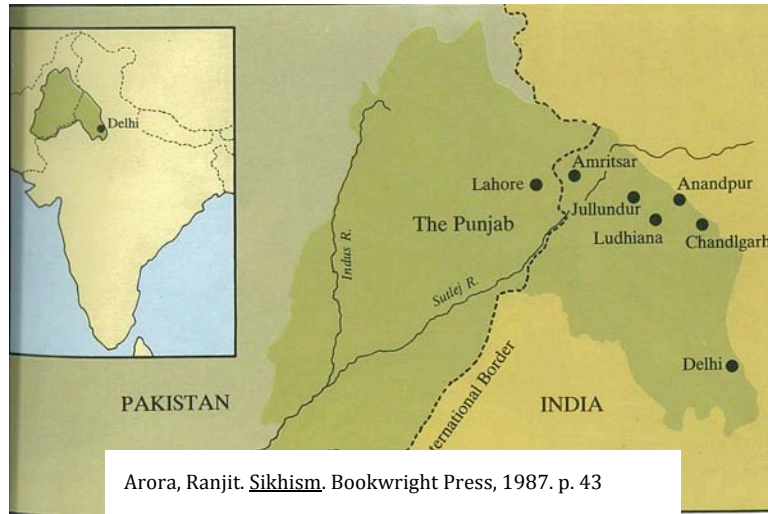


Pioneer Sikh Migration to North America

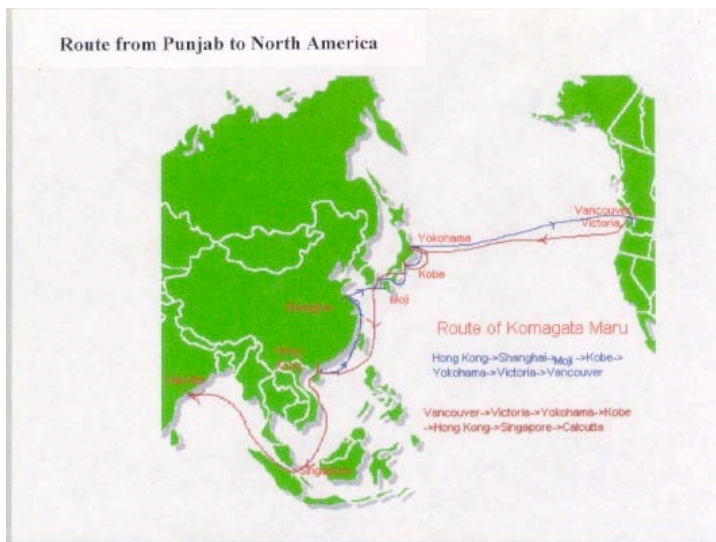
Margaret Hill, California 3Rs Project

The Punjab province in South Asia was a rich food producing area along the upper Indus and Sutlej Rivers and an area of early human settlement, including the Indus Valley Civilization. The region was invaded many times, including by such famous conquerors as



Alexander the Great and Tamerlane. Major South Asian civilizations called the Punjab at least part of their homeland including the Maurya Empire (321-184 BCE), the Gupta Empire (320 – 600 CE), the Pala Empire (750-1120 CE), and the Mughal Empire (1526-1858 CE) when Sikhism began. The British ruled India, including much of the Punjab either directly or indirectly through various princes, from the 19th c. to the mid 20th c. After World War II Indian independence movements and conflict over religion and culture led to the division of the Punjab into the territories of two newly created modern nations countries, India and Pakistan. It was during the British period that much of the Asian Indian immigration to the United States and Canada occurred. Immigrants were often Sikhs and Indians of other faiths who upon ending their service in the British military stayed in the places where they had been stationed or traveled to other regions that were part of the British Commonwealth such as Canada.

