The First Generation of Filipinos in California
By Chuck Johnston

During the late 1920s and all of the 1930s in the United States, it would have been hard to find a more devout group of boxing fans than Filipinos who had migrated from the Philippines a short time before. Despite the fact there were only about 110,000 Filipinos in the Continental United States and the Hawaiian Islands in 1930, Filipino fans were a significant fan base in many boxing venues on both the Hawaiian Islands and the West Coast of the United States.

According to the late Bob Soderman's history of boxing in Hawaii during World War II, Filipinos made up about 70% of the estimated total attendance of about 100,000 at the twenty-three professional boxing shows in Hawaii in 1941. One would think that Filipinos turned out to see boxing shows before 1941 due to the fact that Filipino boxers were boxing on many of the said shows. Moreover, the most popular Filipino boxers of the 1930s drew impressive crowds which contributed to some very large gates when they fought in Hawaii.

On the more populous mainland of the United States, the Filipinos made up a much smaller percentage of professional boxing attendance than in Hawaii. This was true even on the West Coast, where they settled in large numbers. Of course, there were only about 45,000 Filipinos on the mainland during the 1930s with about 30,000 Filipinos (or 2/3 of the Filipinos living on the mainland) living in California. Despite their relatively small population, the Filipinos would still be a very significant boxing fan base in various venues on the West Coast, notably in California. This was one reason why many Filipino boxers stayed on the West Coast during the 1920s and 1930s.

Like other histories of Asian-Americans, the history of Filipino-Americans isn't well known to many Americans, including Filipino-Americans In fact, one can say that the a majority of the current generation of Filipino-Americans have a superficial knowledge of the history of the "first-wave" Filipinos. Moreover, it isn't well-known even among young Filipino-Americans that that a lot of the "first wave" Filipinos were tremendous boxing fans or that top Filipino boxers of the 1920s or 1930s were among the best-known Filipinos of the day. Even if one takes an Asian-American history class, it is possible that one would not learn that a lot of "first-wave" Filipinos were boxing fans.

One reason is that most of the recent books on Asian-American history do not cover the subject of boxing even if there is a good proportion of said books devoted to the history of "first wave" Filipinos in the United States. Since the "first-wave" Filipino immigrants in California had a great impact on boxing far beyond their numbers during the 1920s and the 1930s, it is important to explore the reasons why.

Reading books on Asian immigration to the Hawaiian Islands and to the mainland of the United States does much to explain this. The fact that the vast majority of "first-wave" Filipino immigrants were young, single men (who were known as manongs or Pinoys) was one important reason why this relatively small population was important to boxing promoters at quite a few venues in California. This is despite the fact that the Filipino population in California in 1930 was far less than one percent of the total population in the state.

The United States took over the Philippines during the Spanish-American War in 1898. Up until then, the Philippines had been under Spanish rule for several centuries. As a result of the American takeover, the Filipinos became American nationals and would be able to travel to any part of the United States. This would last until 1934.

In 1910, there were only 406 Filipinos on the mainland of the United States. Of these, 109 lived in Louisiana, but they were descendants of Spanish-speaking "Manilamen" who deserted from Spanish galleons during the 18th Century.

Among the first Filipinos to come to the mainland of the United States after 1898 were students who were enrolled American schools. In 1903, a little less than one hundred Filipino students sailed on the steam ship, Korea, to San Francisco and then took a train down to Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, such a large group attracted lots of newspaper coverage and a substantial number of on-lookers. Then the students were sent to various schools in Southern California.

Another publicized group of about 1,000 Filipinos were a part of a huge display at the 1904 World's Fair in St. 47 acres were set aside to show the huge variety of exhibits depicting life in the Philippines. of sizable group of Filipinos who came to the United States were in the U.S. Navy.

The U.S. Navy recruited Filipinos after the United States took over the Philippines. After having a fairly wide range of job classifications within their reach before and during World War I, they would be

restricted to being mess boys or stewards for several decades afterwards even if they had a lot of ability or a good educational background.

During World War I, there were around 6,000 Filipinos in the U.S. Navy. In his book, BROTHERS UNDER THE SKIN, Carey McWilliams wrote that 25,000 Filipinos served in the United States Armed Forces during the war. After the war ended, the number of Filipinos in the Navy dropped to about 4,000 (or about 5% of all personal in U.S. Navy at the time) and it would stay close to that figure throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Filipinos who were honorably discharged had the chance to become United States citizens.

During the 1910s and 1920s, boxing was a very popular sport in the U.S. Navy, especially on the West Coast. Many Navy units and ships had boxing teams. There seemed to be boxing tournaments going on all of the time in the Navy at the time. So many of the boxers in the Navy were fighting in regular boxing shows.

