

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY REFERENCE SERIES

## Favorable Idaho Reactions to Chinese Residents

Number 935

February 1992

Even though many prominent Idaho leaders endorsed anti-Chinese sentiments during a nineteenth century era of widespread agitation against Oriental immigrants, that kind of prejudice was not universal. William H. Hawkins, for example, had unusually good relations with construction workers whom he employed for Northern Pacific Railway construction projects across North Idaho and adjacent areas in 1881 and perhaps 1882. He actually tried to help, rather than simply exploit, Chinese nationals. In recognition of his efforts on their behalf, he received a certificate of appreciation from them. [Information provided by his grandson, William J. Hawkins II of Portland, who has that certificate along with appropriate files and records associate with it.]

A more recent set of statements concerning Chinese people in Hailey has been provided by Margaret Atherton Bonney of Iowa City, September 22, 1990:

Source: Carolyn (Caroline) Amelia Bailey born 10 December 1899, Hailey, Idaho

She resided in Hailey until 1917 when she went to school at Albion for two years. She then taught school in one or more communities situated along the Snake River until 1927 or 1928 when she moved to Compton, California with her husband.

Included in the statements she made when she was recalling her childhood:

1. The Chinese (men?) allowed one baby fingernail to grow very long in order to scoop up and then sell gold-dust left behind by miners. (Carolyn's father worked as an engineer at the Croesus mine.)
2. Her mother purchased fresh vegetables from a Chinese vendor. Chinese grown produce was considered to be of high quality.
3. She never indicated that she regarded the Chinese people living in Hailey as other than respectable hard-working people of the community. She did not

express an anti-Chinese attitude such as that of editor Picotte in the 1880s and 1890s. She did, however, refer to all non-Anglo Americans as foreigners.