



*Finding a Path Forward*

**ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER  
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS THEME STUDY**

*Edited by Franklin Odo*





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## Essay 7



# Asian American Businesses, 1848 to 2015 Accommodation and Eclectic Innovation

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**A**t first glance, the challenge of generating a comprehensive overview of Asian American businesses, from the 1840s to the present, seems daunting.<sup>1</sup> First, because such businesses were typically small-scale before World War II, and the documentary record in terms of detailed accounts about such enterprises in the published literature ranges from non-existent to slim. In addition, since Asian immigrants and their descendants made their way into most regions of the United States early on, both in terms of ethnic enclaves but also as independent entrepreneurs, most of their names and endeavors have been long and deeply buried.<sup>2</sup> What is more, the sheer numbers are staggering. One authority noted that, even over a decade ago, there were on the order of 1.1 million registered businesses owned by Asian Americans, encompassing marginal to global concerns.<sup>3</sup> By definition, then, and from the beginning, no short survey

The interior of a Chinese laundry in Washington, D.C., located beneath a government charwoman's apartment. Photo by Gordon Parks, 1942; courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.





along the present lines can claim completeness. What is more, introducing some criteria for delimiting the subject is imperative in order to make a survey manageable. My emphasis here is on the mainland United States, on “small” businesses, significant innovations they have introduced, and on the study of such enterprises vis-à-vis a “preservation” agenda.<sup>4</sup> Beyond this, the conceptual framework I rely upon here assumes a global perspective on the ties between Asia and the U.S. In this context, sojourning/immigration from Asia has to be framed in terms of the impact of “the West upon the rest,” generally, and forced integration of Asian pre-industrial economic systems into the world system, specifically.

Concomitantly, as far as the term “innovation” is concerned, I do not mean “new configurations or applications of an idea, product, or strategy”—i.e., the kind of definition often found in a standard dictionary. Rather, Asian American small businesses have to be understood vis-à-vis the many overt barriers that historically limited new Asian immigrants in the USA, especially before the war. To wit, from the beginning, because of the Naturalization Act of 1790, immigrants from Asia were barred from access to naturalization. From that initial disempowering status, each group faced historical conditions related to racial projects in progress as they arrived: e.g., the Chinese in terms of westward expansion and the subsequent Age of Empire; the Japanese, Koreans, and South Asians in terms of racial exclusion combined with passage of state-based alien land laws throughout the West during the Progressive Era; the Filipinos at the cusp and then heart of the Great Depression; and so forth. In sum, institutional discrimination whether at the local, state, or national levels impeded Asians’ ability to compete on a level playing field, educationally or occupationally, let alone in terms of fair access to resources and opportunities. Thus, since the specific barriers that Asians faced in running small businesses before, and even to some extent after, federal Civil Rights legislation of the mid-1960s, are too complex to trace in each instance, throughout the cases that are described below, readers must “read in” a larger context of sustained and injurious racial projects that marginalized, if not excluded, populations of color, including Asians in the United States. And this is a theme I will return to again toward the end of this essay.

## THE CHINESE DIASPORA SETS THE STAGE

I propose that, while small numbers of Asians may have arrived in the United States earlier, including Filipinos who settled along America’s Gulf Coast, the arrival of Chinese in the west sets the precedent for understanding Asian immigrants and a plethora of forms of small business.<sup>5</sup>

Small businesses definitely accompanied the arrival of Chinese immigrants in the late 1840s, responding first to gold rushes in the American west, starting around Sacramento as of 1848, and then, a bit later, to the construction of the railway that knit Sacramento to the east coast and subsequently to north-to-south hubs such as Seattle and San Diego. While many Chinese initially came as laborers, there is solid evidence that they quickly attempted to earn a living in mining and agriculture as proprietors in their own right.<sup>6</sup> And this same penchant for ownership wasn’t limited to central California. Chinese in northeastern Oregon set up mining claims in the 1860s, both in Granite and Union Creek areas.<sup>7</sup> Besides gold and the railroads, Chinese engaged in and sold wage labor in canning, logging, and other extractive industries throughout the west and beyond. One report has it that, by the 1880s, there were already some 3,000 Chinese working in the canneries along the Columbia River in what was eventually to become the Territory of Alaska, which is not to say that Chinese were only relegated to selling their physical labor. Chinese “gardeners” reclaimed land as of the late 19th century and built vegetable and other gardens, some of which can still be seen



Japanese agricultural workers packing broccoli near Guadalupe, California. Photo by Dorothea Lange for the Farm Security Administration, March 1937. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

today (e.g., the Chinese gardens around Warren, Idaho). In San Francisco, in particular, Chinese also made entry into skilled trades, including the cigar, clothing, shoe and slipper, printing, and construction industries, although these kinds of occupations remained open to them for only a couple of decades.<sup>8</sup>

As thousands of Chinese laborers arrived (but no more than 120,000 by 1880) and dispersed throughout California and the west, early businesses sprang up which were directly related to their provisioning. Worthy of special consideration here is the role of the labor broker. Unlike the men who gave their youth, strength, and sometimes their lives in order to build the infrastructure of the west, the names of these labor brokers were often recorded in Asian language accounts. Often men who had a modicum of education, a broker's bilingual language skills enabled him to assess dominant society labor needs that required small-to-large numbers of men, even as they built networks on the docks and rooming houses in order to recruit new arrivals. By charging fees for their placement services, as well as by supplying goods-and-services that laborers might need once they were hired, brokers could make handsome profits by provisioning Asian workers with "basics" such as food stuffs and groceries, hardware and other goods, communication services (having to do with translation, correspondence, bureaucratic paperwork, etc.), and needs related to leisure and "entertainment," such as music and possibly news from back home. Incidentally, "leisure," for early Asian laborers, would be inclusive of activities that were and still are considered as "vice" by the dominant society: e.g., gambling, illegal narcotics, prostitution, and so forth. In sum, labor brokering became an early nexus for small business, on the one hand, because it entailed bringing immigrant Chinese laborers to a host of industries including mining, agriculture and farming, and wage labor pursuits related to domestic service, gardening, and similar occupations. On the other hand, by providing access to goods-and-services to such men, labor brokers could gain both wealth and power. Thus, along with merchants, labor brokers can be retrospectively indexed as markers of the early class stratification within the incipient Chinese American communities.

