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THE MIGRATION OF THE CHINESE TO
SAN FRANCISCO AND THE UNITED STATES

BY

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History shows that Christopher Columbus was the first to discover America on October 12, 1492, but it fails to show any evidence of traditions saying that in prehistoric times, the Chinese were the first to discover Alaska, America, and Mexico. The only evidence to prove that the Chinese were the first to come to the North American Continent is the physical looks and features of the Eskimos, the North American Indians, and the Mexicans who bore a close resemblance of the Chinese. In prehistoric days, the North American Continent was connected with Asia through Alaska, and the Chinese wandered as far as Mexico.

The Chinese, of course, had also been in Southeast Asia, such as Malaya, Singapore, Borneo, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines long before the British, French, Dutch, and Spanish occupied those places. There are evidences, however, in journals, accounts of travels, and other writings showing Chinese pilgrims and priests visiting those places. But there is nothing to show that the Chinese were the first to come to America in prehistoric days. So the credit goes to Christopher Columbus as the first to discover America.

According to the Immigration Commission records, it shows that the first Chinese arrived in the United States was the one found in New York City in 1807. How did he come and why did he come was not mentioned. But the records show that in 1847, three Chinese students came through the regular immigration procedure, and one became naturalized in 1852.

The first Chinese to land in San Francisco, however, were two men and one woman on board the ship Eagle in 1848. In the next two years, a few Chinese laborers who had gone to Peru, South America, escaped from there and worked their passage as sailors, reached San Francisco. But real immigration did not begin until 1852. At the end of the year 1852, the Chinese population of San Francisco was about eighteen thousand as stated in the Congressional Document, page 531, Third Session, 40th Congress.

The first Chinese immigrants who came to the United States were not gold hunters. They migrated to the United States, Australia, Hawaii, and Southeast Asia because they were greatly accelerated by the hardship which they suffered from the Taiping Rebellion of 1850 to 1864. They went everywhere in the world, and were able to cope with the various problems in the countries where they lived. They went to places with little competition with the natives and did work of their own. In Malaya, they built up the great rubber plantations and tin mines. They went into business enterprises in Singapore and helped build up

the Port of Singapore as one of the great ports of the world. In Peru and other countries of South America, they made great headway in business. They met little competition and no discrimination from the natives of various countries.

The discovery of gold in the United States, however, brought forth the major Chinese immigration into the United States. In 1860, there were about thirty-five thousand in the country according to the Bureau of Census Bulletin, page 127, Department of Commerce. During that time, many went to work in the mines, while many others were engaged as servants, laundrymen, and farm laborers. Thousands worked on the construction of the Central Pacific and other railways. A good report of this activity was given by A.D. Richardson in the Atlantic Monthly, Vol. XXIV, pages 741-742. The great trans-continental railways which linked up the East and West of the United States were built by the Chinese.

During that time, there was no lack of employment, and the Chinese were encouraged to come to the country, in as much as they were willing to do work that the Americans and Europeans were too few or unwilling to do. There was no race prejudice at the beginning, and the Chinese immigrants were welcomed cordially by California state and city officials. During the period from 1848 to 1882, it was a period of free Chinese immigration into the United States, and the Chinese contributed their full share to the spectacular growth of San Francisco and California as well as other states in the country. After the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, sometime in 1848, Chinese laborers from the Province of Kwangtung, China, with other pioneers from all over the world, made a rush into California. Labor shortage caused the state and city officials to welcome the arrival of the Chinese. Since cheap white laborers were extremely scarce, the Chinese laborers were largely responsible for the completion of the trans-continental railways and other major work in the mines, and other jobs usually disliked by the white laborers.

