

Sam Moy (- 23 Dec 1905)

The Evening Star, December 24, 1905, p. 2

Suicide of Chinaman

Sam Moy Hangs Himself in His Laundry

Had Been Despondent

Lack of Money Ascribed as the Cause

Had Been Anxious to Return to China --

Statement Made by His Brother

Patrons of the Chinese laundry at the corner of 25th and K streets northwest finding the laundry closed last night, made an investigation and discovered by peering through a rear window the form of the proprietor hanging by a rope from a rafter in the kitchen. The police were notified, and, forcing their way into the laundry, they found the dead body of Sam Moy. Coroner Nevitt was notified. After he had reviewed the remains the coroner stated that he would give a certificate of suicide. A brother of the dead man, known as Moy Soon, took charge of the remains and they were turned over to Undertaker Lee to be prepared for burial. Discouragement is assigned as the cause for the suicide.

Sam Moy, the dead Chinaman, had been in this country for about fifteen years according to his brother. Most of that time was spent in the north, mostly in Boston. He returned to his native country about five years ago, but came back to the United States after a short stay. Six or seven months ago he came here to see his brother, Moy Soon, who keeps a laundry at 1226 I street northwest. The brother offered to set Sam Moy up in business and purchased for him the laundry at the corner of 25th and K streets northwest and he had been conducting a good business there for the past six months.

Sam Moy was last seen alive by his brother late Friday evening. He went to see his brother and they walked over to the corner of 25th and K streets together to talk business. At that time, the brother stated to a Star reporter last night, Sam complained of not feeling well, or as the brother expressed it: "Belly feel sickee; no good." Sam also showed signs of being discouraged and despondent. He had a wife in China and he has been anxious to back to see her. Friday evening he talked a good deal about a trip to China and complained that he did not have money enough to meet the expense. Another thing which added to his despondency was that a friend named John Suay, returned to China recently and Sam Moy had wished to accompany him, but was unable to do so, his lack of means forbidding. There was nothing said at this last talk between brothers about committing suicide, however.

Closed During Day

According to the neighbors, the laundry kept by Sam Moy was closed most of the day yesterday. Patrons who visited it in the afternoon found all the doors locked, but attributed it to some peculiarity of the Chinaman. About 9:30 o'clock last night, however, some of the patrons grew curious, as stated, and made an investigation. One window was not covered up, that in the laundry on the K street side. The gas jet was burning dimly and in that light they could see the form of a man suspended in the air.

Police Notified

The alarm was given to the police in two ways. Policemen Newton and Dulin, the men on the beat, while at 24th and H streets, were told by an excited colored woman, who was at the laundry, that a Chinaman was dead. The station house was also notified by some neighbors. The two officers named, who hastened to the scene, found all the doors and windows of the laundry closely barred and locked.

They forced open the front door, and, stepping back through the office and a middle room, they discovered the body of the dead Chinaman hanging in the rear room, used as a kitchen.

There was every indication that the man had caused his own death. A gas pipe which led down from the ceiling was bent under a rafter which ran across the room about a foot below the ceiling, as if to reinforce the strength of the beam. A towel was carefully wrapped around the rafter to prevent the sharp edges from cutting the rope. Making the rope secure about the rafter and the gas pipe where the towel was placed, he had evident slipped a noose over his head. In order to get away from the floor he placed two soap boxes in position, one on top of the other. After the rope had been adjusted about his neck he had kicked one of the boxes from under him, clearing the other by fully a foot.

Before he hanged himself it is believed he made careful preparations against discovery. At the front windows he tacked up large sheets, hiding out the view from the street. He closed the blinds of the windows on the outside. At the rear window of the room in which he hanged himself he hung up a blanket, but it failed to entirely cover the window, thus leaving the opening through which his suspended body was discovered. All the doors and windows were locked from the inside.

Dressed in His Best

When found Sam was dressed in his best American clothes. In one of the pockets of his coat was found twenty \$1 bills. The finding of money on his person and in the cash drawer of the shop dispelled the rumors which were abroad that he had been robbed. The money, which the brother claimed to have seen on the night before suicide, was all found.