In any case, details aside, what remains certain is that agricultural pursuits were *key* to the livelihood of the

pre-war sojourners and immigrants from Asia. Even in terms of large urban ethnic community formations, such as Los Angeles's Little Tokyo, the economic foundation of this seemingly autonomous urban enclave was deeply and decidedly based on ties that ran out to, and were in fact based on, rural agricultural endeavors. Although these rural-urban business linkages are not as strong today as they once were, agriculture, or at least small-scale farms and farming, have remained an occupational choice for new Asian immigrants even up to the 2000s. An outstanding example would be that of the Hmong refugee populations in semi-rural areas, surrounding cities such as Fresno and Merced in the central valley of California. Reportedly, approximately half of the Hmong who headed to Fresno, for example, expressed in one survey the likelihood that they would wind up working in some area related to farming and agriculture.<sup>9</sup>

While the tiny Korean immigrant population on the U.S. mainland before the war engaged in agriculture, and few new Korean immigrants pursue this occupation now, there are still some modern day farmers from this ethnic background, including rice growers at the Yu Farm in Earlimart, California, and the Lee Jai Soo family-operated farm in Maxwell, California. Cha also reports present-day organic farms run by Koreans in states such as New Jersey and Florida.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from the Chinatowns and other "main street" business formations, certain kinds of Chinese-run and Chinese-staffed businesses were established with an eye toward servicing the needs of the dominant society.<sup>11</sup> These would include, first and foremost, service-oriented businesses such as restaurants—featuring Chinese or American cuisine, or both—and laundries. Grocery stores, Chinese art and curios shops, stores tied to the retail market in clothing are all on the record, as are larger, more sophisticated businesses that dealt with the wholesale/retail linkages in terms of vegetables, fish, flowers, and similar commodities.

Even banks and investment companies emerged by the early 20th century, either based largely on local capital and/or on capital raised between the points of origin of the Chinese immigrants and their points of destination in the United States. Two features of the economic practices of early Asian immigrants in Hawai'i and the U.S. mainland are worthy of note. Before formal banking institutions evolved in a number of the com-

munities, informal mutual aid networks were utilized to enable primitive capital accumulation. Formed in terms of a range of different bases, including common origins, shared religiosity, on different terms, and known by a range of linguistically-specific terms—*ko*, *tanomoshi*, *hui*, *gye*, *paluwagan*, and so forth—these rotating credit associations, as they are known in the historical and social science literature, provided ready access to smaller amounts of capital that could be used for start-up purposes, investments of various kinds in small business pursuits, and even as a stake in order to petition a wife from the home country, as sometimes financial requirements were mandatory in making such a request.

Similar informal mechanisms are employed even today, sometimes by much wealthier participants, including (or so I have been told by my students over the years) Vietnamese Americans who run jewelry businesses and can leverage hundreds of thousands of dollars in this fashion.<sup>12</sup> These practices were apparently so prevalent in the Korean newcomer's communities that the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the U.S. Internal Revenue Service initiated investigations in various congregations in order to determine whether capital raised via *gye* was in violation of IRS tax regulations.

A serious reason, then, for putting together formal financial institutions by/for compatriots had to do with structural barriers. Specifically, not having access to naturalization meant that Chinese and other Asian immigrants were very limited in terms of their ability to access capital via mainstream banks or savings and loan institutions. So quite simply put, they had to form their own specialized businesses in this regard.

If total exclusion toward the end of the 19th century

was the fate of the Chinese and if wage labor and small business at best were often the livelihood of most of these immigrants, I propose that the elements for a typology of Asian American small business, based in ethnic-specific agricultural endeavors, can be proposed on the basis of the above outline.

#### Four Classic Types of Asian American Small Business Formation and Innovation

In the remainder of this essay, I would like to illustrate how the use of a heuristic typology can facilitate the understanding of special contributions of Asian American small businesses and, at the same time, foster awareness of their innovative dimensions. The typology consists of four consolidated ways to view data about small businesses. These include elements as part of: (1) ethnic enclaves/communities; (2) regional business complexes; (3) sets of specialized economic niches; and (4) preeminent individuals who were innovators/magnates.

Again, historically-speaking, there have been so many small businesses that, while arbitrary, this typology lends itself to aspects of Asian Americans and small business that are unique or at least distinctive. At the same time, I propose that this typology also lends itself well to issues of preservation, which demand a selective set of criteria in their own right.

#### Ethnic Communities/Enclaves

If laborers, rooming houses/migrants' hotels, and labor brokers, together, lay at the foundation of Asian American business enterprise in the United States, the rise of more permanent ethnic enclaves or settlements was another development intimately linked to Asian



New Chinatown, Los Angeles. This part of Los Angeles was originally Little Italy and Old Chinatown was about a mile away. By the late 1930s the old Chinatown had either been demolished or burned, and concerted efforts to develop a New Chinatown had resulted in new or remodeled commercial and residential buildings. Buildings such as those pictured here are common in New Chinatown. Photo by Carol Highsmith, 2012; courtesy of the Library of Congress.



In Chinatown, San Francisco, California, a group of men congregates outside of a local business on August 28, 1901. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

ethnic small businesses. We can continue, first, with the Chinese case.

By the end of the fifth decade of the 19th century, large, permanent Chinatowns appeared in the various ports of entry, such as Los Angeles and San Francisco, as well as in what became known subsequently as the “International District” of Seattle. In point of fact, however, smaller Chinatown formations were established before the 20th century in many regions east of California, all the way to New York—especially where there were more than 250 people of Chinese descent living in a relatively circumscribed area.<sup>13</sup> Chinese established themselves in New York as early as the late 1840s, for example, and although smaller than its key “sister” communities on the west coast, it had a population of some 7,000 members by 1890 and a full complement of the kinds of businesses found in an ethnic community formation along these lines.<sup>14</sup> In the most developed Chinatowns on the two coasts, it was even said that one could literally go from “womb to tomb” and have every need met by compatriots who were also of Chinese

ancestry and who spoke the same Cantonese dialect. In addition, in the largest Chinatowns, remarkable structures of self-governance also evolved in these so-called bachelor societies, taking the form of a hierarchy of associations, fully willing and able to police the Chinese population, able to mediate disputes, and otherwise keep the dominant society’s legal, judicial, and penal institutions and personnel, including the local police, at bay.

Special note should be made here in regard to the small businesses set up by Filipino immigrants in the United States, some of which may have very early origins. In her monograph, *Filipinos in Louisiana*, Marina E. Espina describes the “Manila Village” near Lafitte, where some 300 Filipinos established a shrimp fishing industry sometime in the 1880s.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, some 100 Filipinos were said to have set up a settlement dedicated to fishing, known as St. Malo, close to the mouth of Lake Borgne in St. Bernard Parish.

