

# PASSAGES

## FIRST LADY RECOGNIZES ANGEL ISLAND IMMIGRATION STATION

AIISF reached another milestone when First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton appeared as the featured speaker at a special AIISF fundraising reception on November 6, 1999 at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. The First Lady's appearance is the latest marker in an exceptional 18-month period for AIISF, starting with the 1997 designation of the Angel Island Immigration Station as a National Historic Landmark.

More than 100 guests attended the special event. Decorating the reception room were displays and photomurals, including architectural sketches showing the proposed renovations of the entire Immigration Station complex, complete with interpretive displays. A monitor played newsclips of AIISF's exciting past two years with footage from the 1998 National Historic Landmark ceremony, the recent *Today Show* piece profiling the Immigration Station's listing as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places

### 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.

SURREY BLACKBURN



First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton honors the preservation efforts of AIISF at a fundraiser on November 6.

and excerpts from the History Channel's *Save America's Treasures* special hosted by actor Noah Wylie. Guests toasted the Foundation's many successes and discussed future plans for the Immigration Station.

AIISF Board President Felicia Lowe officially welcomed the First Lady upon her arrival. In her opening remarks, Lowe recalled that AIISF's late founder Paul Chow often referred to the Immigration Station as the "Asian American Plymouth Rock, a national symbol of Asian American immigration to the United States." Mrs. Clinton's appearance at the fundraiser lends stature to that claim and helps to place the story of Angel Island more firmly in the national memory.

Also addressing the guests were Bruce Judd, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and local businessman and the event's sponsor Henry Hwang. Mr. Hwang, who immigrated from Shanghai, China in 1948

(First Lady, continued on pg. 2)

## ANGEL ISLAND SHINES AT NATIONAL TRUST CONFERENCE

Angel Island basked in the national spotlight this past October when the Foundation made two key presentations at the annual conference for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Each year preservationists, architects, planners, engineers, historians and site stewards come together for one week to discuss policy and legislation, historical topics, technical issues and project assistance. This year marked the 50th anniversary of the National Trust, and the conference, held in our nation's capitol, was appropriately themed "Saving America's Treasures." Having been recognized by the National Trust as a significant site in their "Save America's Treasures" program, and having also been designated one of "America's 11 Most Endangered Sites," Angel Island was in a perfect position to play to a national audience at the conference.

At the first session, Board Member Daniel Quan introduced Angel Island Immigration Station and discussed the overall planning strategies, internal organization, outreach, fundraising and partnership efforts that the Foundation has developed and nurtured over the last three years to reach its preservation goals. Successes as well as failures were discussed, and the growing pains of a volunteer non-profit organization were related. The session was a summary of a year's participation in the Preservation Partnership Demonstration Project sponsored by the National Trust and the National Park Service.

(Trust Conference, continued on pg. 4)

## President's Message

Let us take a moment to reflect upon the work we've accomplished in 1999... allow ourselves to take a deep breath and thank all of you for supporting AIISF.

AIISF kicked off the year with a series of visioning workshops with our partners, California State Parks and the National Park Service. Workshop participants helped crystalize the educational themes of Angel Island Immigration Station and provided valuable guidance in developing a phased work plan for the site.

AIISF made great strides in our effort to draw national awareness about the history of Angel Island Immigration Station. The National Trust for Historic Preservation identified it as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Places. It also became an official project of the Millennium Council's Save America's Treasures program. This association led to a special donor's reception where the First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton, addressed the importance of community participation in preserving the Immigration Station.

AIISF's exhibit "Gateway to Gold Mountain" traveled to Spokane, Dallas and Boston. We co-hosted "Profiles in Courage" honoring Senator Daniel Akaka and our Asian elders. Board members spoke at numerous conferences around the country. We met with policy makers, foundations and community leaders to rally support.

AIISF also set up its own office in the Presidio and is in the process of hiring our first Executive Director. This has been a year of phenomenal growth for the organization.

AIISF's accomplishments are the result of hard work by our dedicated board of directors, staff, our sharp consultant, advisors and volunteers. Hundreds of hours have been spent in planning meetings, proposal writing, budgeting, site planning, creating materials, coordinating events, coalition building and more.

The organization has been sustained by foundation grants, state funding, congressional legislation and donations from our friends. You are important to our growth and existence.

As we enter the next millennium, we look forward to launching the initial stages of the preservation work on the Immigration Station. A \$2.1 billion parks bond, Proposition 12, comes before the voters in March with \$15 million set aside for the Immigration Station.

The Foundation will continue to play a critical role in helping realize the dream of a restored Angel Island Immigration Station. We look to you to help us continue our work.

