

**THREE COINS:
A 19th Century Romance and Adventure Featuring
a Transcontinental Railroad Worker and a Chinese Slave Girl**

Russell N. Low, MD



"Three Coins is a great story that inspires all of us to explore our roots and to celebrate the diversity that makes us uniquely American."

A new historical novel entitled *Three Coins*, by Russell N. Low, recreates the world of Tong Yan Gai or Chinatown before the turn of the century. It is a world where old traditions and family values are set against the unwelcoming attitudes of the American West. Ah Ying's determination to survive her life as a child slave is only surpassed by her desire for love and her hope for the future.

Three Coins teaches and illustrates early Chinese American history through the stories of the people whose lives shaped this history. The story is compelling because it is told by the great grandson of Lai Wah, the railroad worker, and Ah Ying, the child slave or mui tsai.

Finding a previously unknown 100 year old Hong family photograph amongst the belongings of his great uncle Kim, Low embarked upon a decades-long search to find the stories behind the 1903 photograph. In *Three Coins* he masterfully weaves family stories and real-life characters with the historical and political events of 19th century America. *Three Coins* is meticulously researched and documented with over 100 newspaper articles, photographs, and photographs. It is a text of Chinese American history brought to life by the drama, romance, and intrigue of his rich family story.



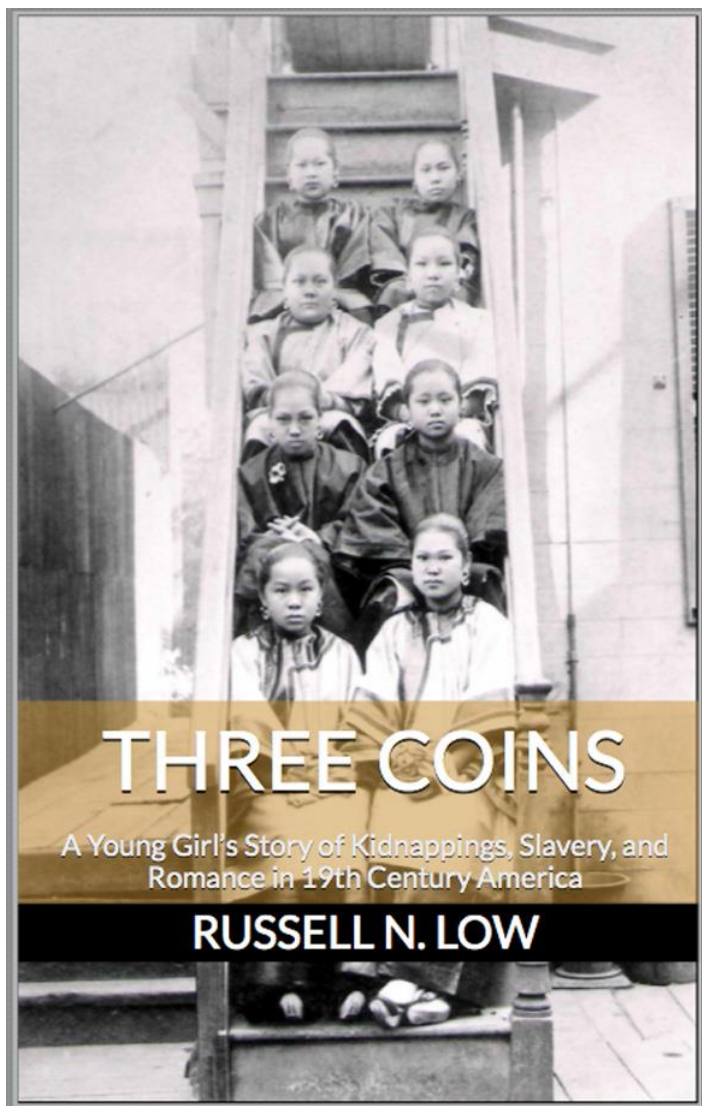
The saga of Ah Ying and Lai Wah is intertwined with the history of the American West. It begins with the building of the transcontinental railroad, a project only made possible by the heroic actions of 12,000 Chinese men, including Low's great grandfather, Hung Lai Wah and his brother Jick Wah. Their story recreates the hardships of building the railroad through the mountains, the bitterly cold winters, and the blasting accident in the Great Summit Tunnel that claimed Jick Wah's right eye. What these young

Chinese railroad workers accomplished with simple hand tools and black powder was nothing short of miraculous as they built a railroad through some of the harshest landscape in North America.

The story then explores the devastating effects of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the subsequent trafficking of young Chinese women as part of the illegal slave trade. Three Coins sheds light on the role of the Presbyterian church and the Occidental Mission Home for Girls, who boldly rescued thousands of these Chinese women giving them a new life in America. Ah Ying is a 9-year-old girl when she is brought to America as a child slave in 1880. She refuses to be held down by slave owners, missionaries, or Tong high binder thugs, who kidnap her. With the help of her romantic interest, the heroic railroad worker, Lai Wah, she escapes and takes control of her life. Against great odds she survived, found romance, and started a family that to this day continues to shape the world.

The heroic role of the early Chinese women is often overlooked. Yet, these courageous women who came to America under the worst of circumstances, became the foundation of early Chinese American society. These women were bold and courageous, and above all else they knew how to survive.

Together Low's great-grandparents overcame countless obstacles to make a life for themselves in America. Their tale of triumph over hardship is truly an American story. Three Coins touches upon the themes of immigration, discrimination, human trafficking, and romance that are as relevant today as they were 140 years ago. Three Coins celebrates all the immigrant stories that make us uniquely American.



THREE COINS

A Young Girl's Story of Kidnappings, Slavery, and
Romance in 19th Century America

RUSSELL N. LOW



Chun Ngou

Ah Gewi

Tom Shee

Kim Tun

Hung Lai Woh

Bing Quong

Kim Seung