Compared to what we know about early Chinese and Japanese small enterprise, relatively little has been documented about the Filipinos who began to come to the U.S. mainland in larger number during the 1920s. Perhaps this lacuna was exacerbated by scholars’ initial claims that Filipinos did not tend to engage in small business formation because of their peripatetic movement in pursuit of employment, an initial lack of capital, and because established Chinese and Japanese grocery store owners were able to meet new demands by adding Filipino goods to their extant stock.<sup>16</sup>

An exemplary piece of documentation that interested readers can consult is the case of the Philippine Islands Market, or P.I. Market (see the on-line account, available at <https://sites.google.com/site/centralcoasttroutesandroots/roots/pi-market>). Established in the town of Pismo Beach, California, in 1936 and incorporated in 1941, the P.I. Market grew to the extent that branch stores were also established in Salinas, Montalvo and Los Angeles. Typical of many similar grocery stores set up by Asian immigrants then and now, the P.I. Market sold Filipino goods and sundries, but it also served as a community gathering place and center. Oral history accounts describe how the pioneer Manongs



who wound up working at the Pismo Beach store or its branches came to be like family members to later generations of Filipinos who patronized the Market. There is little doubt that similar histories remain to be recorded throughout the west, mid-west, and the east, since Filipinos settled in all of these areas.<sup>17</sup> Yet this remains a relatively understudied phenomenon that deserves redress.

Another business formation that involves proximate businesses, but is less than a neighborhood, which also deserves further attention, has to do with Filipino business clusters that sprang up during the 1920s within or adjacent to established Chinese and Japanese American communities. Seattle's International District is a pertinent example of such formations, as was the immediate city block of Kearney Street in the heart of San Francisco's Chinatown.<sup>18</sup>

As successive groups of Asian immigrants arrived in the United States, whether from Japan, Korea, India, or the Philippines, a plethora of businesses evolved in the context of the ethnic-specific "enclaves" they typically set up, especially where there were ports of entry. That process has been replicated by almost every group of Asian immigrants both historically and in the present. The range of businesses they set up might be fairly limited: e.g., small hotels and rooming houses, restaurants, a barber shop/bath house, grocery and dry goods stores, bars, and possibly gaming establishments.<sup>19</sup> Other, larger formations could provide an extensive set of "womb to tomb" services if critical mass happened to be large enough. These would include multiple iterations of the above but also more specialized, sophisticated services including banks, newspapers, religious institutions, newspapers, theaters, clubs, and a host of formal professional, mutual interest, as well as politically-related organizations.

In larger community formations one might even expect to find businesses related to tourism, revolving around various levels of exotified ambience, cultural festivals, events such as Miss Chinatown, Miss Orient, etc., as well as clubs of various types from the prototypical Forbidden City, USA in San Francisco to nightclubs, bars, and other late-night joints. From early on, gambling, narcotics, prostitution, and gang-related pursuits including protection and extortion were also sources of "small business" income.

Today, this list would include gangs and mafia-like transnational crime organizations, bleeding into illicit transactions that have become "big business" such as the heroin and other drug trade, human smuggling, and traffic involving the servitude and even slavery of undocumented and thus very vulnerable immigrants.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, because new immigration from East, South, and Southeast Asian countries has continued apace, incipient Asian community formation along these broad lines continues up to today. Smaller than its older sister in Los Angeles, New York's Koreatown is home to more than 30 percent of that city's metropolitan Korean population. Since the 1980s, Korean Americans have also established ethnic enclaves in suburban settings in New York and New Jersey as well. In the Korean business areas in Fort Lee and Palisades Park, alone, there are reportedly more than 250 KA stores that serve compatriots, whether they are living in more concentrated or more dispersed neighborhoods in the immediate area.<sup>21</sup>

Another example, this time involving Southeast Asians, has to do with the Cambodian American enclave reported in Lowell, Massachusetts.<sup>22</sup> In that locale, where critical mass has been well established, Das reports that the local Cambodian American Business League lists a solid number of restaurants, salons, jewelry, insurance, real estate, electronics stores, and travel agencies, with food-related services playing a special role as a kind of "start-up" business.<sup>23</sup> The Cambodian community formation sufficiently large and visible enough now that Das reports plans are currently in the works to cultivate the locale in terms of an ethnic "attraction" that will draw tourist dollars.

A related community formation has been reported for the incipient Lao American ethnic economy reported in a number of locales across the United States, specifically in terms of ethnic business settings that feature a "local Lao ethnic market".<sup>24</sup> The major feature of the latter has to do with the high level of informal labor that is deployed in order to generate viable profit margins. In part, a consequence of the language-specific preferences of proprietors and customers, as well as the culturally-specific nature of Lao cuisine, these "local ethnic markets" have not been able to attract non-Lao customers, so they remain somewhat marginalized. Other informal characteristics of Lao American businesses along these

lines have to do with flexibility and low profit margins, as they frequently engage Lao women as well as a range of immediate and extended family members, including the elderly, and may allow bartering or exchange as a medium of payment in place of cash.

In sum, even as there is a growing sector of well-educated Lao American professionals, the informal sector practices are an essential means of economic survival for these relatively recent immigrants. Laotian American “ethnic markets” it will be noted, resonate historically with the long tradition of restaurants and grocery stores set up by Chinese immigrants from the 1850s and onward. Thus a related point about small Asian American businesses, then and now, is that even in the 2000s the reasons for their formation, at least inside of the ethnic communities, are similar to those established in the distant past.

In many of the larger enclaves, one is likely to be able to identify print newspapers in Asian languages. These businesses did not necessarily last very long, but local histories report a surprising number of pre-war publications in the larger communities such as the *China Times* (est. 1921), *New Korea*, *Shin Sekai*, and various Filipino papers and magazines having to do with the Philippines, but also having to do with Filipino workers’ rights and unionization in the United States.<sup>25</sup>

As previously mentioned, banks were established early on, if only because Asian immigrants before and immediately after the war did not have access to mainstream financial institutions. The Japanese American Financial Company was set up by the first generation Japanese *Issei* in 1899, and the Bank of Canton, which involved local as well as transnational capital, was one of the early banks set up on behalf of the Chinese American community.<sup>26</sup> Although few of the pre-war banking establishments survived the war and extended into the 1950s and 1960s, the new influx of immigrants from Asia after 1965 created a whole new market for larger financial institutions. As of 2007, two of the largest Chinese American banks were the East West Bank in Los Angeles and the United Commercial Bank in San Francisco, each having total assets of millions of dollars.<sup>27</sup> These post-war banks have roots in the 1960s and 1970s when Chinese Americans still suffered from discrimination such that getting their financial needs met by mainstream banks was not really possible.

