

Asian Pacific American History Timeline

This timeline is not intended to be an all-inclusive, comprehensive listing of all historical events involving Asian Pacific Americans, but is a compilation of many of the major events involving Asian Pacific Americans gathered from various sources.

Year	Event
1600s	Spanish bring Chinese and Filipinos to Mexico on ships of the Manila galleon.
1763	The first recorded settlement of Filipinos in America. To escape imprisonment aboard Spanish galleons, they jump ship in New Orleans and flee into the bayous of Louisiana.
1790	The first recorded arrival of Asian Indians in the United States.
1830s	Chinese laborers (sugar masters) are brought to work in Hawaiian sugar cane fields.
	Chinese peddlers are recorded in New York City.
1843	The first Japanese immigrants arrive in the United States on May 7, 1843.
1844	U.S. and China sign first treaty.
1848	Gold is discovered in California and attracts Chinese prospectors.
1842-52	China is defeated by the British Empire in the first Opium War, resulting in the Treaty of Nanjing, whereby China is forced to cede the island of Hong Kong and open ports to foreign commerce.
1847	Three Chinese students arrive in New York City for schooling. One of them, Yung Wing, graduates from Yale in 1854 and becomes the first Chinese to graduate from a U.S. college.
1850	California imposes Foreign Miner's Tax and enforces it mainly against Chinese miners, who were often forced to pay more than once.
1852	The first group of 195 Chinese contract laborers land in Hawaii.
	Over 20,000 Chinese enter California.
	Chinese first appear in court in California.
1854	Chinese in Hawaii begin to organize, form a funeral society, the first community association in the islands.
	In the People v. Hall, the California Supreme Court rules that a Chinese man cannot give testimony in court since Chinese were "inferior, and...incapable of progress or intellectual development beyond a certain point..."
1858	California passes a law to bar entry of Chinese and "Mongolians."
1859	Chinese are excluded from San Francisco public schools.
1860	Japan sends its first diplomatic mission to the U.S.
1862	Six Chinese district associations in San Francisco form a loose federation.
	California imposes a "police tax" of \$2.50 a month on those of the "Mongolian race" to discourage immigration and protect white laborers from competition.
1865	The Central Pacific Railroad Company recruits Chinese workers for the Transcontinental Railroad.
1867	Two thousand Chinese railroad workers strike for a week.
	Fifty thousand Chinese are reported living in California.
1868	U.S. and China sign the Burlingame-Seward Treaty, affirming friendship between the two nations and guaranteeing the right of Chinese immigration.
1869	The first Transcontinental Railroad in the U.S. is completed on May 10, 1869.
1870	Chinese railroad workers in Texas sue company for failing to pay wages.
1872	California's Civil Procedure Code drops law barring Chinese court testimony.
1876	U.S. and Hawaii sign Reciprocity Treaty, allowing Hawaiian sugar to enter the U.S. duty free.

1877	People unhappy at competing with cheap Chinese labor, and fearful of being “overwhelmed” by non-white immigration, cause anti-Chinese riots in San Francisco and other California cities.
1878	Court rules Chinese ineligible for naturalized citizenship.
1879	California’s second constitution prevents municipalities and corporations from employing Chinese.
	California state legislature passes law requiring all incorporated towns and cities to remove Chinese outside of city limits, but U.S. circuit court declares the law unconstitutional.
1880	As many people blamed the Chinese for taking away jobs and causing unemployment, the U.S. successfully amends the Burlingame Treaty, winning the right to limit or suspend Chinese immigration.
1882	Congress approves Chinese Exclusion Act, banning Chinese laborers for ten years.
	Chinese community leaders form Chinese Consolidation Benevolent Association (CCBA or Chinese Six Companies in San Francisco.
	U.S. and Korea sign first treaty.
1883	Chinese in New York establish CCBA.
1884	Joseph and Mary Tape sue San Francisco school board to enroll their Chinese daughter Mamie in a public school.
	United Chinese Society established in Honolulu.
	1882 Chinese Exclusion Law amended to require a certificate as the only permissible evidence for reentry.
1885	The Irwin Convention allows Japanese contract laborers into Hawaii.
	San Francisco builds new segregated “Oriental School” in response to Mamie Tape case.
1886	Residents of Tacoma, Seattle, and many places in the American West forcibly expel Chinese.
	End of Chinese immigration to Hawaii.
	Chinese laundrymen win in Yick v. Hopkins case, which declares that a law with unequal impact on different groups is discriminatory.
1888	Scott Act renders 20,000 Chinese reentry certificates null and void.
1889	Chae Chan Ping v. U.S. upholds constitutionality of Chinese exclusion laws.
1892	Geary Law renews exclusion of Chinese laborers for another ten years and requires all Chinese to register.
1893	Japanese in San Francisco form the first trade association, the Japanese Shoemakers’ League.
1894	Saito, a Japanese man, applies for U.S. citizenship, but U.S. circuit courts refuse because he is neither white nor black.
	Japanese immigration to Hawaii under the Irwin Convention ends and emigration companies take over.
1895	Lem Moon Sing v. U.S. rules that district courts can no longer review Chinese habeas corpus petitions for landing in the U.S.
1896	Shinsei Kaneko, a Japanese Californian, is naturalized.
1898	Wong Kim Ark v. U.S. decides that Chinese born in the U.S. cannot be stripped of their citizenship.
	The Philippine Islands become a U.S. territory under the Treaty of Paris, ending the Spanish-American War.
	U.S. annexes Hawaii on August 12, 1898.
1900	Organic Act makes all U.S. laws applicable to Hawaii, thus ending contract labor in the islands.