The dead man's brother, after finishing his day's work at his laundry at 1226 I street northwest, went to the laundry at 25th and K streets about 9 o'clock last night accompanied by three friends. When they found that it was closed up they determined to ask the police to help them to get into the laundry. They went to the third precinct station house and were explaining their troubles when the report of the suicide reached the station, and they were detained there until the matter was investigated. Later they were taken to the laundry, and were shown the body of their dead countryman.

The brother gave one look at the body and then left the room.

The four Chinamen talked over the situation in their own language, and then the spokesman told Lieutenant Boyle of the third precinct who had taken charge in person, that they regarded it as a case of suicide. They had little more to say, except that they would take charge of the body, and they subsequently notified the undertaker to come for it.

His Brother's Statement

His brother stated that Sam Moy was thirty-six or thirty-seven years old and that he had a wife in China. He said he had furnished the money for buying the laundry, and the entire affairs of the place and its contents were turned over to him.

Several anxious patrons called late last evening and were given packages of laundry, for which the brother of the dead man collected. There was every indication that the dead man had been doing a prosperous business. His shelves were filled with packages of laundry and in the wash room there was a large number of shirts hanging on the line to dry.

"I have been in the police department for thirty-one years, and this is the first Chinaman I remember who hung himself," was the comment of Lieut. Boyle of the third precinct, after investigating the suicide. One of the countrymen of the dead man also added that very few Chinamen killed themselves by hanging.

The news of the suicide spread rapidly through the neighborhood and a curious crowd gathered about the laundry. Policeman Embrey of the third precinct was stationed outside and he kept back the crowd. Detective Weedon was sent from police headquarters to investigate the case, but he was soon satisfied that it was a case of suicide and returned to the bureau.

The Evening Star, February 25, 1905

**Funeral of Sam Moy,
Interment Tomorrow of Chinaman Who Committed Suicide**

All that is mortal of Sam Moy, the Chinese laundryman who committed suicide Saturday by hanging himself, as printed in the Sunday Star, will be buried in Congressional cemetery tomorrow afternoon. The hour at which the funeral is to take place has been fixed at 2 o'clock, but a change may be made in the hour before tomorrow. When friends and relatives of Sam learned of the suicide they hurried to his business place to prevent the removal of the body to the morgue.

"Don't like looks of dead house," remarked one of Sam's friends. "Put all kinds of people in there and no good place for a Chinaman."

They succeeded in their efforts and the remains of their friend and relative found room at the undertaking establishment of J. William Lee, 333 Pennsylvania avenue. Moy was dressed and his body placed in a casket.

There was a time when the funeral of a Chinaman in this city attracted a curious crowd of persons to the cemetery, but so many of the almond-eyed celestials have died and been buried here that such funerals are no longer a novelty. Chinamen dislike publicity at funerals of their countrymen and they invariably try to hold the ceremonies at an hour when they think there will be but a few curious persons at the cemetery. The distribution of imitation money along the streets between the undertaking establishment and the cemetery always attracts the small boys, who pick it up as fast as it is dropped. Then at the grave comes the interesting ceremony of offering good things to tempt the evil spirits and the destruction of garments and other personal effects of the deceased. Sometime in the future all the bodies of Chinamen that are buried here will be disinterred and the bones removed to China. Most of those who have died in this city had wives in their native land, and the widows hope the bones of their loved ones will reach China before they have passed away.

The Evening Star, December 27, 1905, p. 16

**Funeral of Sam Moy
Remains Followed by Friends to Grave in Congressional Cemetery**

The funeral of Sam Moy, the Chinese laundryman who committed suicide Saturday, attracted a number of curious persons to Congressional cemetery yesterday afternoon. Seated on the hearse beside the driver was a Chinese friend of the deceased, who dropped imitation money along the street for the purpose of attracting the evil spirits. These "spirits," in the form of men, women and children, appeared and gathered the slips of paper to keep as souvenirs of the funeral.

Several ladies and three Chinamen occupied the two carriages which followed the corpse, one of the latter caring for a basket of cooked food that had been prepared in one of the restaurants in "Chinatown." Upon reaching the cemetery and seeing a hundred or more curious persons the Chinese mourners decided to make a change in the burial ceremony to prevent the curiosity of the crowd. Instead of burning the dead man's effects and setting fire to bunches of punk upon the grave they lowered the articles into the grave with the basket of food, one of them made a few remarks over the open grave and the ceremony was concluded.