Another notable example has to do with financial institutions set up by post-war Indian Americans. In 1986, the First Indo-American Bank was established in the San Francisco Bay Area and was chartered specifically in order to provide loans and capital to the Indian American community. When the bank was eventually sold in 2001, its assets were reportedly worth over \$104 million dollars. And although there are no comprehensive lists of similar institutions today, one scholar estimates that as of 2009, there were at least 43 Asian American banks in the United States, serving many of the ethnic/national populations with Asian roots, headquartered principally in California.<sup>28</sup>

Regarding schools as a specialized kind of business, again responding to needs that could not be met by the dominant society’s institutions, even in a population that was heavily skewed toward single males before the war, Chinese immigrants set up a community school in San Francisco as early as 1886. From 1912 to 1945, similar institutions were inaugurated in the Territory of Hawai‘i, New York, Chicago, Washington D.C., and New Orleans. Interestingly enough, more than half a century later, educational aspirations remain a key concern for new Chinese immigrants, even though, throughout the 2000s, there have been published reports noting that (1) Asian American students need to score higher on standardized tests in order to be admitted into America’s elite colleges; (2) speaking Chinese is not necessarily valued a “breadth” skill or ability; and (3) a baccalaureate degree is no longer a sure ticket to a well-paying, secure, professional career.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, in 2005, it was estimated that there were some 100,000 students in the United States who were studying in extra-curricular community-based language programs.<sup>30</sup>

### **Regional Economic Complexes**

The idea of applying criteria involving what I call a “territorial regional complex” is that, whether serving the needs of the ethnic community or members of the dominant society, Asian American businesses can be usefully conceptualized as being linked in terms of a specific region. The prototype example of this comes from the seminal research of the historian Sandy Lydon in regard to the arrival, the tribulations, the contributions, and the eventual fate of Chinese immigrants to the Monterey Bay region of central California.

Shrouded in untamed frontiers, where solid records of pioneers are often difficult to come by, we still know that early Asians in the Americas brought knowledge, tools, skills, and their energy to their new homes. Lydon's remarkable study of the history of Chinese in California's Monterey Bay area is a landmark illustration of pioneering firsts. According to Lydon's account, some Chinese actually came into this relatively unsettled region in full family units, having sailed in their junks directly from Canton to California.

Otherwise, beginning like many of their compatriots as wage laborers, the Chinese who settled in Monterey were able to recognize, appreciate, and "mine" the largely untapped resources of the bay. Lydon's text and presentation of amazing historical photographs document how a wide range of species in the regional biosphere—including fish, mammals, and fauna—were harvested and sold. Chinese, for example, recognized sea urchin as a very marketable delicacy, which, like certain kinds of kelp and seaweed, could be dried and marketed. They also imported tools and techniques having to do with squid fishing from China and deployed an impressive concatenation of boats, grills, nets, and charcoal fire grids on top of long poles in order to lure the bay's squid to the surface at night where they could be easily scooped with large nets.

Some schemes Chinese devised to enrich themselves were brilliant. According to Lydon, Chinese brined and barreled some of their catch, the better supposedly to ship it back to China. While certainly the catch had some value, salt could be re-rendered from the brine itself and, because of Imperial monopolies and taxes, would actually be worth more than anything that had been caught and shipped! In this same innovative spirit, the Chinese identified and nurtured a new set of fisheries and harvests that had been largely untouched before their arrival.

As they had done in the bay, Chinese were able to recognize riches that were in the local environment, plainly out in the open, but that no one was utilizing. One gentleman, who earned the sobriquet of "Mustard Jim," made his fortune harvesting wild mustard seeds, for which he realized there was a lucrative overseas market. "Mustard Jim," who was not initially a land owner in the area, got access by promising to kill the local vermin plaguing the fields and, in return, simply asked

for the landowner's leave to harvest the seeds of the wild mustard. Apparently the owners of the fields where he labored had no idea why "Mustard Jim" asked to be paid in this fashion and were happy to have him deal, too, with what they must have considered "a weed."

Concomitantly, in the area of agriculture, Chinese recognized that what appeared to be swampy, unused, and unusable acreage was actually quite fertile if it could first be drained. Drain they did, building ditches and levees, converting swamps into rich productive soil. Subsequently, when they became more established, Chinese worked specialty crops such as various fruits and berries, and eventually they started impressive businesses to dry and package harvests such as apples. Thus, agricultural labor, land reclamation, and innovations in farming tools, techniques, crops, and species all occurred in a setting where Chinese also contributed labor to mining and dangerous railroad work, as they did in so many parts of the west. In sum, Lydon's use of the metaphor of "Chinese gold" is a wonderful way to capture the interaction of these pioneer immigrants with the bountiful resources of Monterey's Bay area. While everyone is familiar with the Chinese role in the Gold Rush of 1848/49, Lydon's ability to expand the meaning of this clichéd phrase reminds us that precisely because of their cultural knowledge, the Chinese were able to see opportunity in local flora and fauna that were merely part of the region's vast "wilderness" to other early Californians.

A slightly different manifestation of the regional economic complex can be seen in terms of the Japanese American experience in Los Angeles and Southern California. The historian John Modell provided a useful analytic tool in terms of his depiction of the regional networks that linked downtown Los Angeles to the agricultural hinterlands north and south of the city proper.<sup>31</sup> Little Tokyo was the central node of these networks, as capital, power (to the extent that first-generation Japanese Americans held influence and power), and resources of all kinds were concentrated there. Farmers from the hinterlands surrounding the city could get basic credit advanced, as well as the seeds, tools, and other goods that they needed to grow their crops. Once grown and harvested, farmers could individually or collectively bring their product to LA's central produce market where it would be purchased by Nikkei wholesalers. The



Japanese Americans in San Juan Bautista, California, clean their cemetery before evacuation. Photo by Russell Lee; courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

wholesalers would then broker the fruits and vegetables to various Japanese American retailers, from mom-and-pop grocery stores, to restaurants and other businesses. Modell's key finding was that this vertical niche—literally, an interlinked chain of networks, all related to agriculture, spanned the farms, the LA produce market wholesalers, and the various retailers throughout the region—involved Nikkei partners, with Issei and Nisei working in every one. In this fashion, at least in terms of certain crops including table vegetables and berries, the Issei and the Nisei in and around Los Angeles were able to mitigate the effects of racialized discrimination and thus subordination vis-à-vis the larger economy.

A microcosmic case study of this same overall phenomenon is captured in Gary Kawaguchi's fascinating study of the evolution and dynamics of the California Flower Market complex.<sup>32</sup> What is very notable about the latter is that while the first- and second-generation Nikkei flower growers in the San Francisco Bay Area certainly constructed and drew from their own specialized vertical niche, the California Flower Market itself was decidedly a large multi-cultural business operation that entailed a remarkable interface among Japanese, Chinese, and Euro-American ethnic communities. It makes total sense that certain businesses would lend themselves to inter-ethnic relations of various kinds, and hopefully future scholars can attend to this possibility more assiduously, keeping in mind Kawaguchi's case study.

