

# NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

## U.S. IMMIGRATION STATION, ANGEL ISLAND

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: U. S. IMMIGRATION STATION, ANGEL ISLAND

Other Name/Site Number: NORTH GARRISON, FORT MCDOWELL; PRISONER OF WAR  
PROCESSING STATION; CHINA COVE; WINSLOW COVE

### 2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Angel Island State Park

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Tiburon

Vicinity: N/A

State: California

County: Marin

Code: 041

Zip Code: 94920-0318

### 3. CLASSIFICATION

#### Ownership of Property

Private:     

Public-Local:     

Public-State:   X  

Public-Federal:     

#### Category of Property

Building(s):     

District:   X  

Site:     

Structure:     

Object:     

#### Number of Resources within Property

##### Contributing

  7  

  1  

  1  

    

  9  

##### Noncontributing

     buildings

     sites

  1   structures

  2   objects

  3   Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: Not enumerated

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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**4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  X  nomination   request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property   meets   does not meet the National Register Criteria.

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Signature of Certifying Official

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Date

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State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property   meets   does not meet the National Register criteria.

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Signature of Commenting or Other Official

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Date

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State or Federal Agency and Bureau**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register  
  Determined eligible for the National Register  
  Determined not eligible for the National Register  
  Removed from the National Register  
  Other (explain):

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Signature of Keeper

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Date of Action

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**Historic: Government  
DefenseSub: Other: Immigration facility  
Military facility

Current: Recreation and Culture

Sub: Museum

**7. DESCRIPTION**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Italian Renaissance  
No Style  
World War II 700 Series Mobilization Construction**MATERIALS:**

Foundation: Concrete

Walls: Wood: Weatherboard  
ConcreteRoof: Wood  
Asphalt  
Metal

Other:

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

Angel Island is the largest island in San Francisco Bay and is located near Alcatraz Island and the Golden Gate Bridge. The island consists of about 740 acres. Except for a 7-acre Coast Guard station at Point Blunt, Angel Island is presently a state park. It has trails, picnic facilities, beaches, fishing sites, and anchorage for yachts and small boats. Historically, the island has been home to several Federal facilities. These include Camp Reynolds (later called West Garrison) which was fortified with cannons in 1863 to protect San Francisco Bay from Confederate ships. It includes buildings dating from the 1860s and 1870s. Also on the island is Fort McDowell (later called East Garrison when the whole island was called Fort McDowell) which includes such resources as a hospital, a Quonset mess and drill hall, a chapel, a restored guardhouse and officers' quarters. At China Cove (also called Winslow Cove and the North Garrison) are the historic remains of the U.S. Immigration Station, which is the subject of this nomination. It is located on the north end of the island and comprises approximately fifteen acres.<sup>1</sup>

When the Immigration Station was completed in 1908, it consisted of five resources: the administration building, detention barracks, hospital, and powerhouse, and the wharf<sup>2</sup>, all designed by Walter J. Mathews, (d. 1947).<sup>3</sup> A security fence enclosed the detention barracks and outdoor area. A guard tower was located on the southwest corner. In 1909, a stable, carpenter shop, and underground water tanks were constructed. In June 1910, a plan for twelve cottages to house staff was completed. Julia Morgan (1872-1957) designed these three and four room cottages in May 1910 at the time she completed drawings for the hospital disinfecting room.<sup>4</sup> Ms. Morgan was given her commission by her brother-in-law Hart North, the San Francisco Commissioner of Immigration. A toilet wing was added to the south side of the detention barracks in 1912.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jim Charleton, "Draft National Historic Landmark Nomination for [U.S. Immigration Station,] Angel Island." July, 1994. Copy in the files of the National Historic Landmarks Survey, Washington, D.C. The original National Register of Historic Places nomination was for the whole island, not just the Immigration Station. See Allen W. Welts "Angel Island National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form," 1970, copy in the files of the National Historic Landmarks Survey, Washington, D.C.

<sup>2</sup> Dorene Askin, "Historical Report: Angel Island, Immigration Station," (Interpretive Unit, Department of Parks and Recreation, State of California, June 3, 1977), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Mathews was born in Wisconsin and moved to the west coast as a young man. In 1886, he established an office in San Francisco, later practicing in Oakland. Among his early works in the Bay area were "the Immigration Building on Angel Island, buildings on the north side of 14th Street in Oakland, between Franklin and Broadway, and many private homes." See Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, "Mathews, Walter J.," *Biography of American Architects (Deceased)*, (1956; reprint, Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970), 399.

<sup>4</sup> Julia Morgan was the first woman to complete the program at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1902. In her nearly half century career, Morgan designed approximately 700 buildings. Her most notable work included YMCA buildings in Honolulu and numerous California cities, the Hearst compound at San Simeon and numerous buildings at Mills College and the University of California at Berkeley. Waverly B. Lowell, "Morgan, Julia," *Encyclopedia of the American West*, Volume 3, (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1996), 1031.

