

Moy Wing

(- 24 May 1897)

The Washington Post, May 27, 1897

Capons for Moy Wing

Tempting Menu Prepared for a Dead Chinaman

Weird Ceremony at the Grave

Curious Throng Watches Proceedings at Congressional Cemetery,

Where Moy Was Buried Beside Three of His Countrymen --

Quantities of Oil and Incense Consumed Before the Casket Is Consigned

to Earth with Various Articles of Food.

Moy Wing, the Chinaman who shuffled off this mortal coil a few days ago as the result of too much opium, was buried yesterday afternoon in Congressional Cemetery beside three other of his countrymen who have died in Washington. Moy was not buried with the pomp and splendor that usually characterizes the funerals of the Mongolians. The ceremonies at the grave were about the same as those generally employed, but the procession to the cemetery, the beating of tom-toms, the burning of incense enroute, and the scattering of small bits of paper, so that the deceased might find his way back, were omitted.

Several of his brethren, including his two brothers, who are in the laundry business, and Philip, the fat Chinaman who presides over the Chinese restaurant on Pennsylvania avenue, gathered at Lee's undertaking establishment, where the body was removed from the deadroom of the Emergency Hospital, about 3 o'clock. The body was borne to a hearse in the street and about fifteen Chinamen were bundled into three carriages and the procession moved directly to the Congressional Cemetery. No time was lost en route, and when the procession reached the part of the city adjacent to the cemetery it was evident that the children and curious persons of the neighborhood had heard of its approach, for hundreds of them were waiting on the sidewalks and started on a run after the procession and followed it to the cemetery. A great many were admitted to the cemetery, but the very small children had to content themselves with standing at the gate and peeping in.

Many Mysterious Packages

A space around the grave had been shut off by ropes, and around this was gathered a large crowd of men, women, and children, anxious to see the peculiar rites which are performed at the grave of a Chinaman. They were very orderly throughout the ceremony, but could not refrain from making inquiries of their neighbors about the meaning of certain ceremonies. The body was borne to the grave by four Celestials and placed on supports directly above the opening. It was in a plain casket and the top was tightly screwed on and never opened at the grave. The Chinamen then gathered at the foot of the casket and began to unwrap some of the many packages they carried. Moy's two brothers and Philip, who had prepared the delicacies for the nourishment of the deceased on his journey, officiated, and the others stood by watching and occasionally offering a suggestion or making a correction.

It was evident that there were certain differences between them regarding the right and proper course to pursue in the ceremonies, and when one of the managers would go wrong a Chinaman would step out from the bunch and perform the ceremony himself. One of Moy's brothers is a confirmed cigarette fiend, and had a lighted cigarette in his mouth during the entire ceremonies, and when it went out once or twice he would light it again from the sticks of incense burning at the foot of the grave.

The first bundle that was unwrapped contained two capons on separate dishes, baked and browned to a turn by the masterful Philip. The giblets were arranged around the chickens, and these were placed

side by side at the foot of the grave. Then came two heaping bowls of rice, with a hard boiled egg on top of each. Then five chop-sticks were laid in a row at the foot of the grave and between each chop-stick was placed a little dish that resembled a butterdish. Then two little teapots filled with oil were produced and the little dishes filled with oil.

Poured Oil on the Flames

After the many bundles of incense, some that looked like firecrackers, were unwrapped and the firecracker-looking ones were lit from a fire that had been kindled from a bit of the oil poured over some paper and laid at the foot of the grave. The other sticks of incense were stuck upright in bunches in the ground that had been previously prepared by pouring the oil from one of the little dishes upon it. As fast as the dishes were emptied of their contents they were refilled out of the little teapots. Finally all of the incense was burning merrily and one of Moy's brothers made a circle about the fire, from which it had been lighted with oil from the pots, and another fire was kindled of the wrappings that had come around the incense. This was also twice circled with the oil and every scrap of paper that had contained anything used at the burial, and even the market basket in which the stuff was brought, was burned in this fire with the single exception of a single sheet of wrapping paper, which was dropped into the open grave.

Word was then given that the body was ready for burial, and after it was lowered into the grave a bundle composed of the deceased's clothes, his beloved pipe and all other things he was fond of, including cigarettes, were thrown upon the top of the coffin. A brother then threw in a few clods of earth, and as the grave was being filled, the food dishes, pots of oil and all were dropped into it and the Chinamen then got into the carriages and were driven back to the city. Not a word was spoken except the directions to one another, but after all the articles had been thrown into the grave, one of the Chinamen opened a bag of Chinese candy, half sugar and half salt, and passed it around. This meant that they were having a good time.

The money for Moy to pay his passage over the Styx with was in a purse in the bundle of clothes thrown into the grave and according to the best calculations he will reach the other shore in exactly six days.