

Writing On The Walls

When the Immigration Station opened in 1910, the walls of the detention barracks became the voice of the people held inside.

Through frustration, fear, anxiety, and protest, many detainees wrote or carved their thoughts into the soft wooden walls. These inscriptions form a personal account of a unique immigration experience that is now a part of America's heritage.

While Chinese is the most common language on the walls, inscriptions in Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Italian, French, German, English, Punjabi (Urdu), Bengali, and Korean can also be found.

After the Immigration Station closed in 1940, the US Army detained prisoners of war, who also left messages inside the building.

Chinese Poetry

*The low building with three beams merely shelters the body.
It is unbearable to relate the stories accumulated on the
Island slopes.*

*Wait till the day I become successful and fulfill my wish!
I will show no mercy when I level the immigration station!*

By one from Toishan

埃屋三椽聊保身，
崙麓積愆不堪陳。
待得飛騰順遂日，
剷除稅關不論仁。



台山人題

Scan the QR code to listen to the poem read in Toishanese by Yui Poon Ng of the Ing Suey Sun Tong Association of Vancouver.

To request a copy of this publication in an alternate format, contact tours.angelisland@parks.ca.gov.

Additional resources can be found online at www.aiisf.org.



History of the Detention Barracks

Between 1910 and 1940, newly-arrived immigrants were ferried to Angel Island and locked in the overcrowded dormitory until they passed a medical screening and entry hearing. Appealing a possible deportation meant even longer detention at the Immigration Station.

Male and female detainees were held in separate dormitories, which decreased the chance of collaboration during interrogations. Small children, however, remained with their mothers. Women were moved into the administration building a year or two after the station opened.

The building once held up to five-hundred beds. The length of detention was often determined by race and class. People stayed days, weeks, or months. One Chinese immigrant, 16-year-old Kong Din Quong, was held for 756 days (over two years) on Angel Island.

History of the WWII Mess Hall

After the Immigration Station relocated to San Francisco, the US Army expanded its facilities to hold POWs and Japanese Americans during World War II.

Renamed North Garrison of Fort McDowell, the site included the detention barracks, mess hall, guard towers, and barracks for American soldiers.

The mess hall replaced an open-air recreation pavilion used by detainees until 1940.

WWII Mess Hall Exhibit



Taken From Their Families: Japanese American Incarceration on Angel Island During World War II

DETENTION BARRACKS MUSEUM



Second Floor




Chinese Men's Dormitory (2nd Floor)