<sup>5</sup> Commissioner of Immigration, San Francisco to Contractors, June 19, 1912, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Dept. E11, Record Group 85, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

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Central to the Immigration Station was the administration building situated on the level portion of the cove, facing north to the wharf. The administration building contained the following facilities: registration room, general office, examination room, Chief Inspector and Doctor's office, detention room, kitchen, Asian dining room and Caucasian dining room. The building was destroyed by fire in 1940. On the southeast slope, approximately 30 ft. above the administration building site is the detention barracks. On the north-east slope, approximately 30 ft. above the administration building site is the hospital. West of the administration building site is the power house. The stable is approximately 200 ft. west of the detention barracks.

During World War II, the detention barracks were used to house prisoners of war. A kitchen/mess hall was added to the west of the detention barracks. Twenty-one new army barracks were built on the eastern slope of the cove. Two of the barracks behind the hospital remain. The mess hall and the barracks have been protected from deterioration and are in good restorable condition. The barracks are boarded-up whereas the mess hall is used occasionally for special exhibits. Except for the removal of kitchen equipment from the mess hall, both the mess hall and army barracks retain their architectural integrity.

The detention barracks were restored in October 1981 using the same material and maintaining the same workmanship.<sup>6</sup> The hospital and power house were abandoned in 1945 by the Army and left to deteriorate. They have since been boarded up to prevent further deterioration while awaiting restoration. The exterior and interior of the two buildings, while in disrepair, still retain much of their architectural integrity.

The paths and roads are essentially the same as when the station was built. The roads were originally designed to accommodate horse drawn vehicles and later were paved to accommodate automobiles.

Among the original buildings built for the Immigration Station, the administration building, and the 12 cottages are no longer extant. However, the foundation of the administration building and some of the foundations of the cottages remain. The original guard tower has been removed and the original security fence which surrounded the detention barracks and the enclosed stairway leading from the detention barracks to the dining hall of the administration complex no longer exist.

Although some of the buildings have not survived, one can identify and feel the presence of the immigration station's historical past. The integrity of its setting and location is maintained by the original paths and roads which link the foundations and existing buildings together, therefore, the site of the Immigration Station as outlined by the district boundaries on the accompanying USGS map is considered a contributing resource. One can envision the activities of the Station with the immigrants being shunted from place to place under prison-like security. Inside the dormitory in the detention barracks, the detainees have left scores of poems on the walls chronicling the intimate details of pain and sorrow and of joy and hope in coming to America to build a new life. Gazing out the window, across the bay, the visitor can identify with the immigrant's frustration; the mainland so close and yet so far.

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<sup>6</sup> Records in the office of Philip P. Choy, architect.

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**Detention Barracks (Building #317)**

The detention barracks is a two story wood frame building with a hip-roof framed with carpenter trusses. The roof is laid with 1" x 6" tongue and groove straight sheathing overlaid with redwood shingles. The roof overhangs 24" terminating with a continuous redwood gutter at the eaves and rake. Perimeter walls are load bearing on a continuous concrete foundation. A system of wood columns and beams on continuous concrete footing runs down the center of the building in the longitudinal direction.

The exterior finish is 1" x 4" tongue and groove redwood horizontal flush siding on the second story. The first floor finish is 1" x 8" redwood shiplap horizontal siding. A continuous horizontal water table separates the exterior siding at each floor level. The ground floor is elevated 5 ft. from the ground level creating a raised platform and crawl space.

Double hung windows are symmetrically placed within the interior of each room. The upper sashes are divided into 9 equal lights. The lower sashes are divided in half vertically.

The interior walls are laid horizontally with 1" x 4" tongue and groove V-groove redwood. In some rooms, a 14" molding separates the 1" x 4" vertical tongue and groove V-groove wainscot below.

The floors are 1" x 4" tongue and groove douglas fir over 1" x 6" tongue and groove diagonal sheathing over 2" x 12" joists 16" on centers. Finish over the floor was originally canvas and painted over.<sup>7</sup> The toilet rooms were covered with "red fibrous composition flooring" (probably linoleum).<sup>8</sup>

The plan is a 40 ft x 70 ft rectangle. An entry porch of 10 ft x 26 ft is asymmetrical with the building. The east wing is longer than the west wing. From the porch, an enclosed covered flight of stairs descended down to the former dining room on the south side of the administration building. The enclosure and the dining room no longer exist.

The entry porch was the only entrance for the entire building. A center doorway led to the interior stairs to the second floor.

First and second floor plans are almost identical. The entrance doors to each wing led first to a sitting room, then to the dormitory. Each dormitory had a washroom with a restroom. Each dormitory had round metal standards mounted from floor to ceiling to support fold-up metal bunks stacked in tiers of three. The men's dormitory was designed to accommodate 56 and the women's to accommodate 26. However, approximately six months after the Station was opened, the Assistant Surgeon, M.W. Glover reported "there are 204 and 192 in the larger rooms and 60 each in the smaller one . . . the windows are barred and locked. There is only one exit for all four dormitories . . ."<sup>9</sup> It was not until 1912 that serious consideration was given to these

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<sup>7</sup> M.W. Glover, Past Assistant Surgeon to Acting Commissioner of Immigration, November 21, 1910, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Luther C. Steward to Commissioner General of Immigration, (Washington, D.C. December 19, 1910), 9. INS Service Dept. B11, R.G. 85, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>9</sup> Glover, 3.