Several Filipino club fighters had boxed while in the U.S. Navy during the 1920s. Alkie Akol and Tony Valderama come to mind. Akol reportedly was an All-Navy Flyweight Champion. He would box for several years in Southern California during the middle 1920s. Sammy Santos, a main event boxer fighting out of San Diego, was in the Navy before becoming a boxer. It is also believed that Ceferino Garcia, who was a World Middleweight Champion during the late 1930s and early 1940s was in the U.S. Navy before boxing in the United States.

Filipinos have continued to join the U.S. Navy even after the Philippines became independent in 1946. Many are eager to join the U.S. Navy because it was a path out of poverty and a way of immigrating to the United States.

But the first very large groups of Filipinos to come to Hawaii or the mainland of United States were agricultural laborers. The Filipinos were the latest of several Asian groups to do such work in both Hawaii and on the mainland, especially in California. With the rapid expansion of labor intensive agriculture during the 19th Century and 20th Century in both Hawaii and the Western United States, there was a great need for more and more people who would do the "stoop" labor for low wages.

During the 19th Century, the first Asians to come to both Hawaii and California were the Chinese. When large-scale, labor-intensive agriculture started in both areas, the Chinese provided much of the labor. The first Chinese came to California in the early 1850s during the Gold Rush. They worked in a wide variety of occupations at the time, including working in the gold fields. When the Transcontinental Railroad was built during the 1860s, the Central Pacific, which built the Far West section, used as many as 12,000 Chinese workers at one point.

In 1870, there were about 48,000 Chinese in California, which meant they constituted nine percent of the population in the state. The Chinese males out-numbered the Chinese females by a ratio of 14-to-1. Moreover, almost all of the Chinese in the United States were adults. This meant that the Chinese presence in the California work force was far greater than their population would indicate. The Chinese made up about 25% of the workforce in California in 1870.

The Transcontinental Railroad linked California to markets in the East. This included California agricultural products. California's generally mild weather meant that crops could be grown during the entire year in many places. The presence of the Chinese meant that there was a large workforce which was needed in intensive agriculture.

There were other factors in the rapid expansion of intensive agriculture in California during the late 19th and the early 20th Centuries. The invention of the refrigerated railroad car meant that many agricultural products preserved well enough to ship to many markets outside the state. Another factor was the introduction of large-scale irrigation in a state where many areas have relatively little rainfall or have several dry years in a row.

Raising cattle had been done on a large scale in California during the time Spain and then Mexico ruled in the future state. This continued when the United States took over. At times, raising cattle was very profitable. However, it wasn't profitable on a steady basis for many because of there were a lot of dry years. As a result, many owners had a hard time of it. There was a lot of wheat farming in California during the latter part of the 19th Century. But there were a lot of areas where wheat could be grown, making it less profitable on a consistent basis.

Since a great variety of crops can be grown and harvested during the entire year in California, it meant that California farmers didn't have that many competitors in other areas outside the state. This meant that a lot of money could be made at times even when farming on a relatively small piece of land. This wasn't true when it came to cattle ranching or wheat farming.

In intensive agriculture to this day in California, much of the work is done by hand. It is ironic that intensive agriculture was starting to take place on a large scale at a time when many labor-saving mechanical

devices were being introduced in other types of agriculture, making it possible to have a much smaller work force in the latter. But the tremendous expansion of intensive agriculture in Hawaii and the western part of United State As a result, there was a tremendous need for more and more laborers.

Besides doing arduous and low-paying work, a migrant worker has to move from place to place in order to make a living. In many areas in California, farmers didn't need many of the workers the entire year because there wasn't enough work during much of the time. But during key periods of the year, the migrant workers were a vital source of labor for these farmers. The most obvious key period was harvesting the crops, much of which is done by hand to this day. Other key periods included planting, weeding, and thinning, but many of the tasks could be done by machine or with relatively few people.

There were white laborers, including tramps, who traveled from place to place in order to get work during the 19th Century and the 20th Century, but there weren't enough of them to satisfy the labor requirements for intensive agriculture. Moreover, many white workers, including tramps, would avoid doing such work unless there were dire circumstances like an economic depression. As a result, many of the farmworkers were from minority groups.

The Chinese proved to be a tremendous success as agricultural workers in both Hawaii and California. But many people resented the Chinese in the United States. Besides being different physically and having different customs, the Chinese were perceived to be an economic threat by other workers. The Chinese were known to work in adverse conditions for low wages. As a result, many white workers felt that their bargaining power was being hurt. During some hard times, the resentment was more pronounced.

