

“I must have cried a bowlful of tears.” Chinese immigrant Lee Puey You,
recalling her 20 months detained on Angel Island.

*“I would also find it impossible to live in a country where all
my family have been killed.”* Richard Arvay, a refugee from Austria,
describing why he did not want to return there after World War II.



FACES *and* STORIES *from* AMERICA'S GATES

By Bruce I. Bustard

One came with plenty of money; another carried only a handful of belongings. One was a visitor; another was a citizen returning home. One had her papers in order; another brought false documents hoping to find a new life.

All of these men, women, and children left likenesses and traces of their journeys to America's entryways. Entering, leaving, or staying in America—their stories were captured in documents and photographs that were attached to government forms.

Above: Visitors entering "Attachments" will walk by a gigantic photomural of this panorama of the Angel Island Immigration Station, ca. 1910.



I, the undersigned, His Imperial Chinese Majesty's Superintendent of Customs in the Kwang-tung Province, hereby certify that *Chun Sik On*, a subject of the Empire of China, to whom this certificate is issued, is entitled under the provisions of the Treaty of the sixth year of the Emperor Kwang-Sü, i.e. 1880 between China and the United States, to go and come of his free will and accord to the United States on the presentation of the same to the Collector of Customs of the American port at which he shall arrive.

The required description of his person follows:—

NAME.	AGE.	OCCUPATION.
<i>Chun Sik On.</i>	<i>Eighteen.</i>	<i>Trader.</i>
RESIDENCE.	HEIGHT.	COMPLEXION.
<i>Nan-hai District.</i>	<i>Five ft seven ins.</i>	<i>Dark.</i>
COLOR OF EYES.	PHYSICAL PECULIARITIES.	OFFICIAL TITLE.
<i>Black.</i>		<i>None.</i>
 SUPERINTENDENT OF CUSTOMS.		
<i>2/6/27</i> <i>Chung Sik</i> <i>Oceanic</i> <i>1754 and Deputy</i> <i>at 187 (Chun Shoo)</i>		

Left: A 1926 wedding photograph of Wong Lan Fong and Yee Shew Ning is part of Wong's immigration file held at the National Archives at San Francisco. The file also contains a letter from the minister who married the couple, attesting to their good character. Right: When Chun Sik On arrived in San Francisco, California, in 1883, he brought this certificate with him as proof that he was a "trader" and thus able to enter the United States under an exception to the recently passed Chinese Exclusion Act. Opposite: This 1924 "Quota Immigration Visa" for Polish immigrant Elstein Chlewne was a fake. Immigration officials spotted problems with the stamps and seals and found several misspellings that led them to conclude it was a forgery.

A new National Archives exhibition in Washington, D.C., "Attachments: Faces and Stories from America's Gates," draws from the millions of immigration case files in the Archives to tell a few of these stories from the 1880s through World War II. It also explores the attachment of immigrants to family and community and the attachment of government organizations to immigration laws that reflected certain beliefs about immigrants and citizenship. These are dramatic tales of joy and disappointment, opportunity and discrimination, deceit and honesty.

Attachments is organized into three sections: "Entering," "Leaving," and "Staying." As visitors enter the exhibition, they will walk by a large (8 feet by 26 feet) photomural of Angel Island, the main processing station on the West Coast, especially for Asian immigrants. They then pass through large gates embedded with photographs and

documents from the exhibition. Each case will feature a large photograph of the individual whose story is told.

ENTERING

Entering America meant being able to join a spouse or parent; it meant a chance to marry, start a business, pursue an education, and bring family members to the United States. For U.S.-born Asian Americans returning to their birthplace, it was a test of their citizenship. For those escaping religious or political persecution, the outcome of their immigration application could mean life or death. The records in "Attachments" reveal that the answer to the question of who could pass through America's gates and be allowed to join our national community often depended on such factors as where a person was from, race and gender, and when and where the person tried to enter.

For example, when Chun Sik On arrived in San Francisco in 1883, he had to bring a certificate proving that he was a "trader" and therefore not covered by the general ban on Chinese entering the country under the recently passed Chinese Exclusion Act. In 1927, Wong Lan Fong and her new husband, Yee Shew Ning, fashioned strategies that permitted them to enter the United States despite the commonly held belief that most Asian women were trying to enter the United States for immoral purposes. Richard Arvay, a Jewish refugee from Austria, benefited from a brief relaxation in immigration regulations that allowed him to come to the United States during World War II. When faced with the possibility of having to go back to Austria after the war, he wrote, "I would also find it impossible to live in a country where all my family have been killed."