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deficiencies. Exits were constructed at the east and west end of the dormitories. On the walls of the men's dormitory are scores of poems composed by the immigrants.

Minor changes mainly in the use of the building were made during the World War II/Prisoner of War period. The first and second floor of the east wing contained 180 beds each and the smaller east wing contained 90 beds each.

Restoration drawings for the barracks began on September 22, 1977 by Architect Philip P. Choy under contract with the Office of State Architect. The intent and approach to restoration was to bring the building back to the period when it was last occupied during the POW period and performing only the work in need of repair. Restoration consisted of seismic reinforcement and repair of deteriorating members. Members were replaced with identical construction method, material, ornamental detail, size, shape, texture, and color. Two steel seismic frames were installed on the exterior of the south wall. The interior and exterior design material and construction retain the integrity of the original construction. A fire sprinkler system was installed. Special care was exercised to protect and preserve the poems on the walls. The building therefore retains the integrity of material and workmanship.

Beset with problems of poor planning,<sup>10</sup> a separate toilet wing with a connecting stairway was added to the south side of the barracks in 1912. It was 17 ft. wide and 72 ft. long, divided with the men's toilet on the east side and the women's on the west. The wing is reinforced concrete with 12 reinforced concrete pilasters. The walls are plastered. The flat roof is crowned with a cornice about 24" in height featuring a dentil course. Otherwise, the wing has no architectural styling.

The interior walls were tiled with white porcelain tile and the floor with vitrified octagonal tile.<sup>11</sup> The floor elevation was set between the first and second floor of the detention barracks. The old bathrooms on the first floor of the men's and women's dormitories were removed and became the entry to a new flight of stairs ascending to the new toilet wing. On the second floor, openings were made to provide access from each dormitory with a new flight of stairs descending down to the toilet wing. The stairs were located on the east and west ends of the toilet wing.

Changes were made during the World War II/POW period to increase the number of water closets, lavatories, and showers. Plumbing fixtures in the former women's toilet wing were changed to accommodate men.

The barracks and toilet wing are now open to visitors as an interpretive center. Exhibits focus on the theme of immigration and the poems. The World War II/POW theme is also featured. It is a contributing building to the district.

**The Hospital (Building #316)**

The architectural style is modified Italian Renaissance Revival. It consists of four equal wings symmetrically placed and connected by a larger central wing. The entrance is through the central

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 9, 21.

<sup>11</sup> In the letter, June 12, 1912, op. cit., Commissioner of Immigration to contractors, the scope of work was included as "specifications."

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wing which has a raised porch that is approximately 5 ft. off the ground. The front porch is supported by eight round columns. Each of the five wings are two stories high of wood frame construction and hip-roofed with redwood shingles. The roof overhang is about 18" with a continuous redwood gutter at the eaves and rake. Perimeter walls are load bearing on concrete foundation. The exterior finish and treatment is consistent with the detention barracks: redwood siding, water table which accents the floor levels and the first floor is elevated about 5 ft. above grade.

The interior walls and ceilings are wood lath and plaster. Some rooms have a coved ceiling. The floors are 1" x 4" tongue and groove redwood. In what might have been the surgery room, the room has 3" x 8" white tile wainscot, the floor has 3" x 3" white tile accented with 1" x 1" blue tile at the corners.

On May 7, 1910, Julia Morgan completed drawings for a "disinfector" room.<sup>12</sup> It was a single story addition constructed between the two south wings. The exterior walls of the hospital have been protected from further deterioration. The roof, however, is in disrepair. The interior of the building is also in a state of disrepair. Architectural features which define the character of the material and workmanship remain and will guide future restoration faithfully. The hospital is a contributing building.

**The Power House (Building #314)**

The style of the structure is simplified Italian Renaissance Revival. The structure is reinforced concrete, the roof is spanned by steel truss and the floor is slab on grade. The roofing material is sheet metal with standing ribs. The perimeter of the rake and eaves has the same profile as the barracks and hospital except the overhang is less deep. A concrete cornice band at mid-height with windows placed symmetrically above and below gives the illusion of a two story building.

Steam was conducted through pipes under the concrete slab.<sup>13</sup> The power house was designed to service the barracks and hospital only. The administration building had its own heating plant, but was not put to use because of poor design.

Most of the power house heating plant equipment still exists. The walls are in good condition. The windows are boarded up and some need replacement. The wood gutters and the roofing are in disrepair. To the west of the power house are the remains of the oil tanks that fueled the structure. The power house is a contributing structure.

