Looking Back at 2011

We look back at 2011 and all that we have collectively accomplished with great pride. First and foremost is the completion of the Immigrant Heritage Wall. Through the contribution of hundreds of donors, AIISF has created a lasting memorial to honor not only Angel Island immigrants but also those who made courageous journeys to the United States of America in succeeding decades. Each of the 182 panels on the Immigrant Heritage Wall contains a rich story that leads us to appreciate the perseverance and contributions of all immigrants.

Over $800,000 was raised in the Immigrant Heritage Wall campaign, and these funds are already being put to good use as AIISF builds the Immigrant Voices section of www.aiisf.org. The fund has also enabled Angel Island State Park to start an open-house on weekends to allow more visitors to tour both floors of the Detention Barracks.

Even as the wall was being completed, more people were lining up to honor their immigrant ancestors. I’m happy to report that AIISF and Angel Island State Park have reached an agreement to construct a second Immigrant Heritage Wall in 2012. Please contact Grant Din at gdin@aiisf.org or 415 262.4433 for more information.

In the process of figuring out what to say on the plaques, many family members shared their stories with each other to piece together fractured accounts of their family history. As they shared their feelings, their appreciation grew for the brave men and women whose sacrifice and hard work paved the way for future generations. As we dedicated the wall on July 23, 2011, we witnessed many multi-generational gatherings and marveled as great grandchildren walked the same steps taken by long-departed family patriarchs and matriarchs.

As younger generations come to appreciate the strength of their ancestors, we hope that they will see the need to nurture and build this sacred site as a testament to the immigrant spirit. We need the next generations to become the stewards of the Immigration Station and ensure that these stories continue to be told.

There is much work ahead. By early 2012, the Immigration Station Hospital will be stabilized and made watertight with a new roof and gutters. Rehabilitation work on the interior of the hospital will also begin next year and last several years. During the rehab phase of the project, AIISF and California State Parks will develop new exhibits that both tell the story of the hospital and the diverse stories of immigrants who came through Angel Island. When the hospital is completed, which we hope will be at the end of 2015, we will have a major museum that tells the unknown and important story of Pacific immigrants.

We have come a long way, and we still have a bit further to go. Your support has enabled us to make steady progress. Together, we can fulfill the dream of making Angel Island a national symbol of Pacific immigration.

Sincerely,

Eddie Wong, Executive Director
As mentioned in Eddie Wong’s letter, Immigrant Voices is highlighting the experiences of many immigrants from throughout the Pacific Rim, not just during the Angel Island period from 1910 to 1940. The Immigrant Heritage Wall encouraged many family members to chronicle ancestors who came through Angel Island, and noted journalist William Wong interviewed more recent immigrants such as author Isabel Allende and actress Joan Chen. David Tan profiled San Francisco Supervisor David Campos, and journalist Reese Erlich interviewed Bay Area resident Eva Schott Berek, who with her family escaped Nazi Germany and traveled through Angel Island in 1940. Picture brides from Japan, paper sons from China, people who left Imperial Russia are all there.

We were real, so there was no need to be afraid.
- Lum Ngow’s Long Stay on Angel Island

We encourage you to visit our website at www.aiisf.org.

Click on “Immigrant Voices” to read these stories.

We’ve set up an easy way to tell your own family’s stories – click on “Tell a Story” to do so.
Thousands Attend Immigrant Heritage Wall Dedication

Although the morning started out as a typical San Francisco summer day with fog and low clouds, sunshine burst out over the Immigration Station as the crowd of over 1,500 people gathered for the dedication of the Immigrant Heritage Wall. With a flurry of notes from his flute, Francis Wong heralded the opening of the ceremony as Melody Takata performed classical Japanese dance in a new work entitled, “Arrival.”

