Under his guidance, Hip Sing prospered, and spread to other cities like Boston. Hip Sing survived Mock Duck's death, going on to provide narco-trafficking services for the Kuomintang and the CIA, apparently. But Hip Sing never had much presence in Canada. Chinese immigrants transiting from Vancouver to New York had several possible routes to take, but all of them probably involved going through the French-Canadian cartel run by Leo Sabourin.

The Sabourin cartel, in contrast to Hip Sing, attempted to be ghost-like, and they were equally successful: there are no photographs of Leo Sabourin, and few references to him in the press, while Sai Wing Mock became so notorious he is now a character in a video game<sup>24</sup>. “Leo[pold] Sabourin” was a relatively common name in Quebec during this era, and might have been an alias. The street address given for him in the American press seems to be fictional.

Sabourin is mentioned repeatedly in the American press as holding a monopoly on the immigrant smuggling trade in the region, since “*he is the only man who has the complete confidence of the Chinese and the great tongs or Chinese associations all do business with him.*”<sup>25</sup> Sabourin was a major target of American law enforcement<sup>26</sup>, but he never crossed the border, and the Canadians were unwilling to extradite him<sup>27</sup>. On the Vermont side of the lake, he typically ran drivers out of Arthur Boucher's farm in Potton, Quebec<sup>28</sup>, and offered the assurance that if they were caught by patrols in Vermont, he could break them back out of Newport Prison, which was within run-like-hell distance of

<sup>24</sup> *Empire of Sin*, Romero Games (2020)

<sup>25</sup> Burlington Free Press 6/18/1925.

<sup>26</sup> Burlington Free Press, 10/28/1925.

<sup>27</sup> Burlington Free Press article 7/24/1925, etc.

<sup>28</sup> [Newport] Express and Standard, 7/3/1925, Burlington Free Press 6/18/1925, etc. Arthur Boucher's farm, which he purchased in 1919, was right on the border within what is now the site of the Russian Orthodox Holy Transfiguration Monastery, on a road which at that time communicated with Dominion Avenue in North Troy, Vermont. (*Histoire Potton History* 3:1, 1915) Boucher was arrested at least twice, but freed both times, and some news accounts viewed him as the “kingpin”, though this was clearly an error. (Barre Daily Times 5/26/1924)

the Canadian border. Indeed, Sabourin's men effected at least two different successful jailbreaks from Newport<sup>29</sup>. It was an impressive display of organized crime overpowering the rule of law *in another country*.



Arthur Boucher et Délima Champagne.

It is not yet clear to me what the geographic breadth of the Sabourin cartel was, though the American press seems to suggest that he had a monopoly on all the trade from Montreal. He is only directly referenced in overland cases. But Ott's interviews, and corroborating news accounts, suggest that a significant number of Chinese immigrants were taken down the the lake by water to Rouse's Point or Deep Bay at Point Au Roche, just north of Plattsburgh. Deep Bay's location and geography makes it a nearly ideal drop point: the point is over a mile long, but the neck is no more than 150 yards wide, so the approach of a patrol boat from the lake can be spotted from just above the landing site, well in advance. And indeed, it appears that it was never raided.



*Deep bay, Point au Roche, the Kelly brothers' drop site and transit point for Chinese immigrants.*

Deep Bay was controlled by the Kelly Brothers, a prominent local smuggling ring. The Kelly brothers are described by Ott's interview subjects as a major nexus for rum-running, whose runners

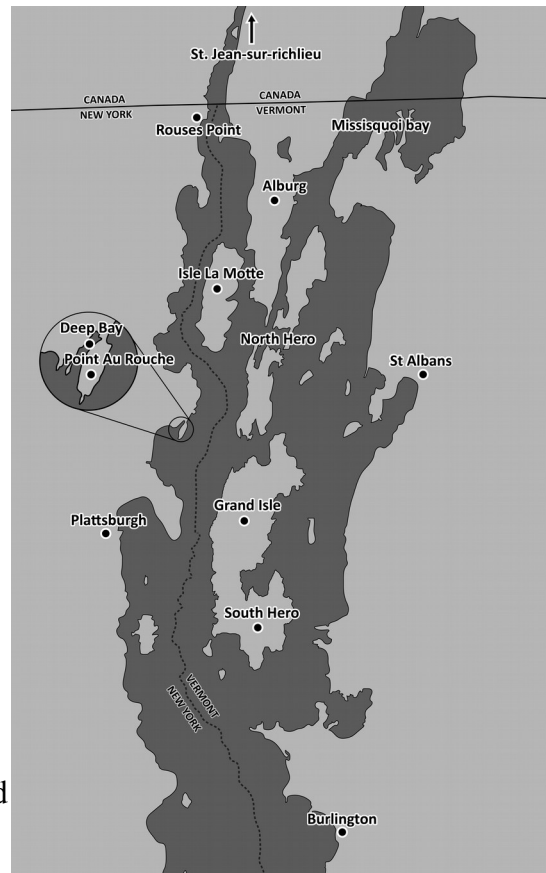
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29 [Randolph] Herald and News, 12/25/1924, St. Albans Daily Messenger 7/1/1925. A third attempt is described in the Burlington Free Press, 10/28/1925, which refers to Sabourin as “the Montreal Fagan”.

