

LUM MAY STATEMENT: JUNE 3, 1886

Territory of Washington
County of King
June 3, 1886

Lum May being duly sworn on his oath saith:

I was born in Canton, China, and am a subject of the Chinese Empire. I am aged about 51 years. Have been in America about eleven years and have been doing business in Tacoma for ten years. My business there was that of keeping dry goods, provisions, medicines and general merchandize store.

On the third day of November I resided with my family in Tacoma on the corner of Railroad Street some little distance from Chinatown. At that time I would say there were eight hundred or nine hundred Chinese persons in and about Tacoma who... were forcibly expelled by the white people of Tacoma. Twenty days previously to the 3rd of November, a committee of white persons waited upon the Chinese at their residences and ordered them to leave the city before the 3rd of November. I do not know the names of [the] white persons but would recognize their faces. The Committee consisted of 15 or 20 persons... who notified the Chinese to leave.

I asked General Sprague and other citizens for protection for myself and the Chinese people. The General said he would see and do what he could. All the Chinese after receiving notice to leave were frightened lest their houses should be blown up and destroyed. A rumour to that effect was in circulation. Many of them shut up their houses and tried to keep on the look out.

About half past 9 o'clock in the morning of November 3, 1885, a large crowd of citizens of Tacoma marched down to Chinatown and told all the Chinese that the whole Chinese population of Tacoma must leave town by half past one o'clock in the afternoon of that day. There must have been in the neighborhood of 1000 people in the crowd of white people though I cannot tell how many. They went to all the Chinese houses and establishments and notified the Chinese to leave. Where the doors were locked they broke forcibly into the houses smashing in doors and breaking in windows. Some of the crowd was armed with pistols, some with clubs. They acted in a rude boisterous and threatening manner, dragging and kicking the Chinese out of their houses.

My wife refused to go and some of the white persons dragged her out of the house. From the excitement, the fright and the losses we sustained through the riot she lost her reason, and has ever since been hopelessly insane. She threatens to kill people with a hatchet or any other weapon she can get hold of. The outrages I and my family suffered at the hands of the mob has utterly ruined me. I make no claim, however, for my wife's insanity or the anguish I have suffered. My wife was perfectly sane before the riot.

I saw my countrymen marched out of Tacoma on November 3rd. They presented a sad spectacle. Some had lost their trunks, some their blankets, some were crying for their things.

Armed white men were behind the Chinese, on horseback sternly urging them on. It was raining and blowing hard. On the 5th of November all the Chinese houses situated on the wharf were burnt down by incendiaries...

A few of the Chinese merchants I among them were suffered to remain in Tacoma for two days in order to pack up our goods or what was left of them. On the 5th of November, after the burning of the Chinese houses on the wharf I left Tacoma for Victoria where I have since resided... No Chinaman has been allowed to reside in Tacoma since November 3rd.

Mayor Weisbach appeared to be one of the leaders of the mob on the 3rd of November. I spoke to him and told him that Mr. Sprague had said the Chinese had a right to stay and would be protected. He answered me: "General Sprague has nothing to say. If he says anything we will hang him or kick him. You get out of here." I cried. He said I was a baby because I cried over the loss of my property. He said, "I told you before you must go, and I mean my word shall be kept good."

I desire to add to this that... it is ten years since we began business there.

Lum May