Introduction

Historical investigations of Protestant child rescuers in San Francisco Chinatown are not new, but surprisingly there are no studies of the Methodist women’s work in the Chinese quarter, even though it actually predates by four years the well known Presbyterian Occidental Mission.\(^1\) The purpose of this essay is therefore to investigate Methodist women’s rescue work in Chinatown, specifically looking at two rescues undertaken by Deaconess Margarita Lake of the Methodist Episcopal Church’s Oriental Home, showing how the politics of child rescue in early 20th century Chinatown were often complex—more complex than has generally been acknowledged by other analyses that have focused only upon the rescues of her contemporary, Donaldina Cameron of the Presbyterian Chinese Mission Home.\(^2\)

The two cases discussed below are particularly interesting and unusual because two Caucasian child rescuing groups are pitted against each other—The Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice/Pacific Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Animals, and the Methodist Oriental Bureau which ran the Oriental Home. Both groups were involved in a two-year struggle for the guardianship of two Chinese girls, “Sau Chun” and “Ah Ying,” and in the process of court battles, their differing views of child-rearing become evident. The Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice was Roman Catholic in origin, and men filled all its leadership roles. William P. Sullivan, San Francisco Chief of Police who died in November 1901, was a former director of the Society. The Oriental Bureau, on the other hand, was a Protestant organization run entirely by women. The Pacific Society seemed to prefer “placing out” as a solution to raising neglected, delinquent, or orphaned children; the Oriental Bureau preferred the more controlled environment of an asylum for its rescued children.

The two cases discussed below are made all the richer by the variety of sources open to critical analysis: newspaper articles, annual reports of the two child-saving societies, Methodist women’s magazines, and unpublished documents preserved by descendants of Margarita Lake.\(^3\)

Origins of the Oriental Home

The Methodist Episcopal Church’s Oriental Home in San Francisco Chinatown had its origins in 1868, when the Reverend Otis Gibson, with his wife Eliza Chamberlain, was asked to establish a Chinese Domestic Mission in California. The Gibsons had been missionaries in Foochow, China for ten years prior to moving to California and had been forced to return to the United States because of Eliza’s poor health. A few months before the December 25, 1870 opening of their new Chinese Mission building at 916 Washington Street, the Gibsons and a small group of Methodist women met and formed the Woman’s Missionary Society of the Pacific Coast to evangelize the Chinese women in Chinatown.
Its central purpose was “to elevate and save heathen women, especially on these shores, and to raise funds for this work.” As a result of that meeting a rescue asylum was set aside on the top floor of the new Methodist Mission house, and within a year the Methodist women had their first “inmate.”

The WMSPC functioned under the auspices of the MEC General Missionary Society for many years, sheltering trafficked Asian (Chinese and occasionally Japanese) women and girls, teaching them English and other cultural survival skills, and marrying them off to responsible Asian men. But in 1893, the WMSPC joined the ten-year-old MEC Woman’s Home Missionary Society as its new “Oriental Bureau,” and eight years later the Oriental Bureau built its own “Oriental Home for Chinese Women and Girls” at 912 Washington Street, just across Trenton Street from the original mission house. Both buildings were destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fire, and the women and children of the Oriental Home were forced to take up temporary residence in Berkeley and Oakland until a new building opened in 1912 in San Francisco, at 940 Washington Street, on the site of Reverend Gibson’s original Chinese Domestic Mission.

Deaconess Margarita J. Lake

In 1896 the WHMS Oriental Bureau hired twenty-three-year-old Margarita J. Lake as
missionary, and her widowed mother, Kate Burton Lake, as matron of their Rescue Asylum. Margarita was a recent graduate of the two-year Methodist Deaconess Training School in Chicago, and her mother had taught in public and private schools for nearly twenty years. Margarita took the position with the Oriental Bureau thinking that it would be good training for her intended goal—which was to go to China as a missionary. However, neither she nor her mother would ever get that far. Instead, they would work for seven years in Chinatown, becoming outspoken crusaders for immigrant Chinese women’s and children’s rights, and indefatigable rescuers of trafficked persons.

California Age of Consent Laws and Child Saving Strategies

Prior to 1889, the legal age of (sexual) consent in the state of California was ten years old. And although atypical, common law marriages were recognized for children as young as seven years of age. In 1889, the age of consent was raised to fourteen, and eight years later, in 1897, it was raised to sixteen. Finally, in 1913, the age of consent was raised to eighteen, and prostitution itself was curbed significantly with the “Red Light Abatement Act.”

In traditional Chinese culture, children were considered to be a year old at birth and they turned a year older during the Chinese New Year festival, which falls between January and February. So it was entirely possible for Chinatown brothel keepers trying to comply with California law to honestly consider their girls legally “of age,” when by Western reckoning they were nearly two years under the age of consent (that is, girls barely twelve by Western reckoning could be “fourteen” by Chinese accounts, and girls fourteen could be “sixteen” by Chinese accounts). Thus, it is not surprising to find that in 1897, when the age of consent in California was raised to sixteen, San Francisco newspapers ran numerous articles about Protestant missionaries rescuing twelve- to fourteen-year-old girls from Chinatown brothels. Yet, the women of the Methodist Rescue Asylum did not rescue sex workers in brothels without having some evidence that girls were clearly underage or wished to escape “the life,” as they euphemistically called prostitution. Girls in brothels would often pass written messages (in English or Chinese) to the Protestant women doing “home visitation,” or to members of the Chinese Society of English Education. Often a Chinese man who wished to marry a girl from a brothel would take a plea for rescue to one of the missions, and that would set the rescuers to work.

Children below the age of consent could legally be in brothels, saloons, or dance halls if accompanied by a parent or guardian. However, any child apparently under the age of sixteen …found wandering, and not having any settled place or abode, or proper guardianship, or visible means of subsistence …[who] frequent[ed] the company of reputed thieves or prostitutes or houses of prostitution or dance houses, concert saloons,…without parent or guardian [could] be arrested and brought before a court or magistrate.

Thus, under these legal provisions, Methodist women and other religious and reform-minded organizations felt a moral responsibility to rescue Chinese children “found wandering” or “frequenting” immoral places—without seeking the consent of the parties involved.

Rescuing the Children—Ah Chun and Ah Ying
In December 1900, Deaconess Margarita J. Lake asked the Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice to assist her in the rescue of a five-year-old Chinese girl called “Ah Chun” whom Margarita apparently had seen in the brothels of Spofford Alley and who had been befriended by the Salvation Army. Francis J. Kane, the Secretary of the Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice, had been deputized as a “Special” by the San Francisco police department and on a number of earlier occasions he had helped rescue girls for Donaldina Cameron of the Presbyterian Chinese Mission Home. But this would be his first rescue attempt for the Methodist women.