were able to consolidate legendary quantities of Canadian alcohol for shipment by cars, trucks, and boats<sup>30</sup>. The Kellys had several “right-hand-men” who were responsible for getting the alcohol over the border from Canada. One of these was Irving Valade, who had deep roots at Point Au Roche on his mother's side. There's good reason to think that the Kellys were involved in smuggling well prior to prohibition, which suggests an early involvement with the Chinese immigrant and narcotics trade. Ed Kelly owned a stable in Brooklyn, where his bookkeeper, one Henry Bullwinkle, was murdered by an Italian gang in 1916<sup>31,32</sup>.

There is some evidence that the Hip Sing Tong and the Sabourin cartel were in direct communication, notably the testimony (and address book) of the smuggler Thomas Martin Baker, arrested in 1925<sup>33</sup>. But most of the intermediaries in Vermont and upstate New York were probably not aware of these larger politics: Sabourin in particular was said to use expendable drivers<sup>34</sup>, rather than a regular crew, at least in his Vermont runs. Nowhere in Ott's interviews do the rum-runners Labelle or Hanlon seem to know who their ultimate Canadian suppliers and downstate receivers were, although Hanlon does mention that the Chinese immigrants had “a leader” in Canada, quite possibly a Sabourin operative<sup>35</sup>. This fog-of-war also appears in the newspaper accounts, which frequently asserted that “the kingpin” had finally been arrested, which was never the case<sup>36</sup>.

This is the wide view, within which a rum-runner like Ott's interviewees were quite minor players, though Conrad Labelle was locally viewed as a giant<sup>37</sup>. The Lake Champlain /Hudson River corridor presents a straight shot between Montreal



and New

30 Hanlon himself seems to have frequently picked up beer and liquor at Deep Bay, then brought it back to Burlington by boat. Labelle corroborates this. But we need not rely on their accounts. Ed Kelly was indicted for smuggling at least twice. ([Elmira] Star-Gazette 11/27/1922, [Glens Falls] Post-Star 5/6/1925) The first of these charges suggests that Kelly was involved in long-range smuggling, from the Canadian border at least as far south as Poughkeepsie. Ed Kelly was found shot dead in his garage in 1939 ([Glens Falls] Post-Star, 5/2/1939). While Hanlon blamed Irving Valade, he noted that Kelly's daughters blamed their uncle George, and the coroner ruled it a suicide.

31 [Brooklyn] Standard Union, 8/22/1916. This was apparently in retaliation for a murder by Bullwinkle during a 1914 gunfight.

32 There's also a loose end here: the 1903 Chinese smuggling case in Buffalo involves a livery owned by the “Kellar brothers”, one of whom was acquitted during the trial. Maybe there were just a lot of Kellar brothers owning Chinese-smuggling-adjacent livery companies in New York, but this seems like it warrants a little more research.

33 Burlington Free Press, 6/18/1925. The article barely avoids referring to Sabourin by name, but describes him well, and “a lonely spot north of Jay” is surely the Boucher farm. In a few legal cases, such as the heroin smuggler Frances Lebern/Bruce (alias Doris Pembroke), we find individuals who seem to be doing business with organized crime on either end of the Champlain corridor.

34 Burlington Free Press, 10/18/1925.

35 Interview #2, excerpted below. In the same interview, Hanlon notes that after being delivered across the border, Chinese immigrants would be picked up by “different people from downcountry. Cars would come and get 'em”. This receiver-side operation was presumably arranged by Hip Sing.

36 Barre Daily Times 5/26/1924, etc. There's always a bigger fish...

37 Carpenter suggested that Labelle was comparatively “bigger” than Al Capone in his region. (Interview #12) Everest



York. It has always been, an irresistible smuggling route, and cases of beer are not where the real money is.

Across a variety of somewhat inconsistent observations, it seems like a bottle of booze picked up at the Meridian Hotel or thereabouts and smuggled to the vicinity of Plattsburgh got marked up about 100% in crossing the border, so a smuggler with a good boat on a good night could double their money and pick up \$100-\$200 dollars. Meanwhile, it appears that the overall payment for smuggling a single Chinese immigrant in this era was worth between \$1000 and \$2000, and \$100 or close<sup>38</sup> seems to have be the standard fee for either the lake or overland run across the border, per individual. Typical runs involved three to twelve immigrants, and (unlike alcohol) did not involve a down payment. These numbers confirm the attitude taken by Ott's interviewees, suggesting that this was a far more lucrative trade than running alcohol, but the risks were daunting.

