CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY
CALIFORNIA HISTORY SECTION

RESEARCH GUIDES
CHINESE AMERICANS IN CALIFORNIA

VISIT US
California History Section
900 N Street Room 200
9:30-4 Monday-Friday
Are you researching your Chinese American ancestry? Are you curious about the Chinese contribution to the trans-continental railroad, or wondering about the history of Angel Island? Maybe you’re writing a paper on Chinese American industry on California. Regardless of your interests, you can explore the extensive history of Chinese Americans in California via the California History Section's rich collections!

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Enjoy Your Research!
Can’t come to the library just yet? No worries! There are a number of online resources you can explore related to California’s Chinese Americans!

**Digitized Images**

We have scanned and digitized a portion of our extensive photograph collection, including images related to California’s Chinese Americans. You can see them on Calisphere!

**URL**: https://calisphere.org/institution/51/items/
**Type in Subject Box**: Chinese

**Digitized Publications**

A few years ago we digitized some of our more fragile resources on California’s Chinese Americans. You can see them on Internet Archive!

**URL**: https://archive.org/
**Type in Search Box**: Chinese AND collection: (californiastateliibrary)
Books

Unsure about where to start? Consult a book! These texts provide both biographies of prominent Chinese Americans and overviews of Chinese American history in California.

A collection of essays and personal profiles, this book puts a face on the history of the Chinese in California, covering everything from the Gold Rush to the present.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author

This comprehensive overview of the Chinese American influence on U.S. history and development highlights both the past and the ongoing contributions of this growing community.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author

This thesis takes a close look at the Chinese contribution to the transcontinental railroad, with particular attention to labor recruitment practices.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title and/or author
Books


An older but still useful title, this syllabus offers an overview of Chinese history in California plus statistics and references for further reading.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank

Search by: Title and/or author


Curious about Chinese American history in your town? This book goes through each county in California highlighting Chinese involvement and influence on places throughout the state.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank

Search by: Title and/or author


What was the Chinese Exclusion Act? This manuscript covers the whats, whys and hows, not to mention the consequences of this controversial chapter in U.S. history.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Periodicals

Want something shorter than a book? In addition to individual articles in historical publications you can read periodicals devoted to Chinese American history!

**Bulletin** (1966–) San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America
This historical society publication not only documents over 50 years of ongoing preservation activities but includes essays documenting early Chinese-Californian history.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title

**News ‘N Notes**. (1990-) Los Angeles: Chinese Historical Society of Southern California
This periodical, dating back to 1990, covers historical society events and topics of interest as well as Chinese-California history in Southern California.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title

**Young China**. (1911-) San Francisco: Young China Publishing Co.
Dating from the 1910’s, this Chinese language newspaper documents items of interest to the Chinese American community in San Francisco.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title
Manuscript Collections

In addition to periodicals, we have several manuscript collections that focus specifically on Chinese American history. Here are some selected collections at the State Library.

**Katharine Maurer Collection**
Known as the “Angel of Angel Island,” the papers left behind by this social worker and deaconess detail the conditions she encountered while serving the individuals held on Angel Island as well as notes of appreciation.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
**Search by:** Title

**Foreign Miners Tax Collections**
A tax that disproportionately affected Chinese miners, these two collections contain various documents relating to the 1850 and 1852 versions of this law along with some actual tax documents. Our textual files also contain some licenses.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
**Search by:** Title

**William Sowden Collection**
A lawyer active in Dutch Flat, Sowden handled both civil and immigration cases for the local Chinese American community. This collection contains papers for several of these cases.

**URL:** https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
**Search by:** Title
SPECIALIZED RESOURCES

Not only do we have periodicals, books and manuscript collections related to Chinese-Californian history, we have several highly specialized resources that offer further information.

Stellman Collections
A prominent late 19th and early 20th century photographer, Stellman documented the residents and conditions in San Francisco’s Chinatown via his portraits and other images. The library has collections both of his papers and his images.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title

Chinese Immigration Pamphlets
Fully scanned and accessible online, these pamphlets provide real-time documentation of the 19th century debate surrounding the Chinese Exclusion Act.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title

Lists of Chinese Passengers
Are you looking for your immigrant ancestors? This set of microfilm documents Chinese arrivals at San Francisco from 1882-1914.