Margarita had tried to secure the aid of the Eureka Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in Ah Chun’s rescue a year and a half earlier, and although the Society had promised to help on that occasion, for some reason it had not. But Margarita persisted, and over the next few months she continued to watch little Ah Chun. Finally, on October 30, 1899, she was able to enlist the help of “officer McMurray” from the Children’s Protective Society for a rescue attempt. Together with a doctor, they took the sick child from her supposed mother, Kim Yook, a brothel keeper at 11 Spofford Alley. Ah Chun was then placed under the temporary care of “Mary,” a Chinese “Salvation Army lassie,” who lived across the alley from the brothel, and there she stayed for a number of months until the brothel keeper reclaimed her. A little over a year later, in the late morning of December 11, 1900, Frank Kane took Ah Chun from Kim Yook again—this time bringing her back to Margarita Lake at the Oriental Home.

A week and a half after Ah Chun’s successful rescue, Kane found himself again helping Margarita Lake. Three days before Christmas seven-year-old Ah Ying was taken from a brothel at 829 Washington Street, where the mother was working. Although no one at the Methodist Oriental Home had contacted Kane about participating in the rescue, apparently he happened to be at the Mission house as the team was about to depart. Margarita Lake would later claim that Kane had never investigated Ah Ying’s home or surroundings before they left to attempt the rescue. But Kane could have argued that he knew the building well, having made a number of raids on a Japanese brothel next door. Margarita Lake assumed from Ah Ying’s clothing that Ying was a boy, but when she took the child back to the Mission house for a bath, she discovered that the child was a girl, dressed in boy’s clothing.

Apparently both of these rescues went smoothly, for neither one was mentioned in the following days’ San Francisco newspapers. However, seemingly without Margarita Lake’s knowledge or explicit consent, Kane went to Superior Court and named himself as temporary guardian of the two Chinese children. It is not entirely clear why he did this, since there is no evidence suggesting that he had followed a similar procedure when he undertook rescues for Donaldina Cameron and the Presbyterian mission. But since these were the first two times he had worked with Margarita Lake and the Methodists, he may not have fully trusted their intentions nor been completely happy with the living arrangements on the third floor of the Mission house, where former prostitutes would be living in close proximity to the little girls. Whatever his reasons for initiating the guardianship papers for Ah Ying and Ah Chun, over the next two years
Kane’s politics of rescue and guardianship would clash sharply with those of the Methodist women. In the end, neither group could claim complete legal victory over the two children. Kane and Lake would each “win” one child, with Ah Ying returning to her mother, and the girl known as “Ah Chun” growing up in the Oriental Home to become my wife’s grandmother.

Francis (“Frank”) J. Kane and the Society for the Suppression of Vice

Very little is known about Francis J. Kane apart from his work with at-risk children. At the time of the 1900 census, Kane was living in San Rafael; he listed his occupation as “secretary,” and his age as forty-two years old. His parents were both born in Ireland, and he was born in California. He was married and had two children living at home. Mr. Kane was still living in San Rafael three years later, but at the time of his death in 1908 his family was living in Berkeley.

Kane had been deputized and authorized by the San Francisco police department to wear a “Special’s star” in 1888, most likely in conjunction with his position as Superintendent of the Youths’ Directory on Howard Street, San Francisco. According to James Flamant, the Youths’ Directory was a Catholic charity connected with St. Vincent’s Asylum (for boys) in San Rafael and as a lay organization, it raised funds through its quarterly publication, St. Joseph’s Union.

The Directory, founded in 1886, “intended especially to provide a temporary home and employment for all those homeless and neglected boys that [did] not properly come under the care of the orphan asylums, nor receive State appropriation.” Because of the Youths’ Directory’s Roman Catholic connections, it is reasonable to assume that Kane was also Roman Catholic. He was still working for the organization in 1894, when a writ of habeas corpus was filed against him on behalf of the children of Henry and Annie Hunt; children for whom Kane sought guardianship.

Apparently when possible, the Youths’ Directory tried to place orphaned or neglected children with Catholic families, for out of the 112 children the Directory helped in 1887, less than half were turned over to orphan asylums. But in 1898 and 1899, in the midst of a national economic depression that had hit California especially hard, Frank Kane, now Secretary of the Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice, was able to place just over a quarter of the 459 rescued children with families instead of in “public institutions.”

Milicent Shinn had argued as early as 1880 that there was a “necessary antagonism between the advocates of orphan asylums and the advocates of aid societies,” noting that the Massachusetts State Board of Charities inveighed against “institutional life” for children, and urged that nature herself pointed to the home as the only place for them. The friends of asylums and reform schools reasoned that really proper homes, where people were willing to take stray children, often vicious ones, were too rare to be counted on; that in the asylum wise and experienced managers, experts in dealing with neglected children, could be had, and would be much better for them than miscellaneous strangers all over the country; that no really close guard could be kept over children so scattered.

As secretary of two different “aid” societies, Kane’s stance on this controversial child welfare issue seems to have been reasonably clear: when economically feasible, it was best to “place out” neglected or orphan children with families in rural settings. Moreover, one might surmise that the former superintendent of a lay Roman Catholic charitable organization whose job included “seizures of obscene literature and pictures” would have his own personal, moral
reasons for taking out temporary guardianship papers for two little brothel-dwelling Chinese girls and then resist turning them over permanently to a Protestant asylum for rescued prostitutes.

Kane was probably Secretary of The Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice from its inception October 21, 1893—a society whose mission was “the suppression of all kinds of vice, including illicit literature, obscene pictures and books, the sale of morphine, cocaine, opium, and tobacco and liquors to minors, lottery tickets, etc.” In January 1894 Mr. Kane was involved in trying to control the “Turkish Dancing Girls” at the Midwinter Fair’s Oriental Village. In 1897 San Francisco newspapers wrote that Mr. Kane, working of behalf of the Society, was arrested for battery while taking a little girl from a Mrs. Holstrom. And a few months later he was charged with contempt of court for “allegedly kidnapping” Katie Brown, “a minor given to its mother’s custody by the court.” In the latter case the prosecution contended that Kane had become the “cat’s paw of a certain Private Detective Dillon, who lay claim to [her deceased father’s] property in some way.”

Over the next few years Kane’s often confrontative and combative rescue strategies (both verbally and physically abusive) were occasionally and unfortunately coupled with financial transactions that raised the suspicions of the judges who granted guardianships. Kane’s financial transactions gave the appearance that clandestine payoffs were being made in the context of domestic disputes. The unfortunate result for him was that irrespective of his moral crusading, serious questions were being raised about the motives behind his child rescuing activities.

Kane did not renew his “Special’s star” after July 1, 1896, and it was apparently revoked in 1897, perhaps as a result of his arrest and contempt of court ruling that year. However, Kane never turned in the star to the police department. Apparently thinking it was lost, the police department issued a duplicate and reassigned it to someone else. Kane, meanwhile, continued to wear his original star when going about his rescue work, since its “authority” allowed him to gain entrance into homes and businesses where he had no search warrant and where other rescuers were refused admittance. When Kane’s Special’s star was finally confiscated in 1903, it bore the initials “B.H.” and belonged to a man in the Potrero named “James Flaherty.”

