

The Independence Hall of Korea Traveling Exhibition

**"The History
of the Korean
Independence
Movement
Through Photos"**

About the Exhibition

From 1910, when imperialist Japan robbed Korea of its sovereignty, to 1945, when Korea regained its independence, the Korean people engaged in a diverse range of efforts aimed at securing the nation's independence at home and abroad. In honor of those efforts, the Independence Hall of Korea presents 20 photos that captured major moments in the history of the movement. We hope you enjoy tracing the footsteps of the Korean independence movement through these photographic vignettes of historic moments.



독립기념관

20 Photographed Moments in the History of the Korean Independence Movement

- # Righteous Armies
- # Patriotic Enlightenment Movement
- # Heroic deed of An Jung-geun
- # Koreans in America
- # The February 8 Declaration of Independence
- # March First Independence Movement
- # First Korean Congress
- # Korean Provisional Government
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- # Establishment of the Republic of Korea government



A Righteous Armies in Yangpyeong (1907)

"It is much better to die as a free man than to live as the slave of Japan."

- An excerpt from Frederick A. McKenzie's *The Tragedy of Korea* (1908) -

Who met with Frederick Arthur McKenzie, a war correspondent of the U.K.'s Daily Mail?

After imperialist Japan forcibly dethroned the emperor of the Korean Empire and disbanded his army, volunteer militias known as "Righteous Armies" were formed around the country to protect the nation. Frederick A. McKenzie, a special correspondent covering events in Korea, met with Righteous Army soldiers and noted that although they wore shabby clothes and carried malfunctioning rifles, they were "an example of patriotism."

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Why did educator Yi Seung-hun found a school in 1907?

Korean nationalist leaders launched the Patriotic Enlightenment Movement.

Its purpose was to increase the nation's capabilities and reinstate Korean sovereignty from imperialist Japan through diverse efforts, including enlightenment inspired by education and journalism and economic autonomy through the promotion of business activities. In 1907, independence activist Yi Seung-hun (1864-1930) founded the Osan School to foster patriotic talent. Many graduates of the school who had received a patriotic education later became leaders of the Sovereignty Restoration Movement.

*"To revive this country,
we do need people who grab
guns and swords.
But what's even more
important is for the people
to become aware of what's
happening."*

*- An excerpt from Yi Seung-hun's Osan School
opening ceremony speech in 1907 -*



students and teachers of Osan School

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Heroic deed of An Jung-geun



Patriotic martyr An Jung-geun who executed Ito Hirobumi

"I executed Ito because he disrupted peace in East Asia and alienated relations between Korea and Japan. For this reason, as Lieutenant General of Korea's Righteous Army, I executed this criminal."

- An Jung-geun -

Why did this young man assassinate Ito Hirobumi?

Deepening Japanese aggression was met by a righteous struggle aimed at executing Japanese figures and pro-Japanese Korean collaborators who led Japan's infiltration into Korea. On October 26, 1909 in Harbin, China, patriotic martyr An Jung-geun (1879-1910) assassinated Ito Hirobumi, the mastermind behind Japan's annexation of Korea. In court, he confidently stated the legitimacy of his patriotic deed and strived to promote his cause until his death by penning the Treatise on Peace in East Asia in prison.

"To sacrifice for the country is the duty of a soldier."

With respects, March 1910
An Jung-geun, citizen of the Korean Empire,
from Yeosu Prison



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Representatives of the Korean National Association (1912)

Why did Korean people go abroad around 1910?

After Korea lost her sovereignty to imperialist Japan in 1910, many Koreans headed for the United States, Russia, China, and other countries **to establish new bases for the Korean independence movement.** Those in the United States founded the Korean National Association and other independence organizations, collected military funds, and set up schools to sustain patriotic education. Despite having to leave their motherland, overseas Koreans contributed their efforts to the independence movement to hasten the restoration of their lost country's sovereignty.

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Who conducted the ceremony for the declaration of Korean independence on February 8, 1919 in Japan?

Amid the changing international order following the end of World War I (Nov. 11, 1918) and U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's advocacy of national self-determination, the Korean people's expectations of breaking free from Japanese colonial rule were further raised. Against this backdrop, **Korean students in Japan** planned and conducted a ceremony for the declaration of Korean independence on February 8, 1919.

