

THE CIVIL HISTORY

The Regional Newsletter of
The Friends of the National Archives and
The National Archives at Atlanta

May 2010

We Are America: Asian Pacific Americans in the U. S. South

In celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, the Friends of the National Archives Southeast Region sponsored an exciting program on May 1, 2010. In partnership with the National Archives and 25 APA community organization partners and archival institutions, the program celebrated and paid tribute to the contributions generations of Asian and Pacific Islanders have made to the U. S. South.

Special guests for the event were U. S. Congressman Anh Joseph Cao from Louisiana and U. S. Congressman Mike Honda from California.

Congressman Cao was elected to the United States Congress in 2008 as Louisiana's 2nd Congressional District Representative making him the first Vietnamese-American elected to the U. S. Congress. His life and career embody the remarkable journey of thousands of immigrants who eventually became Americans. He was born in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City), Vietnam. His father, an officer with the South Vietnamese Army, was imprisoned by the Communists. At the age of eight he escaped to America with two of his siblings.

Congressman Honda's life story is an example of how immigrants and long-term residents struggle to assimilate as well as overcome inequities and injustices. Born in California, he spent his early childhood with his family in an internment camp during World War II.



U. S. Congressmen Joseph Cao, Mike Honda, and program chair, Tricia Sung, along with symposium partners.

John Jung, Bill Greene, and Baoky Vu

Distinguished author Dr. John Jung and Bill Greene from the National Archives at San Francisco discussed records and techniques for using archival sources to document the immigration and history of Asian Americans. Dr. Jung is from Macon, Georgia, and his family was the only Chinese family in the city. He has detailed their experiences in *Southern Fried Rice: Life in a Chinese Laundry in the Deep South*. He also is the author of three other books related to the experience of the Chinese in the American South.

Bill Greene, our colleague at the National Archives at San Francisco, discussed the extensive holdings related to Asian Pacific Americans in that regional office.

Baoky Vu, an Atlanta resident for over thirty years, left Saigon just prior to the collapse of South Vietnam. He discussed the important contributions Asian Pacific American have made to the Southern region.

APA Legacy Awards

Jean Chen who initiated the U. S. Postal Service's annual Lunar New Year Stamp and Dr. Beheruz Sethna, the first Asian Indian president of an American university, both received APA Legacy Awards as Asian Pacific American leaders who have made their mark in the South and across the nation.





Major Exhibit at the National Archives Building, Washington, DC

It ended almost 150 years ago, but Americans still discuss, debate, and disagree about the Civil War.

"Discovering the Civil War," a new exhibit which opened on April 30 at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., takes a fresh look at the conflict through the records left by the participants themselves—letters, orders, maps, telegrams, photographs, and broadsides—that are preserved in the National Archives.

The exhibit invites visitors to consider and ask questions about the evidence found in the records, listen to a wide variety of voices from the Civil War era, and make up their own minds about the struggle that tore apart these United States.

Discovering the Civil War

View the Exhibit Website at <http://archives.gov/exhibits/civil-war/>

Upcoming Programs

June 23, 2010 12:00 - 1:00

Sailors, Ships, and the Sea: True Stories from the Maritime Records of the National Archives at Atlanta

July 31, 2010 9:30–2:30

FNAS Genealogy Summit—Digital Scrapbooking

Presenters: Linda Geiger and Gin Shaw, Heritage Makers

August 11, 2010 12:00–1:00

Internet Resources for Genealogists

September 18, 2010 Time to be announced

Afro American Historical and Genealogical Society

Speakers: Reggie Washington, NARA, Washington D.C. and Ancestry.com representative

Social Media! What's That?

National Archives Connects with the Public

Archivists spend most of their days looking backward—analyzing the New Deal or the Civil War or early maritime records. They delight in finding documents from long ago that interest, inspire, and intrigue them and in providing that information to researchers. That's what our work was all about; Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube were mysteries.

That is, until David Ferriero, the new Archivist of the United States (AOTUS: Collector in Chief), came to lead our agency. Mr. Ferriero spent many years as an MIT librarian so he knows quite a bit about technology. He has inspired all of us to "get with" the 21st century.

It's generally known that the Federal government moves deliberately, and the National Archives is no exception. Technology, however, moves fast, changing day by day. The Archivist feels that "in today's digital age, the National Archives and Records Administration must fulfill its mission not only in the research rooms, regional archives, and presidential libraries, but also in cyberspace. Through our website and creative use of social media tools, we can provide access to the records that document the actions of our government. This enables greater transparency, a crucial pillar of open government."

