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Vol. 3, No.41 (Spring 2000) is not available in a newsletter format, but you can read the articles on the following pages.

The History of Japanese Immigration

The history of ethnic minorities is characterized by adversity, hard work, community initiative, heartache, triumphs, indomitable spirits and hope for the future. People of color in the United States have often been depicted as helpless victims of discriminatory practices with little appreciation of their strengths and their struggle with adversity. Like other minorities, Japanese Americans, attempted to establish themselves in the United States economically, educationally, socially, religiously and politically.

Immigration

In 1869, settlers with The Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony were among the first to arrive from Japan. They brought mulberry trees, silk cocoons, tea plants and bamboo roots. By 1880, 148 Japanese lived in the United States.

Terminal Island, Los Angeles County, circa 1919. Courtesy of California Department of Parks and Recreation.

Japanese laborers were not allowed to leave their country legally until after 1884 when an agreement was signed between their government and Hawaiian sugar plantations. From Hawaii, many Japanese moved to the U.S. mainland. By 1890, 2,038 Japanese resided in the United States. A systematic method of recruiting laborers from regions in Japan for Hawaiian sugar plantations was established. Natives from Hiroshima, Kumamoto, Yamaguchi and Fukushima were recruited for their expertise in agriculture, hard work and willingness to travel. Japanese immigration continued until 1907 when agitation from white supremacist organizations, labor unions and politicians resulted in a "Gentlemen's Agreement" curtailing immigration of laborers from Japan. The agreement, however, permitted wives and children of laborers to enter the country. From 1908 to 1924, many Japanese women immigrated to the United States, some as "picture brides."

In Japan, marriages were arranged based on careful matching of socioeconomic status, personality and family background. The exchange of photographs was a first step in the

process. Entering the bride's name in the groom's family registry legally constituted marriage. For wives who entered the country after 1910, their first glimpse of the United States was the detention barracks at Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. New immigrants were processed there and given medical exams. This was the place where most "picture brides" saw their new husbands for the first time.

Many thought the Gentlemen's Agreement would end immigration. Instead, the Japanese population increased. A movement to totally exclude Japanese immigrants led to the Immigration Act of 1924. That legislation curtailed immigration from Japan until 1952 when 100 immigrants per year were allowed. A few refugees entered the country during the mid-1950s, as did Japanese wives of United States servicemen.

Settlement and Work

In many communities, nihonmachi (Japanese sections of town) were developed with their own businesses. Buddhist churches and Japanese Christian churches were established.

Japanese Picture Brides Angel Island, circa 1919. Courtesy of California Department of Parks and Recreation Office of Historic Preservation.

Labor contractors drew immigrants away from the cities to work for the railroads, oil fields, canneries and farms. Fishing industries developed. In the San Joaquin Delta, more than 100,000 acres of land was reclaimed with the help of Japanese laborers. Potatoes, asparagus, and onions are now grown there.

The Japanese community was firmly established in agriculture. They organized their produce and flower industries vertically in a system of Japanese-owned operations, from raising the plants to retail sales. Cooperatives were organized to improve the growing, packing and marketing of crops. Many businesses were dependent on the traffic of male laborers who traveled from one crop to the next. Japanese entrepreneurs had regular routes to the surrounding countryside, taking orders and making deliveries. Japanese Americans experimented with different strains of rice and were engaged in farming, distributing and selling rice. Keisaburo Koda, known as the "rice king," established new strains of rice. Agricultural areas with Japanese residents had a flourishing Japanese section of town. Cooperatives functioned at their peak. Children were in schools. Japanese-language newspapers added English sections to their publications.

From 1942-45, Japanese Americans were incarcerated in fenced and guarded concentration camps (See Brown Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 3, Spring 1997). World War II

became a turning point in generational control of Japanese American businesses, churches and community politics.

Organizations and Religion

The first Japanese American organization in the United States was the Fukuin Ka established in 1877. This society offered English classes, operated a boarding house and provided a place to meet. Out of this organization came Japanese Christian churches. Before World War II, about 85 per cent of Japanese immigrants were Buddist. Christian, Buddhist, and Shinto churches were the focus of activity for Japanese communities, including women's organizations (fujinkai) and youth groups.

Organizational leaders spoke for the community and worked as intermediaries to resolve conflicts. Japanese-language schools flourished, the first being established in 1902. By the 1930s, virtually every Japanese American community had its own nihongakko (language school) operated by a church or association.

