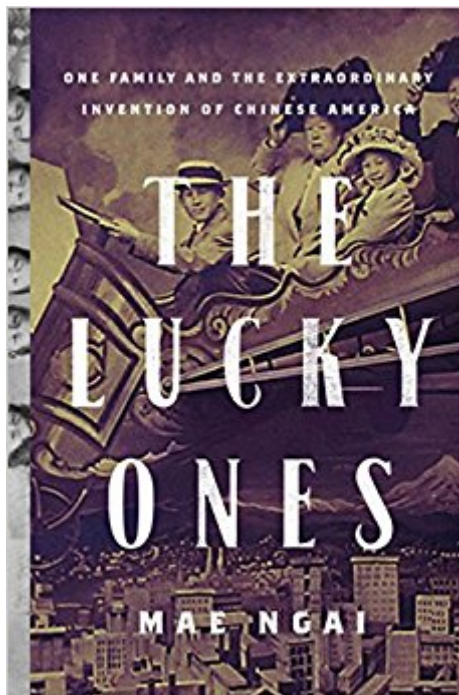




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# The Lucky Ones: One Family And The Extraordinary Invention Of Chinese America



## Synopsis

If you're Irish American or African American or Eastern European Jewish American, there's a rich literature to give you a sense of your family's arrival-in-America story. Until now, that hasn't been the case for Chinese Americans. From noted historian Mae Ngai, *The Lucky Ones* uncovers the three-generational saga of the Tape family. It's a sweeping story centered on patriarch Jeu Dips' (Joseph Tapes') self-invention as an immigration broker in post-gold rush, racially explosive San Francisco, and the extraordinary rise it enables. Ngai's portrayal of the Tapes as the first of a brand-new social type—middle-class Chinese Americans, with touring cars, hunting dogs, and society weddings to broadcast it—will astonish. Again and again, Tape family history illuminates American history. Seven-year-old Mamie Tape attempts to integrate California schools, resulting in the landmark 1885 Tape v. Hurley case. The family's intimate involvement in the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair reveals how the Chinese American culture brokers essentially invented Chinatown (and so Chinese culture) for American audiences. Finally, Mae Ngai reveals aspects—timely, haunting, and hopeful—of the lasting legacy of the immigrant experience for all Americans. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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## Customer Reviews

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now, that hasn't been the case for Chinese Americans. From noted historian Mae Ngai, *The Lucky Ones* uncovers the three-generational saga of the Tape family. It's a sweeping story centered on patriarch Jeu Dip's (Joseph Tape's) self-invention as an immigration broker in post-gold rush, racially explosive San Francisco, and the extraordinary rise it enables. Ngai's portrayal of the Tapes as the first of a brand-new social type--middle-class Chinese Americans, with touring cars, hunting dogs, and society weddings to broadcast it--will astonish. Again and again, Tape family history illuminates American history. Seven-year-old Mamie Tape attempts to integrate California schools, resulting in the landmark 1885 *Tape v. Hurley*. The family's intimate involvement in the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair reveals how the Chinese American culture brokers essentially invented Chinatown--and so Chinese culture--for American audiences. Finally, Mae Ngai reveals aspects--timely, haunting, and hopeful--of the lasting legacy of the immigrant experience for all Americans.

Photos of the Tape Family from *The Lucky Ones* (Click on Images to Enlarge)

Joseph Tape with his hunting rifle and bird dogs, San Francisco, c. 1880s      The Tape family (Joseph, Emily, Mamie, Frank, Mary), 1884      Mamie with children, Emily and Harold, and sister Emily, Portland, 1912      Ruby Tape, 1912      Gertrude and husband Herbert, Sunol, California, 1913      Gertrude with Florence Park and daughters, Pacific Grove, c. 1915

A thoroughgoing look at the historical record of early Chinese immigration to San Francisco unearths the heartening story of one rags-to-riches family. Columbia history professor Ngai (*Impossible Subjects*) characterizes her work as history, situating the union of two young working people in San Francisco in 1875 within a larger frame of Chinese immigration, which had been encouraged by the California Gold Rush of the mid-19th century, attracting impoverished men mostly from the Guangdong Province. Jeu Dip, an enterprising drayman who had come over at age 12, and Mary McGladery, an indentured Chinese servant (*mui tsai*) who had emigrated as an orphan and was then rescued from prostitution at 11 years old, thanks to the Ladies' Protection and Relief Society, both became acculturated English-speakers and ambitious to live among the white middle-class. Despite recent legislation limiting Chinese immigration, and growing anti-Chinese racism due to the resentment from the displacement of the white workforce, Jeu Dip, renamed Joseph Tape, flourished as a deliveryman and broker for new immigrants; Joseph and Mary grew prosperous and even sued to have their daughter Mamie attend the local white public school. Ngai traces their descendants, especially their son, Frank, who was tried for extorting money from new immigrants, and his estranged wife, Ruby, who joined the Women's Army Corps (WAC) during World War II. Ngai fashions a terrifically readable, compelling work about the little-known

middle-class in the Chinese immigrant experience. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Although the lack of sources such as letters and diaries forces Ngai to much speculation in this family history, she brings a deep knowledge of the historical context to the task and reconstructs a fascinating story. Highly recommended to anyone interested in the immigrant experience in America.

Great book

I had to read this book for class. It has a story narrative. I had to write a book response on it. It was easy to get through but some parts were harder to understand. There was pictures in the book. I am a history major so I have to read a lot of history books for university. It was a more of a serious book.

