



Bendigo Remembrance Park - Notable Graves Tour

11. LEE KIE 李復衍

c1840 Guangdong Province, China

Died 28th Oct 1899 Bendigo, Victoria, Australia

Buried 30th Oct 1899

Arrived in Australia before 1868

Located in Section C1 / Grave number 15662 / Interment number 15662 [Grave photo link](#)

Lee was born in San Ning (Xinning) county, Guangdong Province, in c.1840, and according to the inscription on his gravestone he hailed from a location called 逕頭, 塘州 (Mandarin: Jìngtóu, Tángzhōu, Cantonese: Ging Tow, Tong Jau.)¹ The characters of his name on his gravestone are pronounced in Mandarin as Lǐ Fùyǎn, and are rendered in standard Cantonese as Lei Fuk Yin. In Bendigo he was mainly known under his business name, Tip Kee 捷記.

The name 'Tep (or Tip) Kee', storekeeper, appeared in Bendigo City rates from 1868 at the Ironbark Camp. In 1883 Tip Kee announced his return from China in the local press, before reappearing on the Bendigo business scene in late 1885 with the opening of a new store in Mundy Street stocked with Chinese and Japanese goods which he had obtained while out of the country.² On 19 February 1890 a James Hugh put in an advertisement in the *Advertiser* stating that he had purchased the business and goods of "Lee Gie, trading under the sign of Tip Kee, Mundy Street, Sandhurst", adding that he would not be responsible for the debts of Lee, who would be returning to China in ten days' time.³ By 1893 Lee Kie was once again back in Bendigo, operating a tobacco and fancy goods store under his own name in 'Lower Block, Pall Mall'.⁴ In the late 1890s he was back trading in Mundy Street where he remained until his death in 1899.⁵ His shop was purchased by Lim Kee & Co after his passing.⁶

It seems that Lee Kie was a man of some consequence in the Bendigo Chinese Community. Tip Kee was mentioned as a leading member of the Chinese Easter Fair Committee during its formative years in the 1880s and 1890s. He was also one of two local Chinese leaders (the other was James Lamsey) who rode in the carriage with the Imperial Chinese Commissioners and other dignitaries upon their arrival in Bendigo in 1887.⁷

Upon his death he left behind a widow and two children in China.⁸ They seem never to have been part of his life in Australia, and he would have only seen them on his occasional journeys back home. Lee Kie was laid to rest in Bendigo Cemetery's Chinese Section, plot no. 15662. His bluestone gravestone with traditional Chinese inscription still marks the site.

Provided by: Leigh McKinnon, Research Officer, Golden Dragon Museum

¹ See Kok Hu Jin, *ibid.*, pp.47-48.

² *Bendigo Advertiser*, 4 November 1885, p.2.

³ *Bendigo Advertiser*, 19 February 1890, p.3.

⁴ See e.g. the advertisement in the *Bendigo Advertiser*, 13 May 1893, p.6.

⁵ "Death of a Chinaman", *Bendigo Advertiser*, 30 October 1899.

⁶ *Bendigo Advertiser*, 20 December 1899.

⁷ "Visit of the Chinese Commissioners", *Bendigo Advertiser*, 30 June 1887. The 1891-92 Sun Printing and Publishing Co's Bendigo Directory has the following entry: Tip Kee (James Hen-Yee), Merchant, Mundy-st. Either Hen-Yee is another name for Lee Kie, was possibly a partner in the business, or was using the business name during Lee Ki's absence in China.

⁸ VPRS 28 P0002 528