The crowd heard heartfelt comments from Assemblymember Paul Fong, AIISF Board President Buck Gee, Michael Lopez, Glenn Osaka, Norma Samra and Peter Samra, all descendants of Angel Island immigrants. Additionally, Kim Delevett shared her story of leaving Vietnam as a child refugee. Buck Gee summed up the feelings of many people: “Today I look out and see a multitude of teachers, lawyers, doctors, artists, poets, and many others. You are all here to do one thing — to say ‘thank you’ to those who ventured across the Pacific to this place. Thank you for seeking a new life in a distant and sometimes unfriendly land.”

California State Parks Director Ruth Coleman also presented AIISF Executive Director Eddie Wong with the DeWitt Award (photo below), which honors AIISF for its efforts to save the Angel Island Immigration Station.

Rep. Lynn Woolsey closed out the program with a simple plea:

“As we continue to maintain and rebuild the physical infrastructure of Angel Island Immigration Station, let’s also make that restoration a metaphor for the restoration of the very noblest American values: decency and compassion; tolerance and pluralism; hope and opportunity; a belief in our common humanity and our ability to live together in harmony despite our differences.”

Many families took advantage of the dedication ceremony to hold reunions. Some families had over 100 members gather by their family plaques.

AIISF wishes to thank all the participants in the program, the Angel Island State Park staff, and our friends at the Blue and Gold Fleet, Angel Island Ferry, Angel Island Cafe, and Southwest Airlines.

Additional articles about this event and blog postings can be found in the updates section of www.aiisf.org; video clips of the program and afternoon cultural performances with Charlie Chin, Sinag-Tala Performing Arts, Lana Fong Chong, and others are also available (click on Media, then Videos).

Recognition

2011 also saw recognition in addition to the DeWitt award, mentioned earlier. The Gene Autry Museum awarded AIISF the Maverick Prize—an annual award to recognize the work of an individual or organization that challenges conventional wisdom and prompts truly novel thinking about the past, present, and future of the American West. The award, which comes with a $10,000 prize, recognizes AIISF’s innovative work in historical research of the diverse immigrant experiences at the Immigration Station.

Erika Lee and Judy Yung’s Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America, commissioned by AIISF, received several awards. It is the winner of the 2011 Caughey Western History Association Prize for the best book on the history of the West. The prize was awarded on October 15, 2011 at the Western History Association’s conference. The book was also named one of the best books of 2010 by Bay Area authors by the San Francisco Chronicle and was the Adult Non-Fiction award winner of the 2010 Asian/Pacific American Awards for Literature by the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association. Congratulations to Erika and Judy!
Clockwise from top: The Samra family, Thomas Swan crew install panels, singer Charlie Chin; Melody Takata and Francis Wong; the line to board the San Francisco ferry; speakers wait for the program to begin: AIISF board members Katherine Toy and Buck Gee, Assemblyman Paul Fong, Kim Delevett from Southwest Airlines, Glenn Osaka, Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, Michael Lopez, and board member Gerrye Wong; Park Superintendent Amy Brees, Eddie Wong, AIISF executive director, and Lynn Woolsey; Sinag-Tala performers, “Dewi” Yee, Sylvia Tsang and Suzanne Kai, descendants of Lim Lip Hong; part of the crowd. All photos by Frank Jang except Charlie Chin by Stuart Lee and installation photo by Grant Din.
AT&T Grant Helps More Students Visit Angel Island

In May, over 200 students, parents and teachers had the opportunity to enjoy a ferry ride and tour of the U.S. Immigration Station at Angel Island State Park. Through a grant to AIISF from AT&T, students from 4th grade classes at Hillcrest Elementary School in the Bayview district and Spring Valley Science School in Chinatown/North Beach were able to learn about an important chapter in U.S. history and enjoy the wonders of Angel Island.

The students had prepared for the trip by holding classroom discussions about immigration history, including lessons on the Chinese Exclusion Act. They also had writing assignments before and after their visit to the Immigration Station.

