Dalip Singh Saund

Selected Firsts

in Asian Pacific American History

Government Representing California in 1956, Dalip Singh Saund became the first Asian-American U.S. Representative.

Science and Medicine In 1957, Tsung-Dao Lee and Chen Ning Yang became the first Asian-Americans to win the Nobel Prize for physics. They were awarded the prize for disproving a quantum-physics law.

Literature and Publishing In 1974, both Ken Kashiwahara and Connie Chung became the first Asian-American network news reporters. In 1993, Chung also became the first Asian-American news anchor (main reporter) for a major television station.

Film In 1921, Anna May Wong became the first widely recognized Asian-American film star. In 1951, she also became the first Asian-American to have her own television series, "The Gallery of Madame Liu Tsong."

Air and Space In 1932, Katherine Sui Fun Cheung became the first licensed Asian-American aviator. As a co-member of the woman-only aviation "99-Club" (headed by Amelia Earhart), Cheung participated in numerous aerial performances and races, eventually retiring from aviation after an accident destroyed her plane.

Military In 1944, Calvin Chin and Anthony Loo Wong became the first Chinese Americans to be commissioned as second lieutenants (officers), after graduating from the Medical Administrative Corps Officer Candidate School at Camp Barkeley, Texas.

Sports In 1948, Richard Tom became the first Asian-American to win an Olympic medal. He received the Bronze Medal for weightlifting.

Anna May Wong

Calvin Chin

Anthony Loo Wong

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

MAY

MUCH LIKE Black History Month and Women's History Month, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month originated with a **congressional bill.** Two Representatives introduced the bill to the House of Representatives and two senators introduced the bill to the Senate. Both of them passed, and U.S. President Jimmy Carter officially recognized Asian/Pacific Heritage Week on October 5, 1978. Several years later, in May 1990, President George H. W. Bush expanded it to a month, and **designated** it as Asian Pacific Heritage Month. The month of May was chosen in honor of the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the United States on May 7, 1843 and also the completion of the **transcontinental** railroad on May 10, 1869.

May is celebrated with community events that involve historical, educational, and cultural activities, and the recognition of famous Asian Americans in such fields as architecture, entertainment, athletics, education, art, and science. One historical period often discussed in school curricula in May is the building of the first railroad that **spanned** the American continent. This railroad, **largely** built by Chinese immigrants, is considered one of the **crowning** achievements of President Abraham Lincoln, even though it was completed four years after his death. To build the railroad, the Union Pacific Railroad began in Nebraska, and worked westward through Colorado and Wyoming to Utah. At the same time, the Central Pacific Railroad began in California, and moved eastward through Nevada to Utah, carving out places for railroad tracks in high mountain peaks. The two railroad companies met in the town of Promontary, Utah, where they **drove** in the final "golden **spike**" that brought together the east and west coasts of the American continent. This **feat** revolutionized the economy and population of the U.S. It caused the **wagon trains** to be **obsolete,** and **affected** commerce, trade, and travel across the continent.

Glossary

congressional: *adj.* of an elected group of representatives
bill: *n.* a proposed law in government
designate(d): *v.* to officially choose for a particular reason or purpose
transcontinental: *adj.* extending across a continent
span(ned): *v.* to cross the length between two points
largely: *adv.* mostly; almost completely
crown(ing): *adj.* greatest
drive: *v.* to provide the power to make something happen; to pound in
spike: *n.* a narrow thin shape with a point on one end, usually metal
feat: *n.* an action that involves risk or difficulty
wagon train: *n.* a group or line of vehicles with four wheels, pulled by animals
obsolete: *adj.* not in use anymore because something more modern has replaced it
affect(ed): *v.* to cause to change