Thus, more Chinese arrived year after year in San Francisco as the first port of landing and where Chinatown was established as early as 1848. By 1875, there were more than 100,000 Chinese in San Francisco and on the Pacific Coast areas. The large number started to come over from China was due to the signing of the Burlingame Treaty in 1868 between the United States and China when Mr. Anson Burlingame was then American minister to China. The treaty, in fact, was proposed by the United States which contained the significant statement as follows:

"The United States of America and the Emperor of China cordially recognize the inherent and inalienable right of man to choose his home and allegiance, and also the mutual advantage of the free immigration and emigration of their citizens respectively, from one country to another, for purposes of curiosity, of trade, or as permanent residents."

When Mr. Burlingame resigned his post as American minister to China, he was appointed by the Chinese government as the head of a goodwill mission to the United States and to leading countries of Europe. When Mr. Burlingame and his Chinese delegates arrived in San Francisco and every city in the United States, he was accorded a very warm welcome everywhere in the country. So year after year, Chinese immigrants continued to pour into San Francisco until 1882 when the Chinese Exclusion Act was enacted. Up to 1882, the Chinese population in San Francisco and its nearby areas went up to 151,000 which was the largest in San Francisco Chinatown history.

Due to the large number of arrivals year after year since 1848, there was a growing need of some type of social organization for mutual help and protection in the building up of San Francisco Chinatown. The first of such a type of organization was the forming of the Hong Chow Benevolent Association or the San Yip Association by the Hong Chow or San Yip folks formed in 1851 during the time the majority of the Chinese arrivals came from the three districts, North of Hong Chow in Kwangtung Province, China, known as Han Moy, Poon Yue and Sun Tuck, otherwise known as San Yip or Three Districts. It became the most powerful organization in the next few decades as the influx of the San Yip Chinese continued to pour into San Francisco.

In the next three years, the Chung Wah Lung San was organized, which means the meeting hall of the Chinese people. The exact year of its formation is not known even up to the present time. It was formed by the six district Chinese Associations in existence in the eighteen fifties. To the Americans, it was then known as the Six Companies. In later years, it developed with seven organizations and no longer six. But for the Americans, it was still known as the Six Companies even at the present time, in spite of the fact that it is now called the Chung Wah Chung Hui Goon or Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. The object of such an organization was to improve the life and activity of the Chinese people and to carry on the principles of benevolence. The purpose is the same up to the present time. It handles problems or affairs which affects the interest and welfare of the Chinese in San Francisco and California.

The other seven districts also have organizations of their own for the same purpose, but maintain their independence in administering their own district people's affairs unless they affect the affairs of the people of other districts, then the matter will be brought up to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. The seven district associations at the present time are the Wing Yeong, Hong Chow, San Yip, Yeong Wo, Yan To, Top Wo and Shew Ning Associations. They are the representative associations which formed the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association up to the present time.

The Wing Yeong Association is the largest of the seven organizations which includes all the Chinese in San Francisco who belonged to the entire Toyshan District of Kwangtung, China. The majority of the Chinese residing in the mainland of the United States belonged to this district, whereas the majority of the Chinese in Hawaii belonged to the Chungshan District. In San Francisco, the Chungshan folks are classified under the Yeong Wo Association.

The Hong Chow Association was the first organization to be formed in San Francisco, that is, in 1848 and it is the oldest Chinese society in the United States. But later it was split up into two organizations - Hong Chow and San Yip Associations. The Hong Chow Association took over the Sun Wui and Hoi Shan Districts of Kwangtung Province. Chinese of these two districts registered with the Hong Chow Association if they wanted to become members.

The San Yip Association includes Chinese of Han Moy, Poon Yue and Sun Tuck Districts formerly classified under the Hong Chow Association. It also includes Chinese from the Far Yin District.

The Yeong Wo Association includes Chinese of Chungshan, Tung Moon, Jung Shing and Bok Lo Districts. The Chinese in San Francisco who belonged to these several districts are in the minority group. Most of the Chungshan District people are in Hawaii.

The Yan Wo Association includes Chinese of the Hakka tribe of Bow On District, and Chak Kai, Chew Lui, and Tung Moon Districts, who are also in the minority. Most of the Hakka Chinese are also in Hawaii.