As part of the AT&T grant, AIISF has made available four lesson plans from our curriculum guide as free downloads for parents, students, and teachers. These lesson plans are geared for the 3rd through 5th grade levels. Go to www.aiisf.org/learning to utilize these lesson plans.

Students wrote their own poems during their visit.

New Life for Historic Hospital

The Immigration Station Hospital was a foreboding place for many immigrants. After preliminary inspection in the Administration Building, immigrants who were deemed diseased or ill were sent up the hill to the hospital for delousing and quarantine. In keeping with the racial discrimination of the times, Asian patients were kept separate from white patients, and even among the Asians, Chinese were treated in separate wards. After the Immigration Station closed in 1940, the hospital was taken over by the U.S. Army to treat prisoners-of-war. Abandoned after 1946 by the army, the hospital became vandalized and years of neglect led to a leaky roof and decades of water damage to walls and the foundation. Gaping holes in the floors and walls left a pockmarked, shell-shocked look to the once proud and stately 10,000 square foot structure.

This year a major stabilization effort was started in July and will be completed by the end of January 2012. AIISF secured a $3 million grant from the California Cultural and Historical Endowment to enable the California State Parks to oversee the structural reinforcement of the building, which included putting on a new roof and gutters, and repairing some interior walls. Thus, we have saved the hospital from literally falling down.

I came to America for new hope.
I arrived at Angel Island
The walls were green as jade.
They asked lots of questions.
I thought America was a better place to go.
But I was wrong.
I felt like a prisoner.
I’ve been here for 103 days.
Today is the day
I’m Free
To Go.

- Jack

Photographs of students from San Francisco schools by Eddie Wong
Over the next three years, funding secured by AIISF through federal appropriations combined with a California State Major Capital Outlay fund will allow a full rehabilitation of the interior. As this work progresses, California State Parks, AIISF, and the National Park Service will develop plans to restore key rooms such as the Asian men’s ward and the surgery room for historical interpretation. Other wards will be repurposed as conference rooms and performance spaces, enabling groups to hold seminars and creating space for cultural presentations such as poetry, lectures, film screenings, and musical performances.

It is very exciting to see the hospital come to life, saved from imminent destruction, and reborn as a place of enlightenment and spiritual healing. More fundraising is needed to fulfill our vision. Stay tuned for more details in 2012.

On April 30, actors reenacted a series of interrogations of Chinese immigrants that took place on Angel Island in the early 20th century. The heart of the drama is directly from the transcripts, on file at the National Archives at San Francisco, of Leung Shee and her husband Quon Quock Wah, who were trying to immigrate to the US in 1913; and Jung Joong, who arrived in 1911. Special thanks to actors Vicky Lee, Bob Barde, and Chris Yu Gaoiran, who played the roles of Leung, Quon, Jung, and immigration officials, and narrator Daniel Nealand.

The discussion afterward featured well-known authors and professors Judy Yung and Bill Ong Hing, and U.C. Berkeley students Catherine and Jirayut. The current day stories are new immigration dramas, showing the impact of federal policy on everyday lives. The students came to the U.S. at an early age and have been stellar students, but because of their immigration status, have been unable to gain access to financial aid, having to drop out of school from time to time. They shared their stories and related them to what immigrants through Angel Island had to deal with. We greatly appreciate our speakers for their candor and willingness to speak to our audience and encourage you to watch the video that is available at our website, www.aiisf.org. Click on Media, then Videos, and #16 will lead you to the YouTube link.