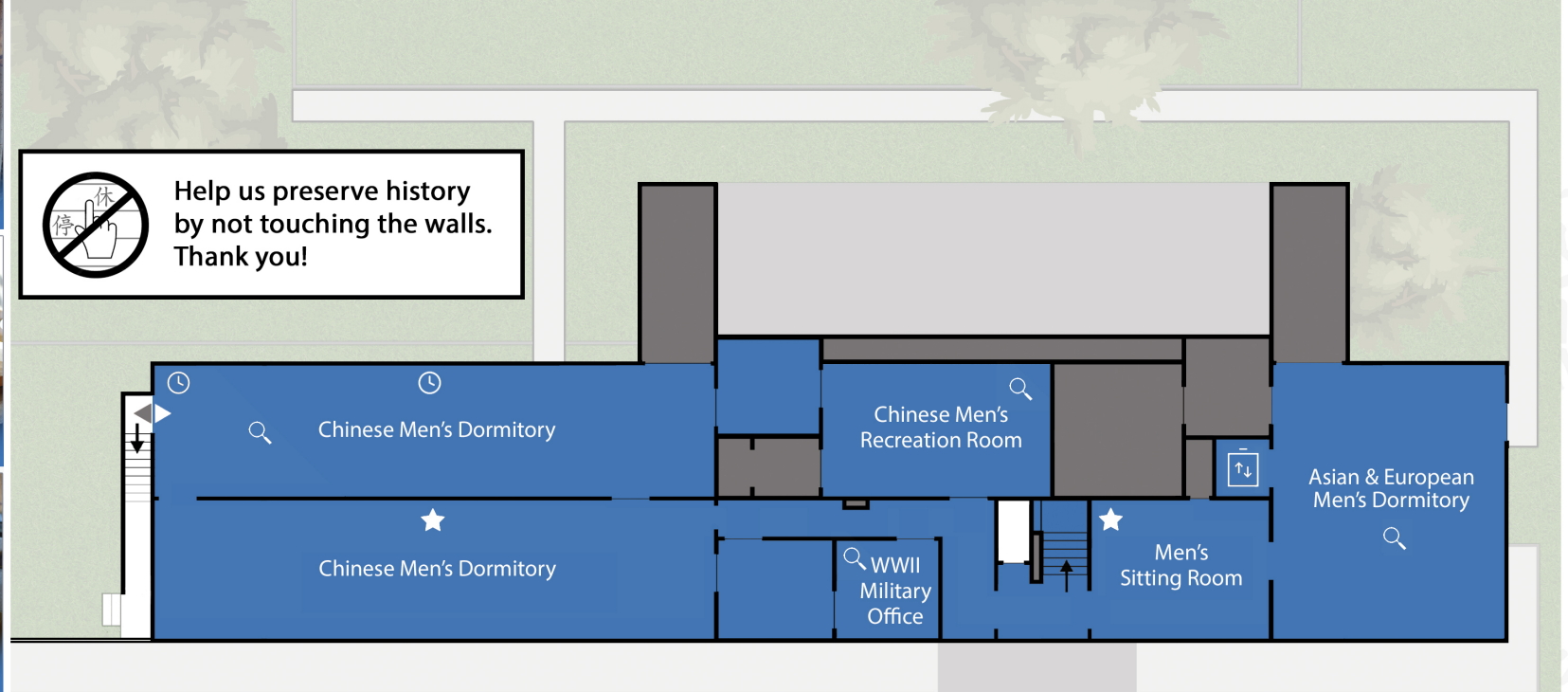


Chinese Men's Recreation Room

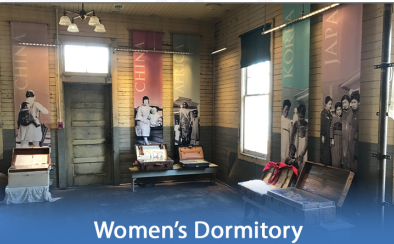


Asian & European Men's Dormitory

 Help us preserve history by not touching the walls. Thank you!



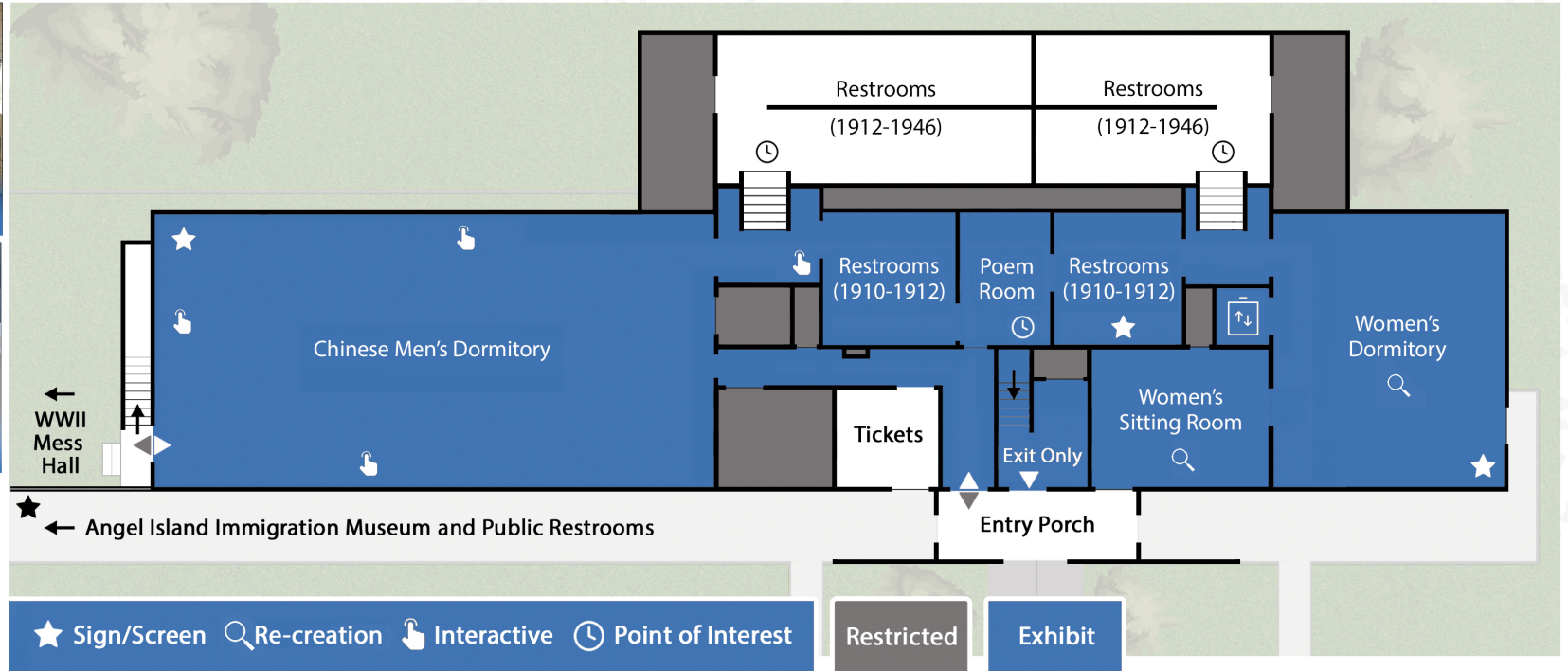
First Floor



Women's Dormitory



World War II Mess Hall



Discover the poetry of the Detention Barracks Museum. Explore two floors of exhibits that tell the story of those who were detained here between 1910-1940 and 1941-1946.

★ Sign/Screen 🔍 Re-creation 🖱 Interactive 🕒 Point of Interest

Restricted

Exhibit