Apparently neither Donaldina Cameron nor Margarita Lake knew of Kane’s ambiguous status in the police department when they first solicited his help for their Chinatown rescues. Or if they did know of his checkered past, perhaps the women considered his brushes with the law as regrettable but understandable side effects of child rescuing. After all, the two Lake women had been arrested on at least one occasion, and they could probably be easily convinced that Kane held the moral high ground in a city where graft and financial payoffs were blatant and often went unchecked. Kane could argue—and did argue—that the suspicions raised with regard to his past rescues resulted from the dealings of shady lawyers and unscrupulous judges.

So it was under these somewhat clouded circumstances that the Roman Catholic Kane assisted Protestants Lake and Cameron in a number of rescues between January and March 1901. But it may have been a bungled rescue attempt on March 21, 1901—the second failed raid at 710½ Jackson Street in less than two weeks—that forced Margarita Lake to reconsider her relationship with Kane.

Margarita Lake’s journal entry for March 21, 1901 reads: “Tried to rescue a girl from 710½ Jackson St. and was put out by watchman and police.” But the next morning’s newspapers filled in the details, reporting that Kane’s men had cursed and thrown punches and
furniture at city police. Perhaps their unbecoming responses, splashed across the pages of San Francisco newspapers, brought Lake’s association with Kane under the close scrutiny of Protestant supporters of the mission. Although her mother and Mission Home matron, Mrs. Kate Lake, defended the rescue attempt by arguing that Kane was an officer of the law, and stated that the police who broke up the rescue attempt also knew Kane was an officer, a cursory police investigation revealed that Kane was not an officer, despite the fact that he wore a Special’s star.

The upshot of the March 21 fiasco was that Kane was accused of impersonating an officer and trespassing without a search warrant. But Kane (and the Lakes) claimed that he did not need a search warrant to take underage children from brothels. And although he was not actually arrested, Kane agreed not to use the star again. Without Kane’s authoritative star leading Chinatown’s anti-trafficking crusade, and with the stain of his cursing accomplices besmirching the high moral ground of Methodist mission rescues, the Lakes may have thought it wise to quietly drop the Society for the Suppression of Vice from their list of partners-in-rescue. There is no evidence that he was involved with the Methodists (or the Presbyterians) in any subsequent rescue attempts, even though his name continues to appear from time to time in San Francisco and Oakland papers up until his death in Berkeley, November 22, 1908.

Margarita Lake and the Oriental Home versus Frank Kane and the Society for the Suppression of Vice: Round One

In December 1900, Kane took out temporary guardianship papers for (Ah) Sau Chun and Ah Ying, the first two girls he had helped Margarita Lake rescue. A little over a month later, the two girls appeared in court—apparently with Kane and Lake standing beside them. Sau Chun’s initial court hearing was held January 16, 1901, and with the help of the Chinatown Corps Salvation Army “lassies,” Margarita Lake easily convinced Superior Court Judge Coffey that little Chun was probably not Kim Yook’s child, and would be better off in the Methodist Rescue Home than in a Spofford Alley brothel. Ah Ying’s hearing was five days later, on January 21, 1901, and would prove to be a bit more complicated. Although Ah Ying’s mother opposed Kane being named as guardian of her child, her protests were of no avail. In both cases Kane was awarded custody of the girl in question, without any hint that the Methodists objected to his guardianship status. However, the children were left in the rescue home with the Lake women.

Evidence collected in Ah Ying’s guardianship dispute revealed that her mother, Hing Sam, was a widow and worked as a general cleaning woman in a brothel at 829 Washington Street. Because of her long hours (usually from ten in the morning to about midnight) and because of the leftover food available in the brothel, Hing Sam often brought Ah Ying to her workplace. Occasionally she would leave Ying with a neighbor woman who did not keep her very clean, for when Ying was rescued she was filthy and covered with vermin. Moreover, Ying was dressed as a boy and called herself a boy when she first entered the Mission Home. Perhaps because Ah Ying had been taken from her biological mother without the mother’s consent, the case was viewed as “an important test..., and the courtroom was thronged with spectators, white and yellow,” including “about a dozen prominent church women...who
interested in mission work among the Chinese.” A week after the hearing, Margarita Lake wrote in her journal that on January 28, she had seen Ah Wing’s [sic] mother go into the house at 829 Washington Street, and a week after that she described a visit to the Mission Home of Ah Ying’s mother:

Ah Ying’s mother and sister called to see her at half-past two, and a man. Suie and Grace were in the room. When the child was taken into the room she would not go up to speak to them. Acted as though she was afraid. I had to speak to her two or three times. They asked her if she did not want to go out. They would take her to the theater. Asked this two or three times. The mother cried. I told her not to cry, and that I could not see why she cried over this daughter. And I asked if she cried over her daughter that she had sold. They brought some candy.

This may not have been the only time the family visited Ah Ying, for Mrs. Lake wrote in a December 9, 1901 court statement, “The mother and the brothers and sisters have never been denied the right to see her at any time.”

From January 1901, when Kane was appointed guardian of the two girls, until August 3, 1901, when he petitioned for writs of habeas corpus for them, there were no articles about the cases in the San Francisco newspapers. But on July 17, Kane appeared on the steps of the new Oriental Home, ironically on the day of its grand opening, and served the Lakes with a letter demanding that they turn the two children over to him. The letter stated that Mr. Kane wished to place Ah Ying with Mrs. Sitton, the wife of a Cumberland Presbyterian pastor on Clay Street, who ran the little Chambers Memorial Mission, while (Ah) Sau Chun was to be placed with the family of Chan Wing Chun, a Chinese merchant. To add weight to his demands, Kane argued that he had been “importuned” by the Chinese Consul-General Ho You “to make the proposed disposition.” However, Margarita Lake had evidence refuting Kane’s claim, for the Consul General had assured her that he had made no such request. Moreover, Margarita Lake claimed that she herself had been offered a large sum of money to turn over the girls to a Chinese guardian who had “excellent papers,” but whose emissary came from one of the brothels where the girls had formerly lived. Kane then wrote a second letter and gave it to the Lakes. But when it, too, was ignored, he sued out the writs of habeas corpus for the girls. And so Margarita Lake was forced to appear in court on August 2, holding Ah Ying and Sau Chun by the hand.
Ah Ying and Sau Chun with Margarita Lake at their habeas corpus hearing, August 2, 1901.
(San Francisco Examiner, Sunday, August 4, 1901, p. 29)

On August 17, the San Francisco Superior Court denied Kane the writs of habeas corpus, and both children were “remanded to the custody of Miss Margarita Lake.” But the guardianship dispute was far from over. Two days later Margarita Lake wrote in her journal that her lawyer, Mr. Henderson telephoned in the afternoon about little Ah Chun and Ah Ying (or John). [He] said he did not get up to court on Saturday until 11 o’clock, and that he thought we had better not [be] making [a] move for a week or so and see what Mr. Kane would do. He said if we took the initiative we would have a very hard fight as the parents would come up again and try to take them again.

