

## **The Chinese Massacre of 1871**

What began as a feud between two Chinese companies over the kidnapping of a woman named Yut Ho turned into the most bloody and barbarous tragedies in Los Angeles and the largest mass lynching in American history.

Yut Ho, an attractive married woman with much worth, belonged to a Chinese faction led by Sam Yuen. She was abducted to be sold into marriage by Yo Hing's men from a rival Chinese faction. These factions were a kind of club or gang that offered support and structure to the Chinese in America. Yuen, determined to restore Yut Ho to her husband, hired hit men from San Francisco to do the job.

During the shootout on October 24, 1871 between Yuen and Hing's men, Robert Thompson, a saloon proprietor, responded to Police Officer Jesus Bilderrain's cry for help and took a bullet to the chest. He died an hour later.

With the anti-Chinese sentiment already in place due to racially biased newspaper editorials, and the Chinese being seen as job competitors, rumors of Chinese gunmen killing white men quickly spread throughout the town. By sundown, an incensed crowd of an estimated 500 gathered in Calle de los Negros to lay siege to the foreigners.

18 Chinese men and boys, including an eminent and beloved doctor named Dr. Gene Tong, were killed that night—some shot, some lynched.

Eight men were eventually convicted. But the verdicts were overturned almost immediately for a legal technical oversight by the prosecution. Incredibly, no one was ever prosecuted.