

# The AACCP Newsletter

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## Valuable Records May Be Moved from the National Archives at San Bruno

### Researchers and History Organizations are Concerned

By Leonard D. Chan

Recent correspondences between the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the US Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), and a group called Save Our National Archives (SONA) has indicated that if funding cannot be found, valuable historical materials may soon be removed from the NARA facility at San Bruno, California. The consequences of the removal of these primary source materials are uncertain, but SONA is concerned that access to these items may become much more difficult or even impossible if the articles are damaged, destroyed, lost, or never returned during their removal and processing at another facility.

The items in question are called the Alien Registration Files (A-files). Under the Alien Registration Act of 1940, all aliens in the United States were required to register with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now known as the USCIS). The A-files are the detailed evidentiary records collected for each of these registered individuals. The contents within these files may include photographs, birth certificates, visas, records of employment, family-related documents, transcripts of testimony, personal artifacts, and other important biographical and historical information.

Although the A-files were first started in the 1940s, some of the A-files contain much older information collected by the various immigration offices. Immigration records that are currently available for public research and viewing at NARA, San Bruno (known as Record Group 85 case files) go as far back as the late 1800s. Non-citizen US residents that had dealings with the federal government after 1940, such as people that traveled out of the US and back, might have had their older immigration records brought forwards and consolidated into the newer A-files. Since A-files are still under the authority of USCIS, they are not viewable without a formal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. As a result many files that could have been included with the originally group 85 case files are still essentially inaccessible.

In 1998, USCIS began consolidating all of its A-files at a non-research accommodating NARA facility in Lee's Summit, Missouri. At that time a group of researchers, educational institutions, history and genealogical organizations, non-profit organizations, and individuals got together to form SONA. Their goal has been to make sure that the non-current A-files are transferred from the authority of USCIS to NARA so that they could be preserved and made accessible to the public. For the past 10 years SONA, Congressman Tom Lantos, and others were able

to prevent the A-files stored at San Bruno from being moved to Lee's Summit.

The A-files stored at San Bruno are from the INS offices in the Pacific Region (San Francisco, Honolulu, and Reno Nevada). These A-files not only include records of Chinese immigrants during the Chinese Exclusion period, but also include records of such people as German, Italian, and Japanese WWII alien internees; Holocaust survivors; Filipino Freedom Fighters; WWII war brides; immigrants from many Asian countries and more.

A further note - government documents are not automatically preserved. When a government agency such as USCIS retires its older documents, NARA must evaluate these records for their historical value before they can be considered for inclusion in NARA's permanent collection. Approximately 98% of all the records produced by our national government are not preserved by NARA and the A-files were among those originally designated for destruction.

NARA and USCIS are now in agreement with SONA that the A-files should be preserved. However, the plans on how and where they are to be stored continues to evolve.

After years of negotiations and organizing, a meeting with the USCIS director, and a detailed letter of [SONA demands](#), a June 2007 USCIS reply letter to SONA stated –  
"USCIS continues to work closely with NARA to develop a comprehensive plan to address the accountability and accessioning of the historically important files located at the San Bruno facility..."

USCIS agrees that no files will be removed from the facility in order to be inventoried and that these files will be handled in a manner that will not compromise their historical value. NARA and USCIS are committed to the A-File inventory. We will continue to collaborate with the user community on the progress of these efforts and look forward to working with you and other interested parties."

However, in an August 2008 email to SONA from Tom Mills of NARA, Mills states that –  
"USCIS has halted plans for the joint A-files processing project at the San Bruno FRC (Federal Records Center), and NARA does not yet know how and when USCIS plans to process the records to prepare them for accessioning."

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## Give Us Your Feedback

Please feel free to send us your reviews, comments, and book suggestions. You can contact us at -  
[aacpinc@asianamericanbooks.com](mailto:aacpinc@asianamericanbooks.com)

### Up Coming Events

Here are some events that AACCP will soon be attending. Invite us to your events.