Some months later, Mr. Kane made his move. He was able to secure a citation from the Superior Court that ordered Oriental Home matron Mrs. Kate Lake to produce Ah Ying in court. But on December 9 Mrs. Lake appeared without the girl, requesting instead that the court appoint a new guardian. Since Margarita Lake was on an extended trip to the East Coast, the judge granted a postponement of the hearing until January 6—much to Kane’s chagrin. Nevertheless, Kane made the most of the hearing, bringing fresh arguments to the bench. First, on a positive note, he said Ah Ying’s mother was presently employed as a domestic with a Christian family and was thus “capable of raising her offspring in a fitting manner.” Second, and on the negative side, he stated that in the months since he had been appointed guardian, “adult Chinese women, who were taken from houses of ill repute, had been received into the [Oriental H]ome,...and [thus he] did not think it a fit place for a girl nine years old, as these women might have a bad
influence on her.” However, Judge Troutt was not persuaded by Kane’s arguments, and concluded the day’s hearing by suggesting that Kane “produce evidence that the girl would be better off by going to the place that Kane had chosen than by remaining at the [H]ome.”

Within a few days of Judge Troutt’s refusal to hand over Ah Ying to Kane, posters appeared in Chinatown that were probably intended to raise doubts in the Chinese community about the Methodist women’s reasons for conducting their rescues. The David W. Garton Collection has preserved a notice that the Oriental Home put up around Chinatown in response to those placards. The undated Methodist document begins by alluding to “the unwarranted publication of a notice concerning the recent rescue of a Chinese child Ah Ying from a Chinese brothel,” and ends with the warning: “Neglect your children, allow them to enter dens of vice and iniquity and you will have us as well as the Law arrayed against you. Be kind to your children, keep them pure and clean and the Law will befriend you and you will have our aid and support.”

It is impossible to determine whether the placards exacerbated the natural suspicions that many Chinese immigrants already had toward the Oriental Home or whether the placards were generally ignored. But the Methodist notice would do little to assuage nascent Chinatown fears. First, there is no evidence to suggest that it was translated into Chinese. Second, it failed to recognize the complicated socioeconomic issues related to being a member of a despised immigrant community, and a single mother trying to raise a girl in Chinatown. For example, dressing the child as a boy and calling her a boy could be construed as an act of motherly protection in a community where girls were bought and sold on the open market. By disguising her child as a boy, Sam Hing might have been protecting her daughter from being kidnapped and sold. But Margarita Lake believed that the disguise was merely to “throw the Mission workers off their guard.” Third, keeping her daughter with her at work in the brothel could just as easily be construed as an act of concern and care, as an act of negligence. Because Sam Hing was a widow, she was forced to work long hours in order to survive. By keeping her daughter with her, she could ensure the child’s welfare and safety. Finally, cleanliness was simply not easily maintained in poverty-stricken neighborhoods of San Francisco, which much of Chinatown was.

The fact that Sam Hing began working as a domestic in a Caucasian home soon after her child was taken from her would seem to prove Kane’s point: The mother had taken advantage of the economic opportunity afforded her, and thereby had shown herself to be a fit mother.

But regardless of the Chinese community’s response to the poster war, the placards provoked members of the Oriental Home Board to more aggressive action.

On December 30, 1901, and in preparation for the January 6 continuance, Mrs. L. P. Williams, secretary of the WHMS Oriental Bureau filed a petition for letters of guardianship over Ah Ying. Taking a proactive stance, she charged Kane with “being derelict in the performance of his duties as guardian . . . [and] abus[ing] his trust.” And she further “allege[d] that Kane’s claim that he intended placing the child under the care of Miss Seton [sic] [wa]s without foundation,” and “that the society of which Kane is secretary is absolutely under his control and that upon his failure to secure the child a systematic effort to injure the [H]ome was made in Chinatown by means of placards in which the orders of the court were grossly misrepresented.”

Although the Lake scrapbooks contain no newspaper clippings of the January 6, 1902 continuance, the scrapbooks do contain two newspaper accounts from later in the month that mention Kane. Both deal with an eleven-year-old girl whose mother and stepfather had lost her
to Kane, and the stepfather makes the claim that a family acquaintance had once remarked that he would “give $500 to get possession of the girl.” There are no subsequent newspaper clippings suggesting that Kane received payment for taking the eleven-year-old girl from her mother, whom he claimed was “not a fit woman to be in charge of any child.” But no doubt the Lakes kept the newspaper articles because these gave the impression that Kane might be “rescuing” children for profit. Margarita Lake hinted at this in Ah Ying’s final hearing on March 10, when she “charged Kane with being subsidized by the Chinese who had before sought to get possession of the child.”

Despite Judge Troutt’s decision against Margarita Lake, which argued that “the mother was the natural guardian for the child and that she now appeared to have a respectable home,” Margarita Lake had the final parting shot. She was “determined to watch the woman and her child, and if the infant is not well cared for [I] will probably come into court again with a claim for its custody.” The Oriental Home finally closed its books on the Ah Ying case with a terse and poignant note in its March 1902 monthly report: “March 6th we lost Ah Ying little Jean.”

But what did Margarita Lake and the Oriental Home lose? They had lost Ying’s body: “Habeas corpus. You (Mr. Kane, Sam Hing) now have her body.” Perhaps, too, they had lost her educational and spiritual potential. Newspaper accounts emphasize that Ah Ying was learning to read English and Chinese. But if Ying survived childhood; if the mother was able to keep her new job and provide for her child, then in the end surely all concerned parties had won.

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Sau Chun’s first guardianship hearing, January 1901
(Unidentified newspaper clipping, Kate Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 7. David W. Garton Collection)

Margarita Lake and the Oriental Home versus Frank Kane and the Society for the Suppression of Vice: Round Two

On Tuesday, December 11, 1900, Margarita Lake wrote in her journal:
Mr. Kane got little Ah Chun from a house on Spofford Alley, and brought the mother and the child up to 916 Washington St. about 1 o’clock.
We questioned the mother for about an hour, and at last Mr. Kane told the woman that she must go and leave the child.

She said, “No,” and that the child was too timid to have her in the Home. So [Kane] allowed her to take her to the door. Then he separated them. I carried the baby upstairs and put the old woman out.

