ANGELISLAND IMMIGRATION STATION

FILIPINO 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.

Filipino Immigration in the Early 20th Century

Because the Philippines was a colony of the United States, residents of the Philippines could travel to Hawaii, Alaska and the U.S. mainland as American nationals in the early 20th century. The U.S. immigration laws that barred entry to other Asians did not apply to Filipinos. Work opportunities abroad provided alternatives to the poor social and economic conditions in the Philippines that resulted from years of Spanish and American colonialism. Filipinos immigrated first to the Hawaiian Islands to work on sugar plantations. Later they migrated to the



mainland, filling a labor shortage in California's orchards and fields. Some Filipino professionals came to the United States on government sponsored scholarships. Most Filipino immigrants were men who wanted to make money for their families back home or complete their professional education and then return to the Philippines. In 1934 the United States ratified the Tydings-McDuffie Act, spelling out a procedure for eventual Philippine independence in 1944. The Act changed the status of Filipinos from "nationals" to "aliens," making them subject to the same immigration restrictions directed at other Asians. Only 50 Filipinos per year were permitted to enter the United States until 1946, when the limit was raised to 100 per year. These immigration laws remained in effect until 1965, when the Immigration Act of 1965 abolished the restrictive quotas based on race and nationality.



At the Angel Island Immigration Station

Little research has been done about the experience of Filipinos at the Angel Island Immigration Station. Many of the case files that could have provided valuable information were destroyed either in the 1940 fire at the Immigration Station's Administration Building or due to consolidation efforts by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. As subjects of the United States,

Filipinos did not fall under the jurisdiction of U.S. immigration laws. Consequently, the few cases files at the National Archives in San Bruno are mostly of Europeans who had become Philippine citizens and Filipinos of Chinese ancestry who were investigated under the Chinese Exclusion Act. Researchers speculate that Filipinos who arrived before 1935 spent little time on Angel Island, most likely staying for brief medical exams at the quarantine station or at the Immigration Station hospital. Numbers of Filipinos arriving in San Francisco probably dropped dramatically after 1935.

An Individual's Story: ANGEL PALANCA

Angel Palanca was detained at Angel Island for a day or two in 1919. The son of a prosperous wine merchant, Mr. Palanca was headed for the University of Michigan Law School. Officials suspected he was of Chinese descent, stating in the file that he was first detained "on account of the strain of Chinese blood." Once Mr. Palanca proved he had a sufficient amount of money and was not be likely to become a public charge, he was released from the Island.

Activity

Historians are often faced with learning about topics without much written materials available to them. Chose a topic you want to learn about (i.e. community history or pastimes, current issues, etc.). If there are no books written about your topic, your research methods might include looking at photographs, interviewing community members, and reviewing newspaper clippings, programs, menus and other

In 1934 the Tydings-McDuffie Act laid out the procedure for eventual Philippine independence. Although the act focused on the policies that would go into effect in the Philippines, people of Filipino

descent in the United States were also affected. International events often have an impact on what happens in our local communities. Look though the newspaper to find a story about a community's response to an international event.

Special thanks to Bill Green, National Archive & Records Administration, for his help with this piece. correction: The number of Chinese immigrants at Angel Island Immigration Station was misstated in an earlier piece. The number of Chinese immigrants estimated to have gone through Angel Island is 175,000 photos: California State Parks graphic design: Stephen Lowe

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