Volume 3 No. 4 THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGEL ISLAND IMMIGRATION STATION FOUNDATION Summer 2000

PASSAGES

AIISF RECEIVES $500,000 FEDERAL GRANT

On July 6, Executive Director Katherine Toy received an invitation to a special ceremony with President Clinton in the nation's capital. The following morning, she arrived in Washington D.C. to receive a $500,000 grant from the White House Millennium Council's *Save America's Treasures* program. The event was held at Anderson Cottage where President Abraham Lincoln drafted the Emancipation Proclamation. In this notable setting, President Clinton declared the Cottage a National Historic Landmark and announced the 2000 S.A.T. grant recipients.

Angel Island Immigration Station received one of 47 grants from a competitive pool of over 300 applicants. Grants were awarded to projects from thirty-one states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In total, $15 million in matching federal grants were awarded to preserve historic treasures nationwide. These funds will be used to protect threatened cultural treasures from the USS Missouri to Ellis Island.

SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

SARA KARRER

Katherine Toy with Ellen Lovell, Director of the White House Millennium Council

"It was thrilling to be in Washington to receive this important news from the President himself," said Toy. "It is rewarding to know the White House and the national government value the work we are doing to preserve the Angel Island Immigration Station as a piece of American history."

The $500,000.00 for the Immigration Station will go toward preserving the poetry carved by the Chinese immigrants into the barrack walls. Long-term deterioration of the buildings and the weathering of the inscriptions threaten to erase this record of the Pacific immigration experience. This grant from S.A.T. will support conservation work to ensure the valuable poetry is preserved.

NEWS FLASH

The State has just approved two permanent positions, Senior Architect and Interpretive Planner, to work exclusively on the Angel Island Immigration Station preservation project. Both the architect and planner will be on site and their sole job will be to oversee the restoration process. They should begin work by late fall or early winter. The approval of these positions is a very significant development and another indication of the high value the State places on the Immigration Station project. Look for more news on this in the next issue of *Passages*.

JIM BOW DEPARTS AIISF BOARD

By Katherine Yee

Jim Bow's an attorney. It's the first thing you know about him. He gets to put "Esq." after his name. He's very careful about the numbers and contracts he handles. Extremely careful. Meticulously careful. The Foundation has relied on him for legal and financial counsel for more than a decade. In the history of the board, he's probably been its longest running officer. It's unlikely that anyone else will replicate his tenure as Board Treasurer, devoting the same kind of hours, continuity, responsibility, and loyalty. Anyone who's been with AIISF will recognize all of the above without hesitation.

But there is another side to Jim. He listens to doo-wop music. He loves the stuff – even makes his own tapes to listen in the car. He has R&B radio playing in his office. And you can even find him tuning into Top 40 rock & pop when he's hanging out with his kids. He's a mellower and hipper guy than his Board Treasurer title implied.

(continued on page 2)

Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation is a non-profit organization whose primary goals are:

a) to lead the effort to preserve, restore and interpret Angel Island Immigration Station, a National Historic Landmark, as the Pacific gateway for U.S. immigration; and

b) to promote educational activities that further the understanding of Pacific Rim immigration in American history.

President's Message

It's hard to imagine topping the successes we've seen so far this year. We were recently awarded a federal grant of half a million dollars for poem preservation at the Immigration Station. That's $500,000.00 on top of the $15 million referendum that passed earlier in the year. Our "piggy bank" is filling up nicely. All that money, which represents about half of what will eventually be needed, is restricted to fixing up the Immigration Station.

Then, there's the matter of **sustaining** the Foundation so that we can continue to do the work we do so well; to continue taking the lead in raising the rest of the dollars necessary to complete the preservation and renovation of the site, and to create educational programs for it. This requires filling a second "piggy bank" – the one that supports our operational expenses like staff salaries, office rent, telephones, etc. For that, we must turn to you, our Friends, and we must cultivate new donors. Your contributions are critical to our long-term survival. So I encourage you to think big, give generously. Come to our September 27th fundraiser!