Migration from the Punjab to America



In the early years of immigration to North America, all immigrants from India were lumped together as "hindoo" or "hindu" regardless of the religion they practiced. The term "hindoo" was often used as a negative term for anyone from South Asia. The first immigrants to North America arrived in Vancouver, British Columbia, to celebrate Queen

Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. In reality, the early settlers were predominantly Sikh with fewer numbers being Hindu, Muslim, and other faiths. Immigrants made their way south into the United States as discrimination, resistance, and intolerance grew in Canada. In fact, in 1914 the Japanese ship Komogata Maru [see map above] carrying over 370 immigrants from India was prohibited from docking in Canada even though the immigrants were traveling from a British territory to a British Commonwealth nation. It is estimated that 7,348 Asian Indians migrated to the United States and Canada between 1899 and 1920.

Because of the Early Arrivals Records Search (EARS), a database for the records of immigrants and American-born Asians who arrived in San Francisco's Angel Island and Hawaii between 1882 and 1955, we know that there were hundreds of immigrants from India who came to California that way. Figuring out how many were Sikh is usually determined by reading the immigration interviews, such as the following:

"Statement Taken From Madho Ram, or Mado Ram, to determine status ...

Q: What is your name?

A: Madho Ram; it is sometimes spelled Mado Ram.

Q: Where were you born?

A: In the village of Jadla, District of Jullundur, Province of Punjab, India.

Q: When did you first come to the United States?

A: In 1913

Q: What date in 1913?

A: I think maybe July or August. Maybe it was July 29, 1913, that I reached San Francisco. I lived three months in Quarantine. My case was handled in San Francisco. I won the case after about two years. The first two times I lost and appealed the case and finally the third time won the

Many immigrants had farming backgrounds or were part of the British Indian Army. Those who had served in the military were used to how authority and institutions worked in Western Europe and America so had an advantage over their countrymen who did not. Sikh immigrants arrived in the U.S. looking for railroad, lumber, or agricultural jobs. Those that became migrant laborers in the Sacramento Valley were known as "Hindu crews." They met resistance and prejudice, both in Canada and the United States. In addition to being viewed as strange and oddly dressed, they also confronted laws that tried to bar their presence that are described later.

As immigration restrictions tightened in Canada, more immigrants came directly to California, some passing through the Angel Island station on their way to San Francisco. Angel Island is the lesser-known point of entry to the more famous Ellis Island of the Atlantic seaboard. Where Ellis Island processed immigrants crossing the Atlantic, the Angel Island Immigration Station, located in the middle of the San Francisco Bay, was often the first stop for any immigrant crossing the Pacific.

Between 1910 and 1940, hundreds of thousands of immigrants, from places such as China, India, Japan, and Korea were stationed, quarantined, questioned, and processed at this historical site.

