

Fei Sheng

Building “The Gold Mountains”: The Chinese Environmental Experiences in the Australian and Californian Gold Rushes.

My historical research project is based on my PhD dissertation, which used an environmental perspective to review the three stages of the nineteenth-century Victorian gold rushes in Australia. In detail, I explore how the gold rushes were caused by environmental and social factors, and how mining changed from shallow digging into deep seeking and finally centralized on quartz refining. As a result of the changed mining technologies, the natural landscape and the built environment were both dramatically reshaped by miners, including the Chinese.

In this project, I will further conduct a comparative study on how Chinese transferred their indigenous environmental experiences onto the Californian goldfields, and what were the similarities or differences compared to the Australian approach. Specifically, I will use the Chinese and English materials to show how the Chinese migrants embedded into the local environment and built their new home—“The Gold Mountain”—in a new continent.