

Yung Wing

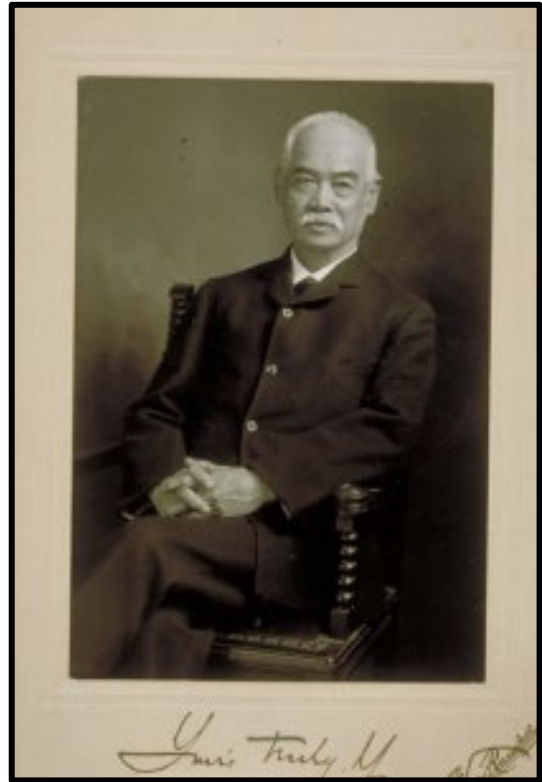
1828-1912 | Educator

Yung Wing grew up in China. At that time, very few Chinese people moved to the United States. He came to New England to study in 1847 and became the first Chinese person to graduate from a U.S. college, Yale in New Haven.

Wing became a citizen of the United States and married a woman from Avon, Connecticut. They had two sons. Wing worked hard to build a strong relationship between the United States and China.

In 1872, he started a program called the Chinese Educational Mission. The goal was to bring 120 Chinese boys ages 10-14 to the United States to learn English, attend school, and learn about American culture. Wing hoped that when the young men returned to China, they would make their country better because of their new knowledge. The boys lived with families in Connecticut and Massachusetts and attended local schools. Many went on to study at Yale and at other universities.

In 1875, the Chinese Educational Mission built a big new headquarters in Hartford. It had classrooms, a dining room, and bedrooms for students and teachers. This was where the students studied Chinese language and culture in the summer. The older students even started a baseball team that traveled around the region to play games. They called themselves the Celestials.



Yung Wing, courtesy Connecticut Museum of Culture and History



Chinese Educational Mission baseball team, courtesy
Washington State University Library

The Chinese government worried that Wing's students were becoming too "American." Then, in 1882, the United States passed a law called the Chinese Exclusion Act to keep Chinese people from immigrating (moving permanently) to the United States or becoming citizens. Wing had to close his school. The United States government said he could not be a citizen anymore. He was forced to leave the country and his family, although he returned in 1902 to see his son graduate from Yale. Wing then stayed in the

United States until his death in 1912. In 1909, three years before his death, Wing published an autobiography called *My Life in China and America*.

Yung Wing's school only lasted nine years, but his students went on to work as engineers, doctors, teachers, military leaders, and government officials back in China. In that way, his dream lived on.

For more information, visit:

<https://connecticuthistory.org/yung-wings-dream-the-chinese-educational-mission-1872-1881/>

<https://connecticuthistory.org/yung-wing-the-chinese-educational-mission-and-transnational-connecticut/>

Created for *Teach It*, a program of Connecticut Humanities, 2021.