Happy New Year,

Felicia Lowe



AIISF board members and staff enjoyed hosting the First Lady.

(First Lady, continued from pg. 1)

after the Immigration Station ceased operations, recalled that he was completely unaware of the Angel Island Immigration Station and its history until his son, award-winning playwright David Henry Hwang, toured the Immigration Station as an undergraduate at Stanford University and informed his father of what he discovered. In his introduction of the First Lady, Mr. Hwang echoed the other speakers in emphasizing the importance of the Immigration Station as both a point of cultural heritage and a key element in the education of younger generations of Asian Americans.

D.C. businesswoman Yeni Wong had pledged \$20,000 a year for five years to underwrite the costs of future special fundraising events for AIISF. Mrs. Clinton also announced that Nikon Corporation had agreed to donate \$10,000. After speaking, the First Lady stayed and graciously greeted and posed for pictures with every guest.

The reception was underwritten by Mr. Hwang and sponsored by Save America's Treasures (SAT). SAT is a partnership of the White House Millennium Council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. One of the organization's programs is to create a national campaign to generate support and resources for projects like the Immigration Station which have been designated as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.

In addition to the donations announced by Mrs. Clinton at the reception, SAT has informed AIISF that additional funds totalling \$7,000 have been pledged, and that SAT was preparing to embark on another round of contribution solicitations on behalf of AIISF.

SURREY BLACKBURN



Reception guests (left to right) Lillian Sing, Ronald Duhn, Ken Fong and Amy Tan.

In her remarks, Mrs. Clinton noted the importance of preserving historical landmarks in America and pointed out that the dearth of government funds for preservation makes the formation of public and private partnerships essential in order to complete the important tasks of preserving landmarks and conducting educational programs. The First Lady encouraged the guests to participate fully in the public and private partnership to restore the Immigration Station. She then announced that Washington,



Henry Hwang, pictured here with AIISF President Felicia Lowe, generously underwrote the costs for the reception hosting the First Lady.

SURREY BLACKBURN

SURREY BLACKBURN

### \$15 Million in Proposition 12 State Parks Bond to Benefit Angel Island

If California voters approve this March, the Angel Island Immigration Station will be a \$15 million beneficiary under Proposition 12. The entire bond is \$2.1 billion, the largest state parks bond measure in history. Thanks to the efforts of State Senator John Burton of San Francisco, Proposition 12 specifically includes \$15 million to help restore the Immigration Station.

This would be the third and easily the largest capital injection by the State of California in nearly 30 years into preserving and restoring the Immigration Station. If Proposition 12 passes, the \$15 million will be enough to fully preserve and restore the barracks and to begin stabilization of the other five buildings that comprise the National Historic Landmark, as well as to restore the grounds to their historic period and form and to significantly improve the visitor's interpretive experience in understanding the full national historic significance of the site.

More information about Proposition 12 can be found at [www.safeparks.org](http://www.safeparks.org).

### Angel Island Goes to the White House

Amid thunderous applause, "oohs" and "aahs," the Angel Island Immigration Station holiday decoration was presented to First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton on November 6th. The one-of-a-kind creation, designed by Jim Yager and



The one-of-a-kind decoration commemorating Angel Island immigration was created by special invitation from the White House and displayed at the residence during the holidays.

Felicia Lowe, was displayed in the White House during the holiday season. The Foundation was invited to send a decoration in honor of the 1999 White House holiday theme highlighting Save America's Treasures projects.

Backlit Chinese characters revolve and reflect the phrase "Imprisoned in this wooden building day after day" – a line from a former detainee at the Immigration Station. On the sides, images of immigrants, carved poetry in the barracks walls and an English translation of the poem reveal other aspects of the historical significance of the site.

The time has arrived for the story of Angel Island Immigration Station to come into the light and it is fitting that this story, an American story, has a place in America's home.

### Meet Our Staff

KATHARINE YEE



Interim Executive Director Mim Carlson (left), pictured here with AIISF Consultant Kathy Lim Ko, at the recent Kearney Street Workshop dinner honoring Felicia Lowe and Dan Quan.

Recognizing that the work of AIISF has increased well beyond the available volunteer time of its board members, the Board is pleased to introduce two staff members: Interim Executive Director Mim Carlson and Administrative Assistant Adam Wimbush.

Over the next several months, Mim will serve as the interim executive director of AIISF while the search for a permanent executive director continues. Her work will involve creating internal systems for finance, grants management, communications and personnel; developing support systems for fund development, "Gateway" exhibit management, board

committees and external communications; assisting in the search, evaluation and hiring of the executive director; and assisting in board recruitment and development. Prior to coming to AIISF, Mim spent many years in the non-profit world, both in Texas and the Bay Area. Her expertise will be invaluable in helping the Foundation to grow.