On another note, we say goodbye to Jim Bow who retires from the board after 17 years of service. Jim was responsible for writing AIISF's by-laws and as treasurer, was the guardian of our finances. He, more than anyone, witnessed the phenomenal growth of AIISF. Confident that we will keep founder Paul Chow's dream alive, he resigned. Our deep gratitude to Jim for his contributions and devotion to our mission (see page 1 for a tribute to Jim).

Another board loss, or in this case, shift is that of Daniel Quan. Through Dan's leadership as president (1996-1998), AIISF became a professional, nationally recognized organization with its first real office, paid staff and recipient of numerous grants and public funds for preservation. He steps off the board to become AIISF's architectural consultant. He will oversee the initial stages of the preservation work. Thank you, Dan for all that you have given us. I've had the distinct pleasure of working closely with both men and it has been an amazing run. Our board may be changing, but our mission holds steady.

Warm regards,

Felicia

Felicia Lowe
President of the Board

"On Gold Mountain: A Chinese American Experience" Opens at the Autry Museum

COURTESY AUTRY MUSEUM OF WESTERN HERITAGE

The See Family c. 1914

The Autry Museum of Western Heritage, in Los Angeles, has developed an exhibition – the largest of its kind – exploring the history of the Chinese in America from the 1790s to the present. *On Gold Mountain: A Chinese American Experience,* based on the acclaimed book by Lisa See, will run from now through January 1, 2001. Lisa See's book *On Gold Mountain* explores six generations of a Chinese American family who originally immigrated to California in 1867, then lived and worked in Los Angeles from 1897 to the present. The *On Gold Mountain* exhibition links this family story to the larger history of Los Angeles' Chinatown and the history of Chinese Americans in the United States.

Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation has lent to the exhibit a replica of the poetry carved into the barrack walls. Utilizing this with objects and materials from over fifty local and national collections, the exhibition will examine the events and influences surrounding Chinese immigration in California and the United States, and the circumstances that transformed the Chinese in America into Chinese Americans.

(continued from page 1)

SURREY BLACKBURN

Departing Treasurer Jim Bow

Jim's a dad. A really dedicated and caring one. When he wasn't clocking in extra hours at the office or for AIISF, he was (and is) doing the "Mr. Mom thing." He coaches for his daughter Barbara and his son Benny's afterschool sports teams. He figured out where he can get Tweety Bird apparel for Barbara. And after much deliberation and careful discussion, he responded to Benny's urgent requests for a Game Boy. It's wonderful to watch him be a dad. He loves to give them what he knows and relies on – a well-considered plan and responsible caretaking.

Jim has truly fulfilled and excelled beyond his pledge of service to the Foundation – from the early years with AIISF founder Paul Chow at the helm to Foundation's current rise. If you look through AIISF's photo album, you might not find Jim in the bulk of the pictures, but he's been involved all along the way. Before the National Historic Landmark designation for the Immigration Station, in-between fundraising events, and through all the various grants and relationships with federal and state interests, Jim has been a vital part of the glue that kept the foundation together and out of the red. We wish him all great things – as immense as his contribution to the Foundation – which is very great indeed.

Katherine Yee is the former AIISF Board Assistant. She currently works for Daniel Quan Design.

Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation Address Changes

AIISF has changed its *mailing address* to:
P.O. Box 29237
San Francisco, CA 94129-0237

Please note that our *office location* remains the same.

We have a *website* at: **www.aiisf.org**

And new *e-mail addresses*:
For general information: **info@aiisf.org**
For Katherine Toy: **ktoy@aiisf.org**
For Adam Wimbush: **awimbush@aiisf.org**

Thank You

Friends of AIISF

Friends

Diana, Douglas, Melissa and Chris Chan, *in memory of Share Chan*
Chrsitine Godwin
William Gwaltney
Erika Lee and Mark Buccella
Jennie Lew
Jill Leyte-Vidal, *in honor of Katherine Toy's appointment as Executive Director*
Mike and Janet Leyte-Vidal
Tessa Melvin
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Lester S. Poon, *in memory of Yin Hing Poon*
Carleen, Phil, and Natalie Wong
Joanne Woo, *in memory of her parents Joel Wong Woo and Pansy Woo*

Landmark Friends

Elizabeth Goldstein

Grants

This past quarter AIISF received generous support from: the Rhoda and Richard Goldman Fund, the Friedman Family Fund, the YK Trust and the Save America's Treasures Program.