NARA staff are now using a variety of social media (or Web 2.0) tools and sites to collaborate and communicate in new ways. Public projects enrich our relationships with our researchers, customers, and stakeholders. We are listening and responding in real time. When our fans are engaged, they share our news and surprising treasures from our holdings with their social networks—people who may or may not already know about us and what we do.

Check out these social media sites:

www.flickr.com/photos/usnationalarchives - Includes over 700 Matthew Brady Civil War photographs and hundreds of other historic photographs and documents.

<http://www.youtube.com/USNationalArchive>—Includes four short videos on the 1940 Census and many videos on The Civil War.

See www.archives.gov/social-media for a complete list of all social media sites.

The Friends of the National Archives is now on Facebook!

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-the-National-Archives-Southeast-Region-FNAS/113827325316384>

The Manhattan Project and America's Secret City



I was the first grocer in Oak Ridge but I had a terrible time getting anything to sell. Had to open up the store before the construction men had even put the doors up. I started filling my shelves in 1943 and didn't manage to get them filled up until 1946. My biggest problem was getting food. This was a priority city during the war - but we still had a job getting supplies. When I asked the big shippers to send me food, they'd say, "We never heard of Oak Ridge, it can't be any priority city." For example a man tried to send me a carload of merchandise. He told me he'd ship it. Four weeks later it hadn't arrived - and I wrote and asked where it was. He wrote back and said nobody could tell him where Oak Ridge was. He didn't believe there was such a place.

That's right. It just didn't make any sense at all. I worked in the laundry at the Morsanto Chemical Company, and counted uniforms. I'll tell you exactly what I did. The uniforms were first washed, then ironed, all new buttons sewed on and passed to me. I'd hold the uniform up to a special instrument and if I heard a clicking noise - I'd throw it back to be done all over again. That's all I did - all day long.

Not many people know that the records related to the secret effort to develop the atom bomb are in the National Archives at Atlanta.

The Manhattan Engineer District was created by the government to meet the goal of producing an atomic weapon under the pressure of ongoing global war. Its central mission became known as the Manhattan Project. Under the direction of Brigadier General Leslie Groves of the Army Corps of Engineers, who recently had supervised the construction of the Pentagon, secret atomic energy communities were created almost overnight in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, at Los Alamos, New Mexico, and in Hanford, Washington, to house the workers and gigantic new machinery needed to produce the bomb. The weapon itself would be built at the Los Alamos laboratory under the direction of physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer.

The grocery store clerks pictured above worked in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, site of several uranium-235 extraction facilities.

“What’s going on there?”

The federal government bought thousands of acres of farmland in East Tennessee to form what became known as “America’s secret city.” Oak Ridge, Tennessee, became the fifth largest city in Tennessee, but no one was aware of it. It wasn’t on any map. Even the 75,000+ employees and their families were unaware of the purpose of the city or what their work was for.

The above images are from a 1947 script from a radio broadcast sponsored by Gulf Oil Corporation. The script includes live interviews with employees who lived and worked at Oak Ridge during the development of the atom bomb. One interview tells of the grocer in Oak Ridge who was unable to have merchandise delivered for his store. None of his suppliers could find the city to deliver the products.

The other image is a description of a young girl’s job in a laundry at Oak Ridge. All she did all day long was hold up newly laundered and ironed uniforms before a special instrument, listening for a clicking noise. If she heard it, she threw it back to be done all over again. She said “that’s all I did—all day long.”

WE'RE ON THE WEB!
WWW.FRIENDSNAS.ORG

Coming Events

In partnership with the
National Museum of Commercial Aviation, the
National Archives is proud to present
**Creating The World's
Busiest Airport:
Asa Candler, William B. Hartsfield,
and Maynard Jackson**

Opening June 28, 2010



Friends of the National Archives—Southeast Region
5780 Jonesboro Road
Morrow, GA 30260

George Jacobs, President.....706-867-1940

Linda Geiger, Vice President.....706-268-3311

Helen Lissimore, Secretary.....404-817-3436

Tricia Sung, Treasurer.....tricia808@gmail.com

James McSweeney, NARA.....770-968-2505
Regional Administrator, james.mcsweeney@nara.gov

Mary Evelyn Tomlin, NARA.....770-968-2555
Editor, *The Civil History*, mary.tomlin@nara.gov

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Southeast Region

5780 Jonesboro Road

Morrow, GA 30260