

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

IMPORTANT MILESTONES IN ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HISTORY 1565-1990

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1565-1815

During the Spanish galleon trade between Manila and Mexico, Filipino sailors are conscripted aboard the Spanish ships. During this period, the Philippines is under Spanish colonial rule. Some of the sailors jump ship and land on the coast of Louisiana. Some of their descendants still live in New Orleans today.

1825

First known Asian American New Yorker is born to a Chinese merchant seaman who had married an Irishwoman.

1847

Chinese immigration to the United States as indentured “coolies” increased to supplement the shrinking African slave labor force. Coolies, although they often work alongside slaves, become free men after they serve their eight-year contracts and pay off their indebtedness for passage, food, clothing, and other necessities. Peru and other parts of South America also become major markets for human cargo from Asia.

1848

Gold is discovered at Sutter’s Mill in California. At this time only a few hundred Chinese live in California.

1850-1860

Lured by America which they dub “Gold Mountain,” Chinese flock to the United States. By 1860, about 41,000 Chinese are settled in the United States. By comparison, 2,500,000 European immigrants arrive during the same 10-year period.

1850

California imposes Foreign Miner's Tax and enforces it mainly against Chinese miners, who often have to pay more than once.

1852

First group of Chinese contract laborers lands in Hawaii. Over 20,000 Chinese enter California.

1854

The Supreme Court of the State of California rules in *People v. Hall* (4 Cal. 399, 1854 WL 765 CAL) that Chinese cannot give testimony in court. See, [People v. Hall](#).

1862

California passes the *Act To Protect Free White Labor Against Competition With Chinese Coolie Labor, And To Discourage The Immigration Of The Chinese Into The State Of California* by imposing a "police tax" of \$2.50 a month on every Chinese. To see the law, click [California passes a "police tax" of \\$2.50 a month on every Chinese .](#)

1865

Central Pacific Railroad Co. recruits Chinese workers for the transcontinental railroad.

1868

U.S. and China sign Burlingame - Seward Treaty recognizing rights of U.S. and Chinese citizens to emigrate between the two countries. See [Burlingame-Seward Treaty](#).

1869

Completion of first transcontinental railroad.

1875

The 43rd U.S. Congress passes the Page Law, which bans importation of Chinese, Japanese, and other Oriental women for prostitution and barred felons from immigrating to the United States. See [Page Law](#).

1878

In re Ah Yup (1 F. Cas. 223 (1878)) ruled that a Mongolian is not a "white person," within the meaning of the term as used in the naturalization laws, and a native of China of such race is not entitled to become a citizen of the United States.

1882

Chinese Exclusion Law suspends immigration of Chinese laborers to the United States for 10 years. See [1882 Chinese Exclusion Act](#).

1886

Chinese laundrymen win case in *Yick Wo v. Hopkins* (118 U.S. 356, 6 S.Ct. 1064, 30 L.Ed. 220 (1886)). The U.S. Supreme Court rules that a law with unequal impact on different groups is discriminatory. See [Yick Wo v. Hopkins](#).

1888

The Scott Act bars Chinese laborers from re-entering the United States, nullifying about 20,000 certificates of re-entry that would have allowed them to re-enter prior to its enactment. See [Scott Act](#).

1889

The Supreme court in *Chae Chan Ping v. U.S.* (130 U.S. 581, 9 S.Ct. 623, 32 L.Ed. 1068 (1889)) upholds the constitutionality of Chinese exclusion laws.

1892-1893

Geary Law renews exclusion of Chinese laborers for another 10 years and requires all Chinese to register with the government. Supreme Court case *Fong Yue Ting v. U.S.* (149 U.S. 698, 13 S.Ct. 1016, 37 L.Ed. 905, (1893)) upholds constitutionality of Geary Law. See [Geary Act](#) and [Fong Yue Ting v. U.S.](#)

1898

Wong Kim Ark v. U.S. (169 U.S. 649, 18 S.Ct. 456, 42 L.Ed. 890 (1898)) rules that Chinese born in the U.S. cannot be stripped of their citizenship. See [United States v. Wong Kim Ark](#).

1902

Congress extends the Chinese Exclusion Act. See [Chinese exclusion extended for another 10 years](#).