A Sabourin agent testified that the cartel had gotten 879 Chinese immigrants across the border in 1924, or about 17 per week<sup>39</sup>. Forgetting what Sabourin and Boucher were raking off, that's about \$1.5 million in today's money simply being paid to the runners. Hanlon describes Valade as having purchased an entire city block in Plattsburgh; if that's true, it isn't hard to see how he did it.

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The question that concerns me, though, is how many of these immigrants never reached New York or Boston. It would be nice to think that Hanlon's dismissive "*I don't know how many of them he drowned, but he drowned a lot of them*" is simply tough talk, which he was certainly prone to. We don't have enough evidence to confirm (or reject) Hanlon's particular claims against Valade. Valade appeared as a person of interest in a minor beer smuggling case (on the lake)<sup>40</sup>, and his position as a motorboat mechanic in Plattsburgh during prohibition certainly put him in the thick of things, but he himself was never charged with smuggling, let alone murder.

Unfortunately, Hanlon's *general* claim that one or more smugglers were drowning Chinese immigrants in the lake is not at all far-fetched. In fact, it is corroborated by many other contemporary comments and known cases, which form an almost entirely forgotten and horrifying chapter of our history.

One of these instances gives a powerful sense of how invisible and disregarded the lives of Chinese immigrants were. In 1920, there was a widely serialized news article about the fact that a syndicate in Detroit was forming to dredge the river for valuable items<sup>41</sup>. This took the form that we would now call a "listicle": *what sort of treasures do people lose underwater?* The examples included jewelry, wallets, and still-functional outboard motors. And then we have this:

James McCabe, immigration inspector, who patrols the Canadian border for Chinese smugglers, affirms that within the past ten years smugglers drowned Chinese to escape immigration officers who pursued the smuggler's boats, and in nearly every case the drowned Chinese had large sums of money concealed in their clothing. Neither the bodies nor the money have been recovered because the feet of the drowned Chinese were weighted with iron.

As with Hanlon's comment above, this is a passing mention of murder, on an apparently large scale, but it isn't treated as a crime to be investigated. Rather, it is buried in a different and rather

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describes him as "one of the boldest and toughest of his day...never caught on either side of the border" (p. 43)

38 \$100 at the time being around \$2000 today.

39 Burlington Free Press, 6/18/1925. A later Free Press article (7/24/1925) places the figure at 761. The ultimate expense ledger had to include the Pacific voyage, \$500 Canadian head tax, and the cross-Canadian rail travel, probably not quoted in the basic figure. The \$2000 figure quoted in 1925 is equivalent to about \$35,000 today.

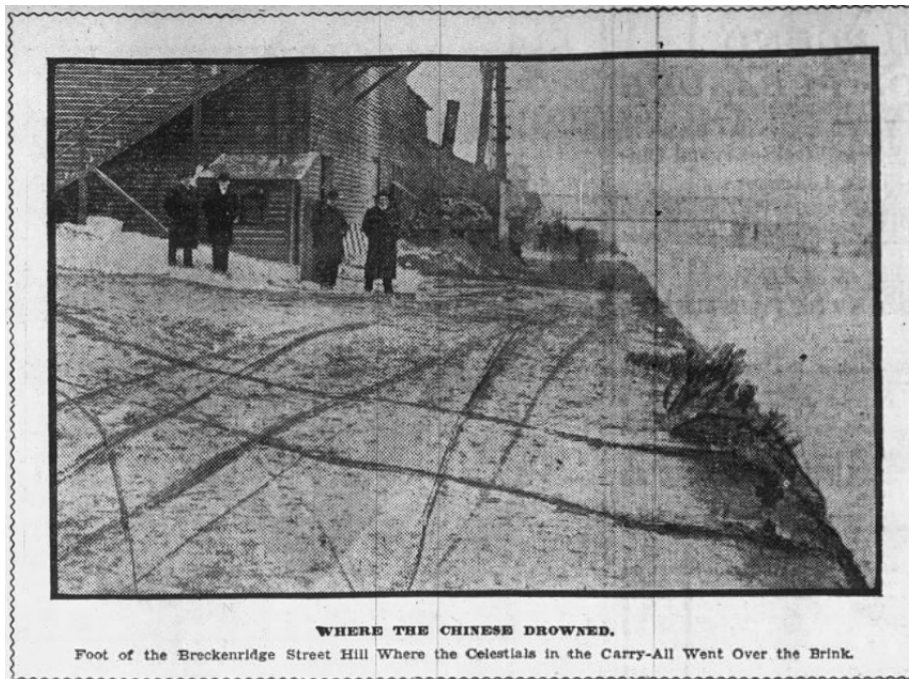
40 Burlington Free Press, 9/29/1923. Notably, he was involved not in the run itself, but in an attempted salvage operation when the boat crashed. In other words, Valade was the guy rum-runners called when things went wrong.