**The Stable/Mule Barn (Building #313)**

The stable is of no particular architectural style. It is a two story wood frame rectangular building with a gable roof. The roof is framed with 2" x 6" rafters 24" on center. The foundation is post and beam on concrete piers. The space between the first floor to the concrete piers is enclosed by 1" x 10" redwood boards. The exterior of the building is 1" x 8" horizontal redwood siding. The interior walls and ceiling are 1" x 4" redwood flush tongue and groove.

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<sup>12</sup> Drawings dated May 7, 1910 from the collection of the "Julia Morgan Association."

<sup>13</sup> Steward, 11.

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The stable was used for linen storage during the World War II period. The building has been restored to its original condition. The structural frame and material retain their integrity. Only the roof has been recovered with asphalt shingles in lieu of the original redwood shingles. Due to lack of personnel, the stable is not open to visitors. The stable is a contributing building.

**The Carpentry Shop (Building #318)**

The carpentry shop is of no particular architectural style. The plan is approximately 15' x 15' square. The building is wood frame with a gable roof framed with 3" x 4" rafters 16" on center. The roofing is redwood shingles. Exterior siding is 1" x 10" horizontal redwood. The concrete foundation is probably of another period. The exterior shell is in good condition. The roofing is in disrepair. It is a contributing building.

**World War II Barracks (Buildings # 241 and 242) and Mess Hall (Building #233)**

The barracks' classification is World War II, 700 Series Mobilization Construction. Both buildings are two stories wood frame with a gable roof. Roofing is asphalt shingles. Exterior walls are 1" x 8" V-groove tongue and groove horizontal siding. The space from floor to grade is enclosed with 1" x 10" redwood boards. The barracks building is in good condition. It is not open to visitors.

The Mess Hall's classification is World War II, 700 Series Mobilization Construction. The construction is wood frame with 1" x 8" V-groove horizontal siding. It has a hip roof. The foundation is concrete.

The State Park is planning to use the barracks as a museum. The two barracks and the mess hall are contributing buildings.

**Sentry Tower (Structure 1)**

Three sentry towers were constructed during the World War II period. Only Sentry Tower #3, located on the S.E. corner of the detention barracks, partially remains. The base and sentry platform still exist but the housing on the platform has deteriorated. The tower is a noncontributing structure.

**Other Noncontributing Resources**

A monument (Object A) stands on the northeast corner of the foundation of the former dining room. Victor Burgeron, owner of Trader Vic's restaurants conceived of the idea to commemorate the Chinese immigration experience. This offer to donate a granite slab for the monument including all installation expenses was accepted by the State Department of Parks and Recreation and the Angel Island Immigration Station Historical Advisory Committee. A public dedication ceremony was held on April 28, 1979. Hundreds of former detainees were invited as honored guests. The monument is a noncontributing object. A bell (Object B) that once stood on the end of the pier located in front of the Administration Building has been relocated to the shore in front of the ruins of the Administration Building. Although it is historic to the Immigration Station, it is counted as a noncontributing object.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide:    Locally:   

Applicable National

Register Criteria:

A X B    C    D   

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions):

A    B    C    D    E    F    G   

NHL Criteria:

1, 5

NHL Theme(s):

- I. Peopling Places
  - 3. Migration from Outside and Within
- IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
  - 3. Military Institutions and Activities
- VIII. Changing Role of the U.S. in the World Economy
  - 4. Immigration/Emigration

Areas of Significance:

Ethnic Heritage: Asian  
Politics/Government  
Military

Period(s) of Significance:

1910 - 1940  
1942 - 1946

Significant Dates:

1940

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Mathews, Walter J.  
Morgan, Julia

Historic Contexts:

- VIII. World War II
  - D. The Home Front
- XXX. American Ways of Life
  - E. Ethnic Communities

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**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.****Statement of Significance**

The U.S. Immigration Station, Angel Island, is significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 1 for its role as the major west coast processing center for immigrants, the majority of whom were Asians, who desired to enter the United States between the years 1910 and 1940. What Ellis Island symbolizes to Americans of European heritage who immigrated to the east coast, Angel Island symbolizes to Americans of Asian heritage on the west coast. In addition, the discriminatory policies practiced at the Station against Chinese immigrants reveal the racist nature of U.S. immigration policy during that period. No other racial group entering the Station received the same treatment involving grueling testimony and weeks or months of detention as did the Chinese. It is also nationally significant as the site of a World War II Prisoner of War facility from 1942-1946. During that time, it housed German and Japanese prisoners of war and members of the Italian Service Units.

The Immigration Station is also significant under National Register of Historic Places Criterion A because it is associated with the broad patterns of U.S. history relating to ethnic heritage, politics/government and military events from which understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained.

**Historic Background**

The coast Miwok Native Americans were the inhabitants on Angel Island prior to the Spanish occupation. In 1775, the Ayala Expedition dropped anchor at Angel Island (now Ayala Cove) and the island came under the dominion of the Spanish Empire. During the Mexican era (1821 - 1848), the Mexican governor granted ownership of the island to Antonio Osio in 1839 and for 20 years Osio used it as a cattle ranch.

