

Identity of body a problem for officials and residents

In the beginning, it was only a small article on the front page of the Oct. 1, 1908, *Evening World*, but the story would remain in the local news for a week. The newspaper initially reported that Sam Moy, "the chinaman (cq) who came here yesterday to start a laundry," had jumped off the Indianapolis Southern railroad trestle.

Though the approaching train was able to stop in time, the man was seriously injured because the drop was 30 feet. Two hours later he died at the hospital. The *Evening World* was guilty of bad taste, referring to the man as a "chink."

Anyway, more details about the man's life were revealed in the Oct. 3 edition, including his name, which had been amended by the newspaper to Gonn Sam. It was revealed that Sam had received a broken arm and internal injuries. He never regained consciousness.

Reported the newspaper, "In the pockets of the celestial (compare that with calling him a "chink") were some letters, a business card showing that he had conducted a chop suey restaurant in Youngstown, Ohio, and \$2.37 in money."

The letters presented a problem until Lee, the houseboy for Edward Seward, translated



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

one, apparently from Sam's father back in China. Continued the *Evening World*, "The letter said that the old man was in receipt of \$200 which Gonn Sam had sent to him. It continued, 'You have been in the United States now for twenty years, and I would like for you to come home.'"

The business card for the dead man's Youngstown restaurant was unique. According to the newspaper, "... on one side contained the picture of a sow with a litter of little pigs, and under the picture was the sentence 'Hot Lunchy at All Hours.'"

It was Lee who telegraphed Youngstown to see if Sam had any relatives there. If the response was negative, the body was going to be turned over to the 'medical department of Indiana University.'

Another local Chinese person able to shed some light on Sam's arrival in Bloomington

was Sam Moy, who operated a laundry. He said that he believed Sam was formerly of Greencastle and passing through on his way to Lafayette. There he planned to open a laundry.

It is likely that everyone was confused about the identity of the man at that point. To the rescue came a Chinese student at the university. Jiu Linn Lee announced that he would see that his countryman received a decent burial. That would save Sam from "going to the pickling barrel," as the *Evening World* indelicately put it.

Jiu Linn sent a letter to the Chinese minister in Washing, D.C., in the hope that the minister would help. Meanwhile, according to the newspaper, "large crowds view it (the embalmed corpse) daily in the morgue."

The next development appeared in the Oct. 6 issue of the *Evening World*. Hundreds of laundry customers of Moy Sam were relieved to learn that he did not jump off the bridge, after all.

And so it was that a Chinese gentleman, A.B. Mind, and his lawyer arrived in Bloomington to take charge of the situation. Their conclusion, among other things, was that Sam was robbed. Nevertheless, Ming and the

lawyer said they knew where Sam's cousin was and would notify him.

Reported the *Evening World* of Oct. 7, "The Wrong Chinaman Again. This morning undertaker Harrel received the following telegram from Chicago. 'Ship remains in hospital case of George Sing to John O'Brien, undertaker, 172 Blue Island Avenue, Chicago, C.O.D.'"

Were the *Evening World* readers getting confused at that point? The newspaper certainly didn't sound like it knew who the victim was. Harrell couldn't comply with the telegram because Goon Sam wasn't George Sing and because express companies were not enthusiastic about shipping bodies C.O.D.

In spite of the mixup, Goon Sam was shipped to Chicago. The money for the shipment had come through for the shipping of George Sing's body. Continued the *Evening World* on Oct. 10, "Tonight Goon's remains will lie in state in the house of his relative in the heart of Chinatown, and many joss sticks will be burned to drive away the foreign devils. Then with other ceremonies Goon will be properly started on the road to join his ancestors."

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