In terms of the situation for Southeast Asians, who generally formed ethnic communities with visible business sectors after the immigration reforms of the mid-1960s, Filipino Americans are a notable exception. One case study that has received increasing attention over the past decade is a residential/business area known as "Little Manila" in Los Angeles, being a visible and notable Filipino American neighborhood between the 1920s through the 1940s. Originally proximate to Little Tokyo, between San Pedro and Figueroa Streets on the east-west axis and Sixth Street and Sunset Boulevard on the southern and northern boundaries, respectively, this Little Manila was home to a dozen restaurants, half a dozen barbershops, pool halls, cafes, employment agencies, at least one photo studio, a newspaper, and various small businesses.<sup>33</sup> As one account has it "this community...became the hub where Filipinos congregated, lived, socialized, organized, and networked among their compatriots to find companionship, fellowship, and work." Although this formation shouldn't be conflated with what is now known as "Historical Filipinotown," in Los Angeles, similarities are also apparent between these two neighborhoods as well as sites such as "Manilatown," in San Francisco, and corollary "Little Manilas" found in a number of places in urban locales. In the hinterlands, the classic example is Stockton, California's, "Little Manila," which has roots going back to the early 20th century and was reputedly the largest Filipino American community in the United States.<sup>34</sup>

In the post-1965 period, one of the impressive, visible, ethnic community formations for Filipinos has to do with Daly City, located just south of San Francisco proper. In his comprehensive study of the "Filipino Nation" there, author Benito M. Vergara, Jr., identifies St. Francis Square as "the closest thing to a Pinoy commercial enclave." Centered by restaurants featuring extensive menus of traditional cuisine, Vergara highlights "Gerry's," as typical of the businesses in Daly City that revolve around transnational ties between the United States and the Philippines. Proximate to the Square are other well-known operations including the Philippine Grocery and the Serramonte Mall. At the time of this writing, the Serramonte Mall is slated for renovation that will eventually transform part of the site into a Daly City Filipino community center.<sup>35</sup>



### Businesses and the “Magnate” Phenomenon

One of the popular aspects of the history of Asian small businesses, in the eyes of the larger public, has to do with Asian immigrant pioneers who went from “rags-to-riches.” Their stories appear to resonate with a Horatio Alger-style mythology—a mythology that was and is held by many Asians who were and who are lured by images of America as the “Gold Mountain,” rife with possibilities for fulfilling the American dream of prosperity. Unlike the nameless Asian wage laborers, the names and achievements of some of these pioneers are on the record, and many are still remembered as having been “kings” of one enterprise or another. Brief consideration of a few of these magnates will illustrate the point.

Some Chinese entrepreneurs started modest businesses but then were able to take their commerce to another level. Many of the Chinese residents in and around the small “China Alley” in Hanford, California, for example, served the local Euro-American residents, but early in the 20th century, Hanford boasted a number

of men who were able to specialize in Chinese herbal medicine. The historian Him Mark Lai recounts the success of one, Dr. L.T. Sue, whose cures were so renown that he is reported to have had as many as one hundred patients seeking treatment a day.<sup>36</sup> At around the same time, a laborer, Wah Long Hum, came to the United States in 1878 from Guangdong, China, worked as a manual laborer, and eventually wound up in Butte, Montana. By 1910, he had established a store in Butte’s “China Alley,” and over time he became one of the richest and largest landowners in the area.<sup>37</sup> Wah Long, by the way, is also known as the father of Professor Rose Hum Lee. Dr. Lee, born in Butte, became a prominent academic, and was the first Chinese American woman to earn M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Sociology.

Other entrepreneurs parlayed mundane enterprises into highly successful businesses. The Wo Kee general goods store, established in Manhattan on Mott Street, would be an early prototype. In 1921, Lee Gim opened the Chung Sun Grocery Store in Colusa, California, which—as a large and well-stocked business—became a model for later iterations of the large Chinese American supermarket.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Joe Shoong, who was born in 1879 and raised in San Francisco, started a modest women’s clothes shop in 1903. Slightly over twenty years later, Shoong consolidated over forty stores that he owned in California, Utah, Nevada, Washington, and Hawai‘i into the National Dollar Stores, Limited, worth approximately \$1 million by 1928.<sup>39</sup>

Today’s parallels with the Wo Kee store can be identified in terms of businesses such as the “99 Ranch Markets,” which are found all over California as well as in larger cities, such as Seattle, Phoenix, Las Vegas, and Honolulu. These are owned both by the parent corporation as well as by franchisers.

Well-known entrepreneurs from Japan who logged outstanding business achievements include Harry Sotaro Kawabe, who started in the laundry business in Alaska and made a fortune by initiating a range of enterprises. Similarly, Keisaburo Koga, rose from farm laborer to become the “rice king” of his region.<sup>40</sup> Kyutaro Abiko is yet another well-known community leader. Abiko purchased two newspapers in 1899 and fused them into the successful *Nichibei Shimbun*. Among other accomplishments, Abiko went on to establish a unique Japanese Christian agricultural community,



A Chinese restaurant above a food mart on Race Street in Philadelphia. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

offering a religious and somewhat utopian vision of how the Issei immigrants might adapt in and contribute to the United States.

Korean immigrants were another group able to parlay success with farming into large-scale economic concerns. One outstanding example is the Kim Brothers Company based in Reedley, California. This family enterprise started in 1921:

... as a small wholesale business dealing with fruit and nursery products, and expanded into orchards, fruit packing houses, and nurseries. In addition, the company began to develop new varieties of fruit trees, working mainly with nectarines and peaches.<sup>41</sup>

When the business was finally sold in 1962, upon the retirement of the brothers Charles and Harry Kim, it was reportedly worth almost \$1.5 million.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in the early 1920s, Si-dae Hahn set up Hanka Enterprise Company in Delano, California. Over time, Hahn was able to purchase agricultural land in the area and eventually ran his farming operation on 400 acres, employing many Korean workers.<sup>43</sup>

Although there were far fewer immigrants from India, they too made their mark in agriculture. Jawala Singh arrived in the United States in 1905 and started a joint farming venture with a Sikh compatriot, first leasing and then purchasing land. Relatively quickly Singh made a fortune and earned the sobriquet of “Potato King.” Singh was very active in politics as well, becoming an early supporter of the India independence movement, in the form of the Bay Area-based Ghadar Party.<sup>44</sup>

Whole ethnic agricultural enclaves sprang up during the early 1900s in California. One fascinating example has to do with Sikh farmers who settled in south-central Imperial County, east of San Diego and proximate to the Mexican border. According to extensive research by the anthropologist Karen Leonard, Sikh men scrimped and saved to purchase agricultural land in Imperial and then built thriving farms over the years. A number of these men wound up marrying women of Mexican descent, and these couples started an early bi-racial community.<sup>45</sup>

