



Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (AIISF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote a greater understanding of Pacific Coast immigration and its role in shaping America's past, present and future. Through an array of interpretive programs and educational partnerships, the Foundation preserves the Immigration Station site, a National Historic Landmark, as a place that honors the complex story and rich cultural heritage of Pacific Coast immigrants and their descendants.

Dear Eddie,

We're bringing you this special pre-AIISF Annual Dinner edition of Passages with the hope that you will tell your friends to attend the dinner and get involved with us. Subscription to Passages is free, so please tell your friends to sign up to stay current with the exciting activities that are in store as we reopen the Immigration Station on February 15, 2009 and prepare for the Centennial in 2010. Thank you to all who have purchased tickets to the Annual Dinner and made donations to keep our work moving forward.

Wishing you all the best,

Eddie Wong
Executive Director

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Don't Miss Out on the September 12 AIISF Gala Dinner

There's still time to get your tickets to the AIISF Annual Dinner on Friday, September 12 at the Westin San Francisco Market Street. Tickets are \$200 and proceeds go to continuing the Foundation's efforts to inform the public about the rich history of the Immigration Station and its implications today.

The keynote speaker is Dr. Erika Lee, co-author of *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* with Judy Yung. The book is due out in 2010, but you will get a preview of the new stories emerging from their studies of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian immigrants, who passed through Angel Island between 1910 and 1940.

Pianist/composer Jon Jang will perform *Prologue to Angel Voices*, a series of musical compositions inspired by new translations of the Chinese poems carved on the Detention Barrack walls, Japanese poems written about the Angel Island experience, and excerpts



from a Russian immigrant's letters about his stay on the island.

Come learn about the upcoming reopening of the Immigration Station on February 15, 2009.

To buy tickets, email your contact information to info@aifs.org or call Julie at 415 262-4429.

AI Immigration Station Renovation Update

by Angel Island State Park Superintendent, Dave Matthews



Hello all and I hope you have had an enjoyable summer. The staff at Angel Island has been busily working to prepare for the grand re-opening of the United States Immigration Station in February. The final steps of the Phase I restoration have been set in motion. Due to unexpected delays, the contract for the interpretive elements for the site was held up in Sacramento for a few months, but is now heading forward. The contractor is starting work on the project and will begin the "concrete" phase of work. This phase will include installing all of the support structures for the information panels and etching words for contemplation and inspiration in the concrete risers of the new Administration Building footprint. The installation of the panels and the granite "interrogation table" will take place in early January and will complete the exterior portion of work at the

site.

Staff from the Departments' Northern Service Center have been installing over 2000 interpretive objects into the barracks, including suitcases, desks, tables, clothing, games, a phonograph and other items that the immigrants would have possessed while detained. The look and feel of the barracks is really taking shape and I think most will agree the authentic pieces being used are bringing the building to life.



As most of you know the re-opening event is scheduled for February 15, 2009 and we look forward to moving presentations throughout the day, we also expect to attract a number of local and national supporters including Diane Feinstein, Lynn Woolsey and possibly the Governor.

Preparations are underway to have a diverse and memorable event. The park is working directly with the Foundation staff as well as many of our other partners and we hope that you will continue to support the re-opening efforts.

The park is also working on establishing a "Sister Park" status with the Angel Island of the East, also known as Ellis Island. This partnership would join the two sites not only in name but in purpose and goal. We hope to develop an interpretive school program in which children from each coast would educate the other about their site and ideas as they relate to immigration. It is an exciting opportunity and we look forward to working with our National Park partners.

A Day at Angel Island

By Michi Kawai



Michi Kawai

Editor Judy Yung's Note: Japanese immigrants were the second largest group after the Chinese to be processed at the Angel Island Immigration Station. Approximately 90,000 Japanese were admitted through Angel Island between 1910 and 1940. Because the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 barred the emigration of Japanese laborers to the United States, the new arrivals consisted mainly of parents, wives, and children of Japanese residents. In contrast to the Chinese experience at Angel Island, the Japanese had an easier time. Armed with passports issued by the Japanese government and birth and marriage certificates proving their right to immigrate, the overwhelming majority were processed and admitted within a day or two. Less than 1 percent were ever excluded or deported. It is probably because their stays at Angel Island were short that few have left written or oral accounts of their detention experience. The

following description of Japanese life at Angel Island is thus rare. It was excerpted from two works by Michi Kawai, general secretary of the YWCA of Japan from 1912 to 1926: *My Lantern* (Tokyo: Kyo Bun Kwan, 1939) and "A Day at Angel Island," *Joshi Seinenkai*, September 1915, translated by John Akiyama. Kawai made three visits to Angel Island in 1915 while in the United States to attend the YWCA National Training School in New York and to investigate the condition of Japanese women on the Pacific Coast. A graduate of Bryn Mawr College and founder of Keisen Girls School in Tokyo, Kawai was a strong advocate of women's education. It was largely through her efforts that the YWCA in Japan and in the United States became directly involved in preparing and assisting Japanese women to adapt to their new lives in America.

Upon hearing that some one hundred Japanese women were on the July 15 ship *Tenyo Maru*, I left home early on the morning of the 16th to visit the Angel Island immigration facility. As I had already visited twice before, I was able to get permission to board the ship without much hassle. Angel Island, which can be reached by heading northeast of San Francisco, is very scenic. One side of the island is occupied by the immigration buildings and military barracks, the other side by a hospital for contagious diseases--a sad and forbidding place. Some may ask why name such a place "Angel," but if it is the work of angels to give comfort in such a lonely and sad place by surrounding it with beauty, then it is very appropriately named.

