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Timeline

Timeline of Chinese Immigration to the United States

- 1785** Three Chinese seamen arrive in the continental United States aboard the ship Pallas in Baltimore, MD.
- 1790** The Naturalization Act of 1790 restricts citizenship to “free white persons” of “good moral character.” The law would be enforced until 1952. In effect the Nation is divided between White and racial minority populations, each of whom would be accorded different and unequal rights and treatment. Racial minorities would be limited in their citizenship, voting, residency, jury, property, and family rights. Asian Americans, including Chinese Americans, would be directly affected by this legislation until it was rescinded by the passage of the Walter-McCarran Act of 1952.
- 1830** The first U.S. Census notation of Chinese in America records three Chinese living in the United States.
- 1830s** Chinese sailors and peddlers visit New York.
- 1844** United States and China sign treaty of "peace, amity, and commerce."
- 1847** Yung Wing and two other Chinese students arrive in US for schooling.

- 1848** Gold is discovered in California and a gold rush begins.
- 1850** Chinese American population in U.S. is about 4,000 out of a population of 23.2 million. Chinese in California form associations for mutual protection.
- 1854** The California Supreme Court decision, *People v. Hall*, rules that Chinese cannot testify in court.
- 1858** California legally prohibits Chinese and “Mongolian” immigration.
- 1860** Chinese American population in US is 34,933 out of a total population of 31.4 million.
- 1862** The United States prohibits the importation of Chinese “coolies” on American vessels.
- 1865** Central Pacific recruits Chinese workers to build a transcontinental railroad.
- 1868** The United States and China ratify the Burlingame-Seward Treaty, which sanctions mutual emigration between the two countries.
- 1869** The first transcontinental railroad is completed with significant Chinese immigrant labor.
- 1870** Chinese American population in US is 63,199 out of a total population of 38.5 million.
- 1870** Congress approves the Naturalization Act, barring Chinese from obtaining U.S. citizenship. The Act also prevents immigration of Chinese women who have marital partners in the United States. Chinese and Japanese men must show evidence in support of a woman’s moral character in the case of prospective and actual wives of Chinese and Japanese descent.
- 1871** Anti-Chinese violence erupts in Los Angeles and other cities. Such violence continues throughout the decade.
- 1875** Congress passes the Page Law, which bars Chinese, Japanese, and “Mongolian” prostitutes, felons, and contract laborer immigration.
- 1878** A federal district court in California rules Chinese ineligible for naturalized citizenship.

- 1880** The United States and China sign a treaty that allows the United States to limit Chinese immigration.
- 1882** Congress passes the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which halts Chinese laborer immigration for 10 years and denies Chinese from becoming naturalized U.S. citizens.
- 1886** The U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, rules that laws that are enforced with racial discrimination violates the 14th Amendment.
- 1888** The Scott Act declares over 20,000 Chinese laborers' re-entry permits null and void.
- 1889** The U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Chae Chan Ping v. United States*, upholds Chinese Exclusion laws' constitutionality.
- 1890** Chinese American population in U.S. is 107,488 out of a total population of 62.9 million.
- 1892** The Geary Act extends the Chinese Exclusion Act for another 10 years and requires all Chinese residents to carry permits.
- 1893** In *Fong Yue Ting v. United States*, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that Congress has the power to expel the Chinese.
- 1894** Sun Yat Sen, founder of modern China and political activist, helps bring down the Qing dynasty. He establishes home-base operations for the liberation of China among Chinese American communities in Hawaii, San Francisco, and in New York.
- 1898** The U.S. Supreme Court admits Wong Kim Ark, a Chinese American born and raised in the United States, back into the United States. Ark was initially denied entry due to the Chinese Exclusion Act. The case rules that U.S.-born Chinese cannot be divested of their citizenship.
- 1904** Congress makes the Chinese Exclusion acts indefinite. Law enforcement officials arrest 250 allegedly illegal Chinese immigrants without search warrants.
- 1905** California's Civil Code forbids intermarriage between Whites and "Mongolians."