As time went on, there became fewer and fewer occupational fields available to Chinese in the United States. There had been some Chinese who worked in factories around 1870, but they would cease to be a presence as time went on. In cities, some Chinese opened up businesses in which they had to put in long hours in order to make a living. The most notable of the businesses were the Chinese laundries, which were numerous. During World War II when there were a great variety of good-paying jobs available to them for first time, a lot of Chinese laundries went out of business.

The resentment towards the Chinese was so great that the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by Congress in 1882. The act barred Chinese from coming to the United States. Since there were relatively few Chinese women in the United States, it meant that the Chinese in the United States would a bachelor society for quite a while. But there were a number of Chinese who would come to the United States as "paper sons" after the earthquake and fire destroyed a lot of records in San Francisco in 1906. As a result, many Chinese claimed to be born in the United States, which made them citizens under the U.S. Constitution and entitled them to have their "sons" come to the United States.

Another interesting note is that an estimated 10,000 Chinese were working in the cotton fields during the 1920s in an area of Mexico just over the United States-Mexico border and a short distance south of the Imperial Valley. Their pay was a dollar a day. But many of the jobs in the cotton fields in the Imperial Valley paid $2.75 a day. However, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act prevented them from going across the border. But a lot of Mexicans were able to go from the cotton fields in Mexico to the Imperial Valley.

The next large Asian group to come to Hawaii and the United States work in the fields were the Japanese. This started in the 1880s and, like the Chinese, they proved to be a great success as farm laborers in both places. Many of the Japanese in California would save some money from working in the fields and then become farmers or owners of a variety of businesses. Some other people of Japanese descent would become labor contractors.

The most visible of the Japanese farmers were ones that had small pots of land, which they owned or leased. They seemed to be very adept at changing marginal land into thriving farms. The contributions that the Japanese made to California agriculture have been enormous, but they were perceived to be such a economic threat by others that laws in California would be passed prohibited aliens who were ineligible for U.S. citizenship from owning land.

Koreans came to both Hawaii and to the mainland of United States during the early part of the 20th Century to work in the fields, but in small numbers compared to the Chinese and Japanese. Around the same time, small numbers of Sikhs came. They had distinctive turbans and were from the Punjab Plain in India. Mistakenly called Hindus, the ratio of Sikh males to Sikh females was about 100-to-1. There were some Sikhs in California who married women of Mexican descent.

In 1908, the United States and Japan made a GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT. Japan agreed not to let Japanese come to the United States or Hawaii. The United States also started to prohibit Japanese-born residents of Hawaii to come to the mainland of the United States. In other words, they could not "reimmigrate." It meant that much of the labor force in Hawaii had to stay there or go back to the place of

their birth. There would be immigration restrictions against other Asian groups (except Filipinos), too.

The GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT of 1908 and immigration restrictions against Asian groups except Filipinos made people in Hawaii and the southwestern part of the United States to look elsewhere for laborers. The Philippines became the main source for laborers in Hawaii. In the 1910s, Mexicans started coming to the United States in massive numbers.

It should be noted that some of the farm laborers in California during the late 19th and early 20th Century were of Mexican descent. However, Mexicans didn't come to California in massive numbers until the Mexican Revolution, which started in 1910, was taking place. Moreover, the vast majority of Mexicans who migrated to the United States during the first few decades of the 20th Century were coming across the border between Mexico and Texas. It should also be pointed out that many of the Mexicans who had come to California during the 1910s and 1930s had prior work experience in other states.

A lot of Mexicans would work in the United States to get a little money, go back to Mexico for while, and then come back to the United States during the first few decades of the 20th Century. Many of them weren't going through checkpoints. In other words, the U.S.-Mexico border in many ways was an imaginary line with a free flow of people going back and forth. As a result, it is difficult to pin down how many Mexicans migrated to the United States during the 1910s and 1920s.

With the advent of World War I, many of the young American men left their jobs in agriculture and went into the service or went to work in better-paying jobs in the war industries. In addition, the migration of Europeans to the United States slowed to a trickle. As a result the labor shortage became even more acute.

The migration of the Mexicans to the United States would be massive with estimates of well over a million coming to the United States by the advent of the 1930s. By the end of the 1910s, it was estimated that more than half of the migrant workers were of Mexican descent. Large numbers of Mexicans also went to work in other jobs on farms, in the mines, in the railroad repair crews, and in factories in the Southwest.

It is a little-known fact that a sizable number of Mexicans went to the Midwest very early during this massive migration. Since sugar beets were grown in some areas of the Midwest, there was a need for the large amount of stoop labor involved in the growing of such crops. Since the work was arduous, low-paying, and often seasonal, it shouldn't come as a surprise that thousands of Mexicans went to work in factories located there, including the automobile manufacturing plants in Detroit and the steel mills located around Chicago and Gary. During the GREAT DEPRESSION, many of the Mexicans, who had lost their jobs while living in the Midwest, went back to Mexico. Many went back on their own accord, but many others were persuaded to go back in various ways, including being repatriated.