41 The Ithaca Journal, 5/10/1920, e.g.

*entertaining* context, so any focus on the mass-murder element feels like being a killjoy.

The notion of weighting someone down to drown them but *not* taking the money in their clothes<sup>42</sup> suggests a perplexing combination of premeditation and spur-of-the-moment decision-making. In fact, this is grimly elucidated several times in Ott's interviews and a few other sources. Smugglers were accustomed to abandoning contraband if they were approached by the authorities. On the water, this was often accomplished by throwing things overboard in weighted bran bags, or even towing the bags behind the boat, so one could simply cut a rope and sink the evidence. Valade himself was described as an expert in this technique<sup>43</sup>. This approach was clearly continuous with techniques for eliminating human passengers before a patrol boat could arrive. The practice of smuggling Chinese immigrants inside bags was an old one, appearing in court cases as far back as 1895<sup>44</sup>. On the Buffalo route, smugglers would sometimes tow immigrants in canoes behind their motorboats<sup>45</sup>: if approached, they would cut the tow rope and let the canoe drift—about two miles above the Niagara Falls. McCabe, Hanlon, and others describe a pattern of attaching weights (in Hanlon's description, lead-weighted bran bags) to the immigrants prior to taking them onboard, so they'd go “straight to the bottom” if they were pushed overboard, or urged to jump overboard. Other systems involved rigging, chains, or even shackles. One Chinese smuggling vessel captured off Montauk, New York was equipped with “a quantity of pistols and handcuffs...[to] hold unruly Chinese.”<sup>46</sup>

At times this may have involved subterfuge: telling the passengers to jump in the water with a promise to pick them up again later. But the general sense from the sources is that the smugglers usually *told* their passengers they would be drowned if a patrol boat approached, and the passengers—receiving this knowledge at the last minute, having already risked a great deal, and having no other real options—got on the boats anyway, with the weights tied to them, or inside weighted sacks.



42 The money-sewn-into-the-clothes gambit appears worldwide in these shadow economies, but it is noted in the same 2001 issue of *Visit'n* as a common pattern for Chinese immigrants as late as the mid-1970s. (Two other deaths are mentioned from that era: a smuggler and Chinese immigrant who both froze to death after getting lost in the woods.)

43 Interview #20. The use of burlap bags for hauling alcohol seems to have been ubiquitous. Everest (p. 49) notes that it was typically 24 (quart?) bottles to the bag, so these were fairly large bags.

44 Buffalo News, 8/10/1895.

45 Buffalo Morning Express, 11/13/1908.

46 Buffalo Enquirer 8/2/1924.

Thus far we have been discussing mere hearsay suggestions that Chinese immigrants were being murdered in water-border crossings. But this was certainly happening, on a large scale. As far back as 1903, a carriage in Buffalo smuggling eleven Chinese immigrants plunged into a frozen canal, killing at least four. The driver, George C. Keller, said that the carriage slid into the canal because the kingpin broke. This is an unusual occurrence of the actual vehicle of a metaphor that permeates this story: endless news articles used the term “kingpin” in attempts to determine—mostly incorrectly—who was really running the smuggling operations. But in its original sense, a kingpin is a bolt used as a pivot joint, as in the connection between horse and carriage.

Meanwhile, one of the survivors, See Fick, immediately suggested to the police via an interpreter that this was not an accident but a premeditated act. He said their driver had been substantially paid in advance, was "in a bad humour" and decided to save himself time and risk by simply drowning his passengers. A trial on the smuggling charges exonerated Keller, Richard Hardison, William McConachie, and the later-notorious William Dingman. May Simpson and Frank “Kid West” Fisher were sentenced to 6 months and 2 years, respectively, for smuggling. “The hearing failed to bring out” See Fick's accusations of deliberate homicide<sup>47</sup>.

At least six more Chinese immigrants were drowned in the "Breakwater Tragedy" of November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1908, in the Niagara River off Buffalo. This got relatively wide coverage in the press, perhaps since the mangled and frozen bodies of the victims were visible from shore and the object of a retrieval operation. Again, one of the survivors (Mock Quong) testified that the smugglers had deliberately left their clients to die after encountering bad weather conditions for the landing, and then ramming the boat into the breakwater, sinking it while the smugglers themselves escaped, possibly with an accomplice on shore. The three smugglers (William Riley, Edward Balz, and George Hanney) all former customs agents<sup>48</sup>, fled to Canada. The survivors were deported<sup>49</sup>. Riley was subsequently arrested in Canada, but there was insufficient evidence to extradite him on a manslaughter charge. He was deported as undesirable and arrested in the U.S.<sup>50</sup>, ultimately being sentenced to a year and a day in prison, for smuggling, not murder<sup>51</sup>. The press coverage and public commentary on this incident is unusually sympathetic, depicting the Chinese as victims of grossly immoral behavior by their white smugglers, if not murderous intent<sup>52</sup>.