Persons from the same area in Japan formed kenjinkai, designed to support, aid and acquaint fellow kenjin. Financial aid, informal counseling and care for the sick or injured were functions of these groups. The Japanese American Citizens League, organized in 1930, gained prominence during World War II, but many organizations died when records were lost during the internments.

Discrimination

Japanese Americans have suffered from discriminatory practices, legislation and restrictions. They immigrated to the United States as a source of labor without plans for them to stay and participate actively in the life of society. The Asiatic Exclusion League mounted a campaign in 1905 to exclude Japanese and Koreans from the United States. Under pressure from the league, the San Francisco Board of Education ruled that all Japanese and Korean students would join the Chinese at the segregated Oriental School established in 1884. There were 93 Japanese students in the 23 San Francisco public schools at that time. Twenty-five of those students had been born in the United States.

To appease those agitating for an end to Japanese immigration, President Theodore Roosevelt negotiated a "Gentlemen's Agreement." The Japanese government agreed not to issue passports to laborers immigrating to the United States. As part of the Immigration Act of 1924, immigration from Japan was cut off for 28 years.

Beginning in 1909 and continuing until after World War II, anti-Japanese bills were introduced into the California legislature every year. The issue of U.S. citizenship eventually was decided by the 1922 Supreme Court decision Takao Ozawa v. United States which

declared that Japanese were ineligible for U.S. citizenship. “Free white persons” had been made eligible for citizenship by Congress in 1790. Due to some ambiguity about the term “white,” some 420 Japanese had been naturalized, but a ruling by a U.S. attorney general to stop issuing papers to Japanese ended the practice in 1906. The Supreme Court ruled that since Ozawa was neither a “free white person” nor an African by birth or descent, he did not have the right of naturalization as a Mongolian.

An amendment to the State Political Code in 1921 established separate schools for Indian, Chinese, Japanese or Mongolian children. Chinese, Japanese and Filipino children in these school districts attended segregated schools until World War II. In 1945 a Japanese American family challenged the constitutionality of segregated schools and the Los Angeles County Superior Court concurred that segregation on the basis of race or ancestry violated the 14th Amendment. The California legislature repealed the 1921 provision in 1947.

St. Andrew's Methodist Church, circa 1929. Courtesy of California Department of Parks and Recreation Office of Historic Preservation.

The most serious discriminatory act toward Japanese Americans was the internment camp policy of World War II. Thirteen temporary detention camps in California were hastily established to hold Japanese Americans. The constitutionality of incarcerating more than 120,000 Japanese Americans is still questioned. While losses by Japanese Americans were estimated to be at least $400,000,000 only 10 percent of this amount was disbursed to former internees.

Japanese Americans have endured discrimination in housing, shopping, dining and recreational activities. When the remains of highly decorated 442nd Combat team were returned to the United States after World War II, they were refused gravesites in some cemeteries because of their ancestry. Discrimination toward Japanese Americans may be subtle, but is still very much in existence, as in recent legal cases involving discrimination in employment promotion.

Diversity Web Page

By Harry Butowsky


Harry Butowsky

The National Park Service Diversity Web Page: A Resource for Teachers, Students and the General Public
http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/diversity

The National Park Service Diversity Web page represents a new approach by the National Park Service to provide diversity educational resources and information to be used by teachers, students and the general public. The page contains a wealth information concerning the latest scholarship in the field of diversity for students and educators to access with a minimum of time and effort.

First, information is organized in a logical fashion along topical lines including National Park Service parks, employees, visitors, publications, educational resources and links to other diversity web sites. Specific diversity information is easy to find and read. Second, the page provides easy access for the general public who can browse its many features in whatever order they desire.

The National Park System celebrates America's cultural diversity by commemorating American Indians, Pacific Islanders, Alaska Natives, African Americans, Spanish pioneers and European and Asian immigrants who were integral to the development of our country. The National Park System was established to preserve and interpret the legacy of diverse individuals as well as historical, natural and cultural places and events that have shaped the lives of our generation and will impact future generations.

In 1998 the National Park Service established a Diversity Advisory Committee. In addition, a National Park Service Diversity Web page was created. The purpose of this web page was to assist the committee in its efforts to communicate National Park Service recommendations and strategies to further Diversity. As the work of the Diversity Committee continues, the Diversity Web page will be updated so that information on the programs, publications and web features of the National Park Service can be accessed by any interested person.

