

HISTORY OF THE REAL CLEVELAND INDIANS

Northeast Ohio boasts of over 25,000 Asian Indians. Many of them are entrepreneurs, doctors, engineers, professors and scientists. Some own gas stations and others own hotels/motels. It is estimated that about 80% of hotel/motel owners in the Cleveland area are Indians. The advent of the age of information technology brought another wave of Asian Indians to the U.S. And the tide continues. The following is a summary of our history.

1960's

- Shanti Bahadur established the first Indian business restoring old photographs on East 4th Street between Euclid and Prospect Avenues. After graduating from University of Michigan taught Ariel Photography during WW-II. He was among the few Indians who came to USA for studies through the first Colombo Plan. His classmates included Zakir Hussain and Pratap Singh Kairon. He was also the first Indian to marry an American lady. He was also involved in the Gaddar Movement.
- Dr. Vishwa Nath Kapur was the first Indian doctor who was on the staff of Metro General Hospital.
- Paramjeet Singh Chopra was the first Sikh doctor doing his internship at the Lutheran Hospital.
- Pritam Singh Bhatia was the first Sikh social worker to be hired by the B.F. Goodrich Center in the early sixties.
- P.K. Saha was the first teacher of English language & literature in the Cleveland area starting in 1957, first at Hawken School and later at Case Western Reserve University.
- The Indian community organized the first entertainment program with Bhangra, exposing the Cleveland community to Indian songs and dance, at the Cleveland Institute of Art in December 1962. This was a fund-raiser and we collected \$2,000.00, which was sent to the Indian Embassy for the Chinese aggression in India.
- Most of the Indian population was students, who were members of the International Student Group, ran by the Cleveland Council on World Affairs. They nominated Paramjit Singh as its first Indian chairman in 1963.
- Dr. Ashok V. Pradhan was the first Indian invited by Case Institute of Technology as a Fellow to work on Rocket Propulsion Technology, on a grant from newly formed NASA by President Eisenhower in 1958. Also, he was the first Indian to work on NASA's Apollo Program initiated by President Kennedy in 1961, as Challenge to Russians to put Man on the Moon before 1960's decade was over. Of his three Doctorate Degrees, one was from the Cleveland State University, he was the first student ever to be awarded Doctor of Engineering Degree by CSU from their newly started Program in 1975.
- The Indian community arranged for the first Republic Day Dinner in 1963 for 125 people at the International Student Center sponsored by the Cleveland Council on World Affairs.
- Ajeet Singh Sood was the first turbaned Sikh to walk in a graduation procession after he earned his Masters in Engineering from Case Institute of Technology now Case Western Reserve in 1963. Cleveland Press wrote on Wednesday, June 6, 1963 "Turbaned Grad Waits Case Diploma".

- In 1963, at the invitation from the American Society of Experimental Stress Analysis, Ajeet S. Sood was the first non-US Citizen permitted by Pentagon, to enter the Lewis Research Center, a NASA lab in Cleveland to present a paper.
- In 1963, Ajeet S. Sood a stress analyst with Hoff Research and Development Labs. Inc., East Cleveland, was the first Indian and non-US citizen given top Security Clearance to study classified materials and develop special publications for the Department of Defense. As an Associate Analyst and Co-author prepared several publications for the US Office of Civil Defense focusing on strengthening USA against nuclear attack.
- The India Association of Cleveland was formed in 1964
- Paramjit Singh was the first turbaned Sikh to walk in a graduation procession after he earned his MBA from Western Reserve University now Case Western Reserve in 1965 (Cleveland, History in Motion authored by John and Diane Grabowski of Western Reserve Historical Society)
- After protesting the first two Indians and an Egyptian were permitted to appear for the Ohio State Board of Professional Engineers Exam in 1965 and they secured the top three positions.
- On May 15, 1965 Cleveland Sikhs held the first Sikh Diwan, a religious congregation to educate Clevelanders about Sikhism and its philosophy at the Church of the Covenant and the local press publicized it.
- Lotus, the Indian community newspaper was first published in 1967.
- The first Indian lady of the Sikh faith was cremated and there was only one place for cremation in the Flats.
- Maharani opened in 1968 selling Indian handicrafts, jewelry and clothing on Coventry Road, Cleveland Heights.
- The first Indian grocery store was opened in the Greenlight shopping Mall in the late sixties or early seventies.