URL: https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&sortby=rank
Search by: Title
While many of our materials are online, even more are only in hard-copy. You can use the following resources to learn about our books, articles, and manuscripts on Chinese Americans.

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**Catalog**

If you are looking for images, books and articles on Chinese Americans, your best source is our catalog.

*URL:* https://csl.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?
vid=01CSL_INST:CSL&lang=en&sortby=rank

*Type in Subject Box:* (Chinese OR Asian OR Chinatown NOT Japanese)

*Limit:* By place

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**California Information File II**

Sometimes the catalog doesn’t provide as much detail as you might like. This is why we created the California Information File II. In this resource, you can find catalog records on individual articles, pamphlets and more.

*URL:* http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCalinfo.htm

*Type in Subject Box:* Chinese OR Asian OR Chinatown

*For a narrower search:* Add a place to your keyword search
City Directories

Looking for a person? You can trace this information via our city directories! See what we have by checking our specialized database.

**URL:** http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryCityDir.htm

**Type in Search Box:**
1. Location

Telephone Books

Are you not finding what you need in our city directory collection? No worries, you might find it in our telephone book collection. See what we have by checking our phone book database.

**URL:** http://dbs.library.ca.gov/dbtext_html/QueryPhonebk.htm

**Type in Search Box:**
1. Location
California’s Chinese Americans contribute in a myriad of ways to this state. While these catalog links barely scrape the surface of this history, they provide a good overview.
COUNTY-SPECIFIC RESOURCES IN OUR CATALOG

Researching Chinese American history in a specific region? While these catalog links don’t list all that the California History Section has, they are a good starting point.

- Alameda
- Amador
- Butte
- Contra Costa
- Humboldt
- Los Angeles
- Marin
- Mariposa
- Monterey
- Nevada
- Orange
- Placer
- Plumas
- Riverside
- Sacramento
- San Bernardino
- San Francisco
- San Joaquin
- San Mateo
- Santa Clara
- Santa Cruz
- Tehama
- Tulare
- Tuolumne
- Yolo
- Yuba
ON-SITE RESEARCH RESOURCES

Our collection predates computers and so do some of our access points! If you are in the library, be sure to check the following analog files for leads on more resources.

California Information File
In the library? Check the California Information File before you do anything else! This file indexes over 130 years of California articles, books, and manuscript collections related to individuals active in California.

Subject Headings:
- Chinese (various subdivisions)

Photographic File
Sometimes a picture is worth a 1000 words and not all of our pictures are online. To check the rest of the collection, search our picture file.

Subject Headings:
- Chinese (various subdivisions)
- Portraits: Individuals by Name
OTHER ON-SITE RESOURCES

Despite our best efforts, some of our resources defy complete description. We suggest that you ask a librarian about any information related to Chinese Americans in the following files:

Vertical Files

Our massive collection of vertical files covers a wide variety of topics including Chinese Americans. You can check them for information on organizations, event pamphlets and more.

Subject Headings: Check with librarians.

Postcard Files

Separate from our photo collection, our postcard collection contains a number of images of Chinese Americans. Most are not online.

Subject Headings: Check with librarians
Other Places to Look

Of course the California History Section doesn’t have everything, so we suggest that in addition to looking at our collections, you contact the following organizations.

Other California State Library Sections
- Government Publications Section
- Witkin Law Library
- Sutro Library
- General Information

URLs:
- http://www.library.ca.gov/government-publications/
- http://www.library.ca.gov/law/
- http://www.library.ca.gov/sutro/
- http://www.library.ca.gov/services

Other Government Agencies
- California State Archives
- California Museum
- California State Parks
- Local California libraries or archives

URLs:
- http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives/
- http://www.californiamuseum.org/
- https://www.parks.ca.gov/

Other Organizations
- Chinese American Museum
- Chinese Historical Society of America
- Museum of Chinese in America

URLs:
- http://camla.org/
- https://chsa.org/
- http://www.mocanyc.org/
California State Library
California History Section

California History Section
900 N Street Room 200
Sacramento CA 95814

Phone: (916) 654-0176
E-mail: cslcal@library.ca.gov
Hours: 9:30-4 Monday-Friday

This guide is also available online at:
http://www.library.ca.gov/california-history/research-guides/