The Diversity Web page can be found at http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/diversity and begins with a statement by Robert Stanton, Director of the National Park Service. Features listed on the Diversity Web page pertain to national parks, work force, visitors, publications and other web features. The Diversity Web page will always be a work in progress.

As we move into the next century the National Park Service will continue to promote Diversity in all respects. As stated by the Director of the National Park Service, our goal is

“to preserve and maintain the nation’s treasures entrusted in our care, to the highest levels of quality possible and to accomplish this through a highly skilled, dedicated work force that exemplifies the rich diversity of our national parks and our nation.” Suggestions for new material or comments on how to improve the National Park Service Diversity Web page should be sent to **Harry_Butowsky@nps.gov**.

Specific features of interest to students include the highly popular Web sites:

- The Underground Railroad -- **http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/ugrr.htm**
- Five Views: An Ethnic Historic Site Survey of California -
  - **http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/5views/5views.htm**
- Teaching with Historic Places, Women’s History -
  - **http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/mar99.htm**
- We Shall Overcome: Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement -
  - **http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights**

The feature articles in this issue were compiled using information from the Diversity Website.

The History of Chinese Immigration

Most Chinese immigrants came to San Francisco where they developed a Chinese American community and made an effort to join the city's political and cultural life. In the 1850s they participated in festivities celebrating California's admission into the Union and in the Fourth of July Parade. Chinese Americans also preserved their own cultural traditions. They celebrated the lunar New Year in the traditional way. In 1852 the first performance of Cantonese opera was held and the first Chinese theatre building completed. Two Chinese-language newspapers began publishing.

Associations

The Kong Chow Association was the first Chinese organization established. In 1849 Norman As-sing, a prominent merchant, became the leader of the Chew Yick Association and served as an interpreter. Tong K. Achick arrived in 1851 and founded the Yeong Wo Association. Later, he and As-sing were rivals for leadership of the Chinese American community in San Francisco.

Chinese American family, Trinity County, circa 1890.
Courtesy of California Department of Parks and Recreation
Office of Historic Preservation.

Immigration

A series of wars, rebellions, civil disorders, floods, famines and droughts made earning a livelihood in China difficult. When China tried to cut off the British importation of opium, they suffered a devastating defeat by the British in the Opium War of 1840. When news of the discovery of gold reached China, many Chinese immigrated to California from Kuangtung Province.

The Chinese often emigrated in self-help groups from the same village, often with the same surname. Most had to borrow money for their passage and were required to repay the debt here. Those who could not borrow from their families borrowed from agencies under the credit-ticket system. The term "coolie" refers to laborers whose contract specified conditions approximating servitude, slavery or peonage. This term was also used with negative connotations to persuade voters that Chinese immigration ought to be prohibited.

Religion

Taoism was the religion of most Chinese immigrants and Kuan Kung the most popular deity. Kuan actually lived in China during the third century, AD. He has been called the god of war, but this designation is misleading. He was a military leader known for his courage, loyalty

and adherence to lofty ideals who sacrificed his personal success rather than compromise his principles. Because of these qualities, he was venerated after his death.

The Taoist temple was a source of strength for early Chinese Americans. People worshiped individually rather than in congregations. Respect for deities and departed relatives was shown by offerings of incense accompanied by food and drink on special occasions. Paper offerings, money and clothing were burned, a means of transmitting objects from the visible to the invisible world. Prayers were offered silently before the altar. Questions were asked of various deities by writing on a piece of paper and then burning it on the altar. Answers were obtained by consulting the prayer sticks that were interpreted by the temple priest or deacon. The Taoist temple was also a social center for early Chinese American communities. The first and fifteenth of the month were days of worship when people met at the temple. Each spring, a “bomb day” festival was held. The highlight of the festival was to shoot off a rocket (or “bomb”) containing lucky rings. The temple also provided services such as lodging for travelers.

Discrimination

The United States Constitution in the 1850s reserved the right of naturalization for White immigrants to this country. Only two skin colors were recognized, White and Black. Since early Chinese immigrants were neither, some were allowed to become naturalized citizens, but most were not. Without citizenship, Chinese immigrants could not vote, hold government office or be employed by the state. They had no voice in determining their future. Designated as "aliens ineligible for citizenship," they were unable to own land or file mining claims. Since Chinese immigrants could not testify in court against Whites, the only reasonable course of action was to avoid open confrontation and avoid direct competition with Whites. Some retained their Chinese citizenship, since they were not allowed to become citizens of the United States. Their future in the country was uncertain, even though they paid taxes and contributed to the economy.