Another outstanding example of a South Asian specialized niche evolved in San Francisco in the 1950s. A remarkable group of compatriots, often with the same

surname, Patel, began to purchase small hotels in the “downtown” district.<sup>46</sup> Over the next 30 years, not only did the Patels build a formidable business specialty in small hotels there, but South Asians generally made up an impressive percentage of small hotel/motel operations in California and in the United States as a whole. By the late 1990s, one estimate conjectured that Indian Americans might own as much as 65 percent of the budget hotels and perhaps as much as 40 percent of all hotels and motels, nationwide.<sup>47</sup>

Although the tradition in terms of Asian American small business concentration in specialized niches is no longer connected to the community’s agricultural foundations, specialized niches continue into the present era. In the post-1965 setting, some specialized niches evolved which were very much part of new transnational linkages between new Asian immigrants and networks that tied them to businesses and capital in Asian countries of origin. An excellent example was well-documented by the sociologist Illsoo Kim, who showed how the preponderance of Korean new immigrant businessmen selling “human-hair” wigs in New York and on the eastern seaboard was a matter of their direct linkages to the developed and sophisticated wig industry back in South Korea.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, some second- and third-generation Patels have been able to draw from family businesses to launch bigger, more ambitious financial projects which entail development and/or banking and transnational investment concerns that operate on much larger scales than otherwise possible.

Finally, it is amazing to note how a few Asian Americans have been able to amass fortunes at relatively young ages via successful startups in the tech industry. If one Googles “Filipino American millionaires,” for example, two names that appear toward the top of that list in 2016 are Garrett Gee, billed as a “Fil-Am millionaire,” and Bobby Murphy, a 20-something mixed-race billionaire who made his fortune via “Snapchat.”

For the most part, however, Asian American business niches are typically small scale, somewhat marginal, low-capital enterprises that rely on some amount of sweat-equity in order to keep afloat. Oft cited examples include Korean immigrant-owned grocery or liquor stores, Vietnamese or Koreans working in nail salons, Pakistani and Bengladeshi Americans working taxi franchises, and Cambodians owning and running donut

shops in Southern California. What is deceptive here in this day-and-age has to do with level of concentration within a particular niche. To give an idea of this phenomenon, research conducted by reporters at the *San Jose Mercury News* estimated that, as of 2005, Cambodian Americans owned approximately 90 percent of the 5,000 independently-owned donut stores in California, and, of these, some 1,800 were located in the greater Los Angeles area.<sup>49</sup> Thus, although the scale and earning of individual businesses might be small, having a commanding share in a large industry can sometimes serve as a vehicle to political empowerment, as the case of the Patel hotel owners in San Francisco has demonstrated.

### **Analytic Frame for Preservation**

Conceptually and heuristically, it is now possible to point out how and why typological devices like the ethnic enclave, “regional economic complex,” and specialized niches capture both the distinctive and the innovative contributions of Asian American small businesses. Note, to begin with, that if one were to target “small, innovative, business” as a focus, the definition lends itself to imagining specific and individual companies in their own right. This would encourage a particularistic, piecemeal approach. Nor does it seem worthwhile to try to identify “firsts” or even “first, path-breaking” examples, as the historical record is too murky to sustain distinctions along these lines with any level of empirical certainty. Finally, to highlight so-called outstanding entrepreneurs and their success stories, while heart-warming, would be quite deceptive.<sup>50</sup>

If we take Chinatown, or the Chinese economic strategies that evolved in a region like California’s Monterey Bay, we need to begin analysis from a totally different framework that is fully appropriate to the cultural, social, and political constraints that framed the early Chinese experience in the California state context and the context of the United States in general. Such a framework has to be predicated on the fact that Chinese had no status and no rights, at least none that extended to persons who were by definition “ineligible to U.S. citizenship.” (This status lasted until at least World War II for Chinese immigrants, and Japanese and Koreans, among others, had to wait until 1952.) Starting from there, Chinese were denied most ordinary avenues to pursue an education, skills, or jobs that would allow

them to compete on an equal basis, and so on. Suffice it to say, then, that a range of businesses in terms of an ethnic enclave, across a regional area, or vis-à-vis specialized niches, provides a more accurate and thus more realistic, picture of how racialization and the economic constraints of the day set limits on Chinese and later on the other Asian immigrants who followed them, before further Asian immigration was barred in 1924. To be sure, oppression is only one side of the context: Chinese actively responded to barriers and constraints, with energy, creativity, and resistance. Their collective efforts help make up the foundation of Chinese and Asian Americans’ contributions to the economy of this country’s cities, hinterlands, regions, states, and the nation as a whole. And I propose that the same could be said for every one of the Asian immigrant groups that followed, well into the 1960s.

On April 21, 2014, I participated in a National Park Service “webinar” having to do with NPS programs: specifically how preservation projects were being carried out in the new millennium. Not having had a great deal of exposure to the National Historic Sites Act, or the current attempts to be more inclusive of racial/ethnic minorities, their histories, and their physical sites of great importance, it was exciting to hear about how the National Register of Historic Places is being expanded and how the number of National Historic Landmarks continues to grow apace.

At the same time, my survey has compelled me to wonder if criteria such as those identified and deployed by, say, the National Historic Landmarks program suffices for preservation objectives vis-à-vis small Asian American businesses.<sup>51</sup> One key issue has to do with a marked “traditional” orientation in terms of identifying specific individuals, buildings, sites, etc. for the purposes of preservation. Specifically, while an object-oriented bias is understandable if only because it lends itself to the immediate tasks of historic presentation, it tends to disguise a pertinent characteristic of Asian American small businesses, then and now; namely, that such businesses are often most properly framed: (1) vis-à-vis familial, community, and regionally-based networks and (2) vis-à-vis structural dimensions of racialization, overt and covert, that have and that may continue to constrain equal economic access and opportunity. Thus, “preservation” in terms of this particular topic appears

to demand units of analysis that are considerably larger than the stories of pioneering individuals, magnates of one kind or another, or “success stories” having to do with individual enterprises.

What, then, to highlight? First, I propose that the National Park Service look for a range of settings where territorial regional complexes have been evident. Without having the room to go into this in more detail here, it strikes me that these are well suited to understanding the evolution of Asian American businesses in areas such as the San Joaquin Delta, south of the California state capital. Looking at the relationship between Chinese and Japanese enclaves that emerged in towns in the San Joaquin Delta region, such as Locke, Isleton, and Walnut Grove, and how they were tied to Sacramento’s and San Francisco’s Chinatown and Japantown might offer a different approach to both historic preservation and to how Asian American business complexes might best be handled in order to serve preservation and educational goals. And although their preservation campaign was initiated after substantive demolition of historic buildings had already taken place, Stockton’s “Little Manila Foundation” is actively trying to ear-mark and preserve what is left of that once-vibrant Filipino American community site (See <http://www.littlemanila.org/>). Without citing additional examples (and there are others), my proposition here is simply that these practices evolved in a wider range of times and settings than is often realized. This makes sense, even in terms of perspectives such as “rational action theory,” and moreover, sites along these lines illustrate an Asian American response to racialized economic constraints if not oppression.

