

## E1141, Video 2

We all stared at the women because we so seldom saw them in the streets. The catastrophic 1906 San Francisco earthquake toppled entire buildings and nearly burned down the entire city. Yet this elderly goldsmith remembers the strangeness of seeing Chinese women in the streets.

Now that says a lot, don't you think? Apparently it was a really odd sight to see them outdoors during the day such was not allowed according to Chinese custom. Now this is just one of the many facts that intrigued me and Connie Young Hughes' factual account of her first-generation immigrant grandmother living in America.

Now what about the custom of foot binding? What did you think of that? The very idea of forcibly tying a young girl's foot back deforming it for life, I have to admit it is a bit foreign to me. But of course I am not a part of that culture. And for those who are, this custom has been handed down through the generations and so is likely to be accepted without question. Regardless, it must have been quite a shock for both parties, the American citizens and the Chinese immigrants.

The author points this out plainly, saying life in America my grandmother found, was indeed rugged and unpredictable. Rugged, I imagine because of the many demands placed on them as a result of their move to a new and strange land; unpredictable because their new surroundings and the many American customs that appeared odd to them.

Now all the stress even without the devastating 1906 earthquake that would shake their world even more and which in the author's words forced some modernity on the San Francisco Chinese community. Now suddenly, Chinese customs had to bend to necessity. Women had to come out of their cultural confinement to work right alongside the men. The author goes on to describe more hardships typical of an immigrant's

experience, health, legal issues, and the lure of opportunity for one's family among them.

After the earthquake, the author tells us that many men moved their families back to China. According to the author they did this because they thought this was the only way for their children to get a good education. But while her grandfather traveled back and forth to the United States for his trade business, he contracted an illness on board ship and died leaving his family fatherless.

Now thinking that perhaps America was the land that offered her children the greatest opportunity the author's grandmother moved the family back to their adopted country. But it turns out that their problems wouldn't end there. When health issues threatened her deportation Hughes' grandmother was detained at Angel Island where she remained for 15 months during which a fierce legal battle ensued. Once settled though, not only was Hughes' grandmother allowed to join her family in San Francisco but her case went on to be used as legal precedent for subsequent Asian immigration cases.

Now our next piece of nonfiction is called special report Asia's Angels and it provides information about the Angel Island immigration center in San Francisco. As you read this report recall another immigration staging area called Ellis Island in New York City. Pay attention to things that these two entry ports have in common as well as those attributes that set them apart.

Now one more thing, both Angel Island and Ellis Island are more than just points on a map. They represent for many of us in America today our very beginnings. For those of us whose ancestors are not 100% American, which is pretty much all of us, Ellis Island and Angel Island have the capacity to conjure up pretty emotional images. See if you can catch a glimpse of some of the images and feelings those who came before us could have experienced.