In 1850, under American rule, President Fillmore declared Angel Island as a military reserve. During the Civil War, the island was fortified to defend San Francisco Bay from the potential attack of Confederate ships entering the bay. Angel Island continued to be a military installation during the Spanish American War, World War I and II.

In 1905, the War Department transferred 20 acres of land from North Garrison, Point Simpton to the Department of Commerce and Labor for the establishment of the immigrant station. The heritage of Asian Americans is rooted in the history of the Immigration Station. The presence of Asians in America in the later half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century was met with hostility and resentment and led to passage of anti-Asian exclusion laws.

The events that led to the enactment of the Asian exclusion laws and the establishment of the Immigration Station on Angel Island are significantly related to the course of history between America and Asia. The arrival of Asian peoples in America had a profound impact on the political, economic, and social development of the nation. It shaped attitudes of antipathy towards Asians and helped dictate our foreign policies toward China and Japan. Anti-Asian activities were first directed against the Chinese and then at the Japanese.

**The Chinese**

In the early 19th century, the philosophy of Manifest Destiny encouraged Americans to spread

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west across the continent to the Pacific. The West was to be the gateway from which the United States would acquire and hold the position of power in Asia for the privilege of trade and commerce. To guarantee those privileges, the United States entered into treaties with China with pledges of "rights to reciprocal immigration."

Following the discovery of gold in California, the Chinese were recruited as a major source of labor in the economic development of the western frontier. To develop California's natural resources, some journalists and politicians advocated the introduction of Chinese labor under contract. However, it was the discovery of gold in California that triggered large scale immigration.

In the development of the frontier, labor began to organize against the exploitation of capital. In competition with the white labor class, the Chinese became scapegoats for the growing pains of America's labor movement. In the West, Chinese were attacked as tools of the capitalists and the enemy of the white working class. Debates known as the "Chinese Question" centered on the pros and cons of Chinese immigration but degenerated into racial epithets based on the superiority of white over yellow. The nation was faced with the dilemma of whether to yield to the demands of labor to expel the Chinese or to honor the pledges of "reciprocal immigration" in the treaties with China for commerce and trade. The answer to the "Chinese Question" was the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Not only did Congress restrict Chinese immigration, it also declared that the Chinese could not become citizens. This was the first time Congress undertook an action to bar an immigrant group on the basis of race and color. These Exclusion Acts were repealed December 17, 1943 when China was an ally of the United States and Japan was the enemy.

Under the Chinese Exclusion Act of May 6, 1882, laborers, skilled or unskilled, were prohibited to immigrate. Exempted from the Exclusion Act were merchants, diplomats, ministers, travelers, students, and children of citizens. Many Chinese attempted to immigrate under these categories of the exempt class. It was necessary for immigration officials to determine those who held legitimate documents to enter into the United States from those who were questionable.

Initially, the arriving immigrants were housed in quarters located at the Pacific Mail Steamship Company docks on the southern end of the waterfront in San Francisco. There they were interrogated by examiners to prove or disprove their rights to entry.

The facilities at the Pacific Mail Docks in San Francisco were in every way inadequate and unsanitary. A study for a new station was authorized on April 25, 1904, with the recommendation that it be constructed on Angel Island.<sup>1</sup> The decision to relocate was not altogether humanitarian. Officials felt the island location would prevent Chinese immigrants from communicating with Chinese outside the island and effectively prevent the spread of communicable diseases carried by the immigrants. Construction of the Immigration Station was completed in October, 1908. An earthquake in 1906, lack of funds and replacement of federal officials deterred the Station's opening until January 21, 1910. Angel Island Immigration Station became the major port of entry. The only other ports through which the Chinese could

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<sup>1</sup> V.H. Metcalf, Secretary of Commerce and Labor, to Speaker of House of Representatives, December 30, 1904. INS Service Dept. E 11, Record Group 85, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

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enter on the west coast were Port Townsend, Seattle; Portland, Oregon; and San Diego, California.<sup>2</sup>

Upon the ship's arrival in San Francisco, immigration officers came on board to inspect the documents of each passenger to see if they were in order. Those who held questionable documents were ferried to Angel Island for further examination. At the Island, whites were separated from other races and the Chinese were kept apart from the Japanese and other Asians. Men and women, including husbands and wives, were kept apart and not allowed to see or communicate with each other until they were cleared for admission. Children under 12 years old stayed with their mothers.

Each arrival was given a medical examination at the hospital to determine if they carried any parasitic diseases. Those found afflicted were automatically denied admission. Those who passed their physical exam then awaited hearings on their application. During the initial years of the Immigration Station, the waiting period stretched into months. After constant complaints registered by leaders of the Chinese community, the situation improved to two to three weeks of waiting in the 1920's.