Over 15,000 gamers who were playing the America 2049 game on Facebook were encouraged to attend this program and view our video online. This game took place in a dysfunctional America in 2049 and gamers were able to go back into time to see what could have been done to prevent the country from becoming this way. It was produced by Breakthrough, a New York and India-based organization that promotes human rights. Other cooperating sites in the game included Ellis Island, the Bosque Redondo memorial in New Mexico, Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, MI, Skirball Museum in Los Angeles, and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.
A record number of more than 360 supporters of AIISF came to the Intercontinental Hotel San Francisco on October 1 to celebrate the Immigrant Heritage Awards – AIISF’s annual fundraiser. They enjoyed hearing from the awardees, bidding on live and silent auctions, and winning raffle prizes. Along with short talks from AIISF board and staff, Amy Brees, Angel Island State Park superintendent, presented an update on what is happening on Angel Island and also helped auction a private tour of Alcatraz, where she was superintendent before coming to Angel Island.

The common thread in the awardees’ remarks was to celebrate their and their ancestors’ immigrant journeys. Natasha Novosolov and Alexander Novell, members of the Émigré Committee of Jewish Family and Children’s Services, accepted JFCS’s award and spoke of how JFCS had greatly helped in their transition to America, as it has for over 150 years for newcomers from around the world. California Supreme Court Justice Joyce Kennard spoke of her improbable journey from the jungles of Dutch New Guinea to the Netherlands to college and law school in Southern California and ultimately the California Supreme Court. May Louie accepted the award on behalf of her husband Sinclair and herself, speaking about their emigration from China and Hong Kong, and Sinclair’s time on Angel Island which he relived in a recent visit. Andrew Ly described how he and his family made four attempts to leave Vietnam and finally were successful, ending up in a refugee camp in Malaysia before they came to the United States and built a business from a small coffee shop in the Sunset District into a bakery which employs hundreds of people in the Bay Area, Asia and North America. Finally, Kristi Yamaguchi remarked how her ancestors’ bravery and pioneering spirit helped pave the way for her success, ultimately resulting in an Olympic Gold Medal for her.

Special thanks to emcees Kristen Sze of ABC-7 and Richard Lui of MSNBC, who also served as enthusiastic auctioneers, our volunteers on the raffle, silent and live auction committees, all of our sponsors and in-kind donors.
AIISF and Angel Island State Park have some exciting news. Due to the great response to the Immigrant Heritage Wall, we will be constructing Phase II of the wall adjacent to the current wall. The wall extension will be 26 feet long by 3 feet high and have room for 102 plaques. The majority of the plaques will be at the 7” high x 6” wide configuration and each plaque will cost $2,500. Larger size plaques sized 14 ¼” high x 12 1/4” wide will also be available for $5,000. The deadline for submitting your contribution will be May 30, 2012 or until the spaces run out. We plan to construct this wall in the summer and hold a dedication ceremony in September 2012.

Visitors have marveled at the new Immigrant Heritage Wall, for it not only offers heartfelt recognition of long-departed family patriarchs and matriarchs, but also points the way to stories that continue to inspire us today. There are simple, elegant testimonials such as the plaque dedicated to How Jiu (Lum Wun Hoy), who emigrated from Canton in July 1928 and Ah Foon Chew, who came in 1898, by her descendants. The Fong family (Joshua and Lena Fong and their children Neal, Jill, Heidi, Charlotte, and Polly) simply state: “We honor their sacrifice and pioneering spirit.”

Some plaques give a capsule summary of the immigrant’s life such as that for Paul Zane Wong, pictured here. Others place a seminal moment in the immigrant’s life on the plaque. The Lee family’s three boys and their wives mark Don Yee Fung Lee’s plaque with this story: “Don Lee left Canton in 1939 on a ship headed for San Francisco. Detained for 30 days on Angel Island until he met his father for the first time.” Mr. Lee’s full story can be found at www.aiisf.org/immigrantvoices.

Please contact us as soon as possible to reserve your spot on the Immigrant Heritage Wall Extension. Call Grant Din at 415 262.4433 or e-mail him at gdin@aiisf.org.

Immigrant Heritage Wall design by Daniel Quan Designs, plaque design by Elaine Joe; immigration documents courtesy of the National Archives.