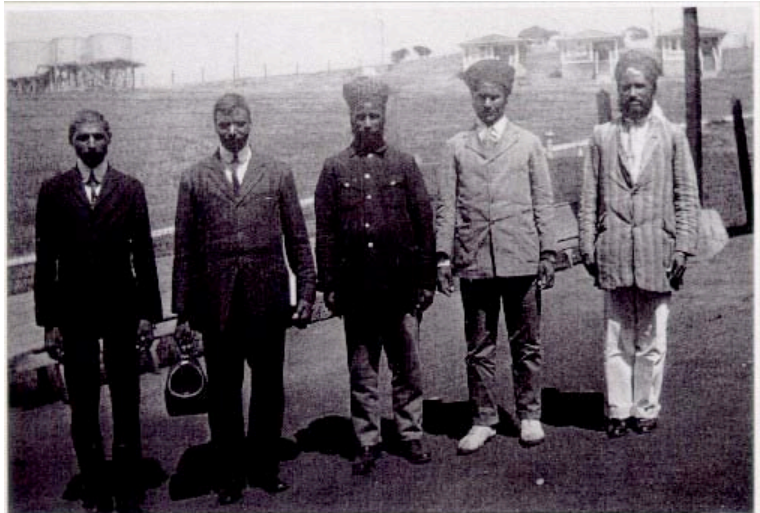


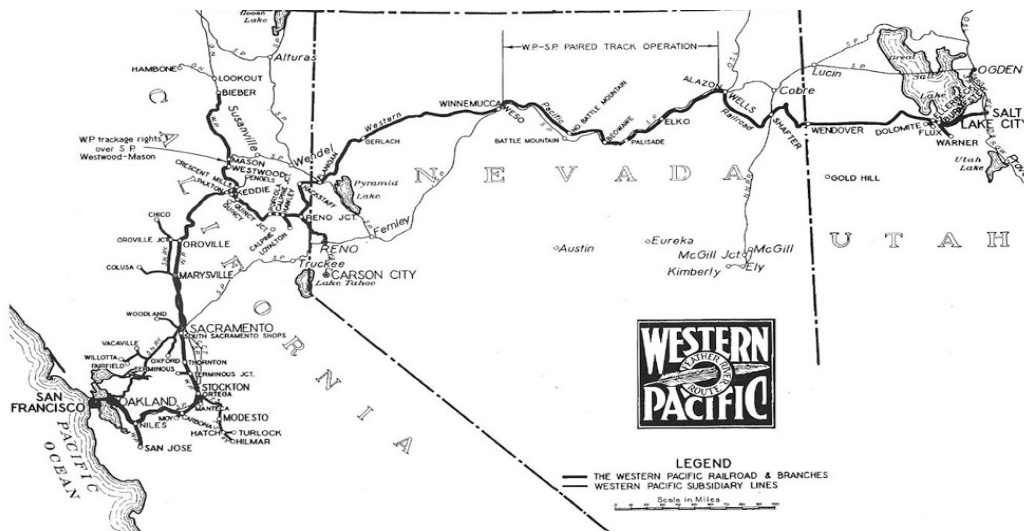
Figure 1
Five Inc

1916. Immigrants at Angel Island Immigration Station.

Early Immigrants in Rail and Lumber Industries and Farming

As we saw above, the first wave of immigrants came to North America to do laboring jobs on railway construction, in the lumber mills, and in forestry. Even though they were unskilled and uneducated, they were favored by employers because they were hardworking and reliable, and because the employers could pay the Sikhs less than white men for the same work.

In Northern California, Some of the Punjabis took jobs in lumber mills and logging camps in Oregon, Washington and California. Between 1903-1908, two thousand Punjabis worked on Western Pacific Railways in Northern California and on a 700-mile road between Oakland and Salt Lake City, which is in large part now the modern interstate 80.



Sikh settlement was spread all along the West Coast of North America. At first it was largely single men who came to make money to send home. For example, the largest mill community of Sikhs was located in British Columbia, at Fraser Mills in New Westminster. According to Mawa Mangat, who immigrated to this settlement in Canada in 1925, "There were only two families there then, the rest were all single men." Presumably to encourage workers to stay, the company even built a temple for the Sikhs in about 1908. Sardara Gill, who came to join his father to live and work at Fraser Mills in 1925, says that when he arrived, there were between 200 to 300 Sikhs. They had four or five cookhouses and different sized bunkhouses in which the men slept. Some had thirty, forty or fifty people living in them.

Sikhs rated the Fraser Mills Company as a very good place to work, but they also acknowledged that they received five-cent lower wage than white workers. The same was true for the railroad and manufacturing jobs.

When early immigrants left the lumber and railroad industry, they returned to farming jobs, well known by many Sikh pioneers. By 1910, the agricultural business expanded swiftly, and Punjabis started getting higher wages because of the agricultural expertise they brought from India.

Punjabi settlements began in farming lands in the Sacramento Valley, San Joaquin Valley and in the Imperial Valley in California. Most Sikhs worked for several years and established permanent homes. Some worked in the Vacaville Orchards. Five hundred lived in the Newcastle area, taking care of orchards. In 1909, four hundred worked the fields in Hamilton, Oxnard and Visalia and hundreds more in the Imperial Valley. Most eventually settled permanently in these places.



