

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS: IMMIGRATION

Directions: Read the excerpts from documents about Immigration and answer the following questions. Some questions will require you to think beyond the text of the document to other material we have covered. Please answer on a separate sheet of paper.

Violence Against the Chinese – P.S. Dorney (1871)

- 1) Did the Chinese live in integrated neighborhoods with native born Americans?
- 2) Do you think that the police were simply following orders when they attacked the Chinese community in Los Angeles? Explain.
- 3) Do you think that the police have allowed civilians like Bob Thompson to be involved in the raids on the Chinese community? Explain.
- 4) The violence described is shocking; unfortunately, this was not the only instance of such violence. Why do you suppose that the government and law enforcement allowed such things to take place?

Gentlemen's Agreement – U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor (1907)

- 5) Who had the authority to deny entry to the U.S. to potential immigrants?
- 6) What specific threat did the potential immigrant have to embody in order to be denied entry?
- 7) To what three areas (two countries, one U.S. territory) were Japanese immigrants coming prior to sneaking into the U.S.?
- 8) As explained in the document, not all immigration from Japan was restricted. Under what conditions could a potential immigrant from Japan gain admission? Do you think that this was fair/reasonable?

19th and 20th Century Immigration Data – U.S. Bureau of the Census (1820-1940)

Read the italicized introduction carefully before trying to answer these.

- 9) What twenty year period saw the biggest influx of immigrants to the U.S.? (*hint: you will have to add up each successive pair of decades...or at least do some deductive reasoning*)
- 10) In what two years was the percentage of foreign born people living in the U.S. the highest?
- 11) During what twenty year period were the most immigrants coming from South-Eastern Europe?
- 12) The lighter shaded countries on the map would be allowed the fewest number of immigrants based on the quota system established in 1924. This is due to the choice of the year 1890 as the baseline for establishing the immigration quota. The choice of this year was not an accident nor coincidental. How did the choice of that year (rather than 1910, for example) serve to dramatically limit immigration to the U.S.? What region would be more limited, North-Western or South-Eastern Europe?

Reflective Questions

- 13) Do you think that Americans were more fearful of immigrants from Asia or Europe?
- 14) What economic, political, and social concerns drove attempts to limit immigration between the end of the Civil War and 1924?
- 15) How were the fears and motivations of Americans in the 19th and early 20th centuries similar to those expressed by people opposed to immigration today? How similar are their responses?

VIOLENCE AGAINST THE CHINESE – P.S. DORNEY (1871)

A great number of Chinese immigrants had arrived in California by the 1860s. American workers resented the Chinese because of the competition for jobs and the resulting lower wages, and Americans sometimes reacted violently. One of the worst episodes of violence occurred in Los Angeles in October 1871. Writer P.S. Dorney was there and wrote about it years later.

In 1854 the State Senate appointed a committee . . . to investigate the "Chinese evil." An exhaustive investigation was had; and, read in the light of latter days, the report of that committee proves the far-seeing judgment of those who made it. The report declared:

The Chinese are destructive to the best interests of the state and dangerous to its peace. They come not as freemen but as serfs and hirelings of a master. It needs no Solomon to predict the result: disputes will take place and blood will flow, to be followed by the expulsion of a population who will be driven from the state by violence instead of law.

. . . For two days that portion of the city cursed by the presence of the Mongols was in a state of war. Every house was barricaded, and the crack of revolvers and the bursting of bombs reverberating throughout the city kept the people in a constant state of anxious excitement. Crowds gathered at the intersection of Commercial and Los Angeles Streets, and some of the most daring ventured as near the Mongol quarter as Carillo's or Caswell's corner; but they were quickly dispersed by a shower of bullets from the pistols of the Mongolian shooters.

Business and travel in and about the Chinese quarter being wholly suspended, the authorities resolved to quell the disorder. To this end the police made a raid upon the fighters late on the afternoon of October 28. This show of authority had a singular effect upon the Chinese. The storm of [mutually destructive] fury instantly lulled. Upon all sides a peculiar cry went up; the fighters, as one man, united in opposing the police; and, taken wholly by surprise, the "peelers" were routed in a moment.

The town was now thoroughly moved. A feeling of deep alarm, not unmixed with fear, spread abroad. Places of business and residences adjacent to the scene of war were closed and abandoned, and an immense concourse of anxious spectators collected at the intersections of Main and Aliso, and of Commercial and Los Angeles Streets.

The police prepared for another charge and were joined by a few citizens, among whom was "Bob" Thompson, a well-known and very popular character. The second charge was better calculated and more determined than the first but was met as before; the police were again routed, leaving behind them Officer Bilderrain, desperately wounded, a Spanish boy shot in the foot, and citizen Thompson writhing in the agonies of death. . . .

About 8 o'clock the death of Thompson was announced. The announcement was received in sullen silence; but in a moment the crowd melted away, and Main Street was deserted. In another moment, armed men were seen hastening, singly and in clusters, from every street and avenue, all heading toward Chinatown. . . . Businessmen closed their shops and joined the gathering clans, and in less than fifteen minutes after the announcement of "Bob" Thompson's death, the cracking of rifles, the roar of shotguns, and the rattle of small arms proclaimed the investment of Chinatown.