God’s Regular Army\(^83\) came up to see about the child, and a Chinese doctor called a number of times to see her. Dr. Wong.\(^84\)

In less than a week after (Ah) Sau Chun’s rescue, Margarita Lake received a letter from Mrs. Harry Brewer, Jr., who had worked with the Salvation Army Chinese Corps from November 1896 until June 1900.\(^85\) Edith aka Mrs. Harry Brewer claimed Ah Chun had been sold to Kim Yook for about $100, and that the parents lived in Fresno.\(^86\) Additional sleuthing would reveal that (Ah) Sau Chun had been sold for $101 when she was about two years old (1897).\(^87\) It was thus fairly clear early on that Sau Chun was not Kim Yook’s natural child. In Chinese terms, Sau Chun was a “mui tsai” (a debt slave),\(^88\) and since she had no blood relationship to her owner (“kwai po”), California state law could be more easily enforced in her case than in Ah Ying’s guardianship dispute.\(^89\) Thus, whereas Ah Ying’s guardianship case ultimately rested on the moral character of her natural mother (was she negligent?), Sau Chun’s case would have to be resolved on the twin issues of race and social formation: What type of home would be better for the Chinese girl? A Caucasian institution (the Oriental Home), a Caucasian family (Kane’s family),\(^90\) or a Chinese merchant family? The solution to this guardianship dispute was not self-evident, and both sides would have a more difficult time playing the moral purity card in their attempts to win Sau Chun.

In August 1901, the court had rejected rather quickly a direct transfer of Sau Chun to Kane’s Chinese merchant family, when Margarita Lake had been able to show that Mr. Chung already had children, and that adding a daughter to the family would be viewed as an economic liability (unless the girl functioned as a “mui tsai” or was subsequently sold).\(^91\) After his request for a writ of habeas corpus for Sau Chun was denied, Kane seems to have forgotten about her guardianship. He would not act on her behalf until months after the court had restored Ah Ying to her natural mother. An unidentified note in the David W. Garton Collection confirms this: “From November 1901 till October 1902 Mr. Kane never inquired about Sau Chün.”\(^92\)
But much to the consternation of the Oriental Home, Kane began a second habeas corpus proceeding to take Sau Chun out of the Home in November 1902. As he had argued the year before in Ah Ying’s case, Kane believed that Sau Chun’s “mind and morals [were] in danger of corruption in the Home,” since the Home gave asylum to prostitutes and was a “bargain counter for Chinese females rescued from brothels at the request of Chinamen who wished them taken to the home so that ultimately they would fall into their hands.” But when Sau Chun’s case came up in Probate Court on December 19, Mrs. L. P. Williams, secretary of the WHMS Oriental Bureau, and Margarita Lake mounted a strong counterattack to Kane’s charges, claiming that the merchant, Chin Ah Chang, with whom Kane wished to place Sau Chun was in fact a “saloon keeper, and the consort of the woman from whom the child had been taken.” The conclusion of the Methodists was that Kane was acting as “the representative of the Chinese who claim[ed]
slave ownership of the little Mei Chun."  Finally, Mrs. Williams impugned Kane’s character, arguing that he was “irascible and quick-tempered and unfit as guardian.”

When the case came up in Superior Court on January 10-11, 1903, Mr. Monroe, the Oriental Home attorney, was able to draw a plausible connection between a recent financial transaction and a transfer of guardianship that raised questions about Kane’s methods of work. In the case cited, Kane had been asked two years earlier to take guardianship of a sixteen-year-old girl named Lillian Young. The foster mother had made a payment of $21 to Kane’s assistant for the legal fees in transferring her foster daughter’s guardianship, and Kane then filed an affidavit stating that Mrs. Young was too poor to pay the amount. Kane then had the court remit all but one dollar of the fee. However, neither Kane nor his assistant ever returned Mrs. Young’s $20. The attorney for the Oriental Home was thus able to argue that Kane’s interest in Sau Chun’s guardianship might likewise have more to do with collecting “legal fees” from a third party, than with his concern for the girl’s welfare.

But if the newspaper accounts are to be trusted, it may have been little seven-year-old Sau (Maud Mei) Chun herself who ultimately won over the Superior Court judge to the side of the Methodist women, rather than either contestant’s legal arguments.

“Let’s hear what the little girl says,” suggested the Judge. “Come here little one,” he called, and the child was brought forward.

“Do you want to go home with Mr. Kane, my child,” he said.

“No,” wailed little Sow Jun.

“He has a nice home in San Rafael, and he has some nice little boys and girls of his own. Wouldn’t you like to play with them?”

Sow Jun’s tiny brown hand clasped the white one of the Judge and she forced her elfin self under his arm till she rested her head in his lap. Then with her eyes filled with tears and her red lips quivering the little girl begged not to be sent to Mr. Kane’s.

“Do you want to stay with me?” asked Coffey gently.

“Oh, I want to go home,” cried the little girl. I want to go home.”

Although the judge decided in favor of the Oriental Home, Mrs. L. P. William’s order to remove Kane as guardian was dismissed, and Kane kept the title. But as he was walking out the courtroom door, Kane was arrested for impersonating an officer of the law. However, within a few days the charges against him were dropped, and three weeks later Kane was reelected secretary and treasurer of the Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice. The Society went so far as to pass a resolution supporting Kane “in his action in the case of the little Chinese girl Lou [sic] Jun,” and it authorized him “to take any steps he saw fit to remove the stigma that had been placed upon the society by the court’s order taking the custody of Sow Jun, a minor Chinese girl, out of their hands.” Encouraged by the Society’s public affirmation of his action in the case, Kane appealed to the California State Supreme Court, hoping that it would grant him an alternate writ of habeas corpus for the girl. However, the Supreme Court refused his petition, and within a few months Mrs. L. P. Williams was granted full custody and guardianship of Sau Chun.

For the most part, the two Lake women dropped out of the San Francisco newspapers at the conclusion of the Sau Chun guardianship dispute. And although there were other internal issues at the Oriental Home that led to the Lakes’ abrupt dismissal at the end of January 1903, no doubt Kane’s persistent agitation to wrest Ah Ying and Sau Chun from the Methodist women’s control had worn down all concerned parties, both physically and emotionally. In June 1903,
Mrs. L. P. Williams resigned from her position as Secretary of the Oriental Bureau for “health reasons,” but it is entirely possible that her health problems were simply a cover for an ongoing power struggle in the Oriental Home. It may be that the Kane guardianship debacle led to her forced resignation. By the end of 1903, Margarita Lake had taken a new position within the Oriental Bureau, becoming the missionary in the WHMS Ellen Stark Japanese Home for Women and Girls, a position that would occupy her time and energy until her marriage in 1910. There is no clear evidence that she ever again had contact with Ah Ying or Sau Chun after she left her position in the Oriental Home.

Not insignificantly, the Oriental Home and Conduct Committee was restructured within a few months of the Lakes’ dismissal and Mrs. L. P. Williams’ resignation. A new set of house rules was established to keep order in the Home. Among the list of twelve—a list that no doubt was posted in the building—was Rule 5 which stated: “No two girls must enter the bathroom or take a bath at the same time.” It is highly likely that this was adopted in response to one of Kane’s concerns: the morality of having pre-adolescent girls sharing living space with former prostitutes.