American Consular Service

AT Warsaw Poland

APPLICATION FOR IMMIGRATION VISA (QUOTA)

I, the undersigned APPLICANT FOR AN IMMIGRATION VISA, being duly sworn, state that my full and true name is **Elstein Chlewne**; that I am **28** years of age, of the **male** sex and race; that I was born on the **5th** day of **April**, A. D. **1896**; that for five years immediately preceding this application I have resided

at **Luniniec**, Poland
at the following places, to wit:
Vilna UL Wielka I5

, from **1918** to **1924** ;
, from to ;
, from to ;
, from to ;

That I am ~~married~~ ^{single}, and the name of my ~~wife~~ ^{husband} is _____; that ~~she~~ ^{he} was born at _____; and resides at _____.

That the names and places of residence of my minor ^{child} ~~children~~ is ^{is} ~~are~~ :
Name, _____; address, _____ .
Name, _____; address, _____ .
Name, _____; address, _____ .
Name, _____; address, _____ .
Name, _____; address, _____ .
Name, _____; address, _____ .

That my calling or occupation is **tailor**; that my height is _____ feet and _____ inches; my complexion **fair**; color of hair, _____; color of eyes, **blue**; and that I bear the following marks of identification: _____; that I am ~~unable~~ ^{able} to speak **Polish, Jewish**, ~~unable~~ ^{able} to read _____.

Polish Jewish, and ~~unable~~ ^{able} to write the **Polish Jewish**; that the names and addresses of my parents are as follows: (Name of language or dialect.)

Mother, **Peshia Lewin**; address, _____ .
Father, **Mowsha Elshtein**; address, **Wielka I5 Wilna** .

That neither of my parents is living, and that the name of my nearest relative in the country from which I come is _____, whose relationship is _____ and whose address is _____.

That my port of embarkation is **New York**; that I shall enter the United States at the port of **Charbourg**; that my final destination; beyond such port is _____; and that I do **have a ticket** through to such destination; that my passage was paid for by **Sister W. Rubinowitz**, whose address is **1315 Lincoln Pl. New York**; that I intend to join ^{relative} ~~friend~~ _____, whose address is _____ (City, State, street, and number.)

That my purpose in going to the United States is **Establishing residence**, and I intend to remain **permanently**; (Permanently or length of time.)

that I have **never** been in prison or almshouse; that I have **never** been in an institution or hospital for the care and treatment of the insane; that my ^{father has} ~~mother has~~ **never** been in an institution or hospital for the care and treatment of the insane.

That, except as hereafter noted, I am not a member of any one of the following classes of individuals excluded from admission to the United States under the immigration laws: (1) Idiots; (2) Imbeciles; (3) Feeble-minded; (4) Epileptics; (5) Insane persons; (6) Persons having had previous attacks of insanity; (7) Persons with constitutional psychopathic inferiority; (8) Persons with chronic alcoholism; (9) Paupers; (10) Professional beggars; (11) Vagrants; (12) Persons afflicted with tuberculosis; (13) Persons afflicted with a loathsome or dangerous contagious disease; (14) Criminals; (15) Polygamists; (16) Anarchists; (17) Members of unlawful organizations; (18) Prostitutes; (19) Procurers; (20) Contract laborers; (21) Persons likely to become public charges; (22) Persons previously deportet; (23) Persons whose passage paid by another; (24) Unaccompanied children; (25) Natives of Asiatic barred zone; (26) Illiterates; or (27) Aliens ineligible to citizenship.

That I claim to be exempt from exclusion on account of the class numbered (), noted above, for the reasons following, to wit:

That I am the **Sister** of **M. Rubinowisz**, who is a citizen of the United States, **55** years of age, and resides at **1315 Lincoln Pl. New York** (City, State, street, and number.) (Unmarried child under 21, father, mother, husband, or wife.) (21 or over.)

That because of the relationship aforesaid I am entitled to and claim the preference provided for in paragraph (1) of Subdivision (a) of Section 6 of the Immigration Act of 1924.

That I am _____ a skilled agriculturist and entitled to and claim preference provided for in paragraph (2) of Subdivision (a) of Section 6 of the Immigration Act of 1924. (Wife or child under 16 of.)

Available documents required by the immigration Act of 1924 are filed herewith and made part hereof, as follows:

Valid Passport, berth cert. doctor cert. cert. of good conduct

LEAVING

Americans see their country as “a nation of immigrants”—a place to get a fresh start and a chance to make a new home. Millions who came here found freedom and opportunity, if not for themselves, then for their descendants.

But others who came to America’s gates could not enter, and some who entered later decided to return or were sent home. For some, leaving was part of their original plan—to make money on a temporary sojourn or to simply visit the United States. For others, tragedy, a criminal past, or injustice drove them away. Immigrants who wanted to enter but failed to qualify because of laws or regulations were cut off from their dreams. Even those who crossed America’s threshold were subject to government control and deportation if, as aliens, they committed a crime, supported an unpopular political cause, or violated a regulation.