The declaration, which criticized Japanese colonial rule and proclaimed the Korean people's will for independence, greatly inspired other independence efforts in Korea and abroad.

"The Korean Young People's Independence Organization declares, on behalf of the 20 million Korean people, the independence of the Korean nation, doing so in front of all the countries in the world, which have already secured the triumphs of justice and freedom."

- An excerpt from the February 8 Declaration of Independence (1919) -



Key figures of the Declaration of Independence of February 8, 1919 (1920)



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March First Independence Movement rally at Gyeongungung Palace, Seoul (1919)

"Our cry for independence will not make it immediately come true. Yet, we are determined to do so at this time to kindle the spirit of independence in the people's hearts."

- Independence activist Son Byeong-hui -

What did the people who gathered together on March 1, 1919 cry out for in unison?

In defiance of the suffering caused by oppressive Japanese rule, the Korean people proclaimed to the world "the independence of Korea and the liberty of the Korean people" and held rallies, led by chants of "Hurrah for Korean independence!" The March First Independence Movement, which started on March 1 and lasted until late May, spread across Korea and to Russia, the United States, and other parts of the world.

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Participants of the First Korean Congress carrying the Korean flag (1919)



A parade by members of the First Korean Congress (1919)

Where was the First Korean Congress held?

Upon hearing the news of Korea's March First Independence Movement, Korean-Americans held the First Korean Congress, a three-day event that started on April 14, 1919 in **Philadelphia**, with the aim of proclaiming to the world the Korean people's determination for independence. On the last day of the Congress, some 150 Koreans carrying both Korean and American national flags held a parade from the Little Theater to the Independence Hall, where the March First Declaration of Independence was read in public.

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What was the first democratic republic government in Korean history?

The proclamation of Korean independence on March 1, 1919 was followed by the founding of the **Korean Provisional Government** on April 11. The Republic of Korea was established as a new country belonging to the people and the Provisional Government as a democratic republic. Serving as both state and government, the Provisional Government promoted popular sovereignty and the democratic republic system of government. As the highest organ of the independence movement, it dedicated itself to restoring Korean sovereignty through efforts aimed at independence.