Contributions

The presence of the ailanthus tree (“Tree of Heaven”) throughout California has long been a puzzle. The tree is native to China, but not to the United States; yet it grows profusely in regions where early Chinese immigrants lived. All sorts of fanciful explanations have been given — that the Chinese accidentally brought the seeds to this country in their trouser cuffs (their trousers did not have cuffs), or that they brought them because they were homesick. The real reason Chinese immigrants brought ailanthus seeds to this country was to grow an herbal remedy beneficial for arthritis. Herbal medicine fulfilled an important health need in the 19th century. Western medicine had not yet developed wonder drugs,

anesthetics, vaccinations or sophisticated surgical techniques. Patent medicines were widely used and their contents were not regulated by the government. Chinese herbal remedies had been used for one or two thousand years. Some of today's “wonder drugs” are actually synthesized forms of various herbs and natural herbs are still prefered by some.

Mining

After gold was discovered in California, Chinese immigrants joined gold seekers from all over the world. In 1850 the California legislature passed a law taxing foreign miners $20 a month. Though stated in general terms, it was enforced chiefly against Mexicans and Chinese. In 1852 a mass meeting was held in the Columbia Mining District where a resolution was passed to exclude “Asiatics and South Sea Islanders” from mining activities.

Construction

Chinese immigrants built many flumes and roads in the mining districts. In the 1850s, the Big Gap Flume was constructed by Chinese workers to cross Conrad Gulch and carry water in a gravity flow system. This wooden flume, suspended by trestle works, was part of a 36-mile ditch supplying water for miners.

One of the ancient building techniques brought from China was rammed earth construction, packing mud between wooden forms and hammering it until it is as hard as stone. While rammed earth is associated with Spanish and Mexican cultures, it was used in China as early as 1500. In China wherever the weather was damp, buildings were faced with stone for added protection.

Stone walls were built by Chinese American workers throughout California in the 1800s. They were made without mortar from uncut fieldstones, obtained by clearing the surrounding land. Even though anti-Chinese meetings were being held in the mining districts in 1852, the governor endorsed the employment of Chinese for projects to reclaim swamps and flooded lands.

Fishing

Inhabitants of early Chinese American communities in Monterey, San Diego and San Luis Obispo fished for squid and abalone. Many Chinese immigrants had fishing and preservation techniques needed at shrimping camps in the 1860s. They also worked in canneries processing fish. Later, discriminatory legislation required special licenses, forbade traditional Chinese fishing techniques, limited the season, prohibited export of dried shrimp and restricted the size of the catch.

Agriculture

Few Chinese Americans were able to become independent farmers, because most were not citizens and were prevented from owning land by local laws and restrictive covenants. Many raised vegetables and fruit sold door to door. Others were sharecroppers or tenant farmers, who leased land and paid the landlord part of their crop.

Skilled Chinese Americans were essential to the development of certain crops like celery. Development of the citrus industry was dependent on Chinese Americans. They grew strawberries, peanuts, rice and vegetables. Gardens were often located on land no one else wanted. Chinese American migrant farm workers harvested wheat, other grains, hops, apples, grapes and pears and processed them for shipping. Seaweed farming involved the laborious task of gathering edible seaweed from the rocks, drying it in the sun and packing it for shipment.

Using the Internet

Is the Internet available at your school or public library?

Other articles at: **http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/diversity**

- African American Heritage in the Golden Cresent -
  - **http://www.cr.nps.gov/goldcres/cultural/africahome.html**
- African American History -- **http://www.cr.nps.gov/aahistory/**
- Ancient Architects of the Mississippi -- **http://www.cr.nps.gov/aad/feature/**
- Asia-Pacific Heritage Month -- **http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/feature/asia/asia00.htm**
- Diversity at Golden Gate National Recreation Area -
  - **http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/ggate.htm**

For more information use a multi-search engine (try dogpile.com) and type in Asian American immigrants. If you find a useful site, be sure to click on "Add Bookmark," so you can return to it.