1970's

- Taj Mahal, the first Indian restaurant opened in Lyndhurst in 1974.
- As the Indian community grew in the early '70s, the idea of having an India House was born, which culminated in the purchase of the India Community Center in 1978 and Cleveland became the first major city in the United States to have an India Community Center. In 2003 it received The Ohio Historical Marker.
- Jasjeet Singh Sood a turbaned attained the Eagle Scout rank in 1974.
- Jasjeet Singh Sood was also the first Indian who graduated Valedictorian from Normandy High School in 1976.
- The Gujrati Samaj was formed in 1979
- Inauguration of Thyagaraj Festival at Cleveland State University

1980's

- In 1981 the Federation of India Community Associations (FICA) was formed to link with The National Federation of Indian-American Associations (NFIA) and serve as the umbrella for all the sister organizations that had been formed by then.
- In 1983 The Asian-Indian Physicians of Northern Ohio (AIPNO) was formed as the number of Indian physicians increased in the area. Since 1992, at their annual fund raising event called the "Chirag" (Lamp), they have donated \$10,000 to non-profit organizations, which reads as follows: The Free Clinic, Cleveland Sight Center, Templum House, Project Act, Providence House, Boys Hope, Help Foundation, Inc., Cleveland Sight Center, Center for Prevention of Domestic Violence, The City Mission, Make-A-Wish Foundation, Partnership For A Safer Cleveland, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation-Rainbow Chapter, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, ALS Association-Northern Ohio Chapter. AIPNO also holds annual health fair for seniors at the Shiva Vishnu and Swaminarayan temples. AIPNO has supported in the past the medical surgical camps in India, Maharashtra Foundation, a Burn Clinic in India, 9-11 Relief, Gujarat Earthquake relief, Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina relief (through Red Cross), Orissa Cyclone relief, India Cultural Garden Project. AIPNO also supports Project SEVA every year with \$5,000 in matching funds.
- Dr. Elizabeth Balraj the first Indian lady, becomes the Cuyahoga County Coroner in 1987.
- In 1988 Cleveland hosted its first National Convention in collaboration with the NFIA, we had Asian Indians come from 35 states and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan performed in Severance Hall, a first for Severance Hall. At this Convention the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) was formed. This was also the year that initiated the Indian community's in politics and participation in the Presidential election.
- Thanksgiving of 1988, Project SEVA was born and served 400 Thanksgiving Dinner at the Morning Star Baptist Church near East 105th Street. This was arranged by the then State Senator Michael White.
- The concept and experience of Project SEVA was presented to the NFIA board and it was adopted by NFIA to be promoted nationally. It is estimated that nationally on Thanksgiving week we serve about 125,000 meals and also distribute blankets to the homeless. Presently we serve about 6,000 meals every month at St. Colman Catholic Church, Morningstar Baptist Church and Hopewell Baptist Missionary Church and the India Community Center. Project SEVA also has a program called, "Indian-Americans for the American-Indians", providing them with healthcare education, diabetes testing and a pantry program. The Indian community rose over \$300,000 for families of those who were victims of September 11, 2001. We have raised funds for Tsunami and Katrina. Currently Project SEVA serves 125,000 foods and 1,250 blankets to the homeless and needy.
- The Asian-Indian Americans for Better Government (AIABG) as a non-partisan body and holds events to provide our community with political education and raise funds for candidates. The Indian community rose over \$250,000 for Mayor Voinovich's race to become the Governor of Ohio.
- The first Indian is appointed to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission
- The Indian community starts the India Chair program at the Cleveland State University and later is nominated to be the Chairman of its Board of Trustees. Monte Ahuja donates two

million dollars to Cleveland State University and they honored him by naming the School of Business as Monte Ahuja School of Business.