There were no Hop Wo and Shew Ling Associations when the above five organizations were formed. The Hop Wo and Shew Ling Organizations came in later. The Hop Wo Association includes people from greater portions of Hoi Ping and Ying Ping Districts and the Yee and Ong clans from Toyshan and Moy Ling Districts.

The Shew Ling Association includes people of Mao Yew, Mao Ling, Yang Kong, Yan Chun, and portions of Moy Ling and Ying Ping districts, and the entire Sam Shui, Tsing Kuen and See Lui districts.

There are no available figures for the number of Chinese in the United States today by district affiliation. The present administrative set-up of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in San Francisco in apportioning delegates from the above seven individual associations is based on figures of the individual associations' numerical membership in California in 1930. During that time, the number of Chinese in California, practically all lived in San Francisco Chinatown, were 27,000. They were assumed to be as follows:

Hing Yeong Association	-----	13,500	or 46%
Shew Ling Association	-----	4,000	or 16%
Hop Wo Association	-----	3,000	or 11%
Kong Chow Association	-----	2,500	or 9.5%
Yeong Wo Association	-----	2,500	or 9.5%
San Yup Association	-----	1,500	or 6%
Yan Wo Association	-----	500	or 2%

In apportioning delegates to serve as members of the board of directors to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, each organization was allowed one delegate per 500 members in its roster. Thus, the number of delegates of each of the above organizations are Hing Yeong, 27; Shew Ling 8; Hop Wo; 6; Kong Chow, 5; San Yup, 3; and Yan Wo, 1. The total number of delegates was 55 and up to the present time it is the same. The delegate representation of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association today should be revised. But most of the Chinese do not take much interest in their district organization and only a comparative few who do care to register, not like the older folks in the early years who depended upon their own district organization for mutual help and aid in time of difficulty. Consequently, it is not easy to get the correct representation. The chairman of the board is considered as the head of the organization, who is chosen among the heads of the seven organizations for a period of six months in rotation basing on representation. The secretary is also chosen the same way. With the changing of time and condition, the whole system should be revised because two months is too short a time for any capable person to do any constructive work.

The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association had performed some valuable and important services in the past since it was organized. Before the establishment of any Chinese consular or diplomatic agency in the United States, it acted as the spokesman of the Chinese government in its relation with the overseas Chinese in the United States. The Chairman of the organization in the early years was chosen among scholars from China by the district organizations which supposed to take turn to occupy the chairmanship for that period, which added some kind of a prestige to the organization. It was not until the late 1870 when the first Chinese consulate was established in San Francisco.

The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association also fought through legal counsel, all anti-Chinese legislation enacted by the city, state or federal government. Between 1850 and 1900, there were at least 25 laws or statutes aimed at curtailing and destroying the freedom and civil rights of the Chinese in the United States. They were enacted either by the city, state or federal government.

The Chinese Restriction Act of 1882 was the first exclusive racial immigration law ever passed by the federal government which brought an end to the ~~free~~ immigration of Chinese laborers. This was known as the Chinese Exclusion Act. Federal anti-Chinese legislation got started soon after the completion of the trans-continental railway when European immigrants, especially the Irish, began to arrive in California in large numbers. The prosperity of the Chinese, through thrift and their standard of living as well as their lack of desire to assimilate with the European immigrants, had caused jealousy and persecution from the white population. In 1885, Governor Bigler of California denounced Chinese immigration and imposed a tax on foreign miners. This started the anti-Chinese agitation.

In 1871, a massacre of Chinese took place in Los Angeles. In October, 1880, a serious anti-Chinese riot occurred in Denver, Colorado. In September, 1885, the Chinese were attacked in Rock Springs, Wyoming. Then at the early beginning of 1882, an act was passed by the federal government suspending the immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years. At the beginning it called for twenty years but later amended to ten years. Additional legislations were enacted later which broadened the restrictions until the passage of the quota Act of May 26, 1924. The quota given to the coming of the Chinese was 105 each year.