Second, the National Park Service can seek intersections between Asian American small businesses, political organizing, and the quest for citizenship and rights. This would also keep us away from a simplistic “model minority” view of America and Americans.

To sketch one example: a significant characteristic of the South Asian entrepreneurs in the small hotel/motel industry is that they have been willing and able to organize themselves in order to exercise political clout. This appeared, distinctively, in the defense of the industry in San Francisco, when attacks were launched by the *San Francisco Chronicle* against Indian American hotel owners who were the mainstay of an innovative program to shelter the city’s homeless. Concomitantly,

in an effort to fight against unfair insurance policies that existed nationwide, the Asian American Hotels Owners Association was founded in 1989 in Atlanta. With a reported membership in 2006 of 8,000 entrepreneurs, the AAHOA has continued to advocate for hotel owners’ rights. Similar cases can be identified having to do with Vietnamese fishermen in California and Texas and taxi cab drivers in New York, such that each group has organized in order to more effectively fight for their rights.

Finally, it is perhaps useful to end with a caveat about not simply looking at Asian entrepreneurs in the United States as a success story, thereby reinforcing the model minority stereotypes that laud Asians as a group that pulls itself up by its own bootstraps. While some entrepreneurs might relish such a characterization, easy purchase of membership in the “Horatio Alger of the Month Club” can elide serious questions related to the sacrifices made and costs exacted.

To wit: a small business might well succeed, financially speaking, but what have husbands, wives, and children, and the networks that sustain them, had to give up in order to earn a small profit margin? What of the domestic conflicts that may be engendered by parents and/or community networks that praise corporate solidarity over the individuation and needs of wives or children in a small business context? This would not be easy to determine, but perhaps such questions enable us to remember that Asians in America were often forced—one way or another—into small businesses in order to survive racialization in a country that has not often been accepting or fair to immigrants or U.S. citizens of color. And although the courage and the spirit of perseverance stand out in minority business history, surely entrepreneurial ventures on the part of Asians in America deserve to be considered in larger terms that encompass “costs” as well as “benefits” because they were, after all, a means of making a dignified living, building family and community, and contributing to the larger society—in sum, a set of prerogatives that had to be fought for and thus are a part of the quest for equality and justice sought by people of color in these United States.

## Endnotes

1 I would like to thank Professor Franklin Odo and his colleagues at the National Park Service for inviting me to write this essay. An earlier draft also benefitted from the suggestion of two anonymous reviewers.



2 Occasionally, research surfaces on esoteric (and eccentric?) Asian pioneers in the United States who ventured off the beaten track and logged intriguing professional accomplishments. Japanese immigrant Frank Sakae Matsura, who from 1903 to 1913 opened his own studio and served as a photographer in and around Condon, WA, Okanogan County. Although he passed away at only thirty-nine, many of Matsura's photographs of Euro-Americans, American Indian locals, and elite families, were preserved (Roe 1981). Reputed to be from an upper-class background in Japan, Matsura apparently eschewed the company of Issei compatriots.

Another intriguing case has to do with pre-war bands and orchestras of Filipinos, which were in effect early small businesses in terms of music and entertainment. For example, "The Manila Serenaders," made up of Filipino musicians, fielded an eighteen-person orchestra that toured the west, mid-west, and the south during the 1930s (Brown 2010).

3 Min Zhou, "Self-Employment," *Asian Americans: An Encyclopedia of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political History*, Vol. 3, edited by Xiaojian Zhao and Edward J.W. Park (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2014), 985-988.

4 A definition advanced by the Small Business Association is useful in terms of framing what constitutes such an enterprise. According to the SBA, a "small business concern" is one that is: "...independently owned and operated, not dominant in the field of operation in which it is bidding" (size standards, 13 CFR Pat. 131; FAR M. 122). Concomitantly, a "minority business operation" is one that is at least fifty-one percent owned, operated, or controlled on a daily basis by one or more U.S. citizens of African, Asian, Latino, or Native/Alaskan ancestry. Although, clearly, the utilization of definitions along these lines, whether projected back in history or not, would entail excluding interesting cases which arguably are "Asian American small businesses," delimitation of some kind is necessary as everything simply cannot be covered here.

A commentary on methodology is also appropriate from the start. The approach I've developed here is tripartite. First, I have made free use of a number of encyclopedias about the Asian American experience, mainly because they are recently published, they encompass a wide range of the available literature, and details of ethnic-specific business practices are duly noted therein. Second, I have chosen to deploy a set of ideal types to organize this overview because so many of the entrepreneurial pursuits of persons and families of Asian descent are similar in focus, then and now. Third, I have examined the published literature with an eye to best preserving the history of Asian Americans and innovation in small business, both in terms of the selection of establishments, but also in terms of how the latter might be best contextualized, imaginatively and productively.

5 Alex Saxton's book, *The Indispensable Enemy*, is the best of many that identify the early Chinese experience as a "fore-runner" for subsequent Asian American economic pur-

suits (Saxton 1971). Saxton and others also highlight how significant mainstream organized labor was in keeping Asians out of skilled manufacturing jobs, and also getting Asians barred from free immigration to the United States.

6 Along with Saxton, highly original, and now classic, studies of Chinese contributions to the economy of the hinterlands of California are available in two extensively-researched books by the historians Sandy Lydon (1985), and Sucheng Chan (1989).

7 Priscilla Wegars, *Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese* (Amityville, NY: Baywood, 1993).

8 Ronald T. Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1979).

9 Mai Na M. Lee, "Hmong of Minnesota and California," *Asian Americans: An Encyclopedia of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political History*, Vol. 2, edited by Xiaojian Zhao and Edward J.W. Park (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2014), 509.

10 Marn J. Cha, "Korean American Farmers in the United States," *Asian Americans: An Encyclopedia of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political History*, Vol. 2, edited by Xiaojian Zhao and Edward J.W. Park (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2014)

11 Him Mark Lai, "China Alley, Hanford," *East West: Chinese American Journal* (September 12, 1973): 7.

12 Ivan Light, et al., "Korean Rotating Credit Associations in Los Angeles," *Amerasia Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1990), 35-54.

13 Sandra K. Lee and Douglas A. Lee, *The Lee Family of New York Chinatown Since 1888*, a companion journal to the MOCA Exhibition, Fall, 2013 (2013).

14 Peter Kwong and Dusanka Miscevic, *Chinese America: The Untold Story of One of America's Oldest New Communities* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2005).

15 Marina E. Espina, *Filipinos in Louisiana* (New Orleans, LA: A. F. Laborde, 1988).

16 Elena S. H. Yu, "Filipino Migration and Community Organizations in the United States," *California Sociologist*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer 1980), 76-102.