1922. Puna Singh Chima engaged in agriculture in Yuba City, California.

Overcoming Resistance and Discrimination

Once they settled in the Sacramento Valley, the early immigrants were pleased with the amount of agricultural work available and with the mild climate. Unfortunately, it was not long before native Californians expressed opposition to further immigration of these "Hindus". The California Board of Control submitted a report to Governor Stephens in 1920 titled California and the Orientals: Japanese, Chinese and Hindus. It indicated that since 1910, the number of Asian Indians in the United States had increased by 33.5%. The California Board of Control perceived these immigrants as an economic threat, or competition for native farmers. They were referred to as "a group of laborers becoming landowners and threatening the monopoly of the majority group." These types of statements stirred up anti-Asian feelings among other groups of people, often with dire consequences.

The California Alien Land Law of 1913, revised in 1920, prevented immigrants from owning and leasing their own land, making it a difficult struggle for those who made their living as farmers. In addition, the immigration Act of 1917 dictated that Indian Laborers were no longer able to enter the United States. Their native country of India existed as a "barred zone" in the Act.



US Immigration Laws

Immigration restrictions toward Asians of all races and countries of origin was very harsh in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 is well known and actually one of the reasons why other Asian Immigrants tried their hand at immigrating to America knowing that many of the jobs originally done by Chinese had remained unfilled. Many of these harsh laws remained in effect until after World War II and the excesses of the Japanese Internment changed many people's minds.

Late 19th - Early 20th Century Immigration Laws

- Chinese Exclusion Act of the 1880s - kept any Chinese from immigrating to the United States until it was repealed in 1943, after which a strict quota of 103 Chinese were allowed to enter the USA each year.
- 1907 Under an informal "Gentlemen's Agreement," the United States agrees not to restrict Japanese immigration in exchange for Japan's promise to voluntarily restrict Japanese emigration to the United States by not issuing passports to Japanese laborers. In return, the US promises to crack down on discrimination against Japanese-Americans, most of whom live in California.
- 1913 California's Alien Land Law prohibits "aliens ineligible for citizenship" (**Chinese and Japanese**) **from owning property in the state**, providing a model for similar anti-Asian laws in other states.
- 1917 Congress enacts a literacy requirement for immigrants by overriding President Woodrow Wilson's veto. The law requires immigrants to be able to read 40 words in some language and **bans immigration from Asia**, except for Japan and the Philippines.
- 1917 The Immigration Act of 1917 restricts immigration from Asia by creating an "**Asiatic Barred Zone.**"
- 1921 The Emergency Quota Act restricts immigration from a given country to 3% of the number of people from that country living in the US in 1910.
- 1922 The Cable Act partially repeals the Expatriation Act, but declares that an American woman who marries **an Asian still loses her citizenship.**
- 1923 In the landmark case of **U.S. v Bhaghat Singh Thind**, the Supreme Court rules that **Indians from the Asian subcontinent cannot become US citizens.**
- Immigration Act of 1924 limits annual European immigration to 2% of the number of people from that country living in the United States in 1890. The Act greatly reduces immigration from Southern and Eastern European nationalities that had only small populations in the US in 1890.
- 1924 The Oriental Exclusion Act prohibits most immigration from Asia, including foreign-born wives and the children of American citizens of Chinese ancestry.

Challenges to Immigration and Citizenship Laws



Bhagat Singh Thind as Young Man

One of the ways that Sikhs attempted to fight discrimination was by challenging American immigration and citizenship laws in court. One of the most famous cases involved Bhagat Singh Thind, Born on October 3, 1892, in the village of Taragarh in the state of Punjab, India, Bhagat Singh Thind came to the U.S. in 1913 to pursue higher education in an American university after serving in the British Indian army. Knowing of his military experience, he was recruited by the US Army on July 22, 1918, to fight in World War I. A few months later, on November 8, 1918, Bhagat Singh was promoted to the rank of an Acting Sergeant. He received an honorable discharge on December 16, 1918, with his character designated as "excellent."