The stubborn resistance of China against Japan in September, 1937 had changed the mind of the American people toward the Chinese with a sympathetic feeling aiming for the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Congress stipulated the annual quota of 105 to Chinese immigrants. When the Refugee Act was passed on August 7, 1953, special authorization was given by Congress to admit 2,000 Chinese and 3,000 Far Eastern refugees. In addition, Chinese aliens living in the United States on or before August 7, 1953 became eligible for adjustment of status to permanent residence. With the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act on June 27, 1952, Chinese and other Orientals living in the United States can become naturalized as American citizens.

The increase of the Chinese population in San Francisco and other cities in the country in recent years was caused by the loss of the mainland of China to Communism because those who are already here do not wish to return to the mother country feeling unsafe to live under the Communist regime, and all those who escaped from the homeland sought entrance into the United States and to other countries of the world as refugees. A very ~~feast~~ ~~every~~ a couple of thousand of them entered San Francisco as refugees every year after the passage of the Refugee Act of 1953. Due to the same reason, most of the well-to-do Chinese invested their surplus money in San Francisco Chinatown and other parts of the city as well as elsewhere in the country. Consequently, San Francisco Chinatown has been built up more rapidly in recent years.

There are more Chinese organizations in San Francisco Chinatown than in any other part of the world. Besides the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and the district associations as previously mentioned, there are the family organizations like the Chen, Lee, Wong, Fong, Lam, Lau, etc. In addition, there are the fraternal organizations known as "tongs" with their auxiliary or sub-organizations. The first tong, also meaning association, was formed in 1852, known as the Kwong Duck Tong, which became the forerunner of the series of such organizations in the next half century. In 1854, the Hip Yee Tong was organized. Unlike the district or family organizations, they were fraternal in scope and admitted members of all clans and districts. At the beginning, they were mutual aid and protective organizations. Later they degenerated into organizations for the promotion and control of certain illegal enterprises such as gambling and prostitution, and inaugurated the process of settling disputes with other groups by physical violence known as "tong war". Today there are five such fraternal organizations in San Francisco Chinatown, namely, the Bing Kong, Hip Sing, Hop Sing, Suey Sing, and the Ying On tongs. Fortunately, they all are all benevolent organizations at the present time. There is no such thing as "tong war" since July, 1926. It was something of the past. They are all working for the promotion of the interest of the Chinese community in San Francisco Chinatown.

Other organizations in San Francisco Chinatown are found along all streets and alleys such as business and trade guilds like the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, political organizations like the Kuomintang, Chinese-American associations like the Chinese-American Citizens Alliance, social clubs like the Ah King Club, recreation centers like the Cathay Musical Club, religious organizations like the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., various churches like the Chinese Community Church and the Buddha's Universal Church, school and college alumni associations like the Chinese High School Alumni Association, Peking University Alumni Association, Sun Yat-sen University Alumni Association, etc. There are also Chinese schools about ten in all, three daily newspapers, a couple of broadcasting stations and a couple of news agencies. There is also a modern hospital which is supported by donations of various occasions known as the Chinese Hospital.

Today, San Francisco Chinatown is the most fascinating Oriental community center in the Western world. It has intrigued travelers and attracted the adventurous visitors from all over the world. It is growing and developing like any other community. But any growing community will have its problems. The influx of the new elements from Hong Kong and the Orient after the passage of the Refugee Act of 1953 has brought forth social, economic, and educational readjustments. The fascinating and virtuous charm of San Francisco Chinatown must not be impaired but improved. The law-abiding good name of the Chinese people must be upheld. Parents must pay attention more to their children, particularly the new arrivals from Hong Kong and the Orient. Most mothers are working too many hours in the clothing factories and do not spend enough time with their children. Hence, we are having no teen-age problems in Chinatown at the present time. In recent years, the younger generation is in all walks of life and in all types of professions. They will also meet their challenge from time to time. There is no doubt that San Francisco Chinatown will continue to grow and will continue to meet its problems, which we hope that they will be solved as they grow in the interest of all.

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