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## PAINFUL PAST ON DISPLAY

### Chinese American Museum remembers Angel Island

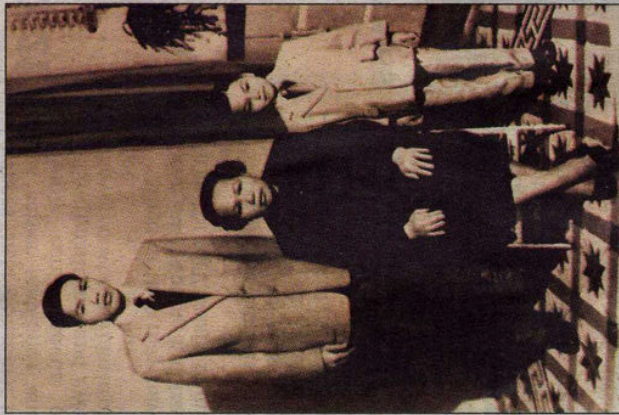
MARIA L. LA GANGA

The photograph that changed Charles Wong's life went on display Friday at the Chinese American Museum in Los Angeles. It is a small black-and-white portrait of a somber woman, a little boy in a new suit and a handsome youth on the cusp of manhood.

Wong found the family portrait — his family portrait — tucked in a suitcase, hidden in a closet, on the day his father, Gun Chown Wong, was buried. The woman in the photo was his mother, Jook Sue. The boy was Wong himself, 6 and scared. And the young man? He was the family secret.

In 1935, Gun Chown boarded the U.S. liner Coolidge and headed to Los Angeles via San Francisco, leaving his family behind in the Chinese village of Hoi-Seun. His first stop was Angel Island, the notorious immigration station in San Francisco Bay, which processed more than a million immigrants before closing in 1940.

By the time the Wong



KATIE FALKENBERG For The Times

**DISCOVERY:** When Charles Wong, right, found this photo of him, his brother Liang, 18, and their mother, Jook Sue, he revealed a family mystery.

family could afford to reunite, Angel Island was history. So Jook Sue took her sons to Hong Kong. That was where the portrait was taken, where she was interviewed repeatedly by immigration officials, where she was finally granted

permission to fly west. Charles was allowed to go with his mother. But Liang, 18, was denied entry. Forced to stay behind, he eventually jumped to his death from a five-story building. His family never spoke of him again.

Until Wong found the portrait, "I didn't know I had a brother. I had suppressed his memory," he recalled, as he wandered the Chinese American Museum, where workers were busy installing an exhibit

[See Museum, A48]