

Chinese Riots

M. J. Carkeek narrative

I was at breakfast Sunday morning when I heard the signal – 3 taps of the fire bell – which had been agreed on by the deputy sheriffs, of which I was one. So I immediately started for Chinatown, where I found a mob engaged in piling the Chinese goods out on the sidewalk and threatening the Chinese. Murphy Chief of Police was there looking on. I said “What’s the meaning of this Murphy?” “I’ve nothing to do with it” and sauntered out the store. I went on up to Wa Chong. The mob seemed to be waiting for a leader. Wa Chong had closed his door, but a guard had been placed in front of it by the rioters. I said “What are you here for?” “I’m guarding the store.” “Alright I’ll assist you.” The man was a teamster whose name I did not know, but he knew me. And said “2 of us are not needed” and walked away. One of the Wa Chong merchants opened the door and asked me to come in to consult about the situation. He said they intended to loot his store and had placed the guard there until they would get reinforcements. My coming had interfered. He asked me to stay and help protect him. I did so. In the meanwhile the rioters had gathered in front of the store preparatory to raiding it. They were gathered in a bunch 10 or 15 feet from the doors, but at intervals they sent men supposed to be drunk to go into the store. I ordered them back seeing their object was to bring on a personal conflict – and work up a fight – and bring the party into action, but this was prevented by the docility of the supposed drunken men, who turned away quietly and walked back. I said “Men this won’t do. You are violating the law. This thing must be settled if you keep quiet and look to the law.” One of them sang out

Damn you we're the law, we'll show you, you ***** and there followed a volley of abuse, but the spirit of the bunch towards violence seem to be waning and the news had drifted down that the Old Guards were forming and violence would be met by the whole force of the law and most of them drifted away but for a few still threatening. Just then John F. Mitchell, Senator Mitchell's son came and asked what I was doing there. I told him. He said "Carkeek, I'll stay with you on the other side of the door." After this episode the Chinese began to feel terrified for their lives and property and began getting the goods in bundles to take down to the wharf where the rioters had ordered them to go. In the meantime the Militia, the Old Guard and the deputy sheriffs had organized and accompanied some of the Chinese for the purpose of protecting them on the way to the wharf where the Law officers intended to make their stand and escort the Chinese back to their homes later. Sheriff McGraw fearlessly led and gave orders to all parties. At the wharf parleys began between the rioters and law abiding citizens as to what should be done with the Chinese. The rioters insisted they should be put on the steamer and deported. The Captain refused to take them unless according to law and by their own volition. While the parleyings were going on my Chinese cook accosted me and begged me to take him home. In the meantime Sheriff McGraw had organized all the forces. Militia, Old Guard, and rifles with the Chinese in front of them to take them back to their homes. The Captain backing up the citizens threatened if there was further violence to turn the hoses on the rioters. Mrs. [Trenworthy?] and her cohorts began to abuse me. I attempted to answer her when McGraw caught me by the shoulders and said "Carkeek what are you doing? They [illegible] to me, keep still. We'll be ready for them in a little while." Which was true. We had forces organized. In a short time he gave orders to march the Chinese to their homes under the protection of Militia, dep. Sheriffs and rifles. They started from the wharf to the intersection of 1st Ave. South where they were met by a

zealous mob who tried to siege the guns of the armed forces. There were then casualties. One of the rioters lost his life.