It reads like a novel, but it's pure history too. Professor Ngai takes you into the world of the first members of the Chinese middle class in America. It's a love story and a family saga and a history lesson all rolled into one compulsively readable package. I've read it more than once. It just gets better.

I don't understand who "the lucky ones" were: Certainly not the Tape family members individually, or as a whole ... Maybe the "lucky" ones were the Chinese and other immigrants who came to America after them, but they were able to come because of the demise of discrimination and exclusion laws which were broken down in the years following World War II. Nevertheless, the story of the Tape family is one I have not read before and was somewhat interesting. There are so many other books chronicling individuals and families through recent Chinese-American history that are so much more thorough and meaningful. I don't really understand the point of this book ... I have read a lot about the Asian experience in the 19th and 20th centuries and this one is set mainly in northern Californian cities where I grew up so I was looking forward to it, but after reading such good reviews of this book, I am sorry to say how disappointed I was. Maybe I missed something that other readers saw ... For one thing, there was a complete lack of interviews, or journals, or letters, or any sort of personal information; hence, the author had to infer from questionable public records and a few family photos ... The very best of the many other books on the same subject include Lisa See's

book *ON GOLD MOUNTAIN* about her family and *THE CONCUBINE'S CHILDREN* by Denise Chong, a truly amazing story.

No question, the family of Jeu Dip (Joseph Tape) and Mary McGladrey Tape was no Joy Luck Club. Whatever their internal family conflicts, the Tapes had plenty of difficulty facing the outside world, beginning with their means of arrival in the U.S. The author speculates on many of the details concerning the respective arrivals of Jeu Dip and Mary, but the facts we know are enough to indicate their genuine hardships --- and give a real sense of the trauma that would also have met most Chinese of that era who ventured to the U.S., by choice or by force. It is not even clear how or when Mary arrived --- only that she walked one day into the office of a kindly Christian pastor who, knowing her likely origin, settled her in with the otherwise all Caucasian orphans at San Francisco's Ladies' Protection and Relief Society, where she chose (or was given) the name of the loving woman who thereafter raised her. The rest is speculation, since the author makes it clear that Mary never spoke --- to anyone --- of events before she walked into the pastor's office. Most probably, however, her parents sold her into domestic bondage at about age 11 and most likely she arrived in California in steerage on a certain ship that sailed in 1868 from Shanghai. She also probably was forced to work at a San Francisco brothel in the hope that, during puberty, her buyers could force Mary, like hundreds or thousands of girls before her, into the sex trade itself. Due to her raising among Americans, however, Mary felt most at home living with them, not the Chinese whom she obviously wished to avoid, and most probably had oppressed her. Mary's husband, Jeu Dip, on the other hand, apparently came to San Francisco on his own steam, as it were. The author is not certain of which ship he arrived on either, but surmises --- since he definitely came in steerage, definitely from the remote and horrifically impoverished Guangdong Province, and definitely at age 12. Jeu also quickly acquired a distaste for his own people, and demonstrated an extremely quick wit, great enough to learn proficient English and engage his natural entrepreneurial spirit. He took the Anglicized name of Joseph Tape, which was easier for Americans to pronounce and better helped him to blend in with other businessmen. At first, Joseph hired himself out as a domestic hand to a Scottish immigrant and farmer who lived on what was then the outskirts of San Francisco. Eventually, he worked his way into delivering milk for the farm, and then acquiring his own horse and cart to establish a carting business. He became wildly successful. Joseph met Mary while she lived at the Ladies' Protection and Relief Society, not far from his employer's farm, on a milk delivery run. They bonded, soon wed and made their own home, also outside the bustling Chinatown center. They were lucky, to be sure, but they actually made their own luck. It did not just fall upon them

without effort. They were the quintessential successful American immigrant entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, as Chinese they looked visibly different than most other immigrants of that era --- despite their Western dress and hair styles --- and consequently suffered some of the discrimination of the era, which undoubtedly rained far greater upon the uneducated Chinese laborers and masses, who dressed in poor Chinese garb, and had learned little to no English. I agree with other readers of this book that it offers many extraordinary details. I am delighted to have read it, and to have learned more specifics about the hardships of Chinese immigrants to California in the mid to late 19th century. However, the book is somewhat dry --- and I too missed some of the richness of detail and personality, the internal workings of the family, that the author could definitely have researched and included had she been so inclined. It's not a big complaint however, and the author did exceptional research on this slice of U.S. History. Therefore I strongly recommend the book.---

Alyssa A. Lappen

The Lucky Ones is essentially a historical account of the Chinese Americans in California. The book features one family in particular, the Tapes of Russell Street in San Francisco who were among the first middle class Chinese American families in that area. If you are not familiar with the history of California, Chinese labours came to this state firstly during the gold rush in the 1840's as a cheap, abundant source of labour. However when the gold rush era panned out, large numbers began to come into the state around the 1860's to work on the transcontinental railroad. The fact that their labour was cheap angered the Occidental population and led to discriminatory laws against the Chinese well into the turn of the twentieth century. It is under this climate that the Tapes, Joseph and Mary lived in California. Ngai has done a great job telling the story of this family. It is not so much analysis as it is a narration of the family's life, their battle against segregation in education and how they retained or in some instances assimilated their culture with that of America. The author used mostly family photos and official documentation to reconstruct their lives, the former can be found throughout the book. At 304 pages, this book is not a light read and may be mostly suited to history buffs like myself yet the content of the book gives you a story not just about this family but about Chinese (and Japanese) Americans during the late eighteenth and nineteenth century and more importantly the development and growth of one of the most populated states in America, California.

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