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Courtesy of U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, College Park, MD
Interrogation, National Archives

Remembering Angel Island

July 16, 2010 – May 29, 2011

MEDIA PREVIEW DAY

Tues., July 13, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

A NEW EXHIBITION AT THE CHINESE AMERICAN MUSEUM COMMEMORATES THE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPENING OF ANGEL ISLAND IMMIGRATION STATION AND URGES A COLLECTIVE REMEMBRANCE OF HISTORY'S LESSONS AMIDST THE CURRENT NATIONAL DEBATE ABOUT IMMIGRATION

(LOS ANGELES, June 28, 2010) - Nearly a century after a raging fire forced the closure of one of U.S. history's most controversial immigration stations, the guarded memories of Angel Island Immigration Station (AIIS) in San Francisco are re-ignited in a new exhibition presented by the Chinese American Museum (CAM) and the El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument. On view beginning July 16, 2010 through May 29, 2011, the ***Remembering Angel Island*** exhibition commemorates the 100th year anniversary of the opening of the West Coast's first immigration station through its history, legacy and the unforgettable stories of those who endured or were profoundly affected by the Angel Island experience. The exhibition's anticipated opening comes on

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the heels of an on-going national dialogue regarding immigration policies and reform and the recent passage of a polarizing new law in Arizona affecting undocumented immigrants.

“During this year of national remembrance of the history of Pacific immigration and Angel Island, it is important to realize that there are still significant lessons to be learned from the Angel Island experience,” notes Dr. Pauline Wong, CAM’s Executive Director. “Some of the most restrictive laws at that time required Chinese laborers to carry certificates of identification to prove their legal status in this country. If confronted and asked, those without such proof would be arrested and deported. Nearly 120 years later, we are seeing a similar reincarnation of this law in Arizona. We as a country must be willing to reflect on national historical experiences like those at Angel Island and remember its lessons and legacy. Despite its dark past, Angel Island has a renewed opportunity to now play a positive force in helping to shape America’s future. The stories that come out of Angel Island attest to the unwavering human spirit and the desire for a new life against the most challenging odds. Many of the former Chinese immigrant detainees at Angel Island went on to become prominent leaders in our community and greatly contributed to many facets of American society.”

Located in the northeast area of Angel Island in the heart of San Francisco's bay, the immigration station served as the main gateway into the United States for people arriving from the Pacific routes. As a result, over one million people from over 80 countries -including 175,000 Chinese- were processed during its 30 years of operations before parts of the Angel Island Immigration Station, including the main administration building, burned down in 1940.

Opened in 1910 in the decades following the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, Angel Island Immigration Station embodied a physical manifestation of America's aggressive immigration policies against the Chinese population arriving from China. In addition, the station’s presence signaled a momentous change in U.S. immigration policies that would ultimately become a national model for how immigration policies were to be drafted and implemented in the ensuing years, a practice which carries on today.

Though often nicknamed by historians as “the Ellis Island of the West,” Angel Island served an entirely different mission than its East Coast counterpart, particularly for Chinese immigrants, and was notorious for its brutality and injustice. Ellis Island processed 12 million immigrants

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between 1892 and 1954, and in general those who were approved stayed 2-5 hours to answer about a dozen or so basic questions. Conversely, many Chinese were subjected to grueling, detailed interrogations and detention that lasted for weeks, months and sometimes even years at the Angel Island Immigration Station. In addition, many were forced to repeatedly undergo demoralizing medical examinations and live confined inside crowded, slum-like barracks where individual mobility was greatly restricted and highly supervised. Poems in multiple languages, but most predominantly in Chinese, engraved on the Angel Island barrack walls testify to the hardship, heartbreak, anger and isolation that many immigrants endured during their detention at the Angel Island Immigration Station.

Remembering Angel Island will provide a bracing look into the hope and heartache of this seminal chapter of America's immigration history through historic photographs, a reproduction of a poem carved on the barracks at Angel Island, highlighted personal stories, related artifacts including original health inspection cards and coaching papers, and a multi-media station featuring a reenactment of an interrogation.

A full schedule of public programs designed to provide visitors with a more in-depth understanding and enjoyment of the exhibition, including panel discussions, book signings and film screenings, will be offered through May 2011. All the programs are free to the public except where otherwise noted.

Major funding for this exhibition comes from El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, Friends of the Chinese American Museum, and individual donors. For a full listing of *Remembering Angel Island* exhibition donors, please visit the CAM website at www.camla.org. Special thanks to the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, California State Parks, National Archives, and the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California.

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[High resolution digital images of the exhibit are available upon request]

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MEDIA PREVIEW DAY

CAM is hosting a special *Media Preview Day* on **Tuesday, July 13, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.** in anticipation of the *Remembering Angel Island* exhibition opening. Media will be treated to a private viewing of the exhibition before it opens to the public and will have access to CAM representatives for interviews. Light snacks and refreshments will be provided.

OPENING RECEPTION

A private reception for CAM members, donors, exhibit participants and media will be held on Thursday, July 15, 2010 at 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. at the Chinese American Museum. The evening will feature special guest speaker, United States District Court Judge, ***Honorable Dolly Gee***.

ABOUT THE CHINESE AMERICAN MUSEUM

The Chinese American Museum (CAM) is jointly developed and operated by the Friends of the Chinese American Museum (FCAM) and El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, a department of the City of Los Angeles. Located within the El Pueblo Plaza in downtown Los Angeles, CAM is housed in the last surviving structure of the City's original Chinatown. CAM's mission is to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of America's diverse heritage by researching, preserving, and sharing the history, rich cultural legacy, and continuing contributions of Chinese Americans. The Chinese American Museum is located at 425 North Los Angeles Street in El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, across from Union Station. Hours are 10 a.m.– 3 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday. Admissions are suggested donations of \$3 for adults and \$2 for seniors and students. Members are admitted free. For more information about the Museum, please visit our new website at www.camla.org or follow us on:

Facebook: search for "Chinese American Museum"

Flickr: http://www.flickr.com/photos/camla_org

Twitter: ChinAmerMuseum