

(C441-M-RS-18)

Interview held with Mrs. Thayer of Rock Springs, Wyoming

August 29, 1922.

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*[Handwritten signature]*

CHINESE RIOT

All north of what is known as Bridger Avenue was China Town in 1885. There had been some disturbances in the coal mines, of which Mr. Tisdell was superintendent. The night of the riot Tisdell very mysteriously got out of Rock Springs during the night. It has since been learned that for some time prior to the riot, guns in the way of revolvers particularly, were brought from Chicago to Cheyenne by the news boys on trains. At first, two were brought, then three were brought until they had thirty-five modern guns of some kind brought from Chicago to Cheyenne, and then from Cheyenne to Rock Springs. These guns were all paid for by some mysterious person.

The whole riot is attributed to the bosses of the mines for they were to blame. The Chinese were given better rooms in which to pick the coal. The Chinese bosses bribed the white bosses for these places, and hence the Chinese coolie was better paid than the White men, because the conditions under which they had to work in the different mine rooms were easier, the coal was easier to pick, or easier to blast. The White men would not stand for this discrimination.

The difficulty was in Mine No. 6, where the rifles were stored. From this mine the Chinese wanted to come into the town, but everything was protected, like Horatio at the Bridge, they would not let them pass. This was in the afternoon of the date *Sept. 2* 1885 when the men were coming home from Number 6, that the riot began and thirty-eight Chinamen were killed that afternoon and night. The Chinese had most of their homes in the side of the hill or in a dug-out, or at best a lean-to or a shack. These homes, if they could be called homes, were raided, and the Chinese went over the hills scampering like sheep trying to find a refuge here and there, leaving all their earthly possessions, which were not numerous. Everything was quiet after the shooting, and they had burned down every semblance of a home that the Chinese might have had.

The United States Troops were called forth, and came the next day. The Chinese began to be more bold when the soldiers were in Rock Springs, and began to come into the town a few at a time, knowing that the soldiers would protect them. As a result of this invasion of the soldiers in Rock Springs, barracks were erected and while not occupied by the United States Troops, the buildings are still used to this day.

The miners were making \$15 a day, but one day Chinese were sent in, and the White men no longer received \$15. The Chinese with their standards of living out bid the White miners in their wages. After the riot, the Chinese ultimately went back to work, and the troops were kept in Rock Springs to guard their operations for five or six years. Colonel Freeman, the husband *father* of Mrs. Robert Carrey was with the troops, the number being two or three companies. The Chinese for a time were kept in by themselves and guarded by the troops. These Chinese had no homes, that is, there were no women or children with the Chinese. Ah Coom had charge of all the Chinese at this time along the Union Pacific line clear out to Evanston, and all of the Chinese labor in that district. Some of the Chinese at this time of the riot, made their escape in the night, and ultimately reached Evanston where they were protected.

There are still a few Chinese working in the mines at Rock Springs, one is receiving \$200 a month at this time. He is very old and takes care of the mules that are in the mines. The Chinese at the time of the riot lived in shacks and burrowed under the ground and into the ground and after the Chinese came back to their possessions, it was learned they had gold buried in powder kegs which were also buried in the ground.