Conclusion

Thanks to the recent discovery of unpublished Oriental Home records and the Lake women’s turn-of-the-century collection of newspaper clippings—together with WHMS magazine articles, Oriental Bureau annual reports, and annual reports of the Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice, the guardianship disputes of Ah Ying and Sau Chun deepen our understanding of the complexity of child rescue strategies in turn-of-the-century San Francisco. While this essay has focused exclusively upon the strategies of two Caucasian child rescuing societies struggling for the control of two Chinese children, it has done so precisely because such struggles were so rare. As Milicent Shinn argued in 1890, “the [Caucasian] community…is by no means convinced that it is a matter of any importance to save Chinese children from abuse,” and as a result the Protestant missions generally found themselves in legal battles with lawyers representing Chinese clients, not in contests with other Caucasian child-saving organizations.

The Chinese community itself may seem to play only a minor role in these two guardianship disputes, but it should be noted that “Old Mary,” the Chinese Salvation Army “lassie” who sheltered Sau Chun for a number of months before the little girl was taken to the Methodist Rescue Asylum, committed suicide in June 1903 as a result of her continued involvement in rescues for the Methodist women. Neither is there any clear evidence that previously rescued teenage girls of the Oriental Home such as Grace Wong and Caroline Lee (Yuk Ying) worked as translators and guides on the two rescues highlighted in this essay. However, those girls were involved in numerous other rescues in 1900 and 1901.

The guardianship disputes of Sau Chun and Ah Ying deserve further investigation, particularly because of the religious issues involved (Protestant versus Catholic; differing views of sin and perfection); the competing theories of child-rearing and differing conceptions of childhood (where is the best place to raise an orphan/neglected child—with a family or in an institution?); and gender politics (male rescue organization versus female rescue organization)—not to mention the ever present issues of race and class. Yet within this complexity is the strong voice of the Chinese child, Sau Chun—who, if newspaper accounts are to be trusted, claimed her own authority and won for herself a future far different from that of a “mui tsai” in a nameless brothel on Spofford Alley in San Francisco’s Chinatown.
Notes


Pascoe’s *Relationships of Rescue* is the best at analyzing the politics of rescue, but does not deal with the differences between the Methodist and Presbyterian missions or with cases where two different rescue organizations fight for the same girls (cf. 86, 93-100).

The latter is a collection consisting of 2 scrapbooks of newspaper articles and other ephemera related to the Lakes’ 6 years of work in Chinatown, and over 200 additional internal documents related to the work of the Oriental Home, 1896-1903. These materials, loaned to me by Margarita’s grandson, have been labeled “The David W. Garton Collection.”


This was part of the general rape law (*California State Assembly Statutes and Amendments to the Codes*, 1855 [p.105]; 1889 [p. 223]; 1897 [p. 201]).


“Statutory Laws,” *Annual Report of the Pacific Society Suppression of Vice [and] Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Animals* (1900), 45. These California laws were enacted in 1878 (Milicent W. Shinn, “Charities for Children in San Francisco,” *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* [January 1890], 89), and Shinn correctly notes that they were the legal basis for the Chinese mission rescues (91). See also Frances Cahn and Valeska Bary, *Welfare Activities of Federal, State, and Local Governments in California, 1850-1934* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), 75.

Cf. Cahn and Bary, 51.

Margarita had written in her journal for Monday, May 29, 1899: “Called at the **Urica Society** twice to get them to do something for the little girl Ah Chun. They promised to do something that night, but did not” (“Journal of Margarita Lake,” David W. Garton Collection). “Urica” appears to be Margarita Lake’s misspelling of the word “Eureka” which she had crossed out.

San Francisco newspapers are notoriously inexact in naming the child protective societies involved in rescues. For example, San Francisco did have a national Jewish relief society called the “Eureka Benevolent Society,” and also a “California Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children” (Charles K. Jenness, *The Charities of San Francisco: A Directory*. San Francisco: Book Room Print, 1894, pp. 22, 45). But I have not been able to find any listing of charities in San Francisco that name a “Eureka Society for the Protection of Children.” Yet in two 1897 newspaper articles, Mr. Holbrook is called the Secretary of this “Eureka Society” (“Torturing Helpless Children,” unidentified newspaper clipping, July 18, 1897 [Lake Scrapbook 1, p. 19]; “Taken out of a Den of Slaves,” unidentified newspaper clipping, July 26, 1897 [Lake Scrapbook 1, p. 22]). Furthermore, Charles Holbrook was secretary of the “California Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children” from at least 1894 (Jenness, *Charities of San Francisco*, p. 45; see also “Lie Wan, the Beautiful, Breaks Her Bonds and Escapes to China,” unidentified newspaper clipping, April 5, 1899 [Lake Scrapbook 1, p. 70]; “Does Not Want to Be Rescued,” unidentified newspaper clipping, July 15, 1899 [Lake Scrapbook 1, p. 83]; and “My Work Is among the Chinese Women and Girls” [Garton Collection, file 17b]; cf. James Flamant, “Child-Saving Charities in This Big Town,” *The Call* May 28, 1893, p. 18, [http://www.sfgenealogy.com/sf/history/hgcs.htm#list](http://www.sfgenealogy.com/sf/history/hgcs.htm#list).

Finally, to confuse matters just a little more, in a letter to editor of the *San Francisco Examiner*, July 31, 1899, the attorney for the Methodist mission, Henry E. Monroe, stated that the “Society for the Suppression of Vice” had helped to rescue a girl that an earlier newspaper article had credited to the “Eureka Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children” (“Why Kim Oy Went Back to Chinatown,” *The Examiner*, July 31, 1899 [Lake Scrapbook 1, pp. 86-87], “Does not Want to be Rescued,” unidentified newspaper clipping, July 15, 1899 [Lake Scrapbook 1, p. 83]).

In an interview in March 1899, Margarita Lake told a reporter that “In the last two years Mr. McMurray of the Children’s Protective Society has located many a young girl for us by going around as a tourist. The keepers, however, now know him by sight, and our tactics must be changed every day” (“How We are Fighting to Free Girl Slaves in Chinatown,” *The Examiner*, March 2, 1899 [Lake Scrapbook 1, p. 76-77]). It is not entirely clear whether this society is different from the Eureka Society or the California Society mentioned above.

According to one 1901 newspaper report, the lessee of the brothel property at 11 Spofford Alley was “Suey Sin” (“Will Fight to Suppress Slave Trade in Chinatown,” *Evening Post*, February 18, 1901 [Lake Scrapbook 2, pp. 28-31]).