When Hawaii was annexed to the United States in 1900, the labor supply from China was cut off because of the CHINESE EXCLUSION LAW which was passed in 1882. As noted before, the Japanese labor supply was cut off when the United States and Japan made a GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT in 1908. Filipinos started coming to Hawaii to work on the sugar plantations in 1906.

At the time, many Filipino farmers were having a hard time making it. Their lives probably were hard even during the best of times, but it certainly became harder during the early part of the 20th Century. Many of the agricultural fields had been converted from growing basic foods to growing cash crops. As a result, much of the food had to be imported in the Philippines. This made the farmers less self-sufficient and more dependent on outside markets.

Many Filipino farmers were forced to borrow while putting up their land as security. With many of them being in debt and losing their land, there were a lot of people who felt they had to go elsewhere in order to make some money. It also was hard to find work in the Philippines, so a lot of them felt they had to go abroad.

The Filipinos, Japanese, and Chinese lived and worked separately on the sugar plantations. Moreover, the owners had the three groups competing against each other in order to keep them from organizing and striking as one big group. As a result, the working and the living conditions were bad for the most part and the pay was low. A lot of Chinese and Japanese workers left the plantations if there were other economic opportunities.

A lot of the Filipinos of the day had planned to go back to the Philippines after making enough money. But many of them didn't make enough to go back home. By 1930, about 110,000 Filipinos had gone to Hawaii with 63,052 being there in 1930. Only 10,486 of the latter were female. In addition, the majority of the sugar plantation workers were Filipino by 1930. Only about 5,000 Filipinos had left the plantations to live in Honolulu because there were fewer opportunities there for them.

In Hawaii, there were ratio of Asian males to all Asian females was much lower than on the mainland. Also in Hawaii, workers were more likely to stay in one place because the work on the sugar

plantations was much steadier than much of the work done by migrant workers on the West Coast of the mainland. Many plantation owners felt that if the workers had wives, they were more likely to stay and work hard.

Moreover, since many wives worked in the fields of the plantations at lower wages than the men, they (the women) were regarded as a good source of labor. But the ratio of Filipinos-to-Filipinas was still high in Hawaii. In 1923, there was some concern that there would be an immigration law passed in 1924 which would stop Mexicans from migrating to the United States. It was realized that the only other labor supply for the still rapidly expanding agri-business in California would be the Filipinos. As a result, Filipinos were encouraged to come to the mainland of the United States. They would come in large numbers for the rest of the decade.

There would be a far-reaching immigration law passed by Congress in 1924, but Mexicans were still able to migrate to the United States in large numbers even when the new law went into effect. With both the Filipinos and Mexicans coming to California during the rest of the 1920s, it meant that a large migrant labor force in the state was assured for the rest of the decade.

In 1920, there were only 5,603 Filipinos on the mainland and by 1930, there would be 45,208, according to the U.S. Census. Although there would be some Filipinos living in just about all parts of the country, the vast majority of them (on the mainland) would be living on the West Coast. In 1930, the Filipinos (males) out-numbered Filipinas (females) 14-to-1 on the mainland. Only 18% of the Filipinos on the mainland were married, although most of the married Filipino men came to the United States without their wives and with the intention of going back to the Philippines after making enough money.

During 1920s, 56% of the Filipinos, who came to the mainland, came by way of Hawaii. Another 35% came directly from the Philippines, while 9% came from Chinese and Japanese ports. According to Carey McWilliams' book, BROTHERS UNDER THE SKIN, some Filipinos were forced to go from Hawaii to the mainland after a big strike against the sugar plantations in 1924 in which five policemen and fifteen strikers lost their lives.

In 1910, there were five Filipinos in California. But in 1930, 2/3 of the Filipinos on the mainland were living in California with population being 30,470. 31,092 Filipinos came to the state between 1920 and 1929 with a whopping 84% being under 30 years of age. In 1930, 80% of the Filipinos in California were in the age group which ranged from 16 to 30 years of age. As in many areas on the mainland, the Filipinoto-Filipina ratio was 14-to-1 in the state.

The total population of California in 1920 was 3,426,861 and in 1930, the total population in the state was 5,677,251. In other words, the Filipino population was still relatively small despite the tremendous Filipino migration during the 1920s. But the fact that so many of the Filipinos in California in 1930 were young unmarried males is one reason that they would have a big influence on boxing in the state.

90% of the Filipinos who came to the United States were Catholics. Some had a bit of exposure to American culture in school, including the English language, in the Philippines, but many of them didn't have that much education. In fact, there was a lot of illiteracy in the Philippines during the 1920s and 1930s.

