

Carrying History: Fifty Years of Hmong Experiences in the US.

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The Hmong in Minnesota: Celebrating 50 years of impact.

Carrying History: Fifty Years of Hmong Experiences in the US.



Among contributions

Pennsylvania – Amish Quilts

California – Strawberries

Washington State – Flowers

Missouri & Arkansas – Chickens

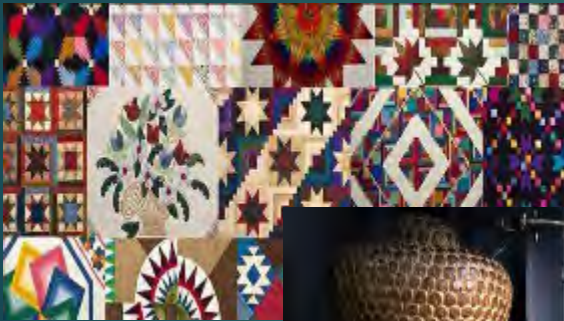
North & South Carolina – Chickens & Eggs

Florida – Tropical Fruits

Minnesota – Organic vegetables (HAFA)

Wisconsin – Ginseng

Michigan - Restaurants



Carrying History: Fifty Years of Hmong Experiences in the US.

- ▶ Hmong Economy
 - ▶ Hmong buying Power
 - ▶ 2000 = \$311 million
 - ▶ 2021 = \$2.3 billion
- ▶ Tax contribution to MN
 - ▶ 2000 = \$34 million
 - ▶ 2021 = \$286 million
- ▶ Poverty Declined
 - ▶ 2000 = 31.6 percent
 - ▶ 2021 = 14.6 percent



Others

- Specific niche marketing



The Hmong

- ▶ Demographic
 - ▶ 1. Minnesota 103,181;
 - ▶ 2. California 101,000;
 - ▶ 3. Wisconsin 60,000.



Hmong Early History

China:

- ▶ 5,000 – 8,000 years in China
- ▶ Credited with first to cultivate wet rice (rice paddies)
- ▶ Forging of metals into weapons
- ▶ Defeated by the Chinese and thus the migration to Southern China
- ▶ 12 Million still lives in China (Guizhou, Hunan, Yunnan, Szechuan, Chongqing, and KwangXi)
- ▶ Migration to SE Asia in the 1800s due to failed rebellions (Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Burma).



Hmong History

- ▶ The French Indo-China War (1900 – 1954)
 - ▶ To Assist the French to fight against the Japanese during WWII.
 - ▶ Fought against the Vietnamese after WWII ended and Japanese pulled out of Laos.



Hmong Early History

- ▶ Hmong and the Secret War of Laos
- ▶ US interest in containing of communism in SE Asia
- ▶ International agreements prohibit foreign troop in Laos
- ▶ Secret War of Laos - US recruited the Hmong to fight as surrogate soldiers of US Arm Forces in Laos – through the CIA.



Hmong History

- ▶ The Secret War (1961 – 1975)
 - ▶ The Hmong fought to defend their homeland.
 - ▶ To engage the North Vietnamese Army in combats using guerilla tactics.
 - ▶ To rescue downed American pilots.
 - ▶ To gather intelligence.
 - ▶ To guard radar sites.



Aftermath of the War

- ▶ During the Secret War (1961-1975)
 - ▶ Hmong fought against 70,000 Vietnamese forces in Laos.
 - ▶ Saved over 50,000 American lives.
 - ▶ 30,000 Hmong perished during the war (1961-1975)
 - ▶ 50,000 Hmong perished after the war (1975 – 1980).



Refugee

- ▶ Hmong fled to Thailand as refugees after 1975.
- ▶ Hmong Refugee Resettlement in Thailand:
 - ▶ Criteria developed for resettlement
 - ▶ Must have worked directly with US government agencies (USAID and US CIA).
 - ▶ Must have family members in the US.
 - ▶ Must have served in the military or would face persecution if they were to return.



Photos by Doug Hulcher, Vang Xiong, and Kou Yang.

How did the Hmong end up in MN/US



- ▶ Refugee Resettlement Agencies (VOLAG) received contracts to resettle refugees
- ▶ International Institute
- ▶ Church World Services
- ▶ Lutheran Social Services
- ▶ Catholic Charities
- ▶ Mennonite Services/Quaker Services



US & Minnesota's Response

- ▶ US Congress passed and signed into law the Office of Refugee Resettlement, expanding the definition of "refugees" to align with UN Refugee Charter.
- ▶ Governor Al Quie's visit to Ban Vinai Refugee Camp
 - ▶ Lobbied US Department of State to send Refugees to Minnesota.
 - ▶ Created the Office of Refugee Resettlement.
 - ▶ Hired Jane Kretzman as first director.
 - ▶ Hired Leng Wong as staff.
- ▶ Mayor George Latimer
 - ▶ Created office of refugee services
 - ▶ Hired Amy Crawford as first director.

First Hmong to arrive in Minnesota

- ▶ Her Dang, USAID Employee, Arrived in Elk River in November 1975.
- ▶ Leng Wong (Vang), Assistant for Jerry Daniels, Former CIA operative stationed in Laos.
 - ▶ Arrived in February 1976, Sponsored by Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church & Macalester Plymouth United Church.
 - ▶ Resettled at Liberty Plaza in St. Paul.
 - ▶ Owner of Sunrise Market on University Avenue.



St. Paul & University Avenue

- ▶ Xang Vang – First Executive Director of Lao Family Community of Minnesota.
 - ▶ Farmer Market
 - ▶ Refugee Resettlement
 - ▶ Entrepreneurial
 - ▶ Developers
- ▶ Kim Long
 - ▶ Restaurant Owner (Kim Long Restaurant)
 - ▶ Developer (International Market)





Hmong American Resettlement Challenges

- ▶ Challenges facing Hmong-Americans
 - ▶ Loss of Culture, Language, History
 - ▶ Educational equity at the K-12 level – the teaching of Hmong history, culture, language
 - ▶ The emergence of Hmong charter schools
 - ▶ To teach history, culture, language
 - ▶ Museums & Cultural Organizations
 - ▶ To collect
 - ▶ To preserve
 - ▶ To teach
 - ▶ To inspire
 - ▶ Health equity (diabetes, high blood pressure).
 - ▶ Educational Achievement.

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RESOURCES

- ▶ TPT – Secret War
<https://www.mnvietham.org/secret-war-educator-toolkit/>
- ▶ Center for Hmong Studies
 - ▶ Library collection
 - ▶ Ongoing exhibit
 - ▶ Lectures & conferences
 - ▶ Archival collection
- ▶ Hmong Archives
- ▶ Hmong Culture Center
- ▶ Hmong Story 40
<http://www.hmongstory40.org/>
- ▶ MN Digital Library
- ▶ Hmong American Center



Q&A

