

## Angel Island Trip

By: Caroline Cheng

In recognition of June as Immigrant Heritage Month, Mayor Darcy Paul and the Cupertino Historical Society organized a group of enthusiastic Cupertino who went to explore the Angel Island Immigration Station facility and museum. Our journey began on a beautiful day and we took the ferry to Angel Island, gathered as a group for a team meeting, and focused on our mission to explore the history and stories of the people who came through Angel Island.



Once we arrived at the Immigration Station, we enjoyed lunch by the port and saw the fog bell, which was used to warn ships to not hit the shore of Angel Island on foggy days.

Inside the barracks, we saw what life was like for individuals who were detained at the Angel Island Immigration Station. The living space was very compact and crowded, and individuals could only get up onto the third level bunk bed by climbing up on the other beds below. One of our tour guides, Marshall Grimes, also shared some stories about different individuals who went through Angel Island. He talked about someone who was detained for almost 2 years and how only having one set of documents for one sibling of a family led to very different lives in the U.S. and back in China.

Additionally, we learned about the segregation at the Immigration Station where the women and children were separated from men, and individuals of different races were also separated. Many individuals spent their time reading and writing, even sometimes about their experiences at the Immigration Station. The detainees carved many poems into the walls of the building to express their distress, loneliness, and desire to get out and have a better life. However, the government had tried to cover these writings with wood putty and by repainting the walls with paint that contained lead. The different colored patches on the wall demonstrated



how the carvings had tried to be covered multiple times.

After some more time for exploration, we had the great opportunity to visit the Angel Island Immigration Station Museum, which exhibited details about the Immigration Station Hospital as well as immigration policies. When speaking with Ed Tepporn, the Executive Director of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation, he shared, “My hope is that people will feel inspired to talk with their friends, their families, their neighbors, their co-workers about what they learn about this history at Angel Island, and unfortunately, how this history is still connected to current events today.”

We also had some reflection and discussion time to process what we had learned and felt. Some takeaways included recognizing the importance of learning from this less well-known history of Angel Island in order to not repeat the same patterns, and taking action to implement public policies that are welcoming and provide opportunities for all individuals.

Furthermore, in recognition of Immigrant Heritage Month in June, it is important to celebrate the heritage and contributions of all immigrants, including ones who came through Angel Island. “When we look at many of the Silicon Valley companies, the arts, media, movies and literature, there are a number of Asian and Pacific Islanders, many of them who are immigrants or of immigrant heritage, and some whose ancestors came through Angel Island,” said Tepporn.

For further learning about the history and stories of the Angel Island Immigration Station, the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation offers various virtual exhibitions and tours. In

the meantime, Tepporn said, “there's definitely no replacement for being physically on the island and walking in the buildings and the rooms and feeling that sense of history and emotion.”