One of Mim's first tasks was to hire an administrative assistant. Adam Wimbush comes to the Foundation after teaching in the U.S. and Japan. With Adam's arrival, AIISF says a fond farewell to Katharine Yee who served as the board assistant for the past three years.

### On-Site Studies To Begin

Beginning with the new year, the Immigration Station may be abuzz with some new activity. If all goes according to plan, a contract will be in place for Architectural Resources Group (ARG) of San Francisco, historical architects, to begin inspections and building conditions assessments of the Detention Barracks, the Hospital and the Power Plant. Architects, engineers, historians and preservation specialists will comb the Station to photograph, measure and evaluate the structures. This will be the first phase of a four-phase study that also includes documentation and study of the inscribed poetry, a cultural landscape report and a historic structures report. Each of these studies will lay the groundwork for all future planning and design decisions as they relate to technical and historical issues. The studies will provide hard data, treatment recommendations and cost estimates for upgrading, preserving and/or restoring the buildings and the poetry. It is felt that taking the time to carefully study and analyze the problems using the best experts is extremely important in establishing the proper mindset for future preservation efforts and adaptive uses at the Station. The studies are scheduled to conclude in mid-summer, with master planning occurring soon after.

Funding for the studies is provided by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Park Service, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and funds raised through the Save America's Treasures program. The architectural consultant, ARG, is a nationally renowned firm that has been involved in historic projects for nearly 30 years. Some of their work can be seen at the Presidio of San

Francisco, the Conservatory of Flowers in Golden Gate Park, Old St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco and selected buildings at Stanford University.

### Angel Island Photo Exhibit in Houston, TX and Santa Ana, CA

During the year 2000, Houston journalist Lydia Lum is exhibiting photographs from her work-in-progress about former Angel Islanders. In March, her work will be at Rice University in Houston, and in May at Pece-Kent Gallery in Santa Ana, California. Both shows are free to the public. Lum has started writing a book compiling oral histories of Angel Islanders. For more information, write [lydialum999@yahoo.com](mailto:lydialum999@yahoo.com) or visit her website at <http://www.angel-island.com>.

*(Trust Conference, continued from pg. 1)*

The second conference session focused specifically on what effect participation in the "Save America's Treasures Program" has had on efforts to preserve historic sites. Angel Island was one of five different projects that were represented and all speakers agreed that association with the program has provided greater opportunities and more recognition than otherwise would be possible.

Judging from the positive response, requests for hand-out materials and further speaking invitations, the Foundation's first foray into the national preservation scene was a success. Session participation was not the only benefit derived from the conference, as many new friends and contacts were made with similar organizations and projects. Sharing experiences and discussing strategies proved just as valuable as the presentations themselves.

### PASSAGES

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### Russian Immigrants at Angel Island Immigration Station

By Maria Sakovich

Angel Island Immigration Station has been associated with immigrants from Asia much as Ellis Island has been associated with those from Europe. Immigrants from Russia, however, entered the United States on both coasts. Geography and politics influenced the route they chose to leave their homeland, a vast country which spans eleven time zones, bordering the Baltic Sea in the northwest and the Pacific Ocean in the east.

By no means do we know the entire story of Russian immigration through Angel Island. Much research in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. is required to find out such basic information as how many came. But local newspaper accounts, files at the National Archives in San Bruno, California, notations in the pastoral journal of my grandfather who was an Orthodox priest in San Francisco, reports by Methodist Deaconess Katharine Maurer, photographs and correspondence suggest that several different groups of Russian immigrants came through Angel Island from 1910 until 1924. In that year, the National Origins Act severely restricted immigration from southern and eastern Europe.

Probably the largest group of Russian immigrants were refugees from the Bolshevik revolution and civil war, who began to arrive around 1921. For the most part these refugees were educated middle or upper class professionals, merchants, military personnel and civil servants. Many had fled European Russia, crossed Siberia in the midst of civil war, found safety but not always employment in Manchuria, and eventually made their way to the Pacific Coast. Despite their privileged background, most arrived with very little.

Less is known about the Russian immigrants who came before the Revolution. Some were Baptists, who may have been exiled to Siberia for their religious beliefs; some were skilled and unskilled laborers. Others came via Hawaii, where they had been brought to work harvesting sugar cane on the plantations. Russian Jewish men from European Russia

who had fled conscription or deserted the army arrived between 1915 and 1918. They, too, made their way across Siberia and the Pacific Ocean to the West Coast. Some arrived with little more than a few rubles and sometimes false travel documents.