In early March of 1916, a group of five to nine Chinese immigrants drowned in the Niagara River, while their smugglers escaped. William Dingman was arrested in connection with these deaths, which were alleged to be murders, but then acquitted. (While there is no particular evidence for jury intimidation, Dingman's Tong connections raise this as a possibility.) Richard H. Taylor, a "Chinese Inspector" from US Immigration Services, noted to the press that smugglers "would go to any extreme to cover up the drowning of the Celestials, disposing of the bodies in any way to avoid publicity and resultant prosecution were they apprehended."

In May of 1922, overland smugglers for the Sabourin cartel, fearing a checkpoint, simply told their clients to get out on a remote back road in Hardwick, Vermont. Six Chinese men were picked up over the next few days, wandering around the *very* rural back roads of the “Northeast Kingdom”. A very similar case occurred in upstate New York in 1926<sup>53</sup>, probably involving immigrants who had come down Lake Champlain. No deaths occurred in these cases, but I mention them as further evidence of the willingness of smugglers to abandon their passengers.

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47 The Buffalo News, 12/16/1903, and Star-Gazette 1/21/1904.

48 Buffalo Commercial, 3/22/1909.

49 Buffalo Times, 6/2/1909.

50 Calgary Herald, 3/3/1909.

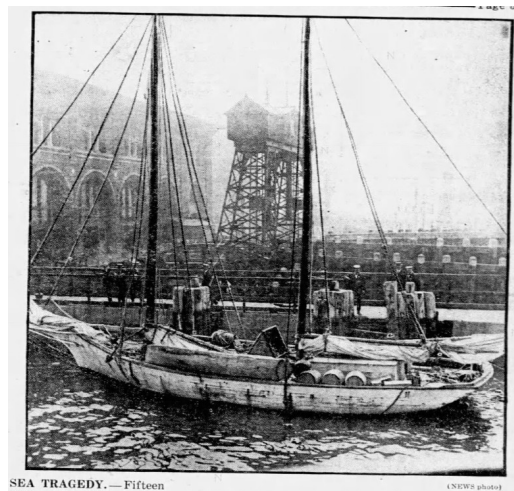
51 Buffalo Commercial, 3/22/1909.

52 Buffalo Morning Express, 11/13/1908.

53 [Ogensburg] Republican-Journal 1/19/1926.

A somewhat different and briefly high-profile case was the *Mary Beatrice* battle in 1923<sup>54</sup>. This involved a small British schooner from Bermuda (possibly starting from Cuba<sup>55</sup>) with an alleged cargo of twenty Chinese immigrants. The *Mary Beatrice* was parked in “Rum Row”, in the nebula of rum-running vessels laying in international waters off New York, about halfway between Coney Island and Sandy Hook. The captain went to shore by motorboat to negotiate, leaving the boat in control of a four-man international crew. He never returned. Nearly a week later, the bedraggled vessel drifted to Staten Island, carrying fifteen Chinese passengers, four of whom were very seriously injured. They reported that, two days after the disappearance of the captain, the crew had decided to murder them for their remaining money. Uniquely in all of these stories, the Chinese passengers were able to offer some resistance, fighting in very close quarters on the open water. In the ensuing bloodbath, five of the Chinese were killed and four injured, while all four of the crew were killed. All the bodies were thrown overboard.

The “Bahama Blood Ship”—as the press dubbed it—quickly became the subject of a confusing investigation, starting with the fact that it was not immediately clear who had jurisdiction—a complex question involving the ship's registration and its position relative to the maritime border. Meanwhile, Federal officials quickly suggested<sup>56</sup> that the story of the fight wasn't true. In the absence of a manifest, or bodies, perhaps there had only ever *been* fifteen Chinese on board. In this narrative, no Chinese had actually been killed in the fray: rather than the victims, they were the instigators of a bloody attack (which for some reason they had decided to begin some 13,000 miles into their voyage, with about 3 miles remaining). Or perhaps the events described had transpired on a different ship entirely. Who could say for sure? Later news articles on the case would focus entirely on the deaths of white men at the hands of the “inscrutable Chinese”<sup>57</sup>. The erasure of victims on the frontier has rarely been displayed so starkly, and the picture of the ship in front of Ellis Island feels darkly symbolic.



*The Mary Beatrice impounded at the Ellis Island Wharf*

In early 1924, the U.S. patrol boat *Rockland* intercepted the *Jessie Brown* off Cape Hatteras on suspicion of running Chinese immigrants. An anonymous inspector was quoted as saying<sup>58</sup>:

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54 Daily News 6/15/1923, many others. Photograph is from the Daily News.

55 cf. Buffalo Morning Express, 8/31/1924.