About 9 o'clock the first Chinese was captured. He was armed with a hatchet and was taken while attempting to break through the cordon of whites that surrounded the Chinese quarter. A dozen hands clutched him, and a hundred throats hoarsely shouted: "A rope! To the hill! To the hill!" . . .

As the maddened men surged up the hill (Temple Street), the little illfavored prisoner, borne bodily along, was stabbed in the back and side and was dead as a doorstep before General Baldwin's corral was reached, to the gatebeam of which the dead man was hanged. . . .

Among the Spaniards whose boldness and vigor attracted attention that night was Vasquez, afterward famous as a bandit, and Jesus Martinez, his chum and relative. . . .

After the assault became general, the Chinese never returned shot or blow; but securely barricading every avenue of approach, each like a badger retired to his den and in sullen silence awaited his fate. But few attempted to escape, and all who made the attempt fell riddled with bullets. . . .

The condition of the Chinese had now become wretched indeed. The "Quarters," it will be remembered, were an old Spanish hacienda one story high, with an open courtyard in the center. Martinez and his companions, armed with axes as well as firearms, cut holes in the asphaltum roof, through which the cowering creatures below were shot in their hiding places or hunted from room to room out into the open courtyard, where death from the bullets of those on the roof was certain. Within or without, death was inevitable. The alternative was terrible. As each separate wretch, goaded from his covert, sought in

his despair the open space, a volley from the roof brought him down; a chorus of yells telegraphed that fact to the surrounding mob, and the yells were answered by a hoarse roar of savage satisfaction.

A simultaneous rush from Los Angeles Street forced the doors upon that side, and the work of real diabolism began. Men were dragged forth, many of them mortally wounded, and hurled headlong from a raised sidewalk to the ground. To the necks of some of the most helpless the mob fastened ropes and, with a whoop and a hurrah, rushed down Los Angeles Street to the hanging place, dragging some writhing wretch prone upon the ground. More of the doomed and bleeding miseries were jerked along by as many eager hands as could lay hold of clothing and queue, cuffed and cursed in the meantime by the infuriated multitude. A boy was thus led to the place of slaughter. The little fellow was not above twelve years of age. He had been but a month in the country and knew not a word of English. He seemed paralyzed by fear—his eyes were fixed and staring, and his face blue-blanché and idiotic. He was hanged.

Close behind the boy followed the Chinese doctor; a man of extreme age, well known, and reputed wealthy. The doctor begged piteously for his life, pleading in English and in Spanish; but he might as well have pleaded with wolves. At last he attempted to bribe those who were hurrying him to his death. He offered \$1,000—\$2,000—\$3,000—\$5,000—\$10,000—\$15,000! But to no purpose. He was hanged, and his \$15,000 was spirited away none the less. At his death the old man wore a valuable diamond ring upon his left index finger, but when his corpse was cut down it was found that the left index finger had been wrenched from its socket, and finger and ring were gone. . . .

It was midnight, and a body of men appointed by the sheriff cut down the dead—twenty-three in number. Nearly all had been dragged through the streets at the end of a rope, and all were found shot and stabbed as well as hanged.

GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT – U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR (1907)

Following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Japanese immigration to the West Coast increased in the early 1900s. U.S. workers grew hostile to the competition and local laws restricting the rights of the immigrants were passed. In 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt worked out a secret so-called "gentlemen's agreement" with Japan to limit the immigration of Japanese laborers to the United States. A 1908 Department of Commerce and Labor Report outlined what the agreement contained and appears below. The Immigration Act of 1924 closed the loopholes that remained.

To SECTION 1 OF THE IMMIGRATION ACT approved February 20, 1907, a proviso was attached reading as follows:

That whenever the President shall be satisfied that passports issued by any foreign government to its citizens to go to any other country than the United States or to any insular [insular means island or non attached] possession of the United States or to the Canal Zone are being used for the purpose of enabling the holders to come to the continental territory of the United States to the detriment of labor conditions therein, the President may refuse to permit such citizens of the country issuing such passports to enter the continental territory of the United States from such other country or from such insular possessions or from the Canal Zone.

This legislation was the result of a growing alarm, particularly on the Pacific Coast and in states adjacent to Canada and Mexico, that labor conditions would be seriously affected by a continuation of the then existing rate of increase in admissions to this country of Japanese of the laboring classes. The Japanese government had always maintained a policy opposed to the emigration to continental United States of its subjects belonging to such classes; but it had been found that passports granted by said government to such subjects entitling them to proceed to Hawaii or to Canada or Mexico were being used to evade the said policy and gain entry to continental United States.

On the basis of the above-quoted provision, the President, on March 14, 1907, issued a proclamation excluding from continental United States "Japanese or Korean laborers, skilled or unskilled, who have received passports to go to Mexico, Canada, or Hawaii, and come therefrom." Department Circular No. 147, dated March 26, 1907, which has been continued in force as Rule 21 of the Immigration Regulations of July 1, 1907, outlined the policy and procedure to be followed by the immigration officials in giving effect to the law and proclamation.