There are a wide variety of languages and cultures in the Philippines with influences from other countries in Asia, Spain, and the United States. As a result, the Filipinos in Hawaii and on the mainland during the 1920s and the 1930s, wasn't a homogeneous group despite the fact that a majority of them came from rural areas.

Even if they were educated, the fact is that the great majority of educated people of Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino descent were unable to get jobs in their professional fields before World War II in the United States. Asian-Americans also had a hard time getting jobs in trades or manufacturing.

If they landed in San Francisco, they often went to Stockton, California, which was a labor center for Filipinos. Stockton also was where the largest "Manilatown" in the Continental United States was located. However, the Filipino population fluctuated due to fact that many of them went to other places to work in the winter months, notably the farmworkers.

During the summer, there were over 6,000 Filipinos in Stockton during the time before World War II, but there were only 1,000 during the winter months, according to Veltisezzr Bautista's book, THE FILIPINO AMERICAN (1763-PRESENT), Their History, Culture, and Traditions (Second Edition). From Stockton, they would fan out into jobs in three categories, service work, farm work, and the fisheries in Alaska. According to Ronald Takaki's book, STRANGERS FROM A DIFFERENT SHORE, this big first wave of Filipino immigrants, even before the "Great Depression, had work in jobs which were very hard and paid very little.

25% (11,400) of the Filipinos on the mainland were service workers in 1930 The service workers included janitors, waiters, butlers, dishwashers, busboys, yardboys, elevator-boys, hallboys, cooks, pantrymen and porters. If a Filipino was living in a city such as Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles the entire year, he was restricted to a service job for the most part.

Nine percent (4,200) of the Filipinos on the mainland in the 1930 Census went up to work in the salmon fisheries in Alaska (where they were called Alaskeros), where they worked from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., six days a week. They represented a total 15% of the fisheries work force in 1930. Filipino and Japanese contractors would recruit workers on the West Coast for the "long season" (or seven months), beginning in April, or the extra season which lasted three months, June through August.

A lot of them often had to go back to the fisheries again and again because they were constantly in debt. A Filipino writer/poet named Carlos Bulosan wrote a book which was partly autobiographical named AMERICA IS IN THE HEART in which he described working in the Alaska fisheries after coming to the United States in 1930. His "take-home" after the season was thirteen dollars after this first and only time he worked in the fisheries.

It was estimated that around 500 Filipinos working the fisheries during the 1920s and 1930s were college students. Many Filipino students also worked in service jobs. Since many of the Filipino students had a rough time making enough money, some would just work for a semester, go to school the next semester, and then go back to work after the semester ended. Under such conditions, it took awhile for many of the Filipino college students to complete their studies.

The Filipino labor force which worked in the fisheries was centered in Seattle where some went to college. In the summer months, there were only about a few hundred Filipinos in the "Manilatown" in Seattle, but there were 3,500 in the winter months during the 1930s.

By the middle 1930s, there was a lot of union activity in connection with the fisheries. Union activity eventually changed the way men were hired with union halls doing the job instead of contractors. Living and working conditions would improve along with the pay, especially with the advent of World War II which caused labor shortages. Sixty percent (27,000) of the Filipinos on the mainland in 1930 worked in agriculture. Most of the Filipinos in agriculture on the mainland were migrant workers who would follow the crop harvests in order to get work.

Over the years, there have been a lot of horror stories about the plight of farmworkers with too many of them being very true. It is doubtful that one can find very many jobs as hard as working in the fields of California, much of it under a hot sun. Many Filipinos of the era felt that working in the fields in California was harder anything that they had done back in the Philippines or even in Hawaii.

The book, FACTORIES IN THE FIELD, written by the noted crusading newspaperman and author, Carey McWilliams, during the late 1930s, says that there were about 180 different speciality crops being grown in California at the time. Even in the year of 2001, California has no equal among the other states in the United States as far as agri-business is concerned despite the fact that the population in the state has grown five-fold in seventy years and there is a lot of urban sprawl.

By the time the second edition of FACTORIES IN THE FIELD and the classic novel, THE GRAPES OF WRATH, by John Steinbeck, were published during the late 1930s, there were about 250,000 migrant workers in California, up from about 200,000 workers in 1930. The migrant force during the 1930s included more whites than usual, notably the refugees from the "Dust Bowl" area in the Midwest.

Most of the Filipino migrant workers worked in groups of gangs from five to as high as sixty men with a contractor in charge. One reason that a lot of Filipinos went to Stockton was that many contractors hired men there. The contractor would line up farm work at a contracted rate for the crew. This meant that the men in the crew often had little direct contact with farm owners.