1903

First group of Korean workers arrive in Hawaii. Filipino students arrive in the U.S. for higher education.

1904

Chinese exclusion laws extended indefinitely and made applicable to U.S. insular possessions such as the District of Columbia. See [Chinese exclusion made indefinite](#).

1907

Japan and the U.S. reach "Gentlemen's Agreement" whereby Japan would stop issuing passports to laborers desiring to emigrate to the U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt signed Executive Order 589 prohibiting Japanese with passports for Hawaii, Mexico, or Canada from re-emigrating to the U.S. First group of Filipino laborers arrives in Hawaii.

1913

California passes alien land law prohibiting "aliens ineligible to citizenship" from buying land or leasing it for more than three years.

1917

Arizona passes alien land law prohibiting "aliens ineligible to citizenship" from buying land or leasing it for more than three years. The Immigration Act of 1917 bars immigration from most Asian countries other than Japan. Japan remains covered under the "Gentlemen's Agreement" of 1907.

1922

The U.S. Supreme Court case, *Takao Ozawa v. U.S.* (260 U.S. 178.43 S.Ct. 65, 67 L.Ed. 199 (1922)) declares that Japanese are not eligible for naturalized citizenship.

1924

Immigration Act of 1924 bars anyone deemed "forbidden to be a U.S. citizen" from immigrating to the United States. At this time, the Philippines is a U.S. territory so Filipinos are not affected by this Act. However, the Act virtually shuts down immigration for Japanese, Chinese, and Indians because previous laws had made them ineligible for U.S. citizenship.

1942

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066 authorizing the Secretary of War to designate military areas "from which any and all persons may be excluded" - primarily enforced against Japanese Americans. This order ultimately leads to the

incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans in internment camps spread across the country. Congress passes Public Law 503 to impose penal sanctions on anyone disobeying orders to carry out Executive Order 9066.

1943

Congress repeals all Chinese exclusion laws, grants right of naturalization, and provides a small immigration quota to Chinese. See [Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act](#).

1944

The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a battalion composed exclusively of Japanese Americans, gains fame for bravery during World War II. The unit goes on to become the highest decorated combat team in U.S. military history.

1946

Wing F. Ong becomes the first Asian American to be elected to state office (Arizona House of Representatives).

1956

California repeals alien land laws. Dalip Singh from the Imperial Valley, California, becomes the first Asian Pacific American elected to Congress.

1962

Daniel K. Inouye becomes a U.S. Senator and Spark Matsunaga is elected Congressman from Hawaii. Senator Inouye continues to serve as U.S. Senator for the state of Hawaii .

1964

Patsy Takemoto Mink becomes the first Asian Pacific American woman to serve in Congress. She continues to represent her district in Hawaii today.

1965

Immigration Law abolishes "national origins" as basis for allocating immigration quotas to various countries - Asian countries now on equal footing with other countries.

See [Immigration Act of 1965](#).

1974

Lau v. Nichols (414 U.S. 563, 94 S. Ct. 786, 39 L.Ed. 2d 1 (1974)) rules that school districts with children who speak little English must provide them with bilingual education.

1975

More than 130,000 refugees start to enter the U.S. from Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Laos.

1976

President Gerald Ford rescinds Executive Order 9066, the order incarcerating Japanese Americans during World War II.

1978-1980

Massive exodus of "boat people" from Vietnam.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees set up an Orderly Departure Program to enable Vietnamese to emigrate legally.

1981

Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (established by Congress) holds hearings across the country and concludes the internment was a "grave injustice" and that Executive Order 9066 resulted from "race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership."

1987

The U.S. House of Representatives votes 243 to 141 to make an official apology to Japanese Americans and to pay each surviving internee \$20,000 in reparations.

1988

The U.S. Senate votes to support redress for Japanese Americans. American Homecoming Act allows children in Vietnam born of American fathers to emigrate to the U.S.

1989

President George H.W. Bush signs into law an entitlement program to pay each surviving Japanese American internee \$20,000.

SOURCES:

Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans, an Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991).

Helen Zia, *Asian American Dreams, The Emergence of an American People* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000).

<http://www.asianamculture.about.com/culture/asianamculture/cs/immigranthistory/index.htm>