56 Star-Gazette 6/18/1923.

57 [Buffalo] Daily News, 2/20/1924

58 Buffalo Morning Express, 8/31/1924.

"We got wind that the *Jessie* was loading Chinese at Havana and bound north. There was a moderate gale and a nasty sea running when we first sighted her east of Hatteras. To our surprise she stood toward us, showing her weather side and so hiding her deck from view. Then she hove to about a mile to leeward<sup>59</sup>.

"Half an hour later I boarded her and asked a few questions. Finally I put it straight to the skipper: 'Where's your Chinamen?'"

"Oh! We landed them at San Domingo five days ago,' he responded.

"I searched the ship fore and aft, but no trace of Chinese until I came to the galley. Here was a big pot of rice, freshly cooked.

"What about that rice in the galley—who's that for?"

"Rice?" he exclaimed. "Rice? Oh that's for the crew—we're very fond of it here."

"That's all the satisfaction I got. If the truth were known, the Chinese went over the side between the time we sighted her and I boarded."

Beyond the simple horror of this scene, what demands notice is that the authorities believed, or we might say *knew*, they were at the scene of a mass murder, moments after the fact. *The victims' dinner was still hot*. And yet there was no further investigation, or any sense that there could be a further investigation. No bodies, no crime.

Later in 1924 a rumor went the rounds in New York<sup>60</sup> that eleven Chinese immigrants had been thrown into the sea and drowned, tied up inside burlap sacks by a smuggler being pursued by a US Coast Guard cutter off Manhattan. One anonymous smuggler insisted that the bags were not weighted down: "*they got a swimming chance. The bags were a screen. There weren't no weights—it'd be unethical.*" Others said there were weights. In a familiar dismissal, the Immigration Department said it would be "impossible to gather any evidence" of the crime, which was apparently not investigated.

The preceding litany encompasses thirty to forty Chinese immigrants dying in transit, most of them cold-blooded murders, the others negligent manslaughter at best. As far as I can tell, no one involved was ever charged with a crime in relation to these deaths: the only sentences handed out were for the smuggling charges. Similarly, it does not appear that these murders were incorporated into any of the various criminological datasets of their era: in a real sense they "didn't count" as homicides. And I can hardly over-stress that the preceding list was compiled by Dicoivitsky and myself rather quickly and cheaply, on the basis of a passing mention in one of Ott's interviews. It is certainly incomplete. It would be reasonable to assume that we have only scratched the surface of a much larger pattern. And so I think it would be fair to assume that in this context, when Hanlon says that "a lot" of Chinese immigrants were drowned in Lake Champlain, he wasn't exaggerating.

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The fact on trial here is that these deaths—which are enormous not simply in their number but also in their cold-bloodedness—were hardly noticed in their own era and then were effectively forgotten and entirely unaddressed afterwards. They were invisible killings, and while we can no longer put the killers themselves on trial, we can attempt to put the invisibility itself on trial.

The *Mary Beatrice* case, while in some ways anomalous, centers this invisibility. The American authorities were faced with a ship covered in blood and bullet-holes, with four Chinese immigrants critically wounded, and the survivors of the battle speaking of nine deaths, five of them Chinese. The counter-narrative offered by the Feds was that the four crew members had indeed been murdered, but the five Chinese victims had never existed in the first place. There are few analogies to this situation in other criminal cases. The 1920s were also an apex of lynching, for instance, which occurred with impunity but not invisibility. The usual pattern with lynching was for an inquest to be

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59 For the non-nautically-inclined, this is a somewhat suspicious maneuver from the inspector's point of view, since it buys the *Jessie Brown* a bit of time (and visual cover) before they allow themselves to be intercepted.

60 e.g. Buffalo Enquirer 11/18/1924, but the story was covered nationally.

held which exonerated or at least failed to identify the perpetrators, but (small favor!) acknowledged that someone died. With most of the Chinese victims discussed here, there was no inquest: the murders went either unnoticed or were treated as inevitabilities unworthy of further investigation.

This disregard is racist both in cause and effect, which is no surprise. The Chinese Exclusion Act was a nakedly racist policy, and that prejudice is written all across the news reports of Chinese immigration in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. But by itself, racism is an insufficient explanation for what's on display here. For instance, when the launderer Sam Wah was murdered in 1923, in St. Johnsbury, the Vermont constabulary and court systems responded more or less appropriately, despite their prejudices. Wah was visible and memorable to the largely white community around him. But the immigrant murder victims we are discussing here were almost completely invisible. Thus the 1924 story of eleven people being murdered off the coast of New York was met with a shrug, although the story, if true, would be the largest multiple homicide reported in the city's history.

This invisibility and amnesia present themselves even in the midst of the few recollections we do have of these murders. In Ott's interviews, Hanlon mentions the drownings so frequently that they clearly left a deep impression on him, but he always treats them as more or less insignificant. Carpenter describes “what violence there was to it around here” as involving retaliation for failed bribes, and inter-gang hijackings of beer trucks. He was *aware* of the drownings, and discusses them with Hanlon, but he doesn't seem to consider them an example of smuggling-related “violence”<sup>61</sup>.

