

A3414

PASSENGER LISTS OF CHINESE ARRIVALS AT
VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA,
JANUARY 1906–JUNE 1912

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INTRODUCTION

On the two rolls of this microfilm publication, A3414, are reproduced passenger lists of Chinese passengers who arrived by ship at Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, January 3, 1906–June 23, 1912. These records are part of the Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group (RG) 85.

BACKGROUND

Early records relating to immigration originated in regional customhouses. The U.S. Customs Service conducted its business by designating collection districts. Each district had a headquarters port with a customhouse and a collector of customs, the chief officer of the district. An act of March 2, 1819 (3 Stat. 489), required the captain or master of a vessel arriving at a port in the United States or any of its territories from a foreign country to submit a list of passengers to the collector of customs. The act also required that the collector submit a quarterly report or abstract, consisting of copies of these passenger lists, to the Secretary of State, who was required to submit such information at each session of Congress. After 1874, collectors forwarded only statistical reports to the Treasury Department. The lists themselves were retained by the collector of customs. Customs records were maintained primarily for statistical purposes.

On August 3, 1882, Congress passed the first Federal law regulating immigration (22 Stat. 214–215); the Secretary of the Treasury had general supervision over it between 1882 and 1891. The Office of Superintendent of Immigration in the Department of the Treasury was established under an act of March 3, 1891 (26 Stat. 1085), and was later designated a bureau in 1895 with responsibility for administering the alien contract-labor laws. In 1900 administration of the Chinese exclusion laws was added. Initially the Bureau retained the same administrative structure of ports of entry that the Customs Service had used. By the turn of the century, it began to designate its own immigration districts, the numbers and boundaries of which changed over the years. In 1903 the Bureau became part of the Department of Commerce and Labor; its name was changed to the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization when functions relating to naturalization were added in 1906. In 1933 the functions were transferred to the Department of Labor and became the responsibility of the newly formed Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Under President Roosevelt's Reorganization Plan V of 1940, the INS was moved to the Department of Justice. The INS was abolished, and its immigration and naturalization recordkeeping functions were transferred to the new Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services within the new Department of Homeland Security, established January 24, 2003, by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-296, § 471, 116 Stat. 2135, 2205).

RECORDS DESCRIPTION

The Chinese passengers included in these records were likely examined by U.S. immigration officials at Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, before they entered the United States. The passenger lists are arranged in chronological order by date of

arrival. However, roll 1 contains 1907–1910, and roll 2 contains 1906 and 1912. Passenger lists for January 22, 1910–January 20, 1912 were not filmed either because they were not extant at the time of filming, or due to human error.

These records consist of **INS Form 1418, *Manifest of Chinese Passengers***, which contains extensive information on each Chinese passenger, including name, gender, date and place of birth, destination, height, physical marks, and peculiarities. Additional details were recorded for domiciled merchants, wives and minor children of merchants, Chinese born in the United States, laborers, passengers in transit through the United States to foreign destinations, and Chinese exempt from provisions of the Chinese Exclusion Acts and treaties. **INS Form 500-B, *List or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States Immigration Officer at the Port of Arrival***, was often used in conjunction with the Form 1418.

The records were filmed by the INS in January 1957 and transferred to the National Archives on microfilm. The INS target (information) sheets at the beginning and end of roll 1 identify these records as being from Portal, North Dakota, but that appears erroneous although “Portal” is written in large letters on the face of the first page of some of the earliest passenger lists on both rolls. Although some of this film may be difficult to read, it is impossible to correct the situation since the INS destroyed the original records.

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