2000's

- India International another newspaper serving the Indian community starts publishing in December 2001.
- The first Indian-American is appointed as the Law Director for the City of Cleveland in 2002
- The Sikh Gurudwara (temple) in Richfield, Ohio is bestowed The Ohio Historical Marker in 2003.
- The India Community Center is also bestowed The Ohio Historical Marker in 2003.
- The American Society of Engineers of Indian Origin holds its first national convention in 2003.
- FICA has the groundbreaking ceremony of the India Cultural Gardens with Mayor Jane Campbell and Congressman Dennis Kucinich in 2004.
- Installation of Mahatma Gandhi's statue in the India Cultural Garden on October 1, 2006. It is the first Gandhi statue in Ohio. The second phase of the Garden was completed by October 2, 2007, which is Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. This is the premier location in the world that has the tallest Gandhi statue on a Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.
- Ratanjit S. Sondhe is a Speaker, Author, Consultant, Entrepreneur, Radio & TV Personality, and has become Renowned Internationally as "Mr. Stress-Free!"
- Meet Neel Kashkari: The Man With the \$700 Billion Wallet (Also a man from Stow Ohio): As [The Wall Street Journal's Deborah Solomon reported October 6, 2008](#), Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson is promoting Neel Kashkari, the Treasury's assistant secretary for international affairs, to be the point man overseeing the \$700 billion financial bailout as the interim head of Paulson's Office of Financial Stability
- Monte and Usha Ahuja donated \$30 million to University Hospital. It is the highest donation made in Northeast Ohio. It is also the highest donation made by an Indian American in the whole country

2010's

- Anand and Neeraj Julka donate \$6 million to set-up a scholarship fund at the Cleveland State University and CSU dedicated a brand new building housing their college and School of Nursing, calling it Julka Hall in 2010.
- Jay Goyal a Democrat, is the first Indian-American elected as the State Representative in Ohio in November 2006. Representing the 73rd District, served as the Majority Whip in the 128th Ohio General Assembly. Rep. Goyal proudly serves his hometown of Mansfield and other areas of Richland County in the Ohio House of Representatives.
www.house.state.oh.us/index.php
- Baiju Shah leads a BioEnterprise team helps build Northeast Ohio's biomedical industry reports Tom Breckenridge of the Plain Dealer, June 6, 2009. A man variously described as "a walking Rolodex," "smart as hell" and a "master facilitator" heads BioEnterprise. The nonprofit, headquartered in University Circle, is charged with boosting growth in the region's health care

economy. So far, BioEnterprise claims a hand in the growth of 89 biomedical companies throughout Northeast Ohio. They've drawn \$859 million in capital and generated 1,900 jobs.

- Anamika Veeramani wins the National Spelling Bee Contest becoming the 2010 National Spelling Bee Champion
- The City Club of Cleveland, the citadel of free speech invites Dr. I.J. Singh, Professor and Coordinator, Anatomical Sciences, New York University; Jasjit Singh, Associate Executive Director, Sikh American Legal Defense & Education Fund (SALDEF) and Paramjit Singh, City Club Special Program member to present *American Sikh: Towards a More Perfect Union*.
- Cleveland International Hall of Fame inducts Paramjit Singh into its 2010 Inaugural Class.
- FICA Trustee Paramjit Singh forms a coalition to make Cleveland the City of Peace and Non-Violence in October 2010 and created a Cyber Wall of Non-Violence sponsored by ClevelandPeople.com. Please visit www.clevelandpeople.com/other/pledge.htm and sign the pledge.
- FICA invited by Mayor Frank Jackson to celebrate Diwali 2010 in the Rotunda of City Hall of Cleveland.
- Radhika Reddy, founder and partner of Ariel Ventures buys a building on East 40th Street with a great view of Lake Erie to house the Ariel International Center to welcome new immigrants to Cleveland. Ariel Ventures will operate it as an incubator for entrepreneurs.
- Rajiv Joseph from Cleveland writes a play "Bengal Tiger on the way to Baghdad" starring Robin Williams hits Broadway.
- Paramjit Singh is selected to be a member of FBI's Citizens Academy in 2011
- Mr. Vinod (Vinny) Gupta of Wadsworth Ohio is appointed to the Ohio Board of Regents in 2011
- The Asian Indian Heritage Project is formed in 2011, preserving the cultural legacy of Asian Indians in Northeast Ohio.
- Cleveland International Hall of Fame inducts Late Vijaya Emani into its 2011 Class.
- Cleveland International Hall of Fame inducts Dr. Jaya Shah into its 2012 Class.
- Cleveland International Hall of Fame inducts Ratanjit Singh Sondhe into its 2013 Class.
- Cleveland International Hall of Fame inducts Monte Ahuja into its 2014 Class.