

**ON LEE CEMETERY (2005)
YALE, BRITISH COLUMBIA
CANADA**



**RECORDING FROM
THE BRITISH COLUMBIA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA**



Fraser Canyon

C89 Part 8

ON LEE PRIVATE CEMETERY, YALE, BC

Recorded by Tom Steele, April 1980.
Photographs by Robin Hooper, 2005.

There is a small family cemetery in Yale hidden away in the bush about 200 feet off Highway #1. This cemetery is located on private property. The land occupied by the cemetery has been deeded in perpetuity to the family of the deceased together with an easement from the highway to the cemetery. The cemetery is enclosed by a wire fence. The family name is ON LEE.

When the Canadian Pacific Railway was being built there were a great many Chinese men employed as labourers. Yale was a bustling centre at that time being located at the southern end of the Fraser canyon and also at the head of navigation on the Fraser River. Some of the Chinese labourers died through accidents or other causes and many were buried in the land all around where the On Lee cemetery is now located. It was a Chinese tradition that the bones of their dead in a foreign land must be shipped back to the area in China from which the person came for reburial. Surrounding the On Lee family plot there are many grave-size depressions in the ground. These are the graves that were opened late in the 1800's or early 1900's in order to ship the bones of the occupants back to China. There are no headstones other than those in the On Lee family plot. The remains in the On Lee burial plot were not disinterred.

Approximately 75 feet away from the On Lee cemetery is all that remains of a small Buddhist altar – it is quite overgrown now – there is even a large tree growing right in the middle of it and it is difficult to recognize it as other than jus a pile of rocks. There are three grave-like depressions within the walls.

Inscriptions in the On Lee Cemetery

1. In loving memory of Mother/ Mary **ON LEE**/ 1864-1925/ two rows of Chinese characters/
At rest/
2. In loving memory of father/ **ON LEE**/ 1841-1909/ two rows of Chinese characters/ At rest/
3. Rose **ON LEE**/ 1913-1950/
This is a small plaque. She was the wife of James On Lee.
4. James **ON LEE**/ 1890-1961/
This is a matching plaque to that of Rose. He was the son of the two elder On Lees.
5. David
6. & 7 Unmarked graves

ON LEE PRIVATE CEMETERY, YALE, BC



Entrance to Yale Chinese (On Lee) Cemetery
Behind a steel gate guarded by two dogs

**ON LEE PRIVATE CEMETERY,
YALE, BC**



**Yale Chinese (On Lee) Cemetery
5 graves occupied**

ON LEE PRIVATE CEMETERY, YALE, BC



Mary On Lee (1864-1928)



Father On Lee (1841-1909)
Lived in Yale from 1881

ON LEE PRIVATE CEMETERY, YALE, BC



Rose On Lee (1913-1950)



James On Lee (1880-1961)



David Joe (1908-1918)