Korean Provisional Government building with the Korean flag flying



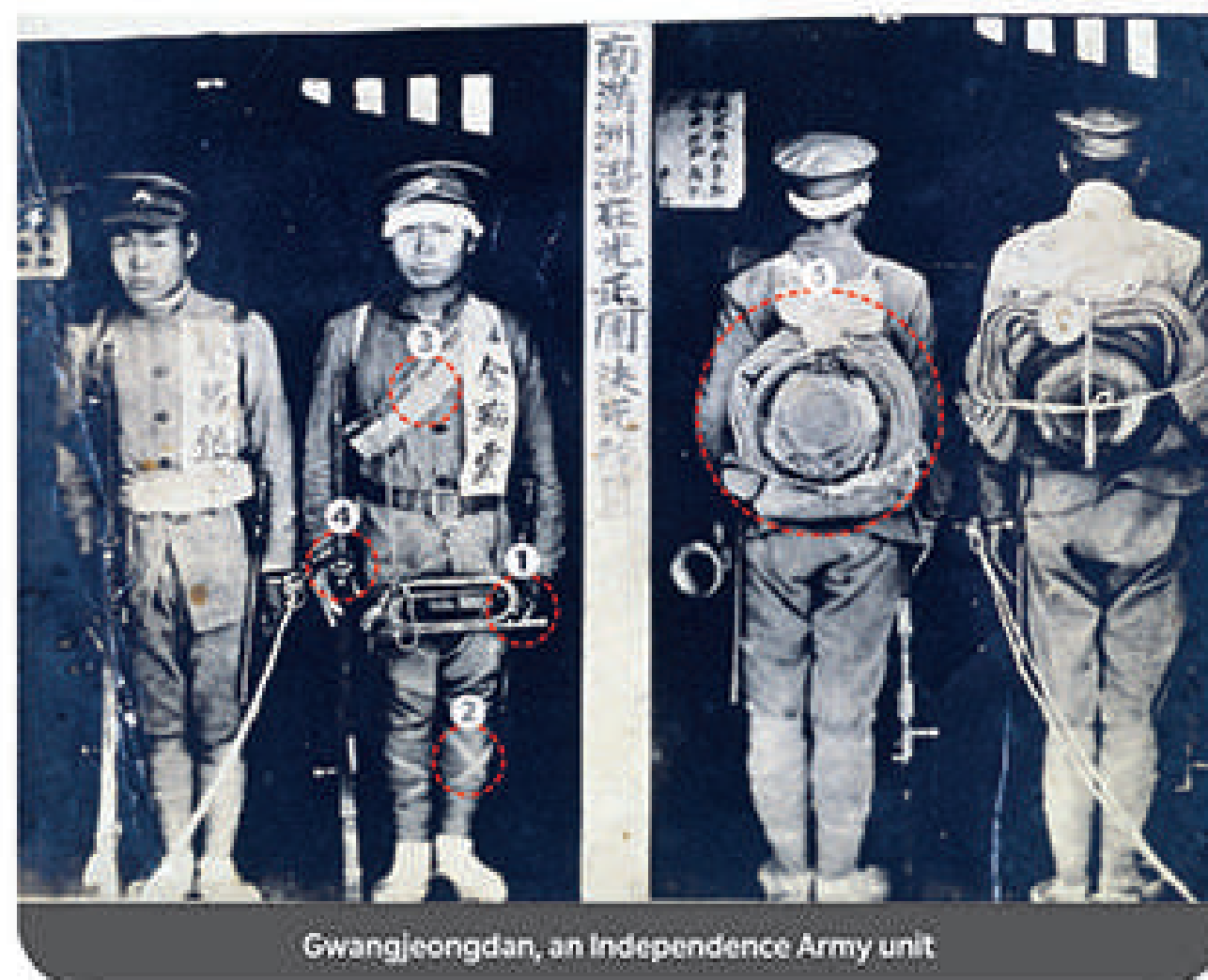
A commemorative photo of the 6th meeting of the Korean Provisional Assembly (Sept. 17, 1919)

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Independence war



Gwangjeongdan, an Independence Army unit

"They have fairly well-trained shooting skills and considerable combat power when taking advantage of the terrain for defense. They also fight bravely."

- An excerpt from a record of the Battle of Fengwudong written by the Japanese Army in 1920 -

- ❶ Bugle
- ❷ Gaiters
- ❸ Ammunition
- ❹ Gun
- ❺ Sleeping Bag

What was the Independence Army, which fought against imperialist Japan, like?

Koreans who fled to Northeast China and the Russian Maritime Province made plans to reclaim their country by waging a war against imperialist Japan, and organized the Independence Army. Its **guns and ammunition**, as well as **bugles, sleeping bags**, and other supplies, were provided by military funds collected from Koreans in the region, who also made uniforms for the soldiers. In 1920, through the support of the Korean community, the Independence Army developed sufficient combat readiness and won battles against regular Japanese forces in Fengwudong and Qingshanli in Manchuria, China.

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What was the Patriotic Struggle organization founded in 1919?

Ardent young patriots felt the need for direct action and engaged in a Patriotic Struggle. The representative organization was **the Righteous Patriots Corps, known as Uiyeoldan**, founded in Jilin, Manchuria, China in November 1919. The Corps consisted of the commander Kim Won-bong (1898-1958) and mostly young graduates from the Sinheung Military Academy. It waged a righteous struggle, with the aim of assassinating Japanese imperialist aggressors, national traitors, and pro-Japanese Korean collaborators, as well as of destroying organizations that promoted Japanese imperialist aggression.



A photo of Uiyeoldan members featured on a personal surveillance identification card used by Imperialist Japan

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What student movement started in Gwangju in 1929?

The Gwangju Student Independence Movement originated from a clash between Korean and Japanese students in Gwangju, South Jeolla Province. In November 1929, a protest rally took place in Gwangju, with students crying out for national liberation and the abolishment of oppressive Japanese colonial education that discriminated against Koreans. The protest spread across the country and lasted until March of the following year. Some 54,000 students participated in the movement and fought against discriminatory Japanese colonial education through the organization of secret anti-Japanese societies, class boycotts, and collective leaves of absence.