Date/Time	Event	Location
Oct. 4 10am-4pm	4th Annual Artistry Faire Fine Arts and Asian Crafts	<a href="#">Palo Alto Buddhist Temple Gym</a> Palo Alto, CA
Nov. 15	<a href="#">Japantown Winter Arts &amp; Crafts Boutique</a>	SJ Buddhist Church Gym 640 N. 5th St. San Jose, CA
<b>Other Event of Interest that AACCP May Not Attend</b>		
Oct. 4-5	<a href="#">Kaiser Permanente San Francisco International Dragon Boat Festival</a>	Treasure Island San Francisco, CA
Oct. 6 6-7:30pm	<a href="#">Pre-Election Event</a> Register to vote, hear about the propositions; this is a San Mateo OCA event	SM Main Library San Mateo, CA
Oct. 11 11-5pm	<a href="#">Locke Harvest Moon Homecoming</a> Dedication of the Boarding House Museum	Locke, CA
Oct 11	<a href="#">China Disabled Person's Performing Art Troupe</a>	Center for the Performing Arts San Jose, CA
Oct 12 11am	Reading from the play "The Betrayed" by Hiroshi Kashiwagi - featuring Haruko Nagaishi and Yuki Kawaguchi. Hiroshi Kashiwagi will be doing a signing of his new book "Shoe Box Plays" following the reading	<a href="#">Berkeley Buddhist Temple</a> Berkeley, CA
Nov. 12-16	<a href="#">Nat. Assoc. for Multicultural Ed. (NAME) 2008 Conference</a>	Sheraton New Orleans New Orleans, LA
Nov. 14-17	<a href="#">CA Lib. Assoc. Annual Conference</a>	McEnery Convention Center San Jose, CA
Nov. 15 8-3pm	<a href="#">National Pacific Islander Educator Network (NPIEN) 7th Annual Education Conference</a> Keynote speakers are Pacific Islander Pulitzer Prize Winner Manny Crisostomo and McNair Scholar James Kawika Riley	Paramount High School 14429 S. Downey Ave. Paramount, CA
Nov. 20-23	<a href="#">CA School Lib. Assoc. Conference 2008</a>	Sac. Convention Center Sacramento, CA

## Editor's Message

Hello Everyone,

Looks like I'm working on Hawaii time again. For those of you that are new to the AACCP newsletter and wonder why you're reading our September newsletter in October, I'm extremely behind schedule as usual :( If you live in Hawaii however, there's a chance that you might actually be reading this in September. So yes this is the AACCP September newsletter.

A few announcements to begin with – AACCP is having a big inventory reduction event at our store. If you live near San Mateo, please come and check us out. Almost everything in the store is 25% off or more with many items as low as \$5. Included in this sale are books that AACCP has collected for its private library - many of these items are now rare books. So if you know your Asian American books, you may find some real gems in our collection.

Note that the sale also extends to phone orders placed on all in stock items. So give us a call and see if we have what you're looking for.

The San Mateo Chapter of the OCA invites you all to a special election event at the San Mateo Main Library. Come and learn about the issues on the ballot, about how to vote, and other election matters. Participate in your community - it's starts with voting.

Please check out a performance of Hiroshi Kashiwagi's play "The Betrayed" on October 12th at the Berkeley Buddhist Temple.

Thank you Jeanie Low and Jennie Lew for your help with this month's article.

Got to end this here or I might not even be in time for those of you in Hawaii.

Bye.

Leonard Chan  
**Executive Editor**

## Valuable Records May Be Moved From San Bruno Archive

(Continued from page 1)

Jeanie Low, the Communications Co-Chair of SONA, states that shortly after the email from Tom Mills was received, she had a phone conversation with USCIS's records manager Dominick Gentile. In their conversation Gentile said that USCIS has no funding to process the A-Files at San Bruno and that even with funding it would take 10 years and approximately \$5 million for six trained staffers to process the files at San Bruno. He further stated that the facility at Lee's Summit had the funding and staff to process the files in less than two years and implied that USCIS's Acting Director Jonathan Scharfen preferred the processing of the files at Lee's Summit. In this conversation, no promises were made to have the files returned to San Bruno after they were processed at Lee's Summit.