In the News

Cause for Celebration

AIISF invites you to join us at our "Cause for Celebration" fundraising event on Wednesday, September 27, 2000, in the Pacific Room on the top floor of the Bank of America Center. We invite you to help sustain our organization and ensure AIISF's leadership role as stewards of the Immigration Station preservation project.

For more information: please e-mail us (info@aiisf.org) or call our office (561-2160).

$15 Million Bond Funds to be Released in Fiscal Year 2000-2001

On March 7, with the passage of Proposition 12, California voters approved $15 million toward the restoration of Angel Island Immigration Station. Immigration Station supporters may have noted that Governor Gray Davis has delayed the release of the bond funds by vetoing its expenditure for this fiscal year. The funding was delayed because the project is still in the planning phase. Voters can rest assured that the $15 million remains dedicated to the restoration and preservation of the Immigration Station and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Tribute to Marvin Hollis

We lost a friend on June 7th. Marvin Hollis, volunteer docent for the Angel Island Association (AIA) and site captain for the Immigration Station, died unexpectedly. Like clockwork, Marvin went to the Island every Thursday. "I appreciated his commitment to telling the Immigration Station story accurately and to make this history come alive," said AIISF's Felicia Lowe. Lily Hollis, Marvin's wife, who is also an AIA docent, will continue the Thursday tradition.

FELICIA LOWE

Flo Oy Wong's "made in usa: Angel Island Shhh" art exhibit is at the Immigration Station through September 23, 2000. For more information: www.kearnystreet.org

Gateway Exhibit at Presidio Visitor's Center

From June 1 to September 17, the "Gateway to Gold Mountain" exhibit is open to the general public at the Presidio Visitor's Center, located at Building 102, Montgomery Street, in the Presidio. The Gateway exhibit is hosted by the National Park Service who expects an estimated 27,000 visitors to the center this summer.

PASSAGES

A quarterly newsletter published by the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation

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Editor • Adam Wimbush
Design • Melinda Lau Donaker

AIISF is a non-profit organization fully qualified under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All contributions (including Friends payments) are tax deductible to the maximum extent permitted by law. For those wishing to make larger gifts or contributions, please contact AIISF for more information.

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My hope is to tell this story "in their own words." Perhaps it's not possible; perhaps those words have been altered or muffled by the translators, immigration stenographers and lawyers. The written, bureaucratic record is, surprisingly, very extensive, even though many of the records covering the operation of the Immigration Station were lost in the 1940 fire that destroyed the Administration Building. The logs, journals, and correspondence of the Quarantine Station have also been preserved. What is missing are the perspectives of people who weren't bureaucrats, who weren't in the business of record-keeping: detainees, kin of detainees, lawyers, reporters, missionaries, physicians. I welcome readers' help in locating "first person" testimony from that era that might fill in the details that a storyteller – or historian – must provide.

It is not clear what Quok Shee's case represents, if it represents anything at all. It is, after all, just a random sample, and so may not be "typical." Perhaps we will conclude that her entry was fraudulent and that she deserved to be deported. A good argument could be made that she was released on a technicality and that her bona fides were never established. Or perhaps she was entering illegally but was, morally, entitled to enter anyway. Immigration stories are often permeated with moral ambiguity of this sort, and even today this makes us uncomfortable.

Stories like Quok Shee's may make us a little less dogmatic about questions of right and wrong, and a little more understanding of the many conflicting interests and perspectives at play in the field of immigration. It is a powerful example of the broad powers given to the Immigration Service and the resultant harsh treatment often afforded Asian immigrants during the period of the Exclusion Acts. While the immigration laws have been revised many times over, such stories are still far too common. For that reason alone, Quok Shee's story deserves to be brought to light.