As many immigrants attempted to enter the United States under the "exempt class," the interrogations were designed to entrap and expose fraudulent claims. The hearing was conducted by two inspectors and a stenographer, with an interpreter present. They were not bound by any federal rules or procedures but could use any means they deemed appropriate to deny the applicant the right of entry.

A great number of immigrants applied for entry by claiming to be the sons of citizens. Intimate details pertaining to the "alleged" father, his family, home life and native village had to be meticulously memorized by the "paper son." The facts were written down in a "coaching" book that the applicant religiously studied during his voyage to America and threw overboard upon arrival.

Separately, witnesses for the applicant were asked numerous questions. For instance, an "alleged" father could be asked: What is your wife's name and age?; Does she have bound feet?; How many children do you have? What are their names and ages? How many houses in your village? Where is your house located? etc. The same questions were asked of the applicant and the answers were compared. The proceedings took two to three days. For those who were suspects, the detainment could take months.

Some inspectors delighted in playing a cat and mouse game with the detainee, others were fair. Still others corrupted by greed, made quick and favorable decisions. In January 1917, it was

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<sup>2</sup> The status of the other facilities is as follows: Port Townsend, Washington was the port of entry in the Seattle District established in 1890 and is no longer extant. Portland, Oregon, 1890-1897. Customs Collector office/facility replaced by new federal building. Construction was completed in 1906 and the building is still extant. It is unknown if the interim facility took over Port of Entry Duties. A newer federal building currently in use today at a different location houses all federal activities. None of the original facility buildings from the 1891-97 era remain. San Diego, California: 1905 to present. Some of the earliest buildings remain downtown area but are not currently used by the government. Current INS/U.S. Border patrol detention facilities exist in San Diego/San Ysidro.

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exposed that inspectors reaped millions of dollars in bribes. If an unfavorable judgment was rendered, the applicant would be deported. If he chose to appeal the decision, he took the risk of prolonged detainment waiting for the result. Some immigrants languished on the Island for as long as two years.

The immigrants lived under a prison-like environment. Wherever they went, they were escorted by guards and when they were confined in the dormitories behind locked doors with guards sitting outside. The dorms hosted from 200 to 300 males and 30 to 50 females at one time. Men were housed on the second floor of the detention barracks. Women were originally housed on the first floor but were moved to the second floor of the Administration Building in the 1920s.<sup>3</sup> No inmate could receive visitors until his case was judged. Incoming and outgoing letters and packages were inspected for possible coaching messages.

The men spent time gaming, reading Chinese newspapers and books and listened to Chinese opera records. Women also knitted and sewed. On occasion women and children were given the privilege to walk the grounds. Social agencies such as the San Francisco Chinese YMCA, the Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Japanese Association of America, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society provided moments of relief from the monotony and anxiety of life under the period of confinement. Deaconess Katherine Maurer of the Home Missionary Society, known as the Angel of Angel Island, served from 1912 until 1951, long after the closure of the station.

During the long wait, some men confined in the barracks expressed their bitterness, frustration, and despair with poems carved in the wooden walls. Women left no such poems, perhaps it was because the majority were illiterate and also they were fewer in number. Originally the interior redwood walls were left unpainted. Ten months after the barracks were occupied, poems had already appeared on the walls. They were calligraphy written with Chinese ink brush on the unfinished redwood walls. The appearance of the poems caused the Assistant Surgeon, William Glover to complain: "the walls lends itself to drawings and writings."<sup>4</sup> The walls were then painted which covered up the first generation of poems. Subsequently, the detainees began to carve their poems into the soft redwood.

The following is a sample of a poem by a detainee awaiting interrogation:

Halfway up the hill on Island, in the  
building upstairs,  
The imprisoned one has been separated  
from the people summer to autumn.  
Three times I dreamed of returning to the  
native village.  
My intestines are agitated in its nine  
turns by the false Westerner.  
I have run into hard times and am

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<sup>3</sup> H.M. Lai, "Island of Immortals: Chinese Immigrants and the Angel Island Immigration Station," *California History* 57 (Spring 1978): 94.

<sup>4</sup> M.W. Glover to Commissioner of Immigration, December 17, 1910.

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uselessly depressed  
There are many obstacles in life but who  
will commiserate with me?  
If at a later time, I am allowed to land on  
the American shore,  
I will toss all the miseries of this jail  
to the flowing current.<sup>5</sup>

Fire destroyed the Administration Building on August 12, 1940. On November 5, 1940, the Immigration Station was relocated to San Francisco at 801 Silver Avenue and the Station was reverted back to military use on February 4, 1941. It was renamed the North Garrison and was used for processing troops and as a prisoner of war camp. The barracks and the hospital were rehabilitated to house prisoners.

