

CHINESE AMERICAN HEROES

chineseamericanheroes.org

Chinese American Heroes presents this series of significant dates in Asian American and Chinese American history. This is by no means a comprehensive list of events due to our limited time and resources for research. For the same reasons we concentrated on the major Asian American population groups in this country in numbers, the Chinese, Japanese, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Filipino Americans. In Week 1 we go from 1587 to 1870. Yes, Asians have been in America for much longer than many people knew about.

Significant Dates in Asian American/Chinese American History

DATE	EVENT
1587	Filipinos are first recorded as landing in what is now Moro Bay, California as part of the crew of the Spanish galleon, Nuestra Señora de Esperanza. This event is still disputed as to the exact year and the location.
1700s	Indians from South Asia are landed as indentured servants in the American colonies by the British East India Company.
1763	The first of several permanent settlements of Filipinos is established in Saint Malo, Louisiana . Many of these men were deserters from the Spanish navy that were forced into service aboard Spanish galleons sailing from Manila. It is suspected that these Filipinos fought for General Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812 as they were the only group of Spanish speaking fishermen known to have been in the area at the time that fought for the Americans. The last of the Filipino settlements in Louisiana only disappear in 1965.
1785	Three Chinese sailors land in Baltimore, Maryland , the first known Chinese to have landed in the newly independent United States. The captain of the Pallas had neglected to tell the Chinese and thirty two lascars (a generic term encompassing sailors recruited from Yemen in the Middle East, and Gujarat, Assam, and Bengal, now states in India and Bangladesh) that he was retiring and selling off the ship and its cargo. The three stranded Chinese petitioned the Continental Congress for money to return home. Given the chronic inability of the Continental Congress to pay its bills one can assume that they didn't get any money. Nothing more is known about what happened to them or the lascars. A Virginia planter expressed great interest in the cargo of the Pallas and sent a shopping list to a friend in Maryland, but would only buy "... If great bargains are to be had..." George Washington couldn't resist buying cheap Chinese goods, like many other Americans before and since.

DATE	EVENT
1790	The original United States Naturalization Law of March 26, 1790 (1 Stat. 103) provided the first rules to be followed by the United States in the granting of national citizenship. This law limited naturalization to immigrants who were "free white persons" of "good moral character". It thus left out indentured servants, slaves, free blacks, and later Asians. While women were included in the act, the right of citizenship did "not descend to persons whose fathers have never been resident in the United States...." Citizenship was inherited exclusively through the father. This was the only statute that ever granted the status of natural born citizen.
1849	Chinese begin to arrive by the thousands along with immigrants from around the world for the California Gold Rush . The growing wave of Chinese immigration, overwhelmingly made up of men, were motivated by civil war in China, famine, and overpopulation, as well as by the prospect of becoming rich in America. Few expressed any desire to permanently stay in the United States but many subsequently spend their entire lives here, unable to make enough money to go home or to marry. The Gold Rush also sees the first Chinese cafes and restaurants open in the United States.
1854	In People v. Hall , the California Supreme Court decided that the testimony of three Chinese witnesses in a case where George Hall, a white man, murdered Ling Sing, a Chinese miner, was worthless under the 1850 California law that stated that, "No black or mulatto person, or Indian, shall be allowed to give evidence in favor of, or against a white man." The court argued that "black" was a generic term that applied to any non-white person. This case legalized any crime, including murder, committed against non-whites in California until 1873.
1861-1865	The American Civil War . From photographs and documentary evidence we know that Chinese Americans fought on both sides of the Civil War. Other Asians, including South Asians, served during the war as well.
1865	Thousands of Chinese workers join the Central Pacific Railroad in building the Western half of the Transcontinental Railway project. <i>Nine of every ten men who built the Central Pacific Railroad were Chinese.</i>
1867	Mistreated and underpaid Chinese railway workers lead one of the biggest sit-down strikes of the 19th Century on June 25th as thousands down tools and refuse to leave their tents. Unsupported by new but entirely unsympathetic American labor unions openly proclaiming their support for "white men only," facing armed railway guards, and dealing with imminent starvation in their remote railway construction camps, the Chinese workers are forced to return to work.

DATE	EVENT
1868	The Wakamatsu Silk and Tea Farm is established in what is now El Dorado County, California by Japanese refugees, formerly supporters of the newly overthrown shogun. They become the first Japanese community in the United States. Promoted and financed by what turns out to be a German American fraudster to grow silk in California, the venture collapses in bankruptcy but the Japanese remain as farmers. The 1870 Census reveals 55 Japanese in the United States.
1868	The Burlingame Treaty - To encourage the immigration of Chinese to the United States to do the menial and backbreaking work in the labor starved American West, the US and China mutually agreed to protect the rights of their citizens working or visiting the other country. However, naturalization is left out of the treaty.
1869	The Transcontinental Railroad is completed on May 10th. Central Pacific Railroad records show that thousands of Chinese were working the day before and the day after but not a single Chinese or non-white face can be seen in the photographs of the "Golden Spike" ceremony marking the end of the project. All minorities had been carefully and deliberately left out of the Transcontinental Railroad's photographic history of the event.
1870	Chinese railroad workers move to Texas to build the state rail system.