Inside the Vault:
Highlights from the Gilder Lehrman Collection

July 29, 2021

The session will start shortly. Please note:
• Your video and audio will automatically turn off.
• You can participate through the Q&A function.
• If you have technical difficulties, please email collectionprograms@gilderlehrman.org so we can assist you.
Our Team

- Sandy Trenholm - Collection Director
- Karalee Wong Nakatsuka - 2019 California History Teacher of the Year
- Meagan Jenkins - Curatorial Intern
- Allison Kraft - Assistant Curator
During the Session

- If you would like to ask a question, you can use the Q&A feature.
- We will be answering audience questions throughout the session.

For Security and Privacy

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Today’s Documents

- Chinatown Declared a Nuisance!
- Report from the House of Representatives
- “The Chinese Question”
- Paper Son Interrogation

Gilder Lehrman Collection
Chinese Immigration to the U.S.

- Chinese immigration begins with the Gold Rush in 1849.
- By 1850, approximately 25,000 Chinese immigrants resided in California (mostly in San Francisco).
- A series of famines from the 1850s to the 1870s in China prompted immigration.
- Burlingame Treaty of 1868 between the United States and China
  - Allowed Chinese people to immigrate and travel within the US
  - Promised protection for Chinese people in the US
  - Gave citizens of both countries access to education while living in the other country
  - Protected trades done in Chinese ports and cities
  - Initiated the right for China to appoint consuls in American port cities
Leading Up to Chinese Exclusion

- **1853 Foreigner Miners’ Tax** - California levied $4/month tax on foreign miners.
- **1854 People v. Hall** - California Supreme Court ruled that Chinese people could not testify in court against White citizens.
- **1875 Page Act** - makes it extremely difficult for Chinese women to enter the country.
- **1880 Angell Treaty** - recognized the US’s power to regulate labor emigration from China.
**Chinese Labor**

- 15,000 Chinese men worked on the Transcontinental Railroad.
- The Workingmen’s Party of California felt Chinese laborers accepted lower wages than White workers.
  - Actively campaigned to remove Chinese from the United States
- The Panic of 1873 caused frustration among the White working class, who saw Chinese workers as the perfect scapegoat for the plummeting economy.
Chinese Immigration.

August 5, 1890.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Mr. Morrow, from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:
[To accompany H. R. 11556.]

The Committee on Foreign Affairs, to whom was referred the bills (H.R. 4548 and H.R. 3357) prohibiting Chinese immigration, have given the subject careful consideration, and report a substitute containing the substantial provisions of both bills.

The treaty between the United States and the Empire of China, concluded November 17, 1889, provided, in article 2, that—

Whenever, in the opinion of the Government of the United States, the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States, or their residence therein, affects or threatens to affect the interests of that country, or to endanger the good order of the said country or of any locality within the territory thereof, the Government of China agrees that the Government of the United States may regulate, limit, or suspend such coming or residence, but may not absolutely prohibit it. The limitation or suspension shall be reasonable and shall apply only to Chinese who may go to the United States as laborers, other classes not being included in the limitations. Legislation taken in regard to Chinese laborers will be of such a character only as is necessary to enforce the regulation, limitation, or suspension of immigration, and immigrants shall not be subject to personal maltreatment or abuse.

The second article provided that—

Chinese subjects, whether proceeding to the United States as teachers, students, merchants, or from curiosity, together with their bodies and household servants, and Chinese laborers who are now in the United States shall be allowed to go and come of their own free will and accord, and shall be accorded all the rights, privileges, immunities, and exemptions which are accorded to the citizens and subjects of the most favored nation.

In pursuance of these provisions of the treaty the United States proceeded to legislate upon the subject and to provide against the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States.

The first act was approved May 6, 1882, and declared that after ninety days from the passage of the act and for a period of ten years from that date the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States should be suspended, and that it should be unlawful for any such laborer to come or having come to remain within the United States.