Other Plans for Access to Research Materials in 2012

During 2012, AIISF will be working with partners such as the National Archives to make available many materials that resulted from immigrants’ journeys to America. It is hoping to make announcements soon about indexes and documents for immigrants and travelers through Angel Island, Hawaii and other ports of entry that we hope to make available online. Here are some examples of documents that may become available online.

AIISF on the Road!

In 2011, AIISF continued to take its message about its programs and plans to communities beyond San Francisco. This year’s South Bay event featured Otto Lee, former Mayor of Sunnyvale, Assemblyman Paul Fong, and Angel Island immigrants Louise Lee Jang, Dr. John Kao, and Frank Lum. Board member Anne Chen also hosted a small event and auction to benefit AIISF in Portland, Oregon.

Events are being planned for 2012 in the Silicon Valley, Sacramento and the East Bay. If you are interested in helping or inviting your friends to future events, please contact Grant Din at AIISF (see above for contact info).
Special thanks to our donors between November 1, 2010, and October 31, 2011. Please notify us if we have made any mistakes or omissions.
About AIISF  Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (AIISF) is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization whose mission is to promote a greater understanding of Pacific Coast immigration and its role in shaping America's past, present and future. AIISF raises funds to restore, preserve and interpret the U.S. Immigration Station at Angel Island, a National Historic Landmark. In partnership with the California State Parks, AIISF educates the public about the complex story and rich cultural heritage of Pacific Coast immigrants and their descendants.

Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation is a member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience.

Media
Some of the media outlets that presented stories/commentaries that mentioned Angel Island Immigration Station in the past year. Please let us know if you know of other ones!

Archnewsnow.com
The Ark (serving Tiburon, Belvedere, Strawberry)
Asian Week
Asian Pacific Americans for Progress
The Atlantic
Channel APAP
China.org
Contra Costa Times
Crosstcut.com
Cupertino Patch
Daily Bruin
Irish American News
J Blog
Journal of American History
Jue Joe Clan blog
Marin Independent-Journal
The Morning Call (Allentown, PA)
New America Now
Next American City
New York Times
Non Profit Quarterly
NTD-TV
Perkomen Valley Patch
Sampan (Boston)
San Francisco Bay Guardian
San Francisco Chronicle
San Francisco Examiner blog
San Jose Mercury News
SF Travel
Teen Observer
Wall Street Journal
Washington Post
Way Out There Press

2011 Volunteers & Presenters
Association of Asian American Yale Alumni, San Francisco Chapter: Mary Lau, Camille Lev, Wayne Lew, Carol Mimura, Christopher Park, Robert Stevenson, Joan Young.

Berkeley Peace Corps Club:
Bonnie Chen, Winnie Chen, Zijian Chen, Lucy Deng, Wainer Fan, Li Yan Hua, Andy Huang, De Liang He, Danny Huang, Huimin Kuang, Amy Lee, Isa Lee, Anthony Lei, Justin Li, Xiao Liu, Lu Luan, Cindy Tan, Jeff Ung, Rosely Villa, JK Wen, Ciaxin Wu, Stephanie Wu, Xiaofan Wu, Xinger Wu, Jason Xu, Jeffrey Xu, Brian Yang, Evelyn Yu, Polly Qianwen Zhang

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Cheryl Wong-Ng
Kay Woon
Carole Yamaguchi
Nancy Yang
Chris Yu Gaoiran
Judy Yung

Angel Island State Park Immigration Station Docents
Barbara Blegen
Elizabeth Chan
Joe Chan
Jennie Choy
Lynn Eichinger
Julianne Eng
Michael Hanrahan
Richard Kandel
Sue Kosos
Terry Lai
Josie Loo
Sam Louie
Ekhard Mahl
Sandy McEowen
Linda Moore
Marian Seiki
William Warrior
Emma Yee
Myrna Yee

Plus others whom we have inadvertently omitted (please contact us)

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Elaine Joe, plaque designs
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