In order that the best results might follow from an enforcement of the regulations, an understanding was reached with Japan that the existing policy of discouraging the emigration of its

subjects of the laboring classes to continental United States should be continued and should, by cooperation of the governments, be made as effective as possible. This understanding contemplates that the Japanese government shall issue passports to continental United States only to such of its subjects as are nonlaborers or are laborers who, in coming to the continent, seek to resume a formerly acquired domicile; to join a parent, wife, or children residing there; or to assume active control of an already possessed interest in a farming enterprise in this country; so that the three classes of laborers entitled to receive passports have come to be designated "former residents," "parents, wives, or children of residents," and "settled agriculturists."

19TH AND 20TH CENTURY IMMIGRATION DATA – U.S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS (1820-1940)

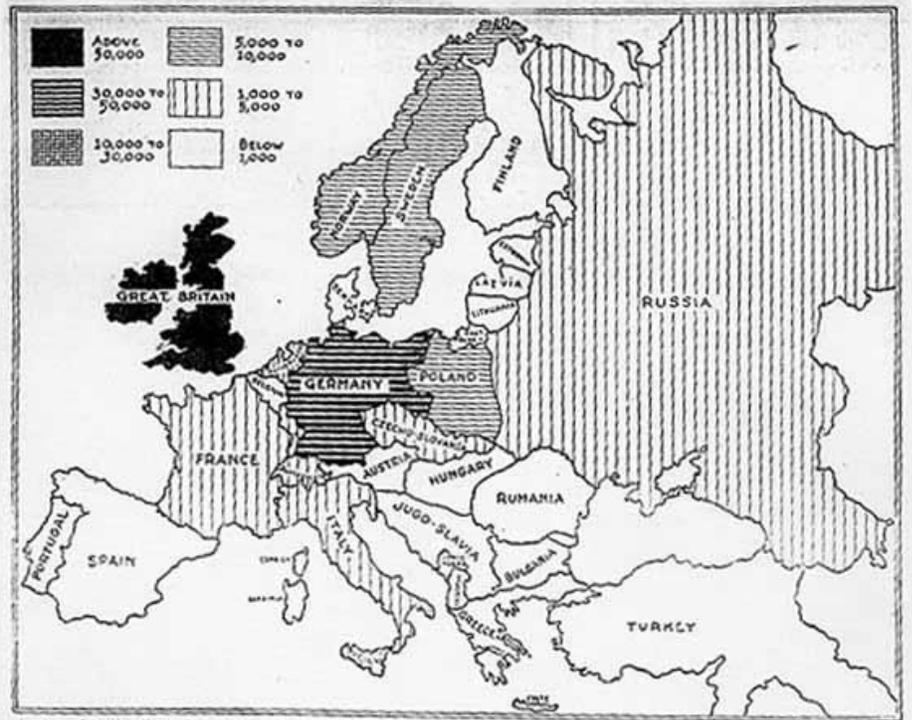
The tables below show the steady flow of immigrants to the United States between 1820 and 1924 and the foreign born as a percentage of the population between 1850 and 1920. After 1920, immigration became governed by a quota system based on national origins, which reflected strong sentiment against foreigners, fear of cheap labor, and social conflict in the country at large. Specifically, in the Immigration Act of 1924 national quotas were established which limited annual immigration from any country to 2% of the number of people from that country who were living in the U.S. in 1890. That was down from 3% as established in the Immigration Act of 1921.

Immigration to the U.S. (1820-1924)

| Year Range | Number of Immigrants |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 1820-1830 | 151,824 |
| 1831-1840 | 599,125 |
| 1841-1850 | 1,713,251 |
| 1851-1860 | 2,598,214 |
| 1861-1870 | 2,314,824 |
| 1871-1880 | 2,812,191 |
| 1881-1890 | 5,246,613 |
| 1891-1900 | 3,687,564 |
| 1901-1910 | 8,795,386 |
| 1911-1920 | 5,735,811 |
| 1921-1924 | 2,344,599 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>35,999,402</i> |

Foreign Born as a Percentage of the Total Population (1850-1920)

| | |
|------|------|
| 1850 | 9.7 |
| 1860 | 13.2 |
| 1870 | 14 |
| 1880 | 13.3 |
| 1890 | 14.7 |
| 1900 | 13.6 |
| 1910 | 14.7 |
| 1920 | 13.2 |



Courtesy of the New York Times

THE FLOW OF IMMIGRATION UNDER THE PROPOSED 2 PER CENT. LAW

Under the present law, which expires June 30, 337,801 immigrants are admitted. Under the proposed law 161,990 would be admitted. The smallest quotas would come from the lightly shaded countries and those shown in white, such as Austria, Rumania, Turkey, and Spain.

Percentage of Immigrants by Geographic Region (Dark is South-Eastern Europe, Light is North-Western

1881-1890 1891-1900 1901-1910 1911-1920 1921-1930

Europe)

1931-1940