Following World War II in July 1946, the Island was declared surplus and turned over to the State of California. The station was abandoned and largely forgotten until 1970 when State Park Ranger Alexander Weiss discovered scores of poems inscribed on the walls of the detention barracks. Until the discovery of the poems, the Chinese immigrants had left very little written record of their experience. They are an invaluable and irreplaceable primary historical resource. They reflect and record the hardship endured, and the indignity suffered by the early Chinese while establishing roots in America. Their courage, their tenacity, and their resilience are enshrined within the walls of the detention barracks. In the words of the authors of *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940*:

The poems occupy a unique place in the literary culture of Asian America. These immigrant poets unconsciously introduced a new sensibility, a Chinese American sensibility using China as the source and America as a bridge to spawn a new cultural perspective.<sup>6</sup>

Between 1910 and 1940, thousands of Chinese immigrants were detained in the detention barracks to await decisions on their application to immigrate. To expose fraudulent claims, the Immigration Service devised an elaborate system of entrapment. The interrogation was brutal, intimidating, and humiliating. Adding insult to injury, even those who were entitled to immigrate had to go through this process. For those who were suspects, the detainment could take months or even years.

The significance of the U.S. Immigration Station, at least for thousands of Chinese hoping to enter the United States, was aptly summarized by H.M. Lai in his article "Island of Immortals: Chinese Immigrants and the Angel Island Immigration Station":

Today, immigration laws no longer blatantly discriminate against specific racial groups. But the lonely hulk of the Angel Island detention building, with its walls

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<sup>5</sup> Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim and Judy Yung, *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigration on Angel Island, 1910-1940*, (San Francisco: Hoc Dol, 1980), 56.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 28.

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covered with carvings expressing the hopes and heartbreaks of nameless Chinese immigrants, stands as a stark reminder that not so long ago the nation's immigration policy was based on the premise that some racial groups were preferred to others in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

**The Japanese**

Anti-Asian politics was not a passing phase in the nation's history but persisted for many decades. The Exclusion Acts effectively reduced Chinese immigration. When the Japanese began to immigrate, the anti-Chinese sentiment quickly extended to the Japanese. Discrimination against Japanese in America led to resentment by Japan towards the United States. Japan had just emerged as a power in Asia following her defeat of Russia in the Sino-Russia conflict in 1905. The United States was mindful not to offend Japan. Under the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, Japan agreed to voluntarily limit the immigration of Japanese laborers. The immigrants were predominately male. In order to adjust for this anomaly, the Japanese in America married women residing in Japan by proxy. The practice was known as "picture brides." The bride-to-be was selected from pictures and the marriage was then performed. Thereafter, the bride would immigrate to America to join her new husband. This practice continued until February 29, 1920 when Japan, under pressure by the United States government, agreed to discontinue it. Up to that time, approximately 600 picture brides each year came through the Immigration Station at Angel Island.<sup>8</sup> To avoid insulting Japan, the processing of the Japanese was quick. The Japanese were not under strict security and were free to walk the grounds.

By 1910, the Japanese began to make their presence felt in the agricultural economy of the west coast. In a letter from Governor William D. Stephens to Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, the Governor described the presence of the Japanese in California as "an even more serious problem than Chinese immigration."<sup>9</sup> He further stated the Japanese in California had indicated a strong trend towards land ownership. Under the Gentlemen's Agreement, passports were issued at the discretion of the Japanese government. Sinophobic leaders found this arrangement unacceptable and agitated for exclusion. Anti-Asian hostilities re-surfaced. Hearings were conducted by the House of Representatives on the pros and cons of Japanese immigration.

In the case of *Ozawa vs. United States*, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled the Japanese were ineligible for naturalization quoting the 1790 Naturalization Act that only aliens "...being a free white person...may become a citizen." This paved the way to prohibit Japanese immigration in the Immigration Act of 1924, pointing to the language "aliens ineligible for citizenship" shall not be admitted to the United States as an immigrant.<sup>10</sup> In the year following the Immigration Act of 1924,

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<sup>7</sup> Lai, "Island of Immortals," 101.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Kyoshi Kawakami, *The Real Japanese Question* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1921) Table 8, p. 258.

<sup>9</sup> California State Board of Control, *California and the Oriental* (Sacramento: State Printing Office) pp. 8-15.

<sup>10</sup> Milton R. Konvitz, *The Alien and the Asiatic in American Law*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1946) p. 81.

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Japanese immigration dropped dramatically from 8,481 to 682. The annual number thereafter hovered around 600 until World War II stopped all immigration.<sup>11</sup>

In the years that the Immigration Station operated on Angel Island, it has been estimated that approximately one million people were processed through the station. But probably only half of that number actually set foot on Angel Island, the remainder only had their paperwork processed there. Of these 250,000 were Chinese; perhaps 150,00 were Japanese. Approximately 75 to 80% successfully entered through the station. The proportion of those who could appeal was 15-25% and 98% of that number were finally able to enter. Approximately 3% were debarred or deported.<sup>12</sup>

**Federal Uses**

The Immigration Station was also used for other purposes. Until 1925, it was used as a detention facility for Federal prisoners. Prisoners stayed in the detention barracks on the second floor. Attempted escapes prompted the Immigration Commissioner, John P. Nagel to protest using it as a penal institution stating that the Station did not have the facilities to handle criminals.<sup>13</sup>