It was also made a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine to which imprisonment might be added, for the master of any vessel knowingly to bring within the United States from a foreign country and land any such Chinese laborer. It was, however, provided as an exception to such provisions of exclusion that they should not apply to Chinese laborers who were in the United States at the date of the treaty, to wit, on November 17, 1889, or who should come into the country within ninety days after the passage of the act; and to give such Chinese persons the full benefit of this exception it was provided that, for the purpose of identifying the
The competition steadily increased as the laborers came in crowds on each steamer that arrived from China, or Hong-Kong, an adjacent English port. They were generally industrious and frugal. Not being accompanied by families, except in rare instances, their expenses were small; and they were content with the simplest fare, such as would not suffice for our laborers and artisans. The competition between them and our people was for this reason altogether in their favor, and the consequent irritation, proportionately deep and bitter, was followed, in many cases, by open conflicts, to the great disturbance of the public peace.

They have no regard for the obligations of an oath as administered in our courts. Their general habits, manners, and customs are different from and repugnant to those of the white and all other races, and as a race the Chinese assimilate with no other. That in the year 1880 there resided in this city and county 21,732 Chinese, and their number since has not materially changed. Of this number but a small portion—less than 1,000—are females, and the greater portion of these females are women of ill fame, living an abandoned life upon the wages of prostitution.
Chinatown Declared a Nuisance!, 1880

Anti-Chinese propaganda
- Isaac S. Kalloch
- Board of Health
- Workingmen’s Party

Describes Chinese people as evil and “documents” ways they were dangerous to the public health.
Report of the Workingmen’s Party

Itemized Report of Nuisances IN CHINATOWN.

614, 712, 714 Dupont Street—Immediately behind the Cathedral is a house of terrible filth, stink and slime; the sewer having penetrated through the cementation is all over the floor of the hall-way. Wooden structures are built out into the court-rooms from the building proper (a feature which can be found all over Chinatown). Open fires are there on every floor. The building is crowded with Chinamen, who smoke opium and live in an atmosphere stung with stench and smoke.

Massillon House Place—Tumbled-down and risky; piles of dirty, old wooden structures, etc., at the end of which is a wood-shed. Dangerous, also, on account of fires, because open fires are there in full blast, which are built in coal-oil cans. Water-closets everywhere.

Rose Street, off Washington, between Stockton and Dupont. The same condition exists there.
Massacres of Los Angeles and Rock Spring

Los Angeles, California

- Tensions became high between rival groups in an immigrant sector of Los Angeles, which led to a shootout.
- In the chaos, a White man was killed and the White residents began to riot.
- 10 White men were convicted and charged with manslaughter, but the convictions were later overturned.
- It became the largest mass lynching in American history.

Rock Spring, Wyoming

- White workers at Union Pacific Railroad mines grew angry that the railroad used Chinese workers to keep wages low.
- They attacked and murdered Chinese residents and burned down their homes.
“The Chinese Question” by Thomas Nast, 1871
The Chinese Exclusion Act, 1882

- May 6, 1882 - signed into law by President Chester A. Arthur
  - First major restriction of immigration into the US
  - Based on race
  - Barred most Chinese immigrants from entering the country for 10 years
  - Prevented Chinese immigrants from becoming US citizens
- 1892 - extended for ten years by the Geary Act
- 1904 - Made permanent by Theodore Roosevelt
- Repealed in 1943
- 1882 - Fundraising for the Statue of Liberty began
- 1883 - Emma Lazarus published “The New Colossus”
“I am willing to admit them to naturalization. I think all persons who come here to make their permanent home ought to participate in our Government, ought to be citizens, and ought to have the right of franchise conferred upon them. I voted for it once; I will vote for it again; and, I believe, Mr. President, that if you will treat these people upon the Pacific slope with common humanity they will assimilate, not, perhaps, as readily as other nationalities, to our institutions, but within a reasonable time.”

“I shall vote against the measure, and I leave that vote the last legacy to my children that they may esteem it the brightest act of my life.”
Chinese Fight Back in Court

- Over 10,000 lawsuits filed between 1882 and 1905 regarding Immigration & Civil Rights
- Many cases argued violations of the Fourteenth Amendment:
  - “nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”
- *United States v. Wong Kim Ark*, March 28, 1898 - established birthright citizenship in the US
Paper Sons and Daughters

- The 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire destroyed City Hall and its records.
- This created an opportunity for Chinese immigration.
  - Chinese Americans could bring relatives into the US.
  - Immigrants pretended to be relatives of Chinese Americans to gain entry into the US.
- The terms “paper son” and “paper daughter” refer to Chinese immigrants who acquired this documentation.
- At immigration stations, authorities interrogated people to find illegal immigrants with fraudulent documentation.