Filipino migrant workers would travel to work in places like the Salinas Valley, which includes the city of Salinas; the Pajaro Valley, which is near the Salinas Valley and includes city of Watsonville (a boxing town which had a population of about 8,000 was dependent on Filipino fans.); the Central Valley, which included the cities of Sacramento, Stockton (a boxing town which had a population of about 40,000 and was dependent on Filipino fans.), Fresno, and Bakersfield; the Imperial Valley (where there were some present since 1916), which includes the cities of Brawley, El Centro (a boxing town which was dependent on Filipino fans), and Holtville; and an agricultural area which includes the cities of Santa Maria, and San Luis Obispo (which is near Pismo Beach, a boxing town which had a population of 600 and was dependent on Filipino fans)to harvest a huge variety of crops. The crops included asparagus, cantalopes, cotton, tomatoes, celery, oranges, peas, melons, and lettuce. They also would go to Montana to top beets, to Idaho to dig potatoes, to the Yakima Valley in Washington to pick apples, and to Oregon to hoe hops.

According to STRANGERS FROM A DIFFERENT SHORE, as many as 6,000 Filipinos worked in the asparagus fields, where the most physically punishing California agricultural jobs were at the time, according to many. Workers would begin at four in the morning with wearing miners' helmets with flashlights so they could get to the asparagus before it grew. They would work during various stages of planting, caring for, and harvesting asparagus in both very hot and rainy weather.

Some growers preferred Filipino workers to workers of other nationalities for other reasons than for the willingness to do hard work well at a very low wage. During the 1920s, agriculture in California became much more competitive, which drove down the prices from the high ones of World War I vintage. Many growers and farmers in California were trying to make it by looking for any edge which they could find. Since the vast majority of Filipino men on the mainland were single, the growers or farmers didn't have to provide separate housing for them.

A man with a family often was at a disadvantage under such circumstances. Housing or living accommodations for agricultural workers in California was often notoriously dismal. Since the vast majority of the Filipinos were single men, they often were packed in large numbers into run-down bunkhouses, barns, chicken coops, or shacks.

But Filipino farm workers proved to be less docile than at first thought as time went on. There were numerous strikes during the 1920s and 1930s throughout California involving Filipinos. During the 1930s, the wages became much lower than before due to an overabundance of very desperate people competing for jobs during the greatest economic depression that the United States has ever known.

There was a lot of resentment from others because it was felt that Filipinos were driving down the wages and that they were taking jobs away from Americans even during the 1920s even though the Filipinos were doing jobs that many Americans avoided. But these compliants increased during the GREAT DEPRESSION when there were many more willing workers than jobs. As the result of the lack of jobs, many Filipinos were on the welfare rolls at the time, which added to the resentment. As people moved to California from the infamous "Dust Bowl" during the middle 1930s, the situation became much worse.

It should be pointed out that there also was a lot of resentment towards Mexicans in the United States at this time because it was felt that they too were taking jobs from Americans. They often were repatriated or encouraged to go to Mexico. It is estimated that 500,000 to 1,000,000 Mexicans left the United States and went back to Mexico during the 1930s. Some of the Mexicans who left the United States had children who were born in the United States. It is ironic that during World War II, Mexican migrant workers would be welcomed with "open arms" in the United States because of a labor shortage.

Despite having to having to work in terrible jobs for low wages and having to live in bad housing a lot of the time, Filipino men of the time were known to dress up well in nice McIntosh suits before "going out on the town." Being single did enabled some Filipino men to have some disposable income that they wouldn't have if they were family men. This probably was a major reason that large numbers of them were able to go to see boxing shows which featured their countrymen in the main events.

When going to town, many of the places that they went to were run by Chinese-Americans or Japanese-Americans, including gambling dens, stores, hotels, and bars. Both the Chinese-Americans and Japanese-Americans had gone into business in fairly large numbers and had developed communities. The Filipinos hadn't been in the United States long enough to do that.

They often would go to what were called "taxi dancehalls" where they would dance with women who would charge ten cents a minute, certainly an excessive rate for the time. Some Filipinos would go to pool halls, gambling halls, or places where cock fights were staged. As a result, the young Filipino men got a reputation of gambling away their earnings at a time when gambling was much less respectable than in 2002. But a common site in California towns was groups of lonely Filipino men in nice suits standing on the sidewalk in front of Filipino barber shops or pool rooms.

Unlike the Japanese and the Chinese men who had come earlier, a sizable number of young Filipino men courted both white and Mexican women in California. Some women took a liking to well-dressed Filipino men who could court and dance very well. The fact that there were stories of Filipino men courting white women or going to "taxi dancehalls" in large numbers in order to dance with women "hostesses" who were often white didn't sit well with a lot of people.

