First Street, Portland

By Unknown

On First Street, the Hop Wo laundry was next to the Monnastes and Davis blacksmith shop. Many other towns had the same two kinds of businesses. People needed blacksmiths to shoe horses and repair tools and other equipment. In frontier towns, where men outnumbered women, laundry, traditionally done by women, was one job where Chinese found little competition. Single men often preferred not to perform their own domestic chores but ate at a hotel or rooming house and paid someone else to do the laundry.

In the 1850s, Portland had wooden sidewalks and tamped dirt streets. Wagons and horses were the preferred modes of transportation, so when it rained, which happened for much of the year, wagons, horses, and people had to slog through seas of mud. Getting around in Portland presented problems aplenty. This was especially true for women, who had to choose between soiling their skirt hems and risking a show of ankle by hitching their skirts up to step across puddles.

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