1700s/1880s Edward Carrington, US consul in Canton (China), builds a mansion on William Street. Down the hill, the Brown family owns and docks sailing ships that are used for travel between the US, China, and India.

1786 The John Brown House (on the corner of Power and Benefit streets) is built, funded partially by the China Trade, laying the foundation for the history of Asians at Brown.

1873 Sau Ahbrah comes to Brown from Henthada, Burma. The first known Asian (and Southeast Asian) at Brown, he is sent from Burma to the US in 1873 (under the presumption that he would later return as a Christian missionary) and arrives with Willis Thomas (class of 1877), son of Christian missionary Benjamin C. Thomas (class of 1847). Ahbrah, however, leaves Brown after his junior year and graduates from Newton Theological Institution in 1879. In 1882, he receives his medical degree from Jefferson Medical College, intending to return to Burma after, but instead stays in the US.

1894 Julius Kumpei Matsumoto (probably the first Japanese student at Brown) receives a Master of Arts degree from Brown after graduating from the University of Tokyo and goes on to become a member of the Japanese Parliament. His brother, Matsuzo Matsumoto, graduates from Brown in 1894.

1905 Sang-Kyu Pak is the first Korean student at Brown. He is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate and returns to Korea after graduation, where he spends time in the banking business and teaches at a college. Pak later becomes a member of the Representative Democratic Council of Korea. He is eventually kidnapped by North Koreans and disappears.

1906 The Chinese government sends five Chinese students (possibly the first Chinese students at Brown) from Tien Tien University to be educated in the US. They are Chen Ju-Hsiang, Chou Tsung-Hua, Ho Hou-Wei, Hua Yu-Peng, and Ma Tai-Cheng, all of whom enter in their sophomore year. None of them graduates from Brown; the last three go on to Sheffield Scientific School to receive Ph.B. degrees in 1908.

1911-12 An international exchange of lecturers between Japan and the US is started by Hamilton Holt, editor for the “Independent,” and supervised by President Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University. The six universities involved are Brown University, Columbia University, Johns Hopkins University, University of Virginia, University of Illinois, and University of Minnesota.

1912 The first of six members of a single Asian family to attend Brown graduates in 1912. They are: Zue Sun Bien ’12, Fu Sun Bien ’17, Richard Pang-Nien Bien ’24, Paul Beh-Nien Bien ’28, George Sung-Nien Bien ’33 Ph.D., and Chu Nien Bien ’38 (Pembroke College).
An honorary degree is awarded to Masanao Hanihara, Japanese Ambassador to the US, to establish good relations between Japan and the US (previously weakened by the Japanese Immigration Restriction Act). This may have an indirect role in leading to the admission of John Aiso ’31.

Siheung Daniel Rhee comes to Brown from Korea. After graduating in 1931, he becomes a chemist in the US and eventually starts an elastic thread firm. His son, Michael Rhee, graduates from Brown in 1955.

John F. Aiso ’31 is the first Asian American graduate of Brown. Aiso is born in California of Japanese parents in 1909, a time of widespread anti-Japanese sentiment in the US. He earns many honors at Brown, mainly for his talent on the Debate Union. Aiso then receives a law degree from Harvard University, after which he starts a career in international commercial law, mainly in Japan. In 1941, he returns to the US and is drafted into the Armed Forces, receiving prestigious honors as a colonel. In 1947, he returns to Los Angeles and resumes his law career. In 1953, he becomes Judge of the Municipal Court, and a year later, he becomes Superior Court Commissioner, followed by his appointment to Superior Court bench in 1957. He later goes on to become Presiding Judge of the Appellate Department of the Superior Court of California in 1966. In 1987, Aiso is shot and killed at a gas station.

Kuo P'ing Chou ’37 is the first Asian (and Chinese) female to attend Pembroke College. She wins a Brown University scholarship that is newly instituted at several Japanese and Chinese universities and transfers from Yenching University to Pembroke as a junior. In 1947, the Alumnae Association holds “Kuo P'ing Chou Day” to raise fund money; they start collecting money for her and Yenching University the year before due to adverse effects of the war at the time.

The Transitional Summer Program is established as a result of the 1968 protest and student demands. It begins as a two-phase program: seven weeks for academic enrichment and one week for socialization and other non-academic activities. It later becomes the Third World Transition Program (TWTP).

The Asian American Students Association (AASA) is established by a small group of students (including Philip Lu ’72, Mike Mochizuki ’72, and Lillian Lim ’73) as a political voice for Asian Americans. In the fall of 1969, a small group of about twelve Asian American students forms a Group Independent Study Project (GISP) under Professor James Sakoda of Sociology to explore their ethnic identity. This leads to the creation of AASA in the spring of 1970. One of AASA’s first accomplishments is the increase in Brown’s Asian American student enrollment (e.g., they help increase active recruiting from Hawaii, initiating a steady stream of enrollment from the state in subsequent years).

Third World student protests ask the University to recommit to the demands of the 1968 walkout, which was aimed primarily at increasing black student enrollment.