In early December 1929 in Watsonville, California, there was a story of a Filipino man dating a white girl in the local paper. The Filipino man was arrested, but was released after the mother of the girl said that she approved of the relationship and that the young couple was going to be married. There was a picture in the December 5, 1929 Watsonville Evening Pajaronian showed the couple hugging each other after the young man was released. A month later, the Watsonville Chamber of Commerce protested against the presence of

the Filipino immigrants.

During this wave of hysteria in late January, four hundred men attacked a Filipino dance hall in the Watsonville area. During four days of rioting, many Filipinos were beaten and one young Filipino, Fermin Tobera, was found dead with a shot through the heart. Trouble also spread to San Jose. Many Filipinos had to be protected by legal authorities during this period.

The January 30, 1930 edition of the San Francisco Chronicle had a news item about a feud between two Filipino factions which led to the dynamiting of the Filipino Headquarters in Stockton. A sixteen-year-old Watsonville girl reportedly was kidnapped and was hidden by Filipinos in the Filipino section of Stockton. The Chronicle went on to say that there were riots in Watsonville a week before. The chairman of the California State Athletic Commission, William Hanlon, ordered that all Filipino boxers be taken off boxing cards until further notice.

While on a trip to Los Angeles at the time of the action by Hanlon, Charles Traung, the commission member from San Francisco, condemned the ban. Traung went on to say that one commissioner cannot act alone and that he must have a backing of another member of the three-man commission. Traung also stated that another member, James Woods, was left out of the decision process, too.

The January 31, 1930 San Francisco Chronicle said that the majority of the boxing clubs in the state upheld the ban. The Dreamland Rink in San Francisco was awaiting a definite ruling from Traung. Harry Smith, the veteran sports writer and sports editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, backed Hanlon. Bobby Mars, a Filipino 112-pounder, was dropped from the January 31, 1930 card held at the Dreamland Rink. One has to think that the California State Athletic Commission would open itself up to a large discrimination lawsuit if they took such action in 2002.

The Watsonville incident is regarded as a milestone in Filipino-American history in several ways. It was a famous event which showed very graphically that there was a lot of resentment towards Filipinos in the United States and the news of it got back to the Philippines.

Such incidents also overshadowed the fact that the arrest rate among Filipinos in California was much lower than whites during the period. This is even more astounding when considering the fact that the vast majority of the Filipinos in California were young males.

There was some question about whether Filipinos could marry white women in California due to the fact that it was unclear if the term, Mongolians, included Filipinos. White women who married Filipinos were threatened with the loss of their U.S. citizenship. In 1933, Salvador Roldan took his case all the way to the California Court of Appeals, which ruled that he could be marry his white fiancée due to the fact the term, Mongolian, didn't apply to Malays.

Immediately after the decision, the state legislature amended the law to include the Malays in the restricted category. In 1934, the Supreme Court declared that as that Malays could not become naturalized citizens due to the fact they were dark-skinned and the Naturalization Law of 1790 only allowed white people to be naturalized.

The first large group of Filipinos in the United States would become a bachelor society like many other Asian groups which came to the United States earlier. As a result, they would leave relatively few descendants

In 1934, the Tydings-McDuffie Bill was passed. The law established the Philippines as a commonwealth and would be eligible for independence in ten years. One selling point of the bill, if it passed, was that Filipinos could be prevented from coming to the mainland of the United States since they were no longer United States nationals.

Only fifty Filipinos a year would be allowed to immigrate to the mainland of the United States. They still were allowed to immigrate to the Hawaiian Islands, but they would not be allowed to re-immigrate to the mainland. Moreover, all Filipinos, including those who had already come to the United States, would now be aliens.

Since they were aliens who were ineligible to become citizens, they were subjected to some state alien laws in states on the West Coast. For example, California had laws which prohibited aliens who were ineligible to become United States citizens to own or lease land in California. These laws were enacted to prevent people of Asian descent from being farmers. As noted before, it was very ironic that such a law was passed in California because Asians contributed much to the development of agriculture in the state as both farmers and as laborers.

Some of the Asian landowners in California often put their American born children down as the owners of their property, but a state law was enacted to prohibit this. Another tactic was to have young Asian-Americans born in the United States would act as "fronts" by paying the latters' college expenses.

Another tactic was to have a white friend act as an owner. The latter two tactics were illegal, but many felt that they didn't have any choice.

It is ironic that the Tydings-McDuffie Bill was passed after Filipino migration to the mainland of the United States had gone from 11,360 in 1929 to 1,306 in 1932. Word got back to the Philippines about the GREAT DEPRESSION which left so many people unemployed in the United States. Moreover, word about anti-Filipino feeling in the United States didn't help.

