

Chinese in Hawai'i

Demography. The Chinese-American population in Hawaii as of the 2000 U.S. Census: 170,803. They comprise 15.57% of the population in Honolulu County, 11.80% in Hawaii County and 8.99% in Maui County. The City of Honolulu has 68,649 Chinese-Americans, or 18.53% of the population. Overall, the Chinese in Hawaii constitute about 4.7% of the state's population. This number does not include people of mixed Chinese and Hawaiian descent — if the Chinese-Hawaiians are included, they form about 1/3 of Hawaii's population.

Language Groups. Cantonese, Mandarin

Origins. Chinese sailors first came to Hawaii in 1778, the year of the arrival of Captain James Cook. Many settled and married Hawaiian women. Some Island-born Chinese can claim to be 7th-generation. Numerous Chinese began immigrating to the U.S. from Guangdong province in the mid- to late-19th century



Chinese cemetery in Honolulu.

to work as laborers on sugar plantations, because of poor economic conditions at home. As a result, three quarters of Hawaii's Chinese have ancestors from Zhongshan in Guangdong.

Notable Chinese people from Hawaii. *Military:* Gordon Pai'ea Chung-Hoon, Admiral in the U.S. Navy. *Politics:* Daniel K. Akaka, U.S. Senator for Hawaii; Hiram L. Fong, U.S. Senator, 1959–1977; Clayton Hee, member of the Hawaii Senate. *Arts and Entertainment:* Kam-Fong Chun, actor, police detective in Hawaii Five-O; Chang Apana Honolulu Police Dept. officer and detective, inspiration for the fictional Asian detective character, Charlie Chan; Don Ho, entertainer; Kelly Hu, actress and fashion model; Jason Scott Lee, actor, martial artist; Richard Loo, film actor. *Sports:* Brian Ching, professional soccer player; Norm Chow, collegiate football coach; William K.S. Chow, martial arts instructor and promoter of kenpo.

University of Hawaii and William Kwai Fong Yap. Born in 1873, William Kwai Fong Yap left school at 13 to begin work. He held a number of positions and was the first person of Chinese descent to serve on the professional staff at the Bank of Hawaii.



In 1919, with the assistance of College of Hawaii President Arthur Dean and Regent Wallace Farrington, Yap drafted and circulated a petition to expand the college into a university offering graduate degrees. The petition stated the need for a university to prepare Hawaii's people for professional careers and serve as a fulcrum for Asia and Pacific relations. Yap collected more than 400 signatures. On April 29, 1919, Senate Bill 76, "An Act to Establish a University of Hawaii," was passed unani-

mously and signed into law. Yap is now honored as "The Father of the University of Hawaii."

Hawaii and Sun Yat-sen. Dr. Sun Yat-sen was a fervent revolutionary who played an instrumental role in overthrowing the Qing Dynasty — the last dynasty in China after 2,000 years of imperial reign — in October 1911. He became the first president of the new Republic of China, and has been called "China's George Washington."

Born November 12, 1866, in the village of Cuiheng in Zhongshan County, young Sun Wen (who later adopted the first name Yat-sen [Yixian in Mandarin]) came to Hawaii in 1879, at the age of 13. His older brother, Sun Ahmi (Sun Mei) had arrived on Maui in 1871 and become a successful ranch owner



Sun Yat-sen's family in Honolulu, 1901.

and entrepreneur. He sent for Sun Wen, enrolling him in Iolani School on Oahu in 1879. Sun Wen learned quickly and was awarded a prize by King Kalakaua before graduating in 1882. In January 1883, he enrolled at Punahou School, then called The Oahu College, where he became so transfixed with Western notions of equality and democracy, and the Christian religion, that his brother in alarm made him withdraw after only one semester and return to the village in China. But it was too late: Sun Yat-sen's Hawaii education had already planted the seeds of revolution in his mind, and his village could not contain him. He reached maturation in Hong Kong and Japan and committed himself to the revolutionary cause.

Dr. Sun's later trips to Hawaii focused on organizing revolutionary societies and raising funds from among the overseas Chinese community for his revolutionary activities, beginning with his long-suffering brother Sun Ahmi. The Chinese in Hawaii were particularly generous in contributing, in defiance of the Qing imperial government and at some risk to their own lives. During his lifetime, Sun came to Hawaii six times and spent a total of more than seven years in Hawaii, more than in any other country he visited outside of China.

Chinese Societies in Hawaii. Today, there are over 200 active Chinese societies in Hawaii, including clubs based on kinship or village of origin, professional associations, and social or religious societies. Of these, the most notable are the United Chinese Society — an umbrella association — and the dynamic Chinese Chamber of Commerce, that organizes an annual Narcissus Beauty Pageant and Tour and a Splendor of China trade fair and exhibition. Hawaii's Chinese actively interact with individuals and organizations on both sides of the Taiwan Straits, make countless trips between Hawaii and the now burgeoning "old country," and hold fervently to the belief that Hawaii's health is integrally linked to China's growth and success.