Russian immigrants were not subjected to the complex questioning required to enforce the Chinese exclusion laws, but neither were they welcomed with open arms. Immigration inspectors everywhere understood their role as guardians of the metaphorical gates and diligently enforced the laws, which had become increasingly restrictive after 1882. By 1917, European immigrants could be excluded for thirty-three different conditions. Most commonly used were specific diseases and "likely to become a public charge," a provision that allowed inspectors considerable discretion. Even though Vasili Zajenko, for example, arrived in 1915 with \$24 and two occupations, "glazer and chemist," Inspector Swasey decided that he did not have a strong enough physique to do manual labor and that labor conditions were "very unfavorable to an alien of this class . . ." By the time the Russian consulate heard about Mr. Zajenko's plight, he had been deported. Luckier were the Russian Jews who were similarly excluded but appealed with assistance from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in San Francisco. In December 1918, Mary Dianovsky, at first refused entry because she could not read or write, was finally landed under a bond of \$500 paid by her employer.

*(Russian Immigrants, continued on pg. 5)*



Russian students, Group 3, from Harbin, Manchuria, organized by the YMCA to study in California. Here they are pictured during their stay at Angel Island, ca. 1923. Photo from the collection of the late Michael Hrenoff, pictured fourth from the right.

## Thank You

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Rebeka Wang Cheng, *in memory of her father,*  
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Nikon Corporation  
Daniel Quan & Joanne Woo  
Yeni Wong  
Timothy Yu

*(Russian Immigrants, continued from pg. 4)*

The Bureau of Immigration kept track of her and others admitted under bond for several years. The length of stay at Angel Island appears to have varied considerably, from two days up to two months.

Unlike today, refugees who numbered in the millions after World War I were not accorded any special legal status. In fact, American legislators did not wish to provide refuge or new opportunities for those who were not white, Anglo-Saxon (or Celtic) Protestant. By the time Russian refugees began arriving in significant numbers in 1922, the first immigration quota law had been enacted. San Francisco newspapers reported a busy summer in 1923 at the Immigration Station. More Russians were arriving than the twenty percent allowed each month by the quota system. The American transport *USS Merritt* brought 500 refugees who had been marooned in Manila. Until their status could be sorted out, they were housed at Fort McDowell. Others, traveling on their own with visas obtained abroad, were sometimes detained, some as long as two and a half months. A few, on the advice of immigration commissioner John Nagle, even returned to Japan (at the expense of the TKK

Steamship Company) to wait until they could be landed.

Not only did these refugees have to contend with the quotas, but also with officials who were uneasy with their Russian, and therefore in their eyes, Bolshevik origins. Those who petitioned for writs of habeas corpus were denied because, according to federal judge John Partridge, "the United States may no longer be considered the haven for political refugees with radical tendencies and ideas." Officials also became alarmed with the arrival of several groups of students sponsored by the YMCA because they worried that "Lenin and Trotsky were sending a lot of Bolshevik propagandists over here under the guise of students. . . ." Unlike their predecessors before the revolution, however, these Russians seem not to have been excluded as "likely to become a public charge." According to an often-told story, believing that they needed fifty dollars in order to be admitted, shipmates and friends would collect that sum among themselves, recycling it as often as necessary in order to appear less poor than was usually the case.

Despite being detained, threatened with deportation (a frightening prospect to those who had survived the civil war), and mistak-

enly identified as radicals, it appears according to newspaper stories that most were eventually landed. However, those who were not able to get to the United States by the summer of 1924 had little chance or very long waits to make America their home. The annual quota for Russians plummeted from 24,405 to 2,248. As a consequence, families remained separated and many Russians who stayed in China and Europe would live through more upheaval in the 1930s and 1940s, finally becoming refugees a second time. This, however, is another story.

*Maria Sakovich is a member of the Fort Ross Interpretive Association board of directors and graduate student at Sonoma State University. She is working on her Master's Degree in American immigration history with a specialty in Russian immigration. The history of Russian immigration through Angel Island Immigration Station is the subject of her master's thesis.*

*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. AIISF also has other special gift-giving programs for those wishing to make larger gifts or contributions. Please contact AIISF for more information.*

## 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

AIISF is now developing a "Friends of AIISF" program. 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.)

### Basic 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 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

To become a Friend, send your name, address, and check to:

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Remember, if you are a Student or Teacher Friend, you must send a copy of your current student or teacher I.D.

If you are a Legacy Friend, please indicate if you are interested in the video or the book.

For those receiving t-shirts (Legacy, Heritage, & Landmark Friends), please indicate your shirt size of choice (adult small, medium, large, x-large, and xx-large). If you do not indicate a shirt-size, an x-large will be sent to you automatically.



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