John Eng-Wong, who graduates from Brown in 1962 and receives his MA from the University of Michigan, begins working at Brown as a college admissions officer, a position he holds until 1977. He then works in the Dean of Students office (currently the Office of Student Life) from 1977 to 1980. In 1980, he becomes a foreign student advisor and is later named the Director of the Office of Foreign Student, Faculty, and Staff Services. He also holds the position as the executive officer of the Council on International Studies, a predecessor of the Watson Institute for International Studies. Eng-Wong retires from Brown in 2005.

The Minority Peer Counselor (MPC) Program is created by African American students at Brown. By
the 1980s, students from African, Latino, Asian, Native American, and multiracial descent are involved in the program. Arab Americans are added to the constituent list in 1995.

1975 With the threat of budget cuts, a coalition of Asian, black, and Latino students mobilizes to occupy University Hall with demands focusing on increasing financial aid for students of color and timetables for increased recruitment. Their goal is to have the University honor the demands of the 1968 walkout. This is also the year that the Third World Transition Program (previously Transitional Summer Program) begins.

1976 The Third World Center (TWC) opens in the basement of Churchill House and is relocated to Partridge Hall in 1987.

1976 The South Asian Faculty Group is formed to advocate increased research and teaching on South Asia at Brown.

1980s Admissions becomes a major issue of concern for Asian/Asian American students on campus.

1980 The first annual Asian American Awareness Month at Brown University is programmed. The name is later changed to Asian American History Month and then to Asian/Asian American History Month in 2005.

1980 About 200 Asian American students apply to Brown – 50% are accepted.

1981-5 The fourth director of the TWC is Robert Lee, who becomes an Assistant Professor of American Civilization at Brown in 1990 and an Associate Professor in 1997.

1982 The Cultural Association of South Asians is founded by a group of South Asian students, including Melanie Mahtani ’86 and Beena Sarwar ’86. The name is changed to South Asian Students Association (SASA) in 1988 to reflect the organization’s shift beyond simply cultural issues.

1983 Jean Wu is appointed to the Dean of the College and is the first Asian to hold this position at Brown.

1983 AASA releases a report called “Asian American Admission at Brown University,” alleging illegal quotas and anti-Asian bias in the Brown admissions process. In the report, statistical evidence is provided to substantiate AASA’s claims, but the Admissions Office denies that it unfairly discriminates against Asian/Asian American applicants.

1983 The South Asia Faculty Group writes the “Proposal for a Center for South Asian Studies at Brown.” Howard Swearer’s Council for International Studies proposes the addition of positions in Sanskrit, Hindi, and South Asian Studies – these are approved by the Academic Council. In 1985, the Academic Council approves South Asian Studies as a concentration at Brown.

1985 Approximately 350 Third World students rally to demand that the University resolve issues raised by students of color in previous years. The Third World Coalition occupies the stairs of the John Carter Library to reclaim documents of Brown’s slave-holding family. This is the first time that blacks, Asians, and Latinos work together in large numbers at Brown. The rally increases Asian matriculation substantially, but several demands from the 1975 protest are still not met, such as increasing the numbers of black students at Brown to their percentage of the US population.
1988 Protests asking for an Ethnic Studies department and recommitment to the 1968, 1975, and 1985 demands begin and last until the following year.

1988 The Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America (CSREA) is established with the purpose of expanding study of and teaching and research on people of color at Brown and nationwide.

1990 About 1600 Asian American students apply to Brown – 20% are accepted.

1990-93 The sixth director of the TWC is Tommy Lee Woon.

1993-98 Thelma Chun-Hoon Zen ’48 is the Brown Corporation’s first Asian Trustee.

1996 Kisa Takesue ’88 is appointed an Assistant Dean of Student Life, with responsibilities including serving as a liaison for Asian and Asian American students. In 2002, she also begins working as the Third World Center Coordinator.

1996 Peggy Chang ’91 becomes the first person of color to direct the Venture Consortium, an organization founded in 1973 as a way for students to become involved in academically enriching experiences outside of the classroom. The Venture Consortium is made up of nine liberal arts colleges and universities, each with its own Venture Board Member and a Campus Coordinator. Chang also co-directs the Urban Education Semester Program.

1996 SASA hosts the 8th National South Asian Students’ Alliance conference, featuring panelists such as Sunaina Maira, Baiju Shah, Jay Jyoti Chaudhuri, Somini Sengupta, and Anu Gupta ’93. SASA tries to modify the focus of the conference, which in previous years had been more social.

2001 David Horowitz, a conservative politician, pays for an ad in the “Brown Daily Herald” entitled, “Ten Reasons Why Reparations for Slavery is a Bad Idea and Racist Too.” Students of color unite in an effort to seek apologies from the BDH and to try to have the money paid for the ad returned to Brown’s Third World community.

2001 The first Southeast Asian Heritage Week at Brown is programmed by Jan Seng ’04.

2001 The first South Asian Identity Week at Brown is programmed by Manisha Kumar ’04.

2002 The Asian/Asian American Alumni Alliance (A4) is established with the intention of building stronger relationships between Brown’s Asian/Asian American alumni, students, and faculty.

2002 The South Asian Faculty Group submits the “South Asian Studies Program Proposal” to the Provost and Academic Council. This proposal is rejected. Soon after, Sumit Guha, St. Purandara Das Distinguished Professor of South Asian History and Professor of History, leaves