Sookmyung Girls' Higher Common School students who joined a collective leave of absence



Seongjinhoe, a secret student organization in Gwangju

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Why did laborer Gang Ju-ryong climb onto a high roof?

In 1930, Gang Ju-ryong(1901-1932), a female laborer working at a rubber factory, participated in labor and hunger strikes when **the factory unilaterally tried to cut wages of workers**. When Japanese police drove her out of the factory, she went onto a 12-meter-high roof, where she gave a speech revealing the harsh realities facing laborers under Japanese colonial rule, laborers who were being exploited by Japanese capitalists as they were subjected to grueling labor despite minuscule wages.

"I came up on this roof even though I may have to sacrifice my life for it. If they do not call off the wage cut ... I will die an honorable death on behalf of the working masses."

- An excerpt from Gang Ju-ryong's speech on the roof -



Eulmildae Pavilion: A pavilion from the Goguryeo period located in Pyeongyang

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Who was the young man who waged a Patriotic Struggle in Shanghai on April 29, 1932?

Amid the Japanese invasion of China in the early 1930s, the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea founded the Korean Patriotic Corps. Its young members were dispatched to various locations in pursuit of Patriotic Struggle, which involved the destruction and execution of organizations and figures responsible for Japanese aggression. One such occasion was the Heroic deed of 25-year-old **Yun Bong-gil** (1908-1932). He executed the Commander of the Shanghai Expeditionary Army, who led Japanese infiltration into Shanghai, and other figures of Japanese aggression gathered at the Lu Xun (Formerly Hongkou) Park in Shanghai, China. His patriotic deed heralded to the world the Korean people's determination for independence.

"The Oath: I hereby declare with utmost sincerity that, as a member of the Korean Patriotic Corps, I will execute enemy officers in charge of the invasion of China in order to ensure the independence and liberation of my motherland."

- On April 26, 1932, in front of the Korean Patriotic Corps -



Patriotic martyr Yun Bong-gil (April 27, 1932)

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Korean Language Protection Movement



The comprehensive Korean Language Dictionary



Members of the Korean Language Society involved in the compilation of The Comprehensive Korean Language Dictionary (1933)

"Our language can be said to be the summation of all mental and physical assets of our people, so we cannot live even a single day or a single moment without it."

- An excerpt from the preface to The Comprehensive Korean Language Dictionary, Volume 1, 1947 -

What was this manuscript used for?

This manuscript was used for the compilation of The Comprehensive Korean Language Dictionary. It is a compendium of Korean language resources collected from around the country for nearly 13 years beginning in 1929 by the Korean Language Society, an organization that pioneered the research into and dissemination of Hangeul, or the Korean alphabet. In 1942, due to Japan's policy of eradicating the Korean language, Korean language scholars were imprisoned, and the manuscript was confiscated, by the Japanese police. After Korean liberation, the manuscript was discovered from a warehouse in Seoul Station and published as a dictionary in 1957. It became a state-designated national Treasure in 2020.

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What was removed from the 1936 photo of the Olympian Sohn Kee-chung?

In 1936, the 11th Summer Olympic Games were held in Berlin, Germany. Since Korea had lost her sovereignty to imperialist Japan, Korean marathoner Sohn Kee-chung (1912-2002) had to participate in the marathon event with **the Japanese flag** instead of the Korean flag adorned on his chest. After he won the gold medal in the event, the Dong-A Ilbo and the Joseon Jungang Ilbo newspapers covered the story and included a photo that had been altered to remove the Japanese flag on his chest. The alteration was an attempt to soothe the Korean people's sorrow at having lost their motherland.



