

= Lum You =

Lum You (ca . 1861 ? January 31 , 1902) ? sometimes spelled Lum Yu ? was an immigrant Chinese laborer and convicted murderer in the Pacific Northwest . He is famous for being the only person to have been legally executed in Pacific County , Washington , and for his death row prison break supposedly arranged by the very jailers charged with his captivity .

= = Biography = =

Lum You was among the many Chinese laborers who came to Washington near the turn of the century . A proud , sociable dandy , You was well @-@ liked in the white community . He spoke a little English , and acted as an agent between the Chinese workers and their employers .

In 1894 You approached the South Bend police chief , Marion Egbert , complaining that a fellow Chinese resident by the name of Ging had threatened him . Egbert brushed You off and suggested he deal with the situation himself . You took this advice , attacking Ging with an axe . For this act he was convicted of assault ; he was fined \$ 500 and was sentenced to a prison term of six months .

In the summer of 1901 , You was employed as a cannery worker and living in Bay Center . While playing cards on August 6 of that year , he was assaulted , threatened , and robbed by Oscar Bloom , a white man with a reputation as a bully . This time You did not approach the police , but instead immediately took matters into his own hands : he went to his room to retrieve his gun , sought out and shot Bloom in the abdomen , and then fled the scene . Bloom survived long enough to swear a deathbed affidavit identifying You as his killer .

Public sympathy for You was high , but white employers of the Chinese workers pressed officials for action to be taken against him . Accordingly , You was arrested on August 7 and in October 1901 was tried and convicted for the murder of Oscar Bloom . Contrary to the jurors ' belief that You would receive a light sentence , the judge ordered that You be hanged . The execution was scheduled for January 31 , 1902 .

Even after his conviction You continued to enjoy public support . Petitions for clemency , one of which was signed by one of the jurors , were sent to the state governor . County officials sympathized with You , supposedly leaving his cell door unlocked at night and encouraging him to escape . You eventually did escape , early in the morning of January 14 : one news report claimed the improvised lock to his cell door had been picked with the aid of a confederate . You hid in the environs of South Bend for several days , during which he was hunted by a squad led by sheriff Thomas A. Roney . On January 15 he was sighted by two men ; the following day the county commissioners met and agreed to offer a reward of \$ 200 for You 's capture . On January 17 You was finally apprehended by a three @-@ man posse . You offered no resistance , and when asked how he escaped , said only that the door was open and he walked out .

On January 27 governor Henry McBride rejected one of the petitions for clemency on procedural grounds , and on January 30 confirmed by wire that he would not be commuting You 's sentence . Anticipation of the execution became so great that Roney was besieged with requests to attend . Roney issued 500 invitation cards , some examples of which survive .

You 's hanging proceeded as planned inside the courthouse of the county seat , South Bend , on the morning of January 31 , 1902 . Though it had been expected that he would break down , You ate fairly well that morning and went to the gallows without assistance . He bade his friends goodbye and then uttered his last words , to his executioners : " Kill me good . " The trap was sprung by means of a rope which , along with three dummy ropes , extended into an adjoining room . Each of the four executioners concealed in that room pulled his rope simultaneously , but only the sheriff knew which was the trigger .

You 's was the first and only official execution ever to take place in Pacific County . A month after his arrest , a new act of the Washington State Legislature took effect which required executions for any future crimes to be carried out at the Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla .

= = Legacy = =

Lum You 's trial and execution attracted a great deal of contemporary publicity in Pacific County , and has since passed into the realm of folk legend . His story has been researched and recounted by local historians Ruth Dixon , Willard R. Espy , and Sydney Stevens . Espy , also a nationally renowned poet , memorialized You in a humorous epitaph . You was also the subject of a biographical play , The Hanging of Lum You by the Oysterville @-@ based Shoalwater Storytellers .