Bob Barde is Academic Coordinator at UC Berkeley's Institute of Business and Economic Research. He is co-author of the Immigration chapter for the Millennial Edition of Historical Statistics of the United States (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming in 2001) and was Managing Editor for the entire project 1995-98. He has also organized the academic Technical Advisory Group for the Backfile Rescue Project (to digitize all INS records) of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

If you have information and wish to contact Bob Barde:
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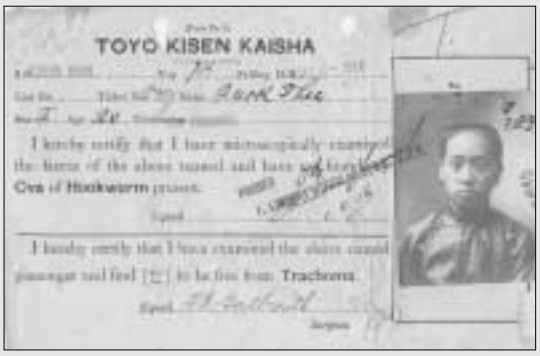
barde@uclink4.berkeley.edu

Interview Ordeal

On November 9, 1917, and again on November 20, and yet again on December 13, Immigration Inspector Mayer interviewed Quok Shee. He did not threaten her – the possibility of deportation was always hanging above her head – but he did attempt to manipulate her isolation and vulnerability to get her to voluntarily return to China. By this time, she had been detained at Angel Island for over one year.


TOYO KISEN KAISHA

COURTESY NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Quok Shee's Medical Form

Q: How long is it since you last saw your husband?
A: I haven't seen him for about 8 months. He has not been to see me at the Island.
Q: Has he sent any word to you within the last 8 months?
A: No. My lawyer brought me over $10 one day.
Q: Did you ever get any money from your husband or from any else since you have been at the station here up until the time you received that $10 last?
A: No nothing...I would like to have you tell my husband to send me back to China.
Q: Do you still maintain that you are the lawful wife of your alleged husband?
A: I was married to him in China.
Q: Have you any reason to think it was not a legal marriage?
A: Yes I think it was a legal marriage my mother had me married.
Q: How do you explain the indifference that your husband has shown towards you since you have been here?
A: He is in the city I don't know why he didn't come.

And again, a few days later:

Q: ...And has not your alleged husband even been over to see you during all that time?
A: No.
Q: Has your alleged husband ever written to you during all that time?
A: No.
Q: Don't you think that is strange?
A: (The interpreter states that Quok Shee does not seem inclined to express any opinion as to that question but she says that she wants to go back on the Tenyo Maru.)

On December 13th, Inspector Mayer again tried to persuade Quok Shee to demand that her lawyer drop her appeal via a petition for a writ of habeas corpus:

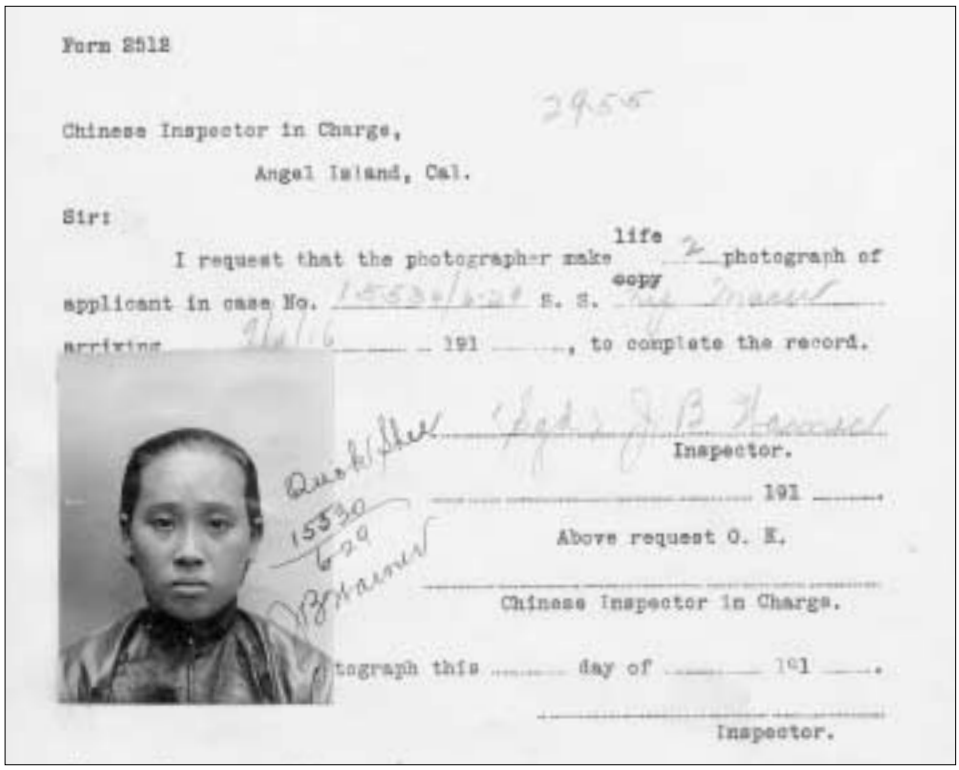
Q: It will probably take three or four months for your case to be decided in court.
A: I am not willing to wait that long, since I have waited so long already.
Q: Would you be willing to wait two months for the Court to decide your case?
A: My lawyer has already promised me in two weeks, so I am not willing to wait any longer than that.
Q: With due deference to your lawyer, I can state that your case cannot possibly be decided for two or three months at the very least.
A: I have already asked him to ask my friends not to appeal my case any longer...I am determined to go back.
Q: (To the Interpreter) Mrs. Wisner, please explain to her that we have no right to urge upon the Court that she be deported day after tomorrow, irrespective of the wishes of her husband unless she herself absolutely demands it of us. (Interpreter complies).
A: (by Applicant) I have nothing else in my mind now, except to return on the Nippon Maru on Saturday the 15th. I have nothing else to say about it; I insist upon going.
A: (Statement by Mrs. Wisner, the Interpreter): During the last month, every time I have seen this woman, I have been asked to take a note to Mr. Hayes or the Commissioner or Mr. Mayer, begging them to use their utmost endeavors to send her back on the first Japanese boat. I have explained this statement to the applicant, and she says it is correct.

The Alleged Wife: A Tale of Angel Island

by Bob Barde

Quok Shee and her husband, Chew Hoy Quong, crossed my path quite by accident. They came upon me almost at random from among thousands of Chinese would-be immigrants, two who had tried to enter the United States in 1916. Their story begins in the 34th year of the Chinese Exclusion Act. It is one of hardship, tenacity, and sadness and, sadly, it is not unusual. It is also puzzling, for through it runs a thread of mystery as to who they really were, why they received the treatment they did, and what finally became of them.

It is a tale now over eighty years old. Most likely they both are dead. Today it seems dramatic; back then it probably passed unnoticed. No newspaper headlines, no revelations by muckraking journalists, no memoirs. Most of what remains is in a folder of documents where brief portions of their lives were written down, neatly, assembled and preserved with bureaucratic thoroughness: Immigration Case File number 15530/6-29.


Form 2512

Chinese Inspector in Charge,

Angel Island, Cal.

Sir:

I request that the photographer make life copy photograph of applicant in case No. 15530/6-29 S. S. arriving _____ 191 ____, to complete the record.

Inspector.

_____ 191 ____.

Above request O. K.

Chinese Inspector in Charge.

tograph this ____ day of _____ 191 ____.

Inspector.

Quok Shee's Application

COURTESY NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Their files now reside at the National Archives and Records Administration office in San Bruno, California. In early 1999, as part of another research project, I had been tracking down lists of immigrants arriving by ship early in the century. Such records were kept by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and its predecessors and later microfilmed. After surveying these microfilms – available to anyone, just walk in and help yourself, thank you – I asked about other records of individual immigrants. Archivist Neil Thomsen introduced me to NARA's individual immigration case files. Anyone who ran afoul of the immigration bureaucracy became a case file, and usually a voluminous one. In the San Francisco region at the beginning of this century, most of those people were Chinese.

