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Finding Aid

➤ **Early Chinese Immigrants in Toledo Oral History Interviews** ◀

MSS-228

Size: .25 lin. ft.

Provenance: Gift of Doris Sing Hedler, Ruth Sing Wong, Edward Sing, and Albert Sing

Access: Open

Collection Summary: This collection consists of oral history interviews with members of the Sing family of Toledo.

Subjects: [Ethnic Culture](#)

Related Collections:

Processing Note:

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Completed by: Brenna Dugan, August 2008; last updated: October 2014

Early Chinese Immigrants in Toledo Oral History Interviews

Historical Sketch

The earliest great influx of Chinese into the USA happened as a result of the gold rush (1848-1859). Mine and railroad workers were imported from China because they were thought to be industrious and more importantly, their labor was cheap in a time when black slave labor was controversial. In the mid 1860s, the Chinese still had the right to unlimited immigration, but the general population wanted to keep them out. Many claimed that the Chinese were taking jobs from organized white labor groups and that they had dirty habits. In 1882, these workers and their families were greatly affected by the Chinese Exclusion Act. This act became the first and only law to exclude immigration based on ethnicity. Only those of high status could enter, and laborers could not. Those laborers already in the USA could stay as residents but they were not granted citizenship, and their future reentry into the country was not guaranteed. In the few years before and after that time, the Chinese were also denied state-funded education.

By 1885, the Chinese were driven out of white communities and they took up residence in concentrated communities in cities such as New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Cleveland. There were few women in these ghettos because a law in 1882 defined women as laborers and this made most unable to immigrate. As a result, married men who were already in the USA could not send for their families. Between the years 1906 and 1924, only 150 women were able to enter the country legally, and they were likely the wives of merchants or teachers. The Exclusion Act was not repealed until 1943.

The Exclusion Act encouraged many Chinese to return home, but during that time, the number of Chinese in Toledo actually increased. The newspaper article in this collection, entitled "The Chinese in Toledo," gives an account of some early families here. The census records, also included, show that there were even some Chinese here before the 1880s.

By 1896, the Ashland Avenue Baptist Church had opened a Chinese Sunday School to serve the growing number of Chinese. One main goal for the school was to help these immigrants improve their English. Much of the history of the Chinese in Toledo is rooted in this Sunday school, as well as in the thirty some laundries and ten restaurants in the area. There was also a store which sold Chinese items, and it was run by Wing Wah, a man who was influential to the local Chinese history due to his connections with important Chinese in other cities.

Early Chinese Immigrants in Toledo Oral History Interviews

Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of oral history interviews with members of the Sing family of Toledo. The Sing family was one of the first Chinese families to settle in Toledo, and these interviews record their thoughts on their lives. Interview subjects include Doris Sing Hedler and her siblings, Ruth Sing Wong and Edward and Albert Sing.

Early Chinese Immigrants in Toledo Oral History Interviews

Topic Index

Oral History Interview: Edward and Albert Sing

Interviewed by Brenna Dugan on 5-22-08

<u>Time Marker</u>	<u>Topic</u>
000-087	Their grandfather's history and their mother and father's story of immigration to Toledo
085-164	The men and their siblings' experience growing up and attending the Chinese Sunday school
186-303	Other early Chinese families in Toledo
303-357	Chinese immigration to the United States
357-438	University of Toledo and importance of education to their family
438-495	The men and their brother serve in the military
495-627	Their lives as adults
627-788	The remainder of the Sing family siblings

Oral History Interview: Ruth Sing Want

Interviewed by Brenna Dugan on 8-8-08

00-150	Birth of the Sing children and their childhood
150-273	The life of their mother, Jung See Sing
273-500	The lives of the Sing children
500-763	The Sing children as adults
763-799	The effect of Toledo and UT on their lives

Oral History Interview: Doris Sing Hedler

Interview by Brenna Dugan on 5-13-08

00-142	Her grandfather immigrates to United States and her father eventually also moves to Toledo
142-223	Her mother and father run a laundry and she and her siblings grow up
223-520	Sing family history and importance of education
520-670	Growing up as a minority
670-773	Chinese Sunday school at Ashland Avenue Baptist Church
773-796	The family connection to the University of Toledo