

Leo Chee

Leo Chee was known in Rock Springs as "Jim". For many years he was the custodian of the Union Pacific's stock and barns at Rock Springs. He was born in his native province of Canton in China about 1857.¹¹⁴ He came to Rock Springs in 1880, where he took to mining "as a duck takes to water." He had worked in practically all the mines the Union Pacific had in Rock Springs.

"Jim" was one of a mob of Chinese who escaped the angry mobs during the Chinese Riot in Rock Springs. He had never wronged a living soul and wondered what all the commotion was about, when he saw his partner die. He ran for the south hills toward Green River in "high gear". It is said that he arrived in Green River ahead of a passenger train which had left Rock Springs a few minutes before he started out.¹¹⁵ He boarded a train at Green River for Evanston, where he was met by army troops and escorted back to Rock Springs.

He was a helper and foreman in the mines since 1898. For thirteen years he was an apprentice under the guidance of one of the best veterinary surgeons in the state. His stables were clean and orderly.

¹¹⁴ Rocket Miner, David G. Thomas

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Leo Chee returned to his native country in September, 1929.¹¹⁶

David G. Thomas wrote the following poem about his friend, Leo Chee.¹¹⁷

Leo Chee
That's Jim

Should you see a dapper fellow
Goo-goo eyed, and somewhat yellow,
And slim,
Without either coat or collar,
You can bet an iron dollar,
That's Jim.

Listen, if he get's excited
You'll be happy and delighted
with him;
Should it prove to be a rumble,
Half between a growl and grumble,
That's Jim.

In a language badly broken
He is ever quite outspoken,
And grim;
But when the words go crashing --
Like a streak of lightning flashing,
That's Jim.

Any hour you may find him
With all work cleared up behind him,
And trim;
But should any one dispute him
Look out! He's apt to shoot him;
That's Jim.

¹¹⁶ History of the Union Pacific Coal Mines, Op. Cit. page 93

¹¹⁷ Rocket Miner, clipping by Dave Thomas