After the war he sought the right to become a naturalized citizen, following a legal ruling that Caucasians had access to such rights. At this time, anthropologists categorized Indians as Caucasian. Thind took the citizenship oath and received his citizenship certificate in the state of Washington on December 9, 1918, wearing his military uniform since he was still serving in the U.S. army.

Only a few days later, his citizenship was revoked on the grounds that he was not a white man. Thind applied for citizenship again in the neighboring state of Oregon in 1919. A federal judge heard testimony from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) but this time ruled in favor of Thind. He became a citizen in November of 1920.

INS appealed the decision to grant citizenship in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals which sent the case to the Supreme Court. In 1923, in the case *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, the Court decided in favor of the United States, retroactively denying all Indian Americans citizenship for not being Caucasian in "*the common man's understanding of the term.*"

Finally in 1935, the 74th congress passed a law allowing citizenship to U.S. veterans of World War I, even those from the barred zones. Dr. Thind received his U.S. citizenship through the state of New York in 1936, taking the oath for the third time to become an American citizen.

The Origin of the "Mexican-Hindus"

Another way that Sikhs dealt with Caucasian American prejudice against them was to seek connections with other discriminated minorities. Since many of the men were unable by law to bring family members from India, they sought new relationships in the United States with such groups as Mexican Americans. A small "Mexican-Hindu" community formed in California when early male Punjabi immigrants

married Hispanic women. Since Indians were barred from owning land due to anti-Asian laws, many married Mexican women who could. They forged a fusion culture that flourished in California's Yuba City and Imperial Valley, producing children with names like "Maria Singh" or "Jose

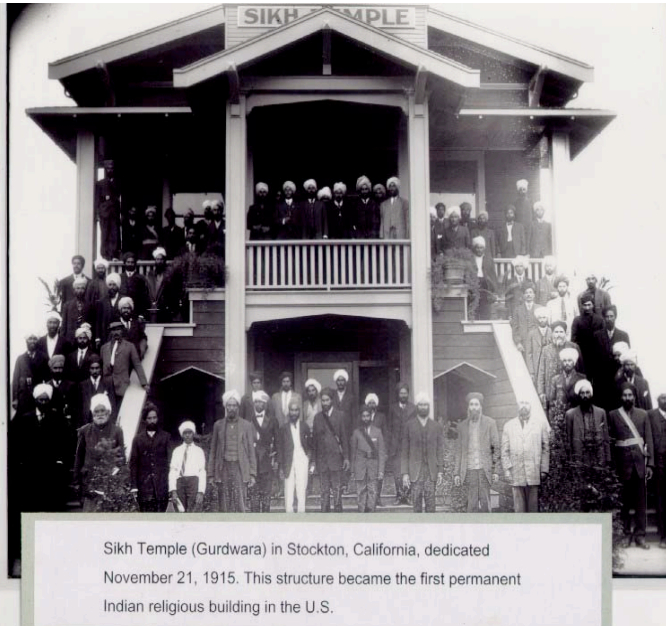


Rai." Both cultures shared a rural life and a lower-class status. Sometimes sets of Hispanic sisters or female relatives married Punjabi business partners, forming joint households.

However, in 1922 the Cable Act declared that any American female citizen who married "an alien ineligible to citizenship" would lose her citizenship and if a Mexican woman married a Punjabi man, she would then become ineligible for land rights. To get around this dilemma, the men turned to Anglo landowners, lawyers and judges to hold land for them, and to honor verbal leases. Later, they also put land in their children's names, who by the 14th Amendment were American citizens.

Religion and The Role of the Gurdwara in Immigration

Following the path used by countless other American immigrants, Sikhs turned to their religious communities for help. Beginning between 1901-1915, the Sikh Temple, or Gurdwara, became the center of Sikh Immigrant life. Sikhs worked together to pay off immigration travel debt and focused on reviving and practicing the Sikh tradition.