The August 25, 1936 issue of the Dong-A Ilbo newspaper

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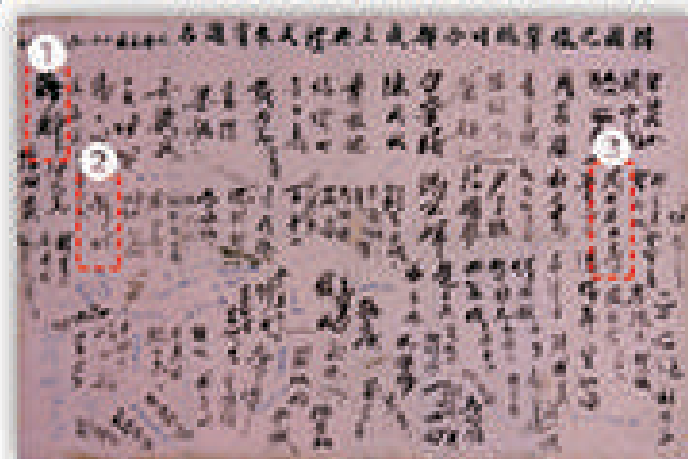
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Who participated in the inaugural ceremony of the Korean Independence Army?

To engage in active military operations against imperialist Japan, the Korean Provisional Government founded a national army known as Korean Independence Army. On September 17, 1940, the inaugural ceremony for the Army's headquarters was held in Chongqing, China. The event was celebrated by **Korean and Chinese officials as well as foreign reporters**. Together with British, American, and other Allied forces, Korean Independence Army actively fought a war against imperialist Japan.

- ❶ Sun Ke, President of the Legislative yuan, the Republic of China
- ❷ Liu Zhi, Commander of Chongqing Garrison
- ❸ Zhou Enlai, National Political Council



The guestbook of the inaugural ceremony of Korean Independence Army headquarters (Sept. 17, 1940)



A commemorative photo of the inaugural ceremony Korean Independence Army headquarters (Sept. 17, 1940)

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What type of Korea-U.S. military cooperation took place on August 7, 1945?

Kim Gu(1876-1949), President of the Korean Provisional Government, and William J. Donovan, Director of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services(OSS), agreed on a joint operation to infiltrate Korea. This secret operation, known as **the Eagle Project**, involved sending Korean Independence Army(K.I.A) soldiers who received OSS training into Korea. By joining forces with the United States in fighting a war against imperialist Japan, the Korean Provisional Government strived to build an autonomous and independent country following Korean liberation.



K.I.A Second Division officers and OSS members (Sept. 30, 1945)



The premier Kim Gu and William J. Donovan, Director of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) at the Second Division Headquarters of Korean Independence Army in Xi'an, China, after agreeing to carry out an infiltration operation into Korea (August 7, 1945)



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Korean people cheering with patriots released from prison, in celebration of Korean liberation

Why are people cheering with joy?

Imperialist Japan's war surrender on August 15, 1945 freed the Korean people from colonial rule and brought national independence. **Korean liberation** was the culmination of the Korean independence movement that unfolded over 35 years in Korea and abroad. It was the result of the sweat and blood of Koreans who, in tandem with Chinese, American, British, and other Allied forces, fought against imperialist Japan.

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Where did officials of the Korean Provisional Government have their photo taken before returning to Korea?

Featured in this photo is the **Korean Provisional Government building located in Lianhuachi, Chongqing, China**. In use since 1944, it was the Government's historic last building that witnessed Korean liberation in August 1945. On November 23, 1945, after the independence movement that had lasted for 27 years, its officials left Chongqing and returned to Korea via Shanghai.



The Korean Provisional Government building in Lianhuachi, Chongqing (Nov. 3, 1945)

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What legacy does the Republic of Korea, which was established in 1948, carry on?

In May 1948, the Constituent National Assembly decided that the Republic of Korea, a term used by its provisional government, would be the official name of the country and also declared 1948 as the 30th year of the Republic of Korea. **Back in 1919, the Korean Provisional Government** was founded and had since been maintained as a democratic republic.

This historical experience paved the way for the establishment of the Government of the Republic of Korea in 1948.

"We, the people of Korea, with a glorious tradition and history from time immemorial, following the indomitable spirit of independence, as manifested in the establishment of the Korean Republic in the course of the March First Independence Movement, ..."

- An excerpt from the First Constitution of the Republic of Korea -



The inaugural ceremony of the Government of the Republic of Korea (Aug. 15, 1948)