Margarita’s journal entry for November 17, 1899 reads: “Called early this morning on a Salvation lassie about Ah Chun….Went out between 12 and 1 to see [the] doctor about Ah Chun.” It is unclear from this entry whether the “Salvation lassie” is a Chinese woman, but other records indicate that “Chun” was placed in the care of “Mary, Salvation Chinese woman” (unpublished note, David W. Garton Collection), and according to the Salvation Army newspaper, “Sister Mary [is] our only Chinese lassie” (“Celestial Clean-ups,” *The War Cry: An Official Gazette of the Salvation Army Pacific Coast Region*, no. 568 [October 15, 1898], 8). In his history of the Salvation Army in Chinatown, Check-Hung Yee writes “Sister Mary…was dressed in full uniform with a hallelujah bonnet, and stepped into the ring in a community where it was customary that no lady be seen in the company of men” (*For My Kinsmen’s Sake: A Salvation Army Officer’s Quarter Century of Service in San Francisco Chinatown* [Rancho Palos Verdes, CA: Salvation Army Western Territory, 1986], 61).
Unpublished note, David W. Garton Collection. Ah Quai, an “inmate” of the 829 Washington Street brothel, had previously spent some months at the Methodist mission and would manage to escape to the mission in late March (“Chinatown Slave Girl’s Thrilling Dash for Liberty,” The Examiner, March 30, 1901, p. 1). She would tell a story that implicated the Chief of Police, William P. Sullivan, in the Chinatown sex trafficking scandal ([Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 49]; cf. The Star, May 4, 1901 [Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 153]).

An article in the Japan Tribune, probably from early May 1901, states, “When Sullivan was the President of the Pacific Society for the suppression of vice, he was regarded as an honorable man, and had the respect of the community, as a conscientious and zealous worker in the humane endeavors of that worthy organization...” (“The Captain Wittman Plague,” n.d. [Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 26]). Biggy, who was also in the running for Chief of Police when Sullivan was chosen for the position, was vice president of the Society “while Frank J. Kane was doing excellent work under them” (ibid.).

William P. Sullivan died November 11, 1901. He was Roman Catholic, and must have known Frank Kane well.

Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice Annual Report (1900), 51.

Mrs. L. P. Williams, “Two New Little Girls,” Children’s Home Missions, 6 (1901): 39-40. It is perhaps not too far off to suggest that Edith Maud Eaton’s (Sui Sin Far) short story “A Chinese Boy Girl” (Century Illustrated Magazine, April 1904) might have been based upon the story of Ah Ying, since Eaton did live in San Francisco from 1898 to 1900. The story is set in Los Angeles and focuses on a troublesome Chinese “girl” who is learning English at Miss Mason’s school. Miss Mason is able to procure the help of the president of the “Society for the Prevention of Cruelty” to try and rescue the child from “her” father and send “her” to a home for Chinese girls in San Francisco. But the “girl” cannot be found, and Miss Mason eventually discovers that the child she thought was a girl was in fact a boy dressed as a girl to keep demons from finding him and killing him.

Although Eaton was living in Seattle by the time of Ah Ying’s rescue, it is possible that she could have read about Ah Ying’s guardianship dispute in newspaper articles sent to her or in letters from her friends in San Francisco.

A later newspaper account states: “When the Methodist Rescue Home made Frank J. Kane guardian of little Maud Mei Chun two years ago, the proceeding was so much a matter of form that the possibility of his ever claiming the child was an idea too remote for consideration. Officers who had assisted in the rescue of Chinese slave girls had figured sometimes, as a matter of convenience, in guardianship papers, but always with the understanding that the child in question was the ward of the home. This was the case when Kane was appointed the legal protector of Mei Chun” (The Examiner, November 7, 1902 [Lake Scrapbook 2, pp. 110-111]).

“Chinese Mission Opposes Kane,” unidentified newspaper clipping (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 79); “Kane’s Methods Inquired Into,” The Call, January 10, 1903, p. 5.

“Think They Can Identify White Child Rescued from its Chinatown Captors,” The Examiner, January 10, 1903, p. 2; Obituary notice, The Call, November 24, 1908, p. 15.

San Francisco city directories for 1889 and 1890 list Frank Kane as “Superintendent” of the Youths’ Directory (W.H.L. Corran, Langley’s San Francisco Directory [San Francisco: Francis, Valentine and Co., 1889]; Langley’s San Francisco Directory [San Francisco: Painter and Co., 1890]); and St. Joseph’s Union lists him still as “Superintendent” in 1892 (6:3 [1892], 7). But the 1893 Youths’
Directory lists him as “Secretary” ([Langley’s San Francisco Directory [San Francisco: Crocker and Langley, 1893]])

22 Flamant, “Child-Saving Charities in This Big Town.”


26 Shinn, “Charities for Children in San Francisco,” 81. Cahn and Bary state that the Youths’ Directory had been founded “primarily to assist in placing city children in homes in the country” (23).

27 Ibid. In one three-month period of 1892, 43 of 71 children placed in orphanages were placed in St. Vincent’s Orphan Asylum, and 54 out of 128 children were placed with families (St. Joseph’s Union [1892], 7).


29 Ibid., 85.


31 Jenness, The Charities of San Francisco, p. 47. See also, “Mrs. Lang’s Children,” The Call, July 24, 1896, p. 7; and “Transcript of the Evidence Taken and Proceeding Had before the Assembly Committee of the Legislature of the State of California, Sitting in San Francisco, California, Commencing Tuesday, Feb. 6, 1901,” California State Archives, Sacramento, CA, 543.

32 Jenness, Charities of San Francisco, p. 47.


34 “Secretary Kane Arrested,” The Call, February 9, 1897, p. 7. By 1898 The Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice had added “Pacific Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Animals” to its name (Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice Annual Report [1898-1899]).

35 “Kane’s Contempt Case,” The Call, June 13, 1897, p. 6.

36 “Man and Wife Want the Child,” The Chronicle, January 23, 1902 (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 71); “Father Demands His Daughter,” unidentified newspaper clipping (Lake Scrapbook, 2 p. 71).

“Transcript of the Evidence,” 543. Dennis Smith states that a “Special’s” uniform and patch were “virtually indistinguishable—to all but careful inspection—from those of standard police issue. The regular police [in 1906] wore a seven-point star on their jacket and breast, but a special police officer wore a six-point star” (*San Francisco Is Burning: The Untold Story of the 1906 Earthquake and Fires* [New York: Viking, 2005], 159-160).

“Kane Is in More Trouble,” *The Bulletin*, January 11, 1903, p. 36; “Showed a Star He Had No Right to Wear,” *The Examiner*, January 11, 1903, p. 27. Smith notes that a Special’s six-point star had “two or three letters in the center rather than a number” like a regular police officer’s badge, and that “the first time a particular badge was assigned, the letters represented the wearer’s initials, but when it was returned, it was usually reissued to someone whose initials did not match” (*San Francisco Is Burning*, 160).

“Legal Obstacles in Their Way,” unidentified newspaper clipping, September 6, 1897 (Lake Scrapbook 1, p. 41).


E.g., “Rescue of a Child Slave Girl from Chinese Den Frustrated by White Watchman,” *The Examiner*, March 2, 1901 (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 71); “Raided a Slave Den,” unidentified newspaper article (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 70). In February 1901, Kane states that he made seven or eight rescues in the past two months, and that he had been out in Chinatown just the night before with Miss Lake (“Transcript of the Evidence,” 543-44).

“Journal of Margarita Lake (Dragon Exercise Book),” David W. Garton Collection, unpublished.


*Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice Annual Report* (1900), 35.

“Won the Judge When She Sang,” unidentified newspaper clipping, January 17, 1901 (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 7). The date “Jan 17, 1901” is handwritten on the clipping. However a search of the San Francisco *Examiner*, *Call*, *Evening Bulletin*, and *Chronicle* for January 16-18, 1901 has not
uncovered this source.

49. “Girl in Boy’s Attire,” unidentified newspaper clipping, January 22, 1901 (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 8).

50. Mrs. Lake’s later court deposition used the words “opposed by the relatives,” when in fact one of the “relatives” opposing the guardianship was the child’s own mother (“Chinese Mission Opposes Kane,” unidentified newspaper clipping [Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 79]; “Girl in Boy’s Attire”).

51. “Won the Judge When She Sang.”


53. “Girl in Boy’s Attire.”

54. “Churchwomen Interested.”

55. “Journal of Margarita Lake.”

56. Ibid. The text in ink reads “Ah Wing,” but in pencil it has been corrected to Ah Ying.

57. Ibid. Margartia Lake’s charge that Hing Sam had sold a daughter is not mentioned in any other records.

58. “Chinese Mission Opposes Kane.”

59. “Contest for Possession of Little Chinese Maiden,” The Evening Post, December 9, 1901 (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 73); “To Apply for the Guardianship for Ah Lin,” The Examiner, January 11, 1903, p. 28.

60. The Chung family lived at 754 Washington Street (“Chinese Maiden Causes a Fight,” unidentified newspaper clipping, August 3, 1901 [Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 70])


62. Ibid.

63. “Secretary Kane Defeated in Court,” The Evening Post, August 17, 1901 (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 70).

64. I.e., August 17.

65. “Journal of Margarita Lake.”
“Chinese Mission Opposes Kane,” unidentified newspaper clipping (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 79); “Frank Kane and Mrs. Lake Battle for Child,” The Call, December 10, 1901, p. 10.

“Frank Kane and Mrs. Lake Battle.”

“Chinese Mission Opposes Kane.”

Ibid.

Mrs. L.P. Williams’ courtroom accusation obliquely mentioned “...a systematic effort to injure the home was made in Chinatown by means of placards in which the orders of the court were grossly misrepresented” (“Claims Kane Abuses Trust,” The Call, December 31, 1901, p. 5). The Oriental Home response to the placards focuses on where Ah Ying was found and what she looked like when rescued (“Owing to a Possible Misconception”).

“Ibid.”

Will Investigate Slave Traffic,” The Evening Post, February 25, 1901 (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 35). Ms. Lake’s argument seems to make little sense, since it was illegal for any underage child—boy or girl—to be in a brothel without the presence of a parent.

“Owing to the Possible Misconception.”

“Claims Kane Abuses Trust.”

Ibid.

Ibid.

“Father Demands His Daughter,” unidentified newspaper clipping (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 71); “Man and Wife Want the Child,” The Chronicle, January 23, 1902 (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 71).

“Man and Wife Want Child.”


“Child Awarded to Its Mother.”

Ibid.


“Chinese Mission Opposes Kane.”

“God’s Regular Army” was incorporated in Oregon, 8 March 1898 (Biennial Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Oregon, Twentieth Legislative Assembly [Salem: State of Oregon, 1899] p. 86). Frank Kane called “God’s Regular Army” a “fake religious order” run by “George
Spurgeon Duggan” who “was engaged in the religious work for ten years. He was five years in the Salvation Army. Then he branched for himself and started the Army of Jesus Christ, in which in which he was the General, in fact the whole organization was in himself. He said the reason he left the Salvation Army was he saw it was an easy way to make a living and money” (Annual Report of the Pacific Society for the Suppression of Vice Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Animals for 1898-1899 [San Francisco: Hancock Bros., 1900] pp. 15-18; see also “A Fraud on the Chinese” San Francisco Call 20 August 1898, p. 7).


85 Known as Lieutenant Edith Graham when she first arrived in Chinatown, she became Captain of the Chinese Corps in October 1898, and held that position until she and her husband moved to Monterey (Check-Hung Yee, For My Kinsmen’s Sake, 275; 1900 Federal Census, California, Monterey County). Margarita Lake’s association with the Salvation Army may go back to about 1892 when she probably attended a Salvation Army camp meeting at Elim Grove, Cazadeoro, California (Letter to “My Dearest Margie,” September 14, 1894, David W. Garton Collection).

86 This was, in fact, correct. Ah Chun’s father, Lai Foon, was a partner in an opium joint at 71 China Alley in Fresno, and the name of Chun’s older brother, Seu Ho, can be found along with the rest of the Lai family living at 1145 G Street, Fresno, in 1900 (U.S. Federal Census). Maud Mei Chun Lai would be a witness at her brother Seu Ho’s re-entry to the United States on August 19, 1919, and she would keep his Alien Identity records until her death.

87 Some early newspaper accounts say that she was sold when “only fifteen days old” (“Will Investigate Slave Traffic,” Evening Post, February 25, 1901 [Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 35]), but Margarita Lake states under oath that the fifteen-day-old child in her care was sold for three hundred dollars (“Transcript of the Evidence,” 495), and later newspaper articles will say Ah Chun was two years old when sold (e.g., “Chinese Maiden Causes a Fight”).


89 “Statutory Laws,” 45.

90 “Arrest Kane at Court Door.”

91 “Chinese Maiden Causes a Fight.”

92 “Sau Chün Rescued for the First Time,” 2.

93 “Demands His Chinese Ward.”

94 Ibid. See also “Witness Scores Frank J. Kane,” The Call, December 20, 1902, p. 4.

95 “Kane’s Methods Inquired Into,” The Call, January 10, 1903, p. 5.

96 “Mrs. Laura P. Williams Scores Secretary Kane,” unidentified newspaper clipping (Lake Scrapbook 2, p. 111); “Witness Scores Frank J. Kane”; “They Don’t Want Kane as Guardian,” The

“Mrs. Laura P. Williams Scores”; “Witness Scores Frank J. Kane.”


Ibid.


On October 22, 1926, Mrs. L. P. Williams signed a deposition stating that she had been appointed guardian of May Chun Lai in 1902 (“In re the American Nativity of May Chun Lai,” [personal collection]). Although the guardianship year is clearly in error, Mrs. Williams must have become Ah Chun’s guardian shortly after the Lakes’ dismissal from the Oriental Home in late January or early February 1903, but before Mrs. Williams resigned from her position as secretary of the Oriental Bureau in July, 1903.

*Fourteenth Year of the California Conference of the Woman’s Home Missionary Society Annual Report* (1903), 21.

In a letter dated October 19, 1908, Margarita’s mother, Kate asks Margarita if she had seen “Maud among the crowd” of people at the WHMS annual meeting in Philadelphia (Kate Lake to Margarita, David W. Garton Collection). The tenor of the question would lead one to suspect that Margarita had had very little contact with the Oriental Home children after her dismissal.


“Charities for Children in San Francisco,” 91.