~ ~ ~

Invisibility won out for a century. There is no discussion of Chinese smuggling in any of the many histories of Lake Champlain that I've read, nor is there any mention of it in the several books specifically about prohibition-era smuggling on the Lake. In fact, across several months of researching these crimes, and reaching out to Chinese-American genealogists and historians, I have yet to run into anyone except Eleanore Kokar Ott who was aware of them. Indeed, I've only met one person who was aware that there had been Chinese smuggling operations on the lake, let alone that there were murders involved.

I am cautious about this kind of observation, in light of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's description of “white forgetting” of racist atrocities that are not at all forgotten by the community that was victimized. But with a few exceptions, these crimes were unusually invisible even to the Chinese-American community of the era. The modal pattern here was to kill all of the witnesses: a violent crime erasing the human evidence of a victimless crime.

We cannot alter the past, but we can try to remember and understand it. And in that regard, Ott's interviews with Hanlon are precious, giving us the only real first-hand account of this history that I'm aware of. There are moments in the interviews with Pete Hanlon that give layered insights into the mindset and economics of human smuggling, as well as being a sort of Brechtian dialog that ought not be lost to time. I'd like to transcribe one of those (from #2) here:

EO: Something else I wanted to ask you about Pete that's a little bit off this...about all those Chinese that were coming on down and going on down to New York. And I was just wondering how much of that went on? And who was carrying...

PC: Oh Jesus man, there was a lot of them. They were going on right and left on that. You go up there and get four, five, six at a time if you wanted them. Take em right down to...

EO: Where would you pick 'em up?

PC: Up the river.

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<sup>61</sup> There are continuities, though. In the aftermath of a shootout at the Meridian Hotel (a popular loading point for rum-runners) the out-of-town victims were allegedly weighted down with chains and thrown into the lake, very much in the way the Chinese immigrants were drowned. (Everest pp. 54-55)

EO: To Saint John's?

PC: Oh yeah, up the river, pick 'em up, and they had a leader there, see? 'I'm gonna take so many. Three or four.' They get over and they: [imitates discussion in Chinese] You don't know what they're saying. You ain't interested in that. See? When they get all through. Then he comes and he has the interpreter tell me what they were gonna do<sup>62</sup>. See? They had these burlap bags. And they had a big weight in 'em, like, not a rock—what the hell was it they were putting in? Some kind of lead or something. And he says that was their ideer if they ever got caught. They were supposed to mind me, I was the captain: jump over. So...jump over with the bag tied to em. Well, they'd go right to the bottom.

EO: Well I guess.

PC: Sure.

EO: How many Chinese do you figure came over? I mean was this...over a period of time...

PC: Oh, hundreds of 'em.

EO: Hundreds of 'em?

PC: Ohhhhh my god yes.

EO: Hundreds of 'em?

PC: I took two, it was Russian Jews, and I'll never forget that as long as I live.

EO: I thought they were Chinese?

PC: No, no, I took Russian Jews, I never took a Chinese.

EO: You never took Chinese?

PC: No, ain't no diff.....more money with the Russian Jews.

EO: Really?

PC: Sure. So. A guy comes to me he says "Pete" he says, "I only got so many bags [of alcohol]"...I think it was forty bags. "You wanna make two, three hundred dollars?" He says, "there's two Jews that wanna go over, they'll pay you, right now, they'll give you your money right now."

I said Jesus Christ, I dunno. I says, if they catch me with the beer, they'll catch me with the goddam Chinese, they'll give me the works.

"Ah," he says, "they ain't many [patrol agents] right now."

I took a chance.

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There is no way for me to conclude this piece satisfactorily. What I can offer is simply the direction of attention, for anyone so inclined, to a set of homicides so large that it upsets the usual understanding of violent crime in this region, both qualitatively and quantitatively. That seems worth doing, but it's just a beginning. I'll be forwarding this research on to others who are better positioned than myself to continue it and perhaps correct it.

Much of the remaining work here may involve research in the American Chinese-language

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<sup>62</sup> This is a particularly revealing phrase, though almost inaudible: the suggestion here is that the "leader" is Chinese, possibly a Chinese member of the Sabourin cartel, and there is *also* an interpreter (possibly Valade).

newspapers of the era (of which there were quite a few, despite the considerable logistical challenges involved); some rather specific research into deeply archived police and court cases; the Lake Patrol's records (if they still exist), and potentially maritime-archaeology approaches. Dicovitsky and I have spent a good deal of time mapping the relevant criminal networks in Vermont, upstate New York, and Canada, and there are further avenues to explore in that regard, if anyone is so inclined. It is also my slender hope that by increasing awareness of this chapter of our history we will be able to surface a few stories from the family histories of Chinese-Americans (or Chinese-Canadians) whose ancestors were affected by it.

