

National Archives Central Plains Region Exhibits

The Central Plains Region offers small, temporary exhibits in the lobby area. Exhibits use facsimile copies of original records held by the region in order to protect the original documents from harmful ultraviolet light. All of our exhibits are designed to educate visitors about the records we hold and how they may be of use to them. Exhibits are changed every two to three months and focus on a variety of topics. Call (816) 268-8071 for the exhibit schedule.



The **Fashion Court** exhibit examined several court cases concerning the fashion and beauty industry. All of the documents and artifacts exhibited are from the National Archives-Central Plains Region.

About the National Archives

The National Archives and Records Administration is America's national record-keeper, a public trust on which our democracy depends. The records we hold play a vital role in our democracy. These records and millions of others give shape to the ideals outlined in the Declaration of Independence, the foundations of democracy laid down in the Constitution, and the freedoms guaranteed to American citizens by the Bill of Rights. Not only do they document the actions of Government, making accountability possible, they document individual rights and entitlements. They tell the story of who we are as a people. They reveal the courage, determination, and spirit that have shaped our democracy throughout its history.



For more information about any of the information contained in this brochure please contact:
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Central Plains Region
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The United States v. Lee Kim



Special Lobby Display
April 3, 2006– May 31, 2006

National Archives
Central Plains Region
2312 E. Bannister Rd.
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816-268-8000

The United States v. Lee Kim

How do you prove your citizenship if your family has been killed and records have been destroyed in a natural disaster? What if you have recently been convicted of a crime? What if your birth country has strict laws against immigration from the country of your parents' birth?



A photograph of Lee Kim that was included in the court case file.

These were all the circumstances facing one man in the 1930s. Lee Kim also known as Lee Kim Kang swore he was born in the United States. But was he? This was the issue at hand in *The United States v. Lee Kim*.

Background of the Case

In 1933 Lee Kim was arrested in Chicago on a narcotics charge. He was convicted and sentenced to Leavenworth Penitentiary for a year and a day. He served his time in what was known as "The Annex," which housed less serious offenders. His imprisonment brought him to the attention of immigration officials. They sought to prove that he was not a U.S. citizen. If he was not, he could be immediately deported for having been convicted on the drug charges. If citizenship was proven, Lee Kim could stay in the United States. Because Kim was imprisoned in Kansas, his case was heard in the United States District Court in Topeka, Kansas.

Lee Kim was interviewed on three separate oc-

casions by U.S. Immigration Inspector W. H. Biggs in May, July, and August 1933. Kim stated under oath that he was born in San Francisco on May 3, 1895. He was not able to produce a birth certificate or any other type of written documentation to prove this fact. In addition, Kim claimed that his parents Lee Chee and Ng Shee had both been killed shortly after the devastating 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. Kim said he survived the earthquake because he had been sent by his parents to work in a drugstore with his father's cousin Lee Yuen Que before the quake hit.

Being a child (11 years of age) at the time of this event, Kim's memory of the details of his early years in San Francisco were somewhat sketchy, although he was able to provide some detail as to his father's employment and where he lived. He also relayed that in the months following the earthquake, a cousin, Lee Hing Yong, took him to Chicago where he had been living ever since.

Immigration inspectors took the information Lee Kim gave and tried to find evidence to support his claims. They were not successful and a trial was held to determine if Lee Kim should be deported.

This exhibition explores the trial of Lee Kim. It also explains how strict laws on Chinese immigration passed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire affected this case.

This case may be found at the National Archives-Central Plains Region in Record Group 21, Records of the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas, First Division, Topeka, Kansas, Law Case Files (1861-1940), Case #3889.

In addition, there is a file relating to this case held at the National Archives-Great Lakes Region in Chicago. Because Lee Kim was living in Chicago prior to his arrest, immigration and naturalization officials conducted some investigation work there, including interviews with witnesses. This case file is found in Record Group 85, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Records of District No. 9, Chicago, Illinois, Segregated Chinese Files, Chinese Case Files (1898-1940), Case # 2038/1055.

Visit our website at: http://www.archives.gov/facilities/mo/kansas_city.html to get more information on our holdings, or call (816) 268-8000 to speak with an archivist.

To learn more about Chinese Exclusion Laws and records contained in the National Archives nationwide, visit our website at <http://www.archives.gov/locations/finding-aids/chinese-immigration.html>

The National Archives has numerous photographs of the aftermath of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. To search amongst the digital images available online, visit our website at: <http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/>. Type in the words "San Francisco earthquake" in the search engine box.

San Francisco Earthquake of 1906: The Hall of Records, McAllister and Leavenworth Streets, which is part of the Civic Center Building in the City Hall group. National Archives & Records Administration, ARC Identifier: 531061.