1902	Chinese exclusion extended for another ten years.
	Immigration officials and the police raid Boston's Chinatown and, without search warrants, arrest almost 250 Chinese who allegedly had no registration certificates on their persons.
1903	The first group of 7,000 Korean workers arrives in Hawaii on January 13, 1903, to work as strikebreakers against Japanese workers.
	1,500 Japanese and Mexican sugar beet workers strike in Oxnard, California.
	Filipino students arrive in the U.S., invited to attend colleges under the Pensionado Program, an effort to modernize and democratize the Philippines.
1904	Chinese exclusion made indefinite and applicable to U.S. insular possessions.
	Japanese plantation workers engage in the first organized strike in Hawaii.
1905	San Francisco School Board attempts to segregate Japanese schoolchildren.
	Korean emigration ends.
	Koreans in San Francisco form Mutual Assistance Society.
	Asiatic Exclusion League formed in San Francisco.
1906	A major earthquake in San Francisco destroys all municipal records, including immigration records, so Chinese immigrants are able to claim they are U.S. citizens and have the right to bring their wives and children to America.
1907	President Theodore Roosevelt signs Executive Order 589, prohibiting Japanese with passports for Hawaii, Mexico, or Canada to reemigrate to the U.S.
	Koreans form United Korean Society in Hawaii.
	First group of Filipino laborers arrives in Hawaii.
1908	Japanese form Japanese Association of America.
1909	Koreans form Korean Nationalist Association.
	7,000 Japanese plantation workers strike major plantations on Oahu for four months.
1910	Administrative measures are used to restrict the influx of Asian Indians into California.
	Angel Island Immigration Station opens to process and deport Asian immigrants.
1911	Chinese men in America cut off their queues following revolution in China.
	Pablo Manlapit forms Filipino Higher Wages Association in Hawaii.
1912	Japanese in California hold statewide conference on Nisei education.
1913	Asian Indians in California found the revolutionary Ghadar Party and start publishing a newspaper.
	Pablo Manlapit forms Filipino Unemployed Association in Hawaii.
1915	Japanese form Central Japanese Association of Southern California and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce.
1917	The 1917 Immigration Law defines a geographic "barred zone" (including India) from which no immigrants can come.
1918	Servicemen of Asian ancestry who had served in World War I receive right of naturalization.
	Asian Indians form the Hindustani Welfare Reform Association in the Imperial and Coachella valleys in southern California.
1919	Japanese form Federation of Japanese Labor in Hawaii.
1920	10,000 Japanese and Filipino plantation workers go on strike.
1921	Filipinos establish a branch of the Caballeros Dimas Alang in San Francisco and a branch of the Legionarios del Trabajo in Honolulu.
1922	Takao Ozawa v. U.S. declares Japanese ineligible for naturalized citizenship.
	Cable Act declares that any American female citizen who marries "an alien ineligible to citizenship" would lose her citizenship.