Courtesy of Karalee Wong Nakatsuka
Paper Son Interrogation

12-13-23
Applicant E-13

Q: Is this your mother's native village? A: Yes.

Q: What is the name of your village? A: Tep Hong Village, S. N. D.

Q: How far is it from your village? A: Quite a distance, I have never been there.

Q: Are your mother's parents living? A: No.

Q: Who are they? A: I don't know their names.

Q: Has your mother any brothers or sisters? A: No.

Q: How large is Su Ling Village? A: Only 4 houses.

Q: Are they all dwelling houses? A: Yes.

Q: Are there any other buildings in the village? A: Yes, 1 lantern house.

Q: How are the buildings in that village arranged? A: In 5 rows, 1 on each row.

Q: What makes the village face? A: South.

Q: In what section is that village? A: Tep How Section.

Q: What section does Tep How Section include? A: Quite a few, I don't know their names.

Q: Do you know any place called Song Share? A: I don't know any village by that name but there is a village named Song Bury, it is in front of my village a little over 1 Li away.

Q: Did you ever hear of a Song Share Section anywhere in your neighborhood? A: No.

Q: Is there a social hall in your village? A: 1st house counting from the west.

Q: What is it used for? A: Used as a meeting place for the villagers.

Q: Was it ever used as a schoolhouse? A: No.

Q: Was school ever held there? A: No.

Q: Is there a house? A: 3rd house counting and including the lantern house or social hall.

Q: Is your house a regular five room house? A: Yes.

Q: What kind of floors has it? A: Dirt.

Q: Is the open court paved? A: Yes, with red tile.

Q: In what condition is that paving? A: Not in very good condition, some of the tiles are broken.


Q: How old is he? A: About 22 years old.

Q: What is his occupation? A: He is conducting a rice store, named Ock Wah, in Wah On Market, about 3 Li west of my village.

Q: Is that your nearest market? A: Yes.

Q: How long has Wong Chong Chung followed that occupation? A: A long time I think, I don't know when he went there.

Q: Did he ever do any farming in your village? A: No, not that I know of.

Q: What family has he? A: A wife, son and daughter; the children's names are: Wong Chong Ock, 9, and Wong Chong Fun, about 4 years old.


Q: What are his age and occupation? A: About 22 years old and is farming in the home village.

Q: Has he a family? A: Yes, a wife and daughter, no son; daughter's name is Wong Toy Gee, about 7.


Q: Was there any mission there? A: Yes.

Q: Did you ever hear anyone speak at that Mission or Market? A: No, but I passed there and locked in there several times.

Q: Have you understood the previous interpreter? A: Yes.

Q: What is the name of that mission in Wah On Market? A: Fook Din or gospel hall.

Q: Is there a wall on any side of your village? A: No.

Q: Has the village any ponds? A: No.

Q: Where do you get water for household use? A: From the river in front of the village, about 20 jongs away.

Courtesy of Karalee Wong Nakatsuka
Wong Chun Ning (1906-1997)

- 1923 - Immigrated as a Paper Son
  - Real age: 17
  - Paper age: 19
  - Traveled with the real son of his paper father
- Worked in the wholesale produce business
- Returned to China in 1929 match-made marriage
  - Wife was able to come to the US due to a 1925 revision in the immigration law
- Had 7 children and 21 grandchildren

“China to America on the President Wilson, landed November 12, 1923. America to China on the President Grant, departed March 1, 1929. Departed Hong Kong September 18, 1929 China to America on the Shimpo Maru, returned October 14, 1929.”
Chinese Immigration in the 20th Century

- 1943 - the Magnuson Act repealed the Chinese exclusion Act but established a quota
  - Only 105 ethnically Chinese immigrants that would be allowed into the US regardless of country of origin
  - Allowed some Chinese residents to become citizens
- 1965 - The Immigration and Nationality Act abolished National Origins Formula
  - Describes groups that achieved a high level of success in the United States
  - Has the consequence of denigrating other ethnic groups
Upcoming Programs

- **Inside the Vault**, Thursday, August 12 at 7 p.m. ET (4 p.m. PT)
  - We will be discussing Robert F. Kennedy’s report on civil rights with Lois MacMillan.

- **Book Breaks**, Sunday, August 1 at 2 p.m. (11 a.m. PT)
  - Clint Smith discusses his book *How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery across America*. 
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