Mary Yee, a white woman born in Michigan, “became” Chinese in the eyes of the law when she married Yee Shing. As the couple prepared to leave the United States in 1922 to educate their children in China, they had to certify her right to return to the United States using a form designed for a “lawfully domiciled Chinese Laborer.”



Above: Pasquale Taraffo, a noted harp guitarist, visited the United States three times in the 1920s and 1930s. He was critically acclaimed “the Paganini of the guitar”—a reference to the legendary Italian violinist Niccolò Paganini. Below: Kaoru Shiibashi submitted this family photograph showing him as an infant as well as his Hawaiian birth certificate as proof of his U.S. birth. Immigration inspectors on Angel Island initially refused to allow him to return to the United States from Japan, but he later won entry. Opposite: Recent graduates from an Americanization Class in Trenton, New Jersey, display their diplomas in 1921. Such classes were one way immigrants sought to assimilate into American life.



Certificate of Birth

No 1038

Honolulu, T. H., June 23rd, 1908.

I, *D. P. Lawrence*, Registrar of Births, do hereby certify that the following is a true copy of an entry in the record of Births in the District of *Kona*, Island of *Oahu*, Territory of Hawaii:

Date of Birth *June 9th, 1908.* Sex *Male,*

Name of Father *Shiibashi Saburo,* Nationality *Japanese,*

Name of Mother *Naga,* Nationality *Japanese,*

Name of Child *Kaoru.*

Place of Birth *Honolulu,*

Date of Record *June 23rd, 1908.*

D. P. Lawrence Registrar of Births

District of *Kona*

Island of *Oahu*

Attest: *Clifford Charlock,*

Secretary Board of Health



Lee Puey You, a Chinese woman, came to America in 1939 posing as the daughter of a man already admitted. She spent 20 months on Angel Island before being deported and remembered her time in detention bitterly, saying that she “must have cried a bowlful of tears,” there.

Kim Ok Yun, a Korean nationalist, fled from the Japanese occupying her homeland. She spent a few years in college in the United States during the 1930s but then returned to Korea and resumed her political

activities until she was arrested and probably executed.

STAYING

Coming to America meant leaving behind the familiar. And while not all immigrants chose to stay, those who did faced both opportunities and challenges in making a life in a new land. Feelings of loss and nostalgia over what was left behind mixed with the thrill of greater freedom and the chance to begin anew. The safety and comfort of

associating with compatriots from “the old country” competed with a desire to demonstrate loyalty to new communities and a new nation. American ideals of inclusion, democracy, and individual rights faced off against the reality of prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping.

Mary Louise Pashgian came to the United States fleeing persecution in Armenia. After Michael Pupa’s parents were killed by the Nazis, he spent two years hiding in the Polish forests; he eventually came to the



To learn more about

- One Chinese wife’s ordeal during the Chinese exclusion era, go to www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2004/spring.
- Race and nationality in INS policy over the years, go to www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2002/summer.
- Finding records in the National Archives relating to ethnic heritage, go to www.archives.gov/research/topics/ethnic-heritage.html.

United States and was raised by a family in Cleveland, Ohio. Kaoro Shiibashi, who was born in Hawaii, was taken to Japan as a toddler. In the 1930s he decided, “I wanted to see my native land,” and he returned to the United States. Despite his Hawaiian birth certificate, he was initially refused entry. Eventually admitted, he spent the rest of his life in the United States, including a stay at the Heart Mountain internment camp in Wyoming during World War II.

All these details—the inspiring and uplifting as well as the mundane and heart-breaking—are recorded in the documents presented in “Attachments.” The documents themselves represent a kind of a gateway—a gateway to America’s immigrant past and a gateway to understanding its complexity. **P**



Above: This package of Raumo Egyptian cigarettes from about 1914 contained a “coaching note” in Chinese. Such notes were sometimes smuggled to Chinese immigrants held on Angel Island so that their interview answers would match those of their friends and family. Below: In 1918, San Francisco police seized this photograph and postcard from a local chapter of the International Workers of the World. Louis Vagadori, seated left, was accused of holding radical and “destructionist” political views but was eventually allowed to stay in the United States. The postcard shows European and American workers waving to each other across the ocean and has a quotation in Italian by Karl Marx, “Workers of the World Unite!”



“Attachments: Faces and Stories from America’s Gates” opened in the Lawrence F. O’Brien Gallery at the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., on June 15, 2012. It will close September 4, 2012. The Foundation for the National Archives has published an illustrated catalog in association with D. Giles, Ltd. To order the catalog, call 202-357-5271 or write to nationalarchivesstore@nara.gov.