They got involved in constructing places of worship where they could build fellowship and community. Then they addressed issues of their common welfare. The Gurdwaras became places to welcome new arrivals and to help these recent immigrants look for jobs and do what they needed to take care of themselves.

These Gurdwaras provided shelter, food, and social life to all immigrants without any consideration of caste, creed, or religion. Hindu and Muslim Asian

immigrants were also attending and living in these Gurdwaras.

Sikh American Political Leaders

Congressman Dalip Singh Saund was the first Asian American to be elected to the US Congress and to date remains the only Indian American to do so. He was elected in 1956 from 29th Congressional district that comprised Riverside and Imperial Counties of California. He was reelected twice. In 1964, while running for his fourth term in the U.S. Congress, he suffered a stroke and became too ill to serve. Nonetheless, Saund set a precedent [an opportunity or example] for many Asians to follow in the U.S. Congress. He remains a symbol of hope and an example for many Indian leaders who want to take part in America's political system. Some others who have been active in the American political system include Mayor David Singh Dhillon of El Centro is a third generation Punjabi-Mexican, Mayor Amarpreet Dhaliwal of San Joaquin, and Mayor Kashmir 'Kash' Singh Gill of Yuba City which has one of the largest Sikh populations in the U.S.



First Sikh and Asian American Congressman Dalip Singh Saund with Senator John F. Kennedy, 1958

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Lesson Plan

Pioneer Asian Indian Immigration to North America

H-SS Content Standards

- 4.4.3 Discuss immigration and migration to California between 1850 and 1900, including the diverse composition of those who came; the countries of origin and their relative locations; and conflicts and accords among the diverse groups (e.g., the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act).
- 4.4.4 Describe rapid American immigration, internal immigration, settlement, and the growth of towns and cities...
- 8.12.5 Examine the location and effects of urbanization, renewed immigration, and industrialization (e.g., the effects on social fabric of cities, wealth and economic opportunity, the conservation movement).
- 8.12.7 Identify the new sources of large-scale immigration and the contributions of immigrants to the building of cities and the economy; explain the ways in which new social and economic patterns encouraged assimilation of newcomers into the mainstream amidst growing cultural diversity; and discuss the new wave of nativism.
- 10.4.o Students analyze patterns of global change in the era of New Imperialism in at least two of the following regions or countries: ...India....
- 10.4.2 Discuss the locations of the colonial rule of such nations as England...and the United States.
- 10.4.3 Explain imperialism from the perspective of the colonizers and the colonized and the varied immediate and long-term responses by the people under colonial rule.
- 10.6.2 Describe the effects of the war and resulting peace treaties on population movement, the international economy...
- 11.2.3 Trace the effect of the Americanization movement.
- 11.3.3 Cite incidences of religious intolerance in the United States.
- 11.3.4 Discuss the expanding religious pluralism in the United States and California that resulted from large-scale immigration in the twentieth century.

Draft H-SS Framework and Sikhism

Grade 4 – Modern California

The history of California then becomes the story of successive waves of immigrants from the sixteenth century through modern times and the enduring marks each left on the character of the state. These immigrants include ... (2) the people from around the world who settled here, established California as a state, and developed its mining, industrial, and agricultural economy; (3) the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Sikhs, and other immigrants of the second half of the nineteenth century, who provided a new supply of labor for California's railroads, agriculture, and industry and contributed as entrepreneurs and innovators, especially in agriculture; (4) the immigrants of the first half of the twentieth century...

Grade 7 - The Civilizations of Islam

Muslim civilization became notably cosmopolitan, as merchants and scholars founded new communities and won converts from sub-Saharan Africa and east to the Indian subcontinent to Southeast Asia. Conversion slowed in India with the emergence of Sikhism in 1469.

Grade 8 - The Rise of Industrial America: 1877–1914

The period from the end of Reconstruction to World War I transformed the nation. This complex period was marked by the settling of the trans-Mississippi West, the expansion and concentration of basic industries, the establishment of national transportation networks and new maritime routes, a human tidal wave of immigration from southern and eastern Europe....The Gold Rush in California and agricultural labor in Hawaii spurred Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Filipino, Hindu, and Sikh immigration to the United States.

