

ANGEL ISLAND

IMMIGRATION STATION

JAPANESE IMMIGRATION

From 1910 to 1940, Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco Bay was a major port of entry for many immigrants from the Pacific Rim and Central and South America.

Japanese Immigration in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries



Japanese came to the United States from Southern Japan in 1880-1920 before laws curtailed their numbers. Due to economic depression and political instability, Japanese sought work opportunities abroad. In Japan, men heard stories of wealth and comfort in America, however, most were exaggerated. Japanese immigrants encountered tremendous hardships in the U.S. They found employment in farming, railways, plantations, factories, canneries, plant nurseries, and fisheries, industries that needed cheap labor when the Chinese labor was excluded.

The early anti-Japanese movement led to the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1907-1908, which restricted Japanese laborers from entering America, but allowing non-laborers, and wives and children of Japanese already in the U.S. to enter the country. Anti-Asian sentiments flared again in the 1920s leading the U.S. to pass the Immigration Act of 1924. This act prohibited entry of all "aliens ineligible for citizenship," effectively halting all Asian immigration. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 abolished these restrictive quotas based on race and nationality.

At the Angel Island Immigration Station

Most Japanese immigrants came through Angel Island during the early years of the Station's operation. Holding official documents, they were briefly interviewed, and released within two to three days, in contrast to Chinese immigrants who stayed two to three weeks. Many of the 60,000 Japanese at Angel Island were "picture brides." As Japanese men in the U.S. often lacked the money to travel to Japan to get married, they asked friends and relatives to find them prospective brides. As the couples only saw each other in photographs, the women were known as "picture brides." Women stayed on the second floor of the Administration building. Men stayed in the barracks separate from Chinese immigrants. The Station's barracks building still holds a few Japanese inscriptions-writings left by Japanese awaiting deportation to Japan when the Immigration Station was converted to a Prisoner of War Processing Center during World War II.

An Individual's Story: HISAYO YOSHINO MAKIMOTO

Hisayo Yoshino was born in Hiroshima, Japan in 1896. At an early age her parents arranged for her to marry the eldest son of a local family. According to Japanese custom, the eldest son and his wife inherit the parents' wealth and are responsible for taking care of them. Hisayo heard about a friend's difficult marriage to an eldest son and sought to escape her own arranged marriage. Rumors abounded about the prosperity in America. Hisayo convinced her parents to let her marry Sahei Makimoto, a farm laborer in Northern California who left Japan in 1906. After two years of processing paperwork, Hisayo boarded a ship on August 10, 1912 bound for San Francisco as a picture bride.

At Angel Island doctors found that Hisayo had intestinal parasites. She received medicine and was detained for over 3 weeks. Without much to do, time passed very slowly. One woman even suggested that she bribe a doctor to hurry her release. After her stay, she was met by her husband in San Francisco and married at the Hiroshima Hotel on September 13, 1912.

The next day she left for Loomis, California where Sahei worked as a contractor on 200 acres of fruit orchard with five other Japanese men. Disappointed that she was the only woman there, Hisayo cried for weeks longing to return to Japan. Eventually she adjusted to her life in America where she cooked and cleaned for the men and raised six children. During World War II, the US government mandated that all persons of Japanese ancestry be removed from designated areas in West Coast and placed in internment camps. The Makimoto family was relocated to Marysville, then to Tule Lake, and finally to Amache, Colorado. After the war the Makimoto family returned to their land. Fortunately friends in Loomis had held their property. Hisayo passed away at age 97 and was survived by her 6 children, 19 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren.



Activity

Hisayo Makimoto's granddaughter taped her grandmother's story for a college assignment. Identify a person that you would like to know more about. Conduct an oral history by interviewing them about their life.

Look through the newspaper to find a story about government policies. How do they affect the people in your community?

Teachers: Order no-cost newspapers for your class, call (415) 777-6797 or visit www.sfchron.com/inie.

For Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation info visit www.aiisf.org. Photos: California State Parks, Janice Muto Design: Stephen Lowe