Book Nook

Night Garden
Poems from the World of Dreams
by Janet S. Wong
Illustrated by Julie Paschkis

...dreams grow wild
Like dandelion weeds,
feathery heads alive with seeds--

and these fine seeds,
about to sprout,
race the day
to find their place
in a welcome mind...

And the dreams grow in an endless variety, some familiar things, some strange and beautiful, some on the darker side.

In this collection, Janet S. Wong records some of the many dreams she or her friends have had. She even watches her old dog while he twitches and growls and dreams in his sleep and finally yelps awake.

Wong's poetry gives the reader insight into her Korean and Chinese heritage with glimpes of her American background. Through her poetry, children have the opportunity to close their eyes and float along on a cloud of dreams in vivid color!

The Cook's Family
by Laurence Yep

What do you do when your world is falling apart? Robin Lee can't stand her parents' constant fighting, so she's glad to spend time with her grandmother in Chinatown. They befriend a lonely cook and pretend to be his long-lost family.

At Cook's restaurant, Robin is a star and a whole new world opens up to her. In her make believe father, she finally discovers a sense of her Chinese heritage and sees a new and exciting side to her grandmother. The thing is, once Robin starts pretending, she doesn't want to stop. For children 12 and over.

Angel Island

The U.S. Immigration Station, a National Historic Landmark, is located on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. What Ellis Island symbolizes to Americans of European heritage, who immigrated to the east coast, Angel Island symbolizes to Americans of Asian heritage on the West Coast. From 1910 to 1940 this immigration station processed one million people. Approximately 250,000 Chinese and 150,000 Japanese immigrants were detained at the Station.

Most early Chinese immigrants arrived during the Gold Rush (1849-50) and were recruited as laborers. With the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Congress restricted immigration and excluded Chinese laborers already in this country from becoming American citizens. Exempted were merchants, diplomats, ministers, travelers, students and children of American citizens.

Chinese immigrants were held in detention barracks at Angel Island for weeks or months until their paperwork was approved. In 1923 in Ozawa v. the United States, the Supreme Court ruled that Japanese were ineligible for naturalization. This led to the Immigration Act of 1924 prohibiting Japanese immigration, except for women married to Japanese men already in the United States. The Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed in 1943 when China became an ally of the United States during World War II.

During their long wait on Angel Island, some Chinese men expressed their bitterness, frustration and despair in poems written with Chinese ink brushes on the redwood walls of the barracks built in 1908. The walls were then painted covering the first generation of poems. Subsequently, the detainees began to carve their poems into the walls, reflecting the hardships and indignities they had endured.

Following World War II, the island became a state park. The station was abandoned and largely forgotten until 1970 when State Park Ranger Alexander Weiss discovered the scores of poems on the barracks walls. Today, the detention barracks are a museum open to the public. For more information, visit the Angel Island State Park Site at **http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/diversity**.

Join us for this exciting journey...

Historic Connections:
A Civil Rights Travel Symposium

...Retrace the steps of our civil rights pioneers.

October 18-22, 2000

Reminiscent of the 1960's Freedom Riders

Travel by Motor Coach to the heart of this country's Civil Rights Movement

St. Louis, Missouri
Memphis, Tennessee
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Study Tour Sponsored by:
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Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site
Washburn University, Topeka

Symposium Purpose:
A rich history of civil rights and human rights movements have shaped public policy in this country. Join us for an exclusive introduction to the communities and people whose grassroots efforts changed the course of history.

"Historic Connections" will journey to:

St. Louis, Missouri - site of the Dred Scott Case, identified as a major factor in the start of the Civil War.

Memphis, Tennessee - We will visit the National Civil Rights Museum, which houses the Lorraine Motel with its infamous balcony where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was standing when he was struck down by an assassin's bullet. Museum exhibits also depict freedom marches and other civil rights milestones.

Montgomery, Alabama - This stop includes the Southern Poverty Law Center and the National Civil Rights Monument, which is a tribute to the fallen heroes, both men and women, of the civil rights movement. We will learn about the Center's initiative called "Teaching Tolerance" and their efforts to educate the public about hate groups.

Birmingham, Alabama - Here we will explore the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute which focuses on the city's sometimes turbulent past. Institute exhibits and educational programs offer a behind the scenes look at sit-ins and marches for the cause of equal rights, and the police brutality, bombings and other attempts to halt African Americans' pursuit of constitutional protections.