Grade 10 - The Rise of Imperialism and Colonialism

Colonizers built infrastructure and introduced medicine, education, and Western beliefs. Print technology and more rapid transportation aided the growth of Protestantism, Catholicism, Islam, Sikhism, and Buddhism.

Essential Question

How are immigrants treated and how do they contribute to the US and California culture?

Lesson Starter

When students come into the classroom or begin the lesson, ask them to think about this question and note down two things under each part of the question:

*How is California connected to the rest of the world in....
the products we buy and sell?
the people who live here?
the skills people have for important jobs?*

*After 5 minutes have students share their answers with a partner.
Share out to the whole class and record the ideas on the board or chart at the front of the room.*

Explain to students that we are going to learn about one group of people who came to live in California and the rest of the U.S. especially the west coast...immigrants from India who practiced the Sikh religion.

Pre-Reading Activity

1. In partners, students find the titles and headings in the article.
2. Have students share out and list these on the board. Lead a discussion predicting what the content will be in each section.
3. Define key words: pioneer, immigration, resistance, discrimination, gurdwara, citizenship
4. Assign groups of students one or two records within the article to examine and respond to the questions on the handout sheet:
Historical records or primary sources are the way we piece together and evaluate what happened in the past. This article includes a number of historical records that came from government offices, photo libraries and archives, old newspapers, business records, religious institutions, and family scrapbooks, etc.
5. Discuss the handout answers as a class.

Reading Activity

1. As a class, read the first long paragraph of the article aloud. The teacher should show the Punjab region on a world map, and discuss the history of the Punjab based on the article and what is happening in the area today based on the news.
2. Discuss the following questions with students:
 - How might coming from a part of the world with a long and powerful history have influenced Sikh thinking?
 - If you had been a Sikh in the late 19th and early 20th c., how might they have responded to British conquest and rule of the Punjab? Would you have cooperated or rebelled? Why?
3. Divide up the reading so that the groups that did the primary source activity have the opportunity to read the section of the text where their source was located.
4. Students break into partner groups within their section groups. Partner groups read that section using a reciprocal reading process. (Reading a short section to a partner who asks clarifying questions and switching readers half way through). Together the students prepare a summary of that section of the reading.
5. When the partner groups are finished they meet back with the larger section group to discuss the content of their summaries. In the discussion students add anything they may have missed. They should discuss whether the source added to or helped them understand the section and why or why not.
6. All sets of partners need to be ready to report out their section of the reading.

Post Reading Activity

Randomly call a partner group to the front of the class to report on their section of reading for which they prepared a summary. Have them use the sources in any way that enhanced their presentation. Allow time for questions and answers from the class to the presenters.

Closing Activity

Based on the presentations that they heard, all of the class members write a paragraph response agreeing or disagreeing with the following statement and providing reasons for their position. Their responses may be the ticket to leave class at the end of the period or a ticket into class the next day.

*Sikh immigrants were welcomed and treated as fairly as other immigrants to America.
This is why they prospered and contributed to society.*

Record Analysis Sheet

1. Describe the record:
2. What is its probable source? Why do you think so?
3. How do you think the record might relate to the article?
4. If it is a photo, who do you think might have taken the picture? Why?
5. What clues are on the record to show it was part of a library or archive collection? How might the library or archive have acquired the record?
6. Examine each record and photo. What do it tell us?
 - a. Record 1 (text) – p. 2
 - b. Record 2 (photo) – p. 3
 - c. Record 3 (map) – p. 3
 - d. Record 4 (photo) – p. 4
 - e. Record 5 (clipping) – p. 5
 - f. Record 6 (photo) – p. 7
 - g. Record 7 (photo) – p. 8
 - h. Record 8 (photo) – p. 9
 - i. Record 9 (photo) – p. 9
7. Why isn't the chart on page 6 included in the list of records? In what ways might it relate to primary sources?