After further communications with Gentile, he stated in his latest email that "we are still looking at doing the files in San Bruno. We are waiting for cost estimates from NARA based on new requirements from us."

Jennie Lew, SONA's other Communication Co-Chair, states that *"Regardless of the mixed messages we are getting from agency folk, we can no longer rely on occasional phone and email messages that seem contradictory. It's been over a year and a half, and nothing has been agreed upon much less acted on..."*

*Their credibility with our community is now non-existent. You can imagine how our community feels to first be victimized by immigration policy and now have our immigration history so disrespectfully compromised because the government can't find \$5 million or whatever to database and consolidate the files. Are our contributions to this country and our devotion to our genealogical history worth so little to be treated this way?"*

SONA is organizing a writing campaign to USCIS and NARA heads, and congressional representatives to seek an immediate halt to any movement of the A-files from San Bruno until the next administration in 2009 can take further, more agreeable action.

For further information, you can write to Jeanie Low at PO Box 472012, San Francisco, CA or correspond with AACCP's staff to get in touch with Jeanie Low or Jennie Lew.

## ADDITIONS TO OUR WEBSITE

The following books are discounted for subscribers to our newsletter. The discounts on these books end October 18, 2008.

	<p><b>Images of America Filipinos in the East Bay</b></p> <p>By Evangeline Canonizado Buell, Evelyn Luluquisen, Lillian Galedo, Eleanor Hipol Luis, Filipino American National Historical Society East Bay Chapter 2008, 128 pages, Paperback.</p> <p>Filipinos in the East Bay is another book in Arcadia Publishing's wonderful Images of America Series. This book is co-authored by remarkable author and historian Evangeline Canonizado Buell (Twenty-Five Chickens and a Pig for a Bride) and her fellow members of the Filipino American National Historical Society East Bay Chapter.</p> <p>Item #3523, Normally \$19.99 ... for newsletter subscribers <b>\$15.99</b></p>
	<p><b>The Myth of the Model Minority Asian Americans Facing Racism</b></p> <p>By Rosalind S. Chou and Joe R. Feagin 2008, 250 pages, Paperback.</p> <p>The Myth of the Model Minority is a fascinating study of a collection of Asian American respondents' views on racism directed towards Asians in America. Some of the topics discussed include everyday racism in public places, in schools and at work; the costs of Anti-Asian discrimination; struggle and conformity with a white framework; and acts of resistance to racism.</p> <p>Item #3520, Normally \$23.95 ... for newsletter subscribers <b>\$19.16</b></p>
	<p><b>The Japantowns of Placer County</b></p> <p>By California Japanese American Community Leadership Council and David Washburn 2007, 40 pages, Paperback.</p> <p>Traveling along Instate 80 between Sacramento and Reno, you may miss the historical Japanese American communities in Placer County. The Japantowns of Placer County is a nice booklet that documents the once thriving Japanese American communities of Penryn, Loomis, Auburn, and Newcastle nestled in the California Sierra Nevada foothills.</p> <p>Item #3524, Normally \$15.00 ... for newsletter subscribers <b>\$12.00</b></p>
	<p><b>Rising Sons The Japanese American GIs Who Fought for the United States In World War II</b></p> <p>By Bill Yenne 2007, 302 pages, Hardback.</p> <p>With all of the books that have been written thus far on the contributions of Japanese Americans in the US Military during World War II, Rising Sons is perhaps one of the most comprehensive on the subject. Rising Sons is part history book, part biography, part reference, and a great read.</p> <p>Item #3521, Normally \$25.95 ... for newsletter subscribers <b>\$20.76</b></p>
	<p><b>Dim Sum for Everyone!</b></p> <p>By Grace Lin 2001, 27 pages, Paperback.</p> <p>Have a hankering for some dim sum? Then take a bite of this delicious favorite children's book by prolific author Grace Lin. This book includes a nice list of some if the dishes you may find at a dim sum restaurant.</p> <p>Item #3522, Normally \$6.99 ... for newsletter subscribers <b>\$5.59</b></p>

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