"Chinese case files? Sure, here's one that someone was using just now. Nothing out of the ordinary about it that I know. Probably some descendant, looking for an ancestor, had us pull the file. Have a look through it."

Quock Shee's immigration case file was an inch thick, carefully page-numbered with the most recent material on top. And it was the topmost sheet, the Action Sheet, that startled me – begun in September 1916 and not closed until August 1918. For almost two years Quok Shee was held in detention, repeatedly interrogated, denied access to a lawyer, plagued by depression, subjected to smallpox, isolated from a husband she scarcely knew yet who was her only contact in America, pulled this way and that by a system of kafka-esque obduracy. One hundred and fifty pages of legalistic maneuvering, bureaucratic record-keeping, inquisitorial interrogations, medical evaluations, intrigue, and court orders – all over the attempt of one Chinese woman to enter the United States.

The more I thought about her case, the larger grew the element of mystery. Were they really husband and wife, as they claimed? Or was she being brought in for "immoral purposes," as a mysterious informer alleged? How could Chew Hoy Quong, a relatively poor merchant, afford two sets of lawyers and seemingly endless administrative and judicial appeals? If someone helped pay the legal bills, who was it? And why?

Quok Shee's case was decidedly not ordinary. Neither were the times, the place, the other characters. Where the concept of "opportunity for all" collided with enforcement of the Chinese Exclusion Act (and its equally ugly successors) came the rancid odor of deep moral ambiguity. Angel Island was saturated with scandal and populated by an assortment of honest and dishonest immigrants, smugglers, corrupt officials as well as honest ones, ambitious investigator-knights errant, lawyers of every stripe, racists, and good Samaritans (some people managed to be both), and the saintly presence of the "Angel of Angel Island." Quite a place, this Angel Island, and quite a tale.

I have been gathering the material to tell that story, but I need help. While the story focuses on Quok Shee and her "alleged husband" (as the Immigration Service always referred to him), Chew Hoy Quong, there is a large cast of supporting characters drawn from the immigration "industry", the Quarantine Station, and the military facilities on Angel Island. The cast includes not only Chinese, but Japanese, Indians, and Europeans detained on the Island; officers of the Public Health Service (which was the first agency to "greet" incoming ships); and the many U.S. Army soldiers who used Angel Island in transiting to and from America's new empire in the Far East.

(continued on page 4)

Commemorative T-Shirt

Proceeds from the sale of the commemorative t-shirt honoring Angel Island Immigration Station as a National Historic Landmark will go toward the docent training program for the Immigration Station. Please contact the Angel Island Association at (415) 435-3522 for more information.

Wear a landmark! Specially designed for the Landmark event, these t-shirts are silkscreened in four colors and are 100% cotton. Available in adult sizes S, M, L, XL for $12.00 and XXL for $14.00 (plus sales tax and shipping).

Would you like to plan a special visit to the Immigration Station? Please call AIA Volunteer Co-ordinator Ellen Loring at (415) 435-3522 and she will be happy to make the arrangements for your group.

Become a Friend

Become a "Friend" and receive quarterly issues of our newsletter and/or exclusively designed items that show your support of Angel Island Immigration Station and its rich historical legacy.

Student or Teacher Friend – $25
- Receive the quarterly newsletter for one year (Please enclose a current copy of your student or teacher I.D.)

Friend – $50
- Receive the quarterly newsletter for one year

Heritage Friend – $100
- Receive the quarterly newsletter for one year
- Commemorative t-shirt

Legacy Friend – $250
- Receive the quarterly newsletter for one year
- Commemorative t-shirt
- A choice (please indicate) between the book, ISLAND by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim and Judy Yung ***OR*** the video "Carved in Silence" by Felicia Lowe

Landmark Friend – $500
- Receive the quarterly newsletter for one year
- Commemorative t-shirt
- The book, ISLAND by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim and Judy Yung ***AND*** the video "Carved in Silence" by Felicia Lowe

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