- 1906** Earthquake destroys all records in San Francisco, including immigration records. This opens the opportunity for a new surge of Chinese immigrants. These “paper sons” could now claim with the loss of official records that they were U.S. citizens and had the right to bring family members to America. The U.S. government creates the Bureau of Immigration.
- 1910** Chinese American population in U.S. is 94,414 out of a total population of 92.2 million. Angel Island Immigration Station opens to process potential Asian immigrants.
- 1917** The Immigration Act of 1917 restricts immigration of Asian persons and denies entry of natives from the “barred zone.”
- 1918** World War I Asian veterans receive right of naturalization.
- 1924** The Asian Exclusion Act, which is part of the Immigration Act of 1924, excludes all Asian laborer immigrants from entering into the United States. The U.S. Border Patrol is created, as an agency under the Department of Labor, to regulate Chinese immigration to the United States across the U.S.-Mexico border.
- 1925** Chinese wives of American citizens are denied entry.
- 1929** Annual immigration quotas are declared permanent.
- 1930** Chinese American population in U.S. is 102,159 out of a total population of 123.2 million.
- 1932** Anna May Wong, at the height of her career, stars with Marlene Dietrich in Shanghai Express.
- 1941** The United States declares war after the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor. China is now an ally of the United States.
- 1943** Congress repeals all Chinese exclusion laws, grants Chinese the right to become naturalized citizens, and allows 105 Chinese to immigrate to the US each year. China and the United States become World War II allies against Japan. The U.S. Army drafts over 20 percent of Chinese men living in the United States.
- 1945** World War II ends with atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.

- 1947** Due to the 1945 War Brides Act of 1945, permitting immigration of foreign wives, husbands, fiancés, and children of U.S. Army personnel, 6,000 Chinese women enter into the United States as wives of Chinese American servicemen.
- 1949** The United States grants refugee status to 5,000 highly educated Chinese after China launches a Communist government. This Central Intelligence Agency Act (CIA Act) encourages Chinese scientists, engineers, and physicists to enter into the United States in furtherance of U.S. national security interests.
- 1950** Chinese American population in U.S. is 150,005 out of 151,325,798.
- 1952** The Walter-McCarran Immigration and Naturalization Act revokes the Asian Exclusion Act of 1924. A small number of Asians are also allowed to immigrate to the United States and are given citizenship status.
- 1953** The Refugee Relief Act offers unlimited immigrant visas to Chinese refugees.
- 1959** The U.S. government implements the eight-year “Confession Program” to encourage illegal Chinese immigrants to reveal identities of illegal residents.
- 1962** The Kennedy Emergency Immigration Act (KEIA Act) permits 5,000 Chinese immigrants to enter the United States during the period of China’s “Great Leap Forward” movement.
- 1965** A new immigration act effectively removes racial bias from America's immigration laws.
- 1968** San Francisco State College and the University of California at Berkeley students successfully strike for more minority studies programs. The demonstration leads to the historic School of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State College and the creation of Black Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. In following years, Asian American Studies, Chicano Studies, Native American Studies, and comparative Ethnic Studies programs start at U.C. Berkeley and University of California at Los Angeles. These programs address the immigration history and ethnic experiences of Asian Americans and Chinese Americans.
- 1970** Chinese American population of the U.S. is 237,292 out of 179,323,175
- 1976** American physicist Samuel Ting wins the Nobel Prize in Physics

- 1982** Vincent Chin, a Chinese American, is killed by two white Americans. Chin's killers are sentenced only to probation and a fine of \$3,000 plus court fees.
- 1982** Maya Lin's design selected for the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial.
- 1987** TIME Magazine publishes a cover article entitled "The New Whiz Kids". Many Chinese Americans express a concern about a "model minority" stereotype.
- 1990** Chinese American population of the U.S. is 1,645,472 out of 248,709,873.
- 1996** Dr. David Ho is named TIME Magazine's Man of the Year for his research into HIV/Aids.
- 2000** Chinese American population of the U.S. is 2,879,636 out of 281,421,904.