

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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!

Digitized Resources	3
---	---

Reference Works:

Books	4
Periodicals	6
Manuscript Collections	7
Specialized Resources	8

Search:

General Research Tips	9
Subject-Specific Resources in our Catalog	11
County-Specific Resources in our Catalog	12
On-site Research Resources	13
Other On-site Resources	14
Other Places to Look	15

ENJOY YOUR RESEARCH!

DIGITIZED RESOURCES

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: (californiastatelibrary)

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.



Starr, K., et. al. (2001). [150 years of the Chinese presence in California.](#)

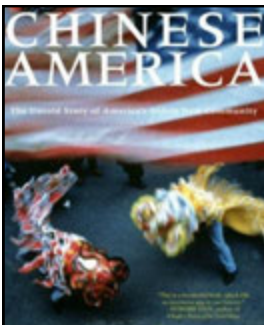
Sacramento: Sacramento Chinese Culture Foundation.

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



Kwong, P., & Mišcević, D. (2005). [Chinese America.](#) New York: New Press.

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



Miller, M. (1989). [The Chinese and the Central Pacific Railroad.](#) Manoa: University of Hawaii.

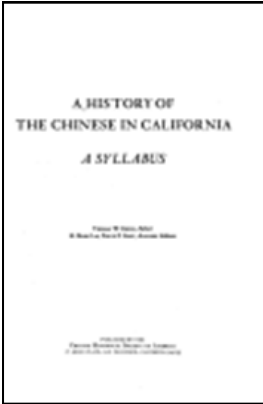
This thesis takes a close look at the Chinese contribution to the transcontinental railroad, with particular attention to labor recruitment practices.



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

Search by: Title and/or author

BOOKS



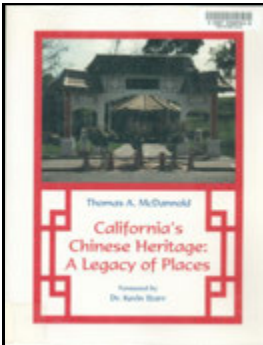
Chinn, et. al. (1969). [A History of the Chinese in California; a syllabus](#). San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America.

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



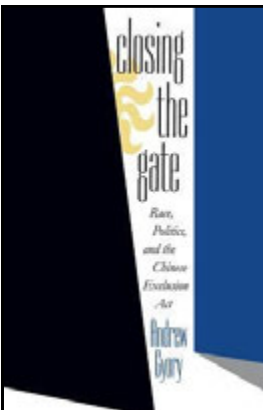
McDannold, T., & Starr, K. (2000). [California's Chinese heritage : A legacy of places](#). Stockton: Heritage West Books.

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



Gyory, A. (1998). [Closing the gate : Race, politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act](#). Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

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

GENERAL RESEARCH TIPS

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



Catalog

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



URL: <https://cs1.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



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

GENERAL RESEARCH TIPS



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

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC RESOURCES IN OUR CATALOG

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.



A map of California showing its county boundaries and names. The counties are labeled as follows: San Norte, Siskiyou, Modoc, Humboldt, Trinity, Shasta, Lassen, Tehama, Plumas, Glenn, Butte, Sierra, Colusa, Yuba, Nevada, Placer, Lake, Yolo, Sacramento, El Dorado, Alpine, Sonoma, Napa, Solano, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Mono, Marin, San Francisco, Contra Costa, Alameda, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Mariposa, Mendocino, Fresno, Inyo, Monterey, Kings, Tulare, San Luis Obispo, Kern, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, and Imperial.

Subject

- [Agriculture](#)
- [Art](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Cooking](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Environment](#)
- [Festivals](#)
- [Fiction](#)
- [Fish](#)
- [Geology](#)
- [Highways](#)
- [Land](#)
- [Legal](#)
- [Legislature](#)
- [Migration](#)
- [Mining](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Poetry](#)
- [Politics](#)

[Shipping](#)

[Slavery](#)

[Railroads](#)

[Religion](#)

[Restaurants](#)

[Water](#)

[Wildlife](#)

[1960's](#)

Type

- [Maps](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Images](#)
- [Manuscripts](#)
- [Newspapers](#)
- [Periodicals](#)
- [Statistics](#)

Residents

- [Vitals](#)
- [Women](#)

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

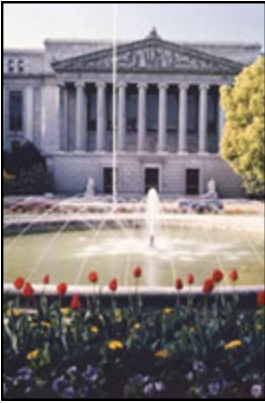
Separate from our photo collection, our postcard collection contains a number of images of Chinese Americans. Most are not online.



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/>