After crossing the short pier, one faces a large two-story wood-framed building [Administration Building], and beyond that up the hill is a two-story building that serves as the men's detention barracks. The ugly white building on the left is a quarantine hospital with trees and flowers dotting the landscape, displaying the struggling efforts of a gardener. The smokestacks sticking out towards the seaside show that electricity flows through the island, and on both sides, as if to stand guard over the premises, are the staff quarters lined up like toy battleships.

Entering the building ahead, one finds a room [Main Examination Room] that is partitioned into three or four waiting areas on each side, and an official calling out Japanese to the left, Chinese to the right. This is where the parents, spouses, and friends of the new arrivals are interviewed. On the second floor are the one hundred or women of the same nationality gathered in one room. Bunks in tiers of three occupy the greater part of the room. Some of the women are lying down, others are changing their clothes, and still others are sitting on a bench as if waiting for someone to come. All of them are anxiously



awaiting the physical examination for trachoma and hookworm as they carefully guard their passports done up in furoshiki wrapping-cloths. It is no wonder that they are nervous. I hear that even those who passed the same exams three times in Japan have been stopped by the Immigration Service, because they did not take care of their health while on board the ship.

In general, the women represent a cross-section of lower-middle class Japanese—a hair-dresser, a middle-aged geisha and a dancing mistress, all with Japanese coiffure and clothes; a group of dancing girls going to the Exposition; several older country women; a refined looking mother with two children; wives who have been sent for by their husbands; some who are returning from visits in Japan; and a few "picture brides." The brides are mostly from country communities and look queer, even to me; for no one has told them that their huge pompadours stuffed with "rats" have long since gone out of style in America, and that their efforts to beautify themselves with an excessive use of powder results only in giving an impression of uncleanness.

When the lunch bell rings, they go downstairs to the dining room along with the Chinese, Spanish, and European women—all housed in separate quarters. The room is bare, save for eight rows of long tables and benches. On each table is a large pan filled with slices of bread, some small bowls of jam and white sugar, and cups for tea. The Europeans have meat, beans, and even better silverware. Only a few of the Japanese women are served one or two extra dishes, which they had ordered and purchased beforehand. Within five minutes, they finish eating and head back upstairs. Some stop along the way at the small food stand to purchase pickled vegetables and other snacks. At four o'clock for their supper they have steamed Chinese rice and greens cooked with scraps of pork in a salty broth. Some of the Japanese women tell me with tears that the food is awful. The steamship companies pay a certain amount per person to the government for food; the government bids out the food services to a sub-contractor who is of course white; and the sub-contractor uses mainly Chinese cooks who cater to the palates of the Chinese immigrants.

After dinner one is allowed to go out and view the ocean scenery, or head towards the hill for some exercise. The back area, however, is surrounded by a chain link fence, and guards can be seen from time to time, giving one a sense of unease. We return inside by 7 o'clock and take a bath, and the matron on duty orders everyone to prepare for bed. There are two matrons for the female dorms, one is an American and the other is the beautiful wife of Reverend Terasawa. Mrs. Terasawa is fluent in English, very compassionate, and a mother of several fine children. No one is better suited for such a role. The fact that she can also speak Chinese is very advantageous; the Chinese respect and call her Mama. Her virtue should be noted, as it is due to Mrs. Terasawa's generosity that I am permitted to spend the night, to my great delight.



The next morning, in order to ease the nerves of those waiting for the results of their physical exam from the previous day, and those waiting for their own exams, I talk to them like an older sister, explaining the customs, the likes and dislikes of the American people. I mention the special things women should be careful about; the cleanliness of hair, nails, shoes and handkerchiefs; the difference between the Japanese and the American bathroom and toilet; the way to walk in American shoes. I tell them about American home life and moral standards, and of the Japanese people's responsibility to the land they have come to live in. After an hour of talking to them, it is time to board the boat. Unsure of how long the boat would wait, I cut short my farewells and hurry below to the waiting room, which is packed with husbands, parents and friends of

the new arrivals. As we leave the island I look up, and at all the windows a flutter of white handkerchiefs wave an appreciation of what little I had been able to do in that short time. Then and there I saw a field of service for the Y.W.C.A., the work of preparing our women emigrants for life abroad, before ever they leave Japan.

Please note: We continue to look for stories of those who were once detained or who worked at Angel Island. Please contact us if you have a story to share. Call AIISF at 415 262-4429 or email us at info@aiisf.org. If you'd like to send us a note or pictures, our new address is 50 Francisco St., Suite 110, San Francisco, CA 94133.

Judy Yung is professor emeriti of American Studies at UC Santa Cruz and the co-author of *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940*. She is currently working on *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America*, with Professor Erika Lee of the University of Minnesota. The book is sponsored by the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation and will be available in 2010.

UPCOMING IN THE OCTOBER ISSUE OF PASSAGES

-Interview with Laurence Yep and Kathleen S. Yep, co-authors of *The Dragons Child*, a new childrens book about a father and sons journey from China to Angel Island in the 1920s.

If you would like your friends and family to receive this e-newsletter, click [here](#).

See you on September 12 at the AIISF Fundraising Dinner.

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