

# REPAYING A DEBT

**NAME INC ALIASES:**

Ching Choy

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**NATIVE PLACE:**

China

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**RELIGION:**

Pagan

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**OFFENCE:**

Unlawful wounding

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**SENTENCE:**

6 months

**Ching Choy owed some money to his 'comrade' Ah Fat, also known as Charlie.**

One day in September 1886 Charlie decided to call in his debt and visited the Chinese boarding house in Tapanui to ask for his money back. Ching Choy either could not or would not pay, so Charlie resorted to threats. As he was leaving the room he felt a slight pain in his side as if he had been pricked by a pin.

It turned out Ching had stabbed him with a pair of sheep shears, leaving a nasty wound 4½ inches deep and 2½ inches wide – this was half a century before penicillin, but he eventually

recovered. Ching repeatedly claimed it had been an accident, but couldn't produce any witnesses in his defence.

The jury recommended mercy as they didn't think the attack had been premeditated, and the judge gave him six months' hard labour in the old prison (now the site of the Law Courts). He seems to have kept out of trouble from then on, though Ah Fat was tried for theft in 1902. The judge said he 'did not seem to bear a good character with either his own countrymen or the police.'

Photo: New Zealand Police Museum