The peculiar nature of borders, and illicit border-crossings, creates a space where it is easy for things to go unseen, unremembered. Even mass murders an order of magnitude larger than what would otherwise be seen as the biggest news in the region sink below the surface. We can identify many factors that feed into this invisibility. Racism and the related cultural and linguistic barriers are one of these, obviously.

The spectacle of prohibition is another factor: by creating a carnival of amateur scofflaws defying a law the public did not approve of, prohibition provided a great deal of cover for much more professional criminals to hide within. It's noteworthy that the cases here with the most media coverage—and most active legal response—occurred *before* the Volstead act of 1919.

There is the fact that bodies of water, above all other crime scenes, “never give up their dead”. There is the “white forgetting” of briefly sensational news stories like the Breakwater Tragedy or the battle on the *Mary Beatrice*. There is the fact that the Chinese Exclusion Act (and earlier Page Act<sup>63</sup>) had locked in an almost entirely male population of Chinese-Americans, most of whom never had children, dampening the transmission of oral history. There is the naïveté that Vermonters in particular apply to our landscape: boatloads of Chinese immigrants being drowned is simply not part of the story we tell about the placid waters of our beloved lake.

Above all of these other factors contributing to invisibility, and largely orchestrating them, is the mere fact of the border. Border waters, especially. A group of men are drowned at night, in the dark, in the deep waters of Lake Champlain. Maybe in New York, maybe in Vermont, maybe in Canada: who's to say? They are ten thousand miles from home and even there, their families never expect to see them again. There is no paper trail, there are no witnesses, there is no constable or journalist whose beat they are on. They are perfect victims for the perfect crime. And this scenario, this type of invisibility, is a characteristic feature of borders. Of the waters in between.

The inspector who intercepted the *Jessie Brown* believed he was standing on a crime scene where many people had been killed moments earlier. And yet he did nothing, and felt like he *could* do nothing. Not so much because they were at sea, but because the victims had become invisible in their attempt to cross a border. As with immigrant deaths on other border crossings—the Sonora Desert, say, or the Mediterranean—we can point to particular smugglers as culprits, but they are ultimately minor operatives. The kingpin is the idea of the border itself.

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63 The Page Act of 1875 banned the entrance of Chinese women to the United States.



## **Appendix 1: an incomplete roster of Chinese immigrant deaths in transit in the Vermont/New York corridor, 1900-1930**

*Four to six*<sup>64</sup> *drowned off Buffalo, December 1903.*

Named dead: Lem Yung Yem, Jing Way, Ung Hook Baw, Moy Foo Yik<sup>65</sup>  
Named survivors: See Fick, Moy Foy

*Six or seven*<sup>66</sup> *drowned in “Breakwater Tragedy” of 11/12/1908.*

Named survivors: Chin Ton (19), Mock Quong, Ping Sing (25), Chin Jing (22)

*Five to nine drowned or frozen in ice jam near Navy Island, Niagara River, March 1916*<sup>67</sup>.

*Intentional drownings with weights mentioned by McCabe, 1920, “over the last decade”*<sup>68</sup>.

*Five murdered on the Mary Beatrice off New York, June 1923*<sup>69</sup>.

*Eleven drowned in burlap bags off New York, November 1924*<sup>70</sup>.

*“A lot of them” drowned by Irving Valade in Lake Champlain, 1920s*<sup>71</sup>.

## **Appendix 2: List of interviews referenced in this article, with archival indices**

#2 vfc1983-0002\_1993-3020tc\_hanlon-pete\_carpenter-merritt\_01\_sl  
#12 vfc1983-0002\_1993-3035tc\_labelle-conrad\_carpenter-merritt\_02\_sl  
#13 vfc1983-0002\_1993-3023tc\_hanlon-pete\_carpenter-merritt\_02\_sl  
#20 vfc1983-0002\_1993-3049tc\_hanlon-pete\_carpenter-merritt\_02\_sl

(These audio files and seventeen others not specifically cited in this piece are kept in the digital archives of the Vermont Folklife Center.)

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64 Buffalo Courier 12/5/1903. The Buffalo Morning Express in 11/13/1908 recounts six deaths, although I can only find mention of four at the time, but it was winter, and (at least) two of bodies were not recovered until much later.

65 The last two bodies were not discovered until the spring thaw: Buffalo Courier 5/10/1904, and Buffalo Morning Express 5/28/1904

66 Early accounts such as Buffalo Morning Express, 12/12/1908 agree on six deaths; the Buffalo News 1/15/1912 counts seven.

67 Buffalo Morning Express, 3/19/1916. See also Buffalo Commercial 9/9/1916, which may refer to a separate incident.

68 The Ithaca Journal, 5/10/1920, e.g.

69 Daily News 6/15/1923, etc.

70 Buffalo Enquirer 11/18/1924, etc.

71 *Visit'n*, (7) November 2001.