17 Fred Cordova, *Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans* (Seattle, WA: Demonstration Project for Asian Americans, 1983).

18 Doug Chin, *Seattle's International District: The Making of a Pan-Asian American Community* (Seattle, WA: International Examiner Press, 2001); Dorothy B. 2003, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1947* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); Estella Habal, *San Francisco's International Hotel* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008).

19 *Sento at Fifth and Main* provides an excellent example the buried pasts of Asian small businesses in the hinterlands, and the specific challenges of finding and preserving buildings related to that history (Dubrow and Graves 2004).

20 Kwong and Miscevic, *Chinese America: The Untold Story of One of America's Oldest New Communities*.

21 Sookhee Oh, "Koreatown," *Asian Americans: An*

- Encyclopedia of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political History*, Vol. 2, edited by Xiaojian Zhao and Edward J.W. Park (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2014), 719-724.
- 22 Mitra Das, *Between Two Cultures: The Case of Cambodian Women in America* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2007).
- 23 Mitra Das, "Cambodian Community in Lowell, Massachusetts," *Asian Americans: An Encyclopedia of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political History*, Vol. 2, edited by Xiaojian Zhao and Edward J.W. Park (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2014), 171.
- 24 Malaphone Phommasa and Celestine Detvongsa, "Lao American Ethnic Economy," *Asian Americans: An Encyclopedia of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political History*, Vol. 2, edited by Xiaojian Zhao and Edward J.W. Park (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2014), 745.
- 25 *Dictionary of Asian American History*, edited by Hyung-Chan Kim (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1986), 429.
- 26 Wei Li, "Asian Ethnic Banks," *Asian Americans: An Encyclopedia of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political History*, Vol. 1, edited by Xiaojian Zhao and Edward J.W. Park (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2014), 103-108.
- 27 Wei Li, "Banks, Chinese American," *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, edited by Huping Ling and Allan Austin (Armonk, NY: Sharpe Reference, 2010), 130-131.
- 28 Li, "Banks, Chinese American," *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia*; Wei Li et al., "How Minority-Owned Banks Matter: Banking and Community/Economic Development," *Landscapes of the Ethnic Economy*, edited by D. Kaplan and Wei Li (Lanhan, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 113-133.
- 29 Frank Shyong, "Struggling With a New Diversity: Asian Americans Say the Bar Is Higher in College Admissions," *Los Angeles Times*, California section (Sunday 22 February, 2015) B1; B5.
- 30 National Council of Associations of Chinese Language Schools <<http://www.ncacls.org>>
- 31 John Modell, *The Economics and Politics of Racial Accommodation: The Japanese of Los Angeles, 1900-1942*, (Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1977).
- 32 Gary Kawaguchi, *Living With Flowers: History of the California Flower Market* (San Francisco, CA: Market, Inc., 1993).
- 33 Linda Espana-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles Little Manila: Working Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006); Carina Monica Montoya, *Los Angeles's Historic Filipinotown* (San Francisco, CA: Arcadia Publications, 2016).
- 34 *Filipinos in Stockton*, edited by Dawn B. Mabalon, et al. (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Press, 2008).
- 35 Benito M. Vergara Jr., *Pinoy Capital: The Filipino Nation in Daly City* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2009).
- 36 Lai, "China Alley, Hanford," *East West: Chinese American Journal*, 7.
- 37 Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- 38 Gabriella Oldham and Wei Li, "Grocery Stores and Supermarkets, Chinese American," *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, edited by Huping Ling and Allan Austin (Armonk, NY: Sharpe Reference, 2010).
- 39 *Dictionary of Asian American History*, 488.
- 40 *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, Vols. 1, 2, and 3, edited by Huping Ling and Allan Austin (Armonk, NY: Sharpe Reference, 2010), 387.
- 41 *Dictionary of Asian American History*, 349.
- 42 This account reminds me to point out that although their names are lost to history, there were early pioneers who planted, grew, and nurtured varieties that laid the foundations for the growers of various crops today-although the former's efforts may not have resulted in monetary rewards. Prominent examples would have to include the Chinese botanist Lue Gim Gong. Lue was originally an agricultural field hand who grew adept at developing hybrid species, most notably an orange that was more frost resistant than anything before it (Lai 1973b). This was such an important contribution that it is sometimes said to have been the basis for Florida's subsequent domination of the citrus industry. Despite such claims, Lue Gim Gong, himself, died in reduced circumstances that did not merit the innovative contributions that he made. Similarly, what we know today as the variety, "Bing cherry," was named after its developer, Ah Bing (Lai 1973a).
- 43 *Dictionary of Asian American History*, 273.
- 44 *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, Vols. 1, 2, and 3, 361.
- 45 Karen I. Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi Mexican Americans* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992); There are some agricultural formations along these lines that should be mentioned, although they do not quite fit the paradigm. Among the pioneer Issei settlers, some set up farming communities based on religiosity: for example, the Yamato Colony, associated with the town on Livingston, California, today, but which historically also had branches in the neighboring communities of Cressy and Cortez. (This settlement is not to be confused with a similarly named "Yamato Colony" in Florida, near Boca Raton. Other iterations, formed under differing circumstances, have been identified across the country.)
- Shungo and Mitsu Hirabayashi, the parents of Presidential Medal of Honor awardee Gordon K. Hirabayashi, along with related Hirabayashi families from the village of Hotaka, Naga-no-ken, set up the White River Garden in Thomas, Washington, south of Seattle, near today's SEA-TAC airport. This was a farming collective formed in the 'teens of the last century by a religious fellowship of adherents to Japanese "non-church"

Christianity (*mukyokai*).

46 Govinda B. Bhakta, *Patels: A Gujarati Community in the United States* (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2002).

47 Padma Rangaswamy, "Business and Entrepreneurship, Indian Americans," *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, edited by Huping Ling and Allan Austin (Armonk, NY: Sharpe Reference, 2010), 320-321.

48 Illsoo Kim *New Urban Immigrants: The Korean Community of New York* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

49 Cited in Martin Kitch, "Business and Entrepreneurship, Cambodian Americans," *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, edited by Huping Ling and Allan Austin (Armonk, NY: Sharpe Reference, 2010), 102-103.

50 When we consider the case of a business magnate such as George Aratani, his official biography makes it clear that, while he may have been a brilliant and visionary leader, his business acumen had much to do with his selection of dedicated, talented, colleagues, with whom he worked as a team.

51 It is hard to be sure that one catches all the points covered in an on-line webinar, but my notes indicate that key NHL criteria include items such as events, persons, the idea/ideal of the American people, buildings and significant architectural structures, archaeological sites, and scientific ideas. Similarly, the criteria for the National Register entail items such as broad patterns of significant events, significant individuals, masterworks of various kind, and significant archaeological sites. What strikes me about these items is their singular, individualistic orientation.

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