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, crew men and officers on German ships in the harbors of the United States were considered enemy aliens. Those from the Pacific Coast ports, including Hawaii, were interned at Angel Island. On July 1, 1918, enemy aliens were placed under the jurisdiction of the War Department and the aliens were transferred to Hot Spring, North Carolina.<sup>14</sup>

In 1939, a deportation hearing for Harry Bridges, labor leader of the International Longshore Association, was held at the Station. He led the 1934 West Coast maritime strike and was charged by the government as a communist subversive. The concluding evidence did not support the allegation that Bridges was a communist nor was he affiliated with the Communist Party of the United States. The attempt to deport Bridges continued relentlessly until the United States Supreme Court ruled in Bridges favor.<sup>15</sup>

On December 19, 1939, crew members of the German liner, *Columbus*, scuttled the ship to prevent its capture by the British. The crew was rescued by American ships 24 miles off Cape Hatteras. Because British warships patrolled the Atlantic, Germany arranged with the United States to have Japan pick the men up on the Pacific Coast. The United States was not yet at war and Japan was an ally of Germany. The 512 crew men were sent to Angel Island to await transportation by a Japanese ship to cross the Pacific, then cross Russia to Germany. However, Japan failed to agree to the plan. For the duration of the war, the crew was then quartered at the Quarantine Station and the Immigration Station. They had the freedom of the grounds and even took excursions to San

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<sup>11</sup> Harry H.L. Kitano, *Japanese Americans*, (Engelwood, New Jersey, 1969): Table 29, p. 176.

<sup>12</sup> Jo-Anne Rosen, editor, "A Teacher's Guide to the Angel Island Immigration Station," (Tiburon, California: Angel Island Association, 1986): p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Askin, "Historical Report" pp. 68-69.

<sup>14</sup> United States Department of Commerce and Labor. Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization. *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration for the Fiscal Year, June 1917*. pp. ix, x.

<sup>15</sup> Konvitz, pp. 70-78.

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Francisco and Yosemite. After the war, some became American citizens.<sup>16</sup>

As mentioned previously, fire destroyed the Administration Building on August 12, 1940 and the Station reverted to military use in February 1941. It was renamed the North Garrison and was used for processing troops and as a prisoner of war camp. The Barracks and the hospital were rehabilitated to house prisoners. In July, 1942, a group of Japanese prisoners from the battle of Midway were interned at the Station. Other Japanese prisoners included those captured at Attu and the Solomons. On January 8, 1946 the last Japanese prisoner was returned to Japan.<sup>17</sup>

German prisoners included high ranking officers captured by the British in North Africa. They were sent by air to Iceland, then by ship to Boston, then by train to San Francisco. Other prisoners were sent by way of Australia to San Francisco. At the time of Germany's surrender, there were 277 German prisoners on the Island.

When Italy surrendered on September 8, 1943, it shifted to the side of the Allies. The Italian POWs could not be released, yet they were not prisoners. These former prisoners were transformed into Italian Service Units who could perform non-combatant related work. The first group of sixty Italian Service Unit men came to Angel Island on May 1944. On March 23, 1945, 160 more arrived under Captain Louis A. Voss. They also were given a great deal of freedom while on the Island.<sup>18</sup>

**End of Military Use**

The Island was declared surplus by the Army in July, 1946 and was turned over to the War Assets Administration to be disposed of to the State of California or municipalities for park, recreational, and historical purposes. During the years from 1946 to 1963 the buildings were left unattended. The State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation, received full title to the Island on July 29, 1963.

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<sup>16</sup> Askin, "Historical Report," 78-79.

<sup>17</sup> McDonald, Marshall & Associate. *Recommendation for the Historical Recreational Development of Angel Island* (Oakland, California: 1966): p. 134.

<sup>18</sup> Askin, 87-91.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  
☒ Previously Listed in the National Register.  
☐ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.  
☐ Designated a National Historic Landmark.  
☐ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #  
☐ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State Agency  
☒ Federal Agency  
☐ Local Government  
☐ University  
☐ Other (Specify Repository): National Archives  
INS-Dept. E-11  
Ref. Service  
NNJ Record Group 85

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: 15

| UTM References: | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|-----------------|------|---------|----------|
| A               | 10   | 550680  | 4191440  |
| B               | 10   | 550680  | 4191080  |
| C               | 10   | 550460  | 4191300  |
| D               | 10   | 550460  | 4191420  |

Verbal Boundary Description:

The 15 acre site is located on the north side of Angel Island State Park, Tiburon, California, between Point Campbell and Point Simpton. The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the polygon marked by UTM reference points as indicated on the accompanying USGS quadrangle map, San Francisco North, California.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated site includes the entire area historically associated with the United States Immigration Station, Angel Island. Included in the area are two buildings and three structures still remaining from the original immigration station era (1910-1940) and two barracks and the mess hall from the World War II Prisoner of War facility (1942-1946).

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY  
January 5, 1998