

A3408

REGISTERS OF JAPANESE, FILIPINOS, AND
HAWAIIANS HELD FOR BOARDS OF SPECIAL
INQUIRY AT SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA,
SEPTEMBER 1928–FEBRUARY 1942

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INTRODUCTION

On the two rolls of this microfilm publication, A3408, are reproduced six registers of Japanese, Filipinos, and Hawaiians held for Boards of Special Inquiry at San Francisco, California, September 2, 1928–February 7, 1942. Most of the detainees were Japanese. 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.

Each arriving person faced a "primary inspection" to determine their status, a process that consisted of questioning by an immigration official, usually a single inspector. The inspector followed defined lines of questioning concerning age, birthplace, amount of money, occupation, and U.S. citizenship or prior U.S. residency, if applicable, to determine whether the person was declared either admissible or inadmissible. If rejected, the person was turned over to a board of special inquiry. Each board consisted of three members who were appointed by the

commissioner of immigration in charge of the local immigration station. Permanent boards were maintained in larger ports of entry.

The administrative law hearing before a board of special inquiry began with the presentation of evidence. The detainee was called before a table or bench to face the seated members of the board, placed under oath, and subjected to questioning by the chairman of the board. The first phase of the interrogation was routine. Basic facts were put into the record: age, birthplace, port of departure for the United States, destination in this country, amount of money in the individual's possession, trade or calling, purpose of migration, and applicable evidence of U.S. citizenship or prior U.S. residency. Any documents the person may have brought to the hearing were examined. Witnesses who came to testify on behalf of the detained person were secluded in a separate room. They were not called to testify until after the detainee had completed his or her testimony. Usually the board rendered its decision immediately at the end of the hearing. Agreement by two out of three board members prevailed. If the decision was to admit, the person was immediately released from detention. If the decision was to deport, the person was kept in detention until deported or until an appeal was completed, or until a recognizance bond was paid to ensure their appearance at further proceedings.

RECORDS DESCRIPTION

These records consist of a chronological listing of Japanese, Filipinos, and Hawaiians detained for boards of special inquiry. They are arranged by date of arrival, then by vessel. The information was recorded in six oversize bound volumes each containing about 130 numbered pages plus unnumbered index pages. Due to the way the volumes were filmed, their pages are reproduced in reverse order.

Each index is arranged roughly alphabetically by the first letter of the detainee's surname. For each detainee, the index provides the person's full name plus the page upon which his or her information is recorded.

Each numbered page consists of a two-page spread, that is, a left and right page. The page number is shown only on the right page. Due to the way the volumes were filmed, the "right" portion of these two pages is reproduced to the left of the "left" portion. The "right" portion or image includes part of the "left" portion which should assist researchers in "matching" the two halves.

Each vessel's name and the date upon which it arrived are noted at the top of the page. A ship arrival number is written under the vessel name on the "left" page. The "ship arrival number"—such as 27532 for *President Lincoln*, which arrived on December 26, 1928—refers to the number assigned to a passenger or crew manifest by the INS—San Francisco District (hereafter "INS-SF"), and it may assist researchers in locating an INS-SF investigative case file.

Each two-page spread includes the pre-printed columns shown below, not all of which are filled in for each detainee.

| COLUMN | COMPILER'S REMARKS |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Serial Number | Usually left blank |
| Ticket Number | |
| Name | |
| Class | May indicate Filipino, "Native", Student, Housewife, some other description of the person's status |
| Residence | Apparently the place of prior U.S. residence |
| Referred by | Name of INS Primary Inspector |
| Date Referred | Date sent to BSI |
| Date Returned | Date returned from BSI |
| Admitted | Date |
| Denied | Date |
| Appealed | Date |
| Attorney | Name, usually blank |
| Referred to | May indicate "Dept.," "Detention Div.," "S.F. Office," and date |
| Date Returned | May indicate what happened, such as appealed dismissed, etc. |
| Returned to China [<i>sic</i>] | Usually blank, but may indicate steamship and date of return to Japan, etc. |
| Remarks | May indicate "Paroled to International Institute" or other disposition pending completion of BSI process |

GENERAL REMARKS

The records were filmed by the INS in 1957 and transferred to the National Archives on microfilm. Although some of this film may be difficult to read, it is impossible to correct the situation since the INS destroyed the original records.

RELATED RECORDS

The INS-SF investigative case file number for an arriving individual is composed of the ship arrival number plus the ticket number, or, after 1912, the arrival number plus the manifest page and line numbers. Thus, the number 10383/15/23 refers to manifest number 10383, page 15, line 23. These case files are located (in 2004) at NARA's Pacific Region (San Francisco), 1000 Commodore Dr., San Bruno, CA. Not all arriving individuals had case files.

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| | 3 | May 20, 1931 – May 1, 1934 Index |
| | 2 | February 14, 1930 – May 3, 1931 Index |
| | 1 | September 2, 1928 – January 29, 1930 Index |
| 2 | 6 | April 13, 1939 – February 7, 1942 Index |
| | 5 | June 24, 1936 – March 23, 1939 Index |
| | 4 (part) | May 9, 1934 – June 23, 1936 |