1923	U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind declares Asian Indians ineligible for naturalized citizenship.
1924	In response to concerns about rising immigration, Immigration Act of 1924 establishes strict quotas based on national origin according to the 1880 census, effectively ending Asian immigration.
1925	Hilario Moncado founds Filipino Federation of America.
1928	Filipinos in Los Angeles form Filipino American Christian Fellowship.
1930	Anti-Filipino riot in Watsonville, California.
1934	Tydings-McDuffie Act spells out the procedure for eventual Philippine independence and reduces Filipino immigration to 50 persons a year.
1936	American Federation of Labor grants charter to a Filipino-Mexican union of fieldworkers.
1938	150 Chinese women garmentworkers strike for three months against the National Dollar Stores (owned by Chinese).
1940	American Federation of Labor charts the Filipino Federated Agricultural Laborers Association.
1941	Japanese planes attack Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941, and the United States enters World War II.
	After declaring war on Japan, 2,000 Japanese community leaders along Pacific Coast states and Hawaii are rounded up and interned in Department of Justice camps.
1942	In the wake of anti-Japanese sentiment following the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt signs an order to intern Japanese-Americans.
1943	Congress repeals all Chinese exclusion laws, grants right of naturalization, and a very small immigrant quota to Chinese (105 per year).
1945	Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945, ushering in the nuclear age.
	Japan surrenders on August 14, 1945, ending World War II.
1946	Luce-Celler bill grants right of naturalization and small immigration quotas to Asian Indians and Filipinos.
1946	Wing F. Ong becomes the first Asian American to be elected to state office in the Arizona House of Representatives.
	Philippines become independent. U.S. citizenship offered to all Filipinos living in the United States, not just servicemen.
1949	Communist Revolution takes place in China and the U.S. breaks off diplomatic ties with the newly formed People's Republic of China.
	5,000 highly educated Chinese enter the U.S. and are granted refugee status after China institutes a Communist government.
1950-53	Korean War
1952	McCarran-Walter Act abolishes race as an immigration criterion, sets quotas by nation.
1956	Dalip Singh Saund from the Imperial Valley, California, is elected to Congress.
1959	When Hawaii became a state on August 21, 1959, Daniel K. Inouye won election to the U.S. House of Representatives as the new state's first Congressman; the first Asian Pacific Islander to do so.
1962	Daniel K. Inouye elected U.S. senator and Spark Matsunaga elected U.S. congressman from Hawaii.
1964	Patsy Takemoto Mink becomes first Asian American woman to serve in Congress as representative from Hawaii.

1965	Immigration Law abolishes “national origins” as basis for allocating immigration quotas to various countries – Asian countries now on an equal footing with others for the first time in U.S. history.
1974	March Fong Eu elected California’s Secretary of State.
1975	More than 130,000 refugees enter the U.S. from Vietnam, Kampuchea (Cambodia), and Laos, following the end of the Vietnam War.
1977	Eilberg Act restricts immigration of professionals.
1978	National Convention of Japanese American Citizens League adopts resolution calling for redress and reparations for the internment of Japanese Americans.
1979	Resumption of diplomatic relations between the People’s Republic of China and the U.S. reunites members of long-separated Chinese American families, and increases immigration from China.
1981	Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (set up by Congress) holds hearings across the country and concludes the internment was a “grave injustice” and that Executive Order 9066 resulted from “race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership.”
1982	Vincent Chin, a Chinese American draftsman, is clubbed to death with a baseball bat by two Euro-American men.
1986	Ellison Onizuka and six fellow crew mates die aboard the space shuttle Challenger when it exploded during liftoff.
1987	First formal signing of the Proclamation of Asian Pacific American Heritage Week by the White House.
	The U.S. House of Representatives votes 243 to 141 to make an official apology to Japanese Americans and to pay each surviving internee \$20,000 in reparations.
1988	American Homecoming Act allows children in Vietnam born of American fathers to immigrate to the U.S.
1989	President George Bush signs into law an entitlement program to pay each survivor of Japanese internment camps \$20,000.
	U.S. reaches agreement with Vietnam to allow political prisoners to emigrate to the U.S.
1990	Immigration Act raised the total quota and reorganized the system of preferences. Nearly 5 million immigrants arrive from Asian countries.
1993	Connie Chung becomes the first Asian American to be a nightly news anchor for a major network (CBS).
1996	Gary Locke is elected governor of the state of Washington. He is the first Asian American governor of a state on the mainland.
2000	Norman Yohsio Mineta is appointed Secretary of Commerce for the Bill Clinton administration.
2001	Elaine Chao is appointed Secretary of Labor. She is the first female Asian American cabinet member.
2008	Anh Cao wins a special election for a seat in the House of Representatives, representing New Orleans, Louisiana. He is the first Vietnamese-American to serve in Congress.
2009	President Barack Obama names Gary Locke to be Secretary of Commerce, Eric Shinseki to be Secretary of Veterans’ Affairs, and Stephen Chu to be Secretary of Energy.