There was a movement to force Filipinos in the United States to go back to the Philippines during the 1930s. In 1935, Congress passed the

Repartition Act, which would offer Filipinos free transportation back to the Philippines from the mainland if they forfeit their right to reentry into the United States. The offer wasn't extended to those in the Hawaiian Islands. The law failed in its purpose because only 2,190 Filipinos took the offer.

In Stockton by the 1940s, there were an estimated five hundred children who were either Filipino or part-Filipino. The second generation often had to go through much of the discrimination that their fathers went through, although many of them had white friends. Since they grew up in modest circumstances, they often had to quit school in order to go to work. Like other Asian-Americans, they often had many "uncles" among the big number of Filipino bachelors.

A big turning point for Filipinos and other people of Asian descent in the United States was World War II. Word would get back to the United States about the brave Filipino soldiers at Bataan. This made people in the United States look at Filipinos with more respect.

The vast majority of Filipino were aliens under the law and weren't eligible to become citizens of the United States, but they had to register for the draft if they were in a certain age bracket. The response was impressive. For the first draft, 40% of the Filipinos in California were registered. Many eagerly went into the service.

Over 7,000 men served in two segregated Filipino units, the 1st Filipino Regiment and the Second Filipino Regiment, impressing their commanding officers with their enthusiasm and discipline. When General Douglas McArthur led a force back to the Philippines, one thousand Filipino-American soldiers infiltrated the Japanese-held islands during the invasion.

After they joined the U.S. Army, there was a move to make them U.S. citizens. There were some mass ceremonies held to swear them in. Some of the Filipinos who were civilians got to go work in good-paying jobs in other occupational fields for the first time. Some others were given the opportunity to lease farmland after the California Attorney General reinterpreted the law prohibiting aliens from leasing or owning land.

Some of the Filipino-Americans soldiers brought wives back from over-seas after the war. It should be pointed out that a lot of the Filipino-American soldiers were in their late 30s or in their 40s by the time the war ended. There would be a few of them who got married and started having families when they were in their middle 40s.

After the war, there still would be a lot of Filipino-Americans in the United States who went back to their old occupations. There still was some discrimination, but one problem was that a lot of the "first wave" Filipino-Americans didn't have the education or job skills in other occupational areas.

As a result, 48.9% of all Filipino-Americans in the workforce in California were farm-workers in 1950.

But the percentage of Filipino-Americans who were farmworkers would drop dramatically as the "first wave" Filipino-Americans got too old to do such work and as the newer immigrants went to work in other occupational fields. In 1960, only 27.5% of the Filpino-Americans in the workforce in California were farmworkers. In both 1950 and 1960, over 20% of the Filipino-American workers in California had service jobs.

There were still enough Filipino-Americans doing farm labor to make them an important force in the formation of an of an important farmworkers union in 1965 in Delano, California. The Filipino-American farm union merged with a Mexican-American farmworkers union. The new union would later become the United Farmworkers with the famed Mexican-American leader, Cesar Chavez, as its head. One reason for Chavez being the union leader was that people of Mexican descent made up the vast majority of farmworkers in California since the end of the GREAT DEPRESSION.

A lot of the "first wave" Filipino-Americans had a difficult time when they reached the age of retirement. As a result, many of them would live in poverty for the rest of their lives. One place for old Filipino-American farm-workers was the International Hotel in San Francisco. In the 1970s, a documentary film was made about the International Hotel with many of the residents being interviewed. The hotel was one of the few remaining buildings of the small "first-wave" Filipino-American community in San Francisco.

Before hotel was demolished during the late 1970s, some of old Filipino-American men had to be forcibly evicted.

Between 1965 and 1985, there were 664,938 Filipinos who came t0 live in the United States. By 1990, the Filipino-Americans constituted the second largest Asian-American group with about 1.4 million people. In 2000, there would be 1.8 million. In this "second wave" of Filipino immigrants, an astounding percentage of them were professional people due to the fact that the Philippines has one of the highest percentage of college graduates in the world despite the fact there are relatively few jobs available to them in their chosen fields in their native country. As a result, there is a huge percentage of the foreign-born doctors and nurses in the United States who are from the Philippines.

In the United States, there are still many of them who are unable to get jobs in their professions and are forced to work in other occupations, but they are still doing a lot better than the "first wave" Filipino immigrants. This is due to the fact that the vast majority of "second-wave" Filipinos got much better jobs than their " first-wave" counterparts after coming to the United during the last thirty-five years of the 20th Century.

It is also interesting to note that there were some years since 1965 that many more Filipinas came to the United States than Filipinos. Moreover, many of the "second-wave" immigrants are able to bring their families to the United States. As a result, the bachelor societies are not as prevalent among the "second-wave" Filipino-Americans.