Author

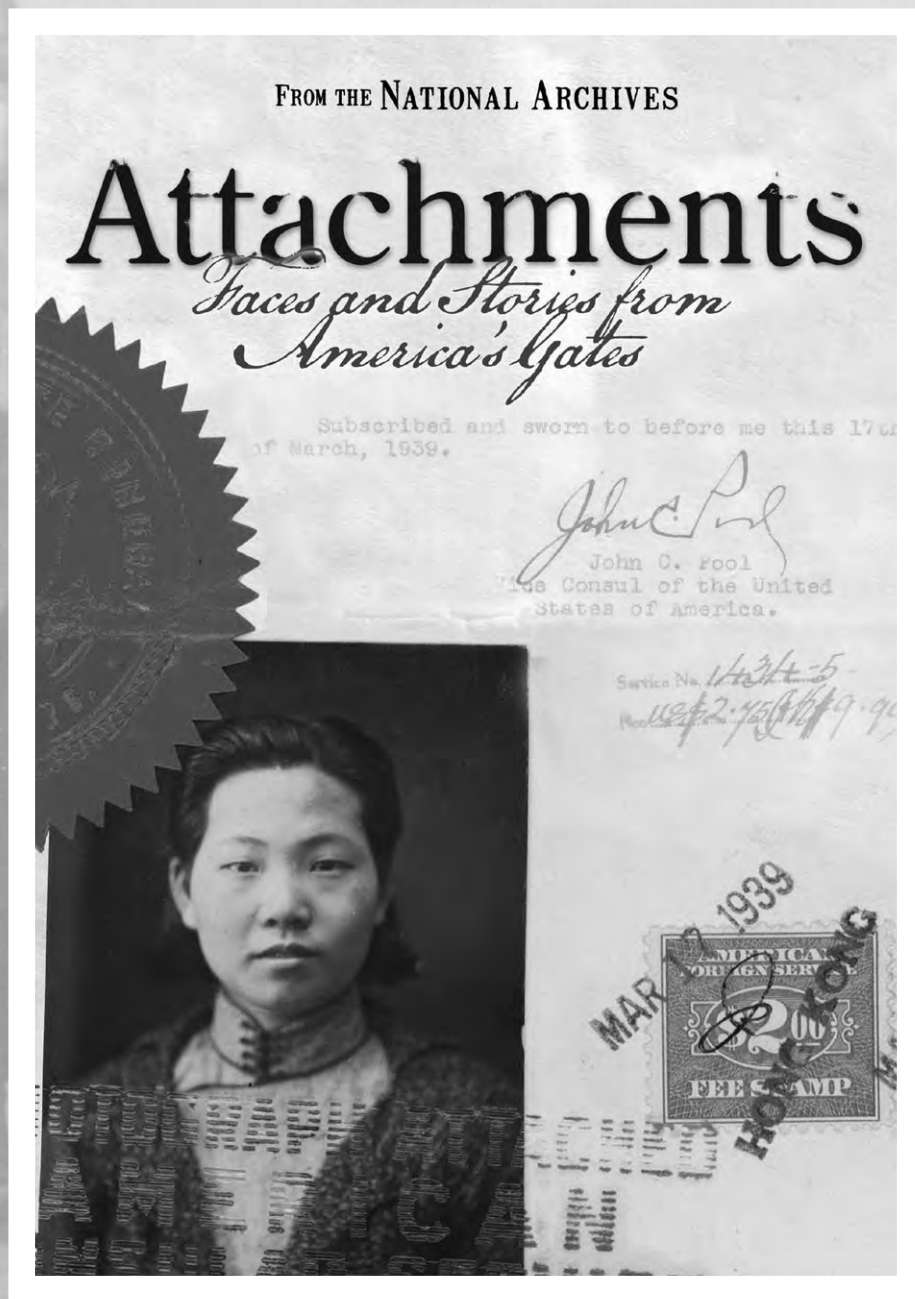
Bruce I. Bustard is senior curator in the Center for the National Archives Experience at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. He is the curator of “Attachments: Faces and Stories from America’s Gates,” and the son of an immigrant from Scotland.

1	Name in full <i>Geo. Joseph Dussan</i> <small>(Given name)</small> <i>Dussan</i> <small>(Family name)</small>	Age, in yrs. <i>26</i>
2	Home address <i>211</i> <i>W. ...</i> <small>(Street)</small> <i>Wells</i> <small>(City)</small> <i>Pa.</i> <small>(State)</small>	
3	Date of birth <i>2-9-18</i>	
4	Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your	

Attachments

FACES and STORIES from AMERICA'S GATES
A companion book to the new National Archives exhibition

\$34.95 HARDCOVER \$24.95 SOFTCOVER



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