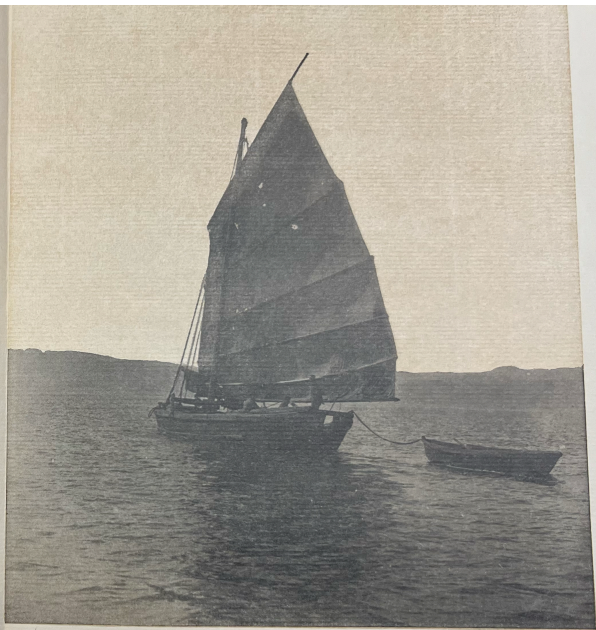


According to tradition, the latter leased the area from George P. McNear and his brother, pioneer Marin brickmakers, for \$1,000 a year then sub-leased it to the Chinese fishermen for \$3,000. Bullis and his brothers had originally sold 700 acres of Point San Pedro to the McNears in the 1860's then, only a few months later, bought back a 365-acre parcel. Presumably China Camp Cove lay just beyond Bullis' property.

Anti-Chinese discrimination was rampant in the 1870's and the Chinese fishermen used Bullis as their contact and "front" with the San Francisco market. He was also captain of their little fleet. Californians did not approve of Chinese skippers of vessels of any size so it was Bullis who took the shrimp to 'Frisco and it was he who brought back from Redwood City the 900 cords of wood China Camp used up each season. In 1880 a law was passed to bar Chinese entirely from commercial fishing but it was found unconstitutional only two months after enactment. Some of the hostility was perhaps justified since the so-called Celestials were even more ruthless exploiters of California's fisheries than 19th Century *Anglos*. They had learned of the tasty *Crango franciscorum*, the so-called San Francisco Bay shrimp, from eight Italian shrimpers who used felucca-rigged boats and seines in deep water. Not only did finely-meshed nets imported from China drive the Italians out of business but thirty percent of the Orientals' catch tended to be young smelt, perch, flounders, sole, tomcod, anchovy, bass and sculpin. These were often too small to eat and too far gone to throw back, so the Chinese used them to "dress the soil" of China Camp. Behind the thirty to forty shacks near the water's edge were truck gardens for long beans and *bok choy*.

But the real fertilizer industry at China Camp was in the hulls retrieved after the shrimp were dried and threshed in clearings made in the brush of the hillside behind the cove. Twenty to thirty tons of shrimp a week were prepared for sale. The San Francisco market could take only a small part of the catch in fresh shrimp, which sold for 8¢ to 14¢ a pound. The rest was dried for shipment to China. The shells were sent too, to nourish the worn-out soils of the Old Country. Selling at \$20 a ton, the shells returned the Marin County Chinese a profit of \$5 a ton after all expenses.

Rickety piers stretched into the water and the stakes to which the shrimp nets were attached extended for a mile or more into the flats of San Pablo Bay. There were boathouses and marine ways as well as homes in China Camp. The editor of a mugbook history of Marin County noted a thirty-five foot craft and a forty-footer on the ways when he visited the cove



Chinese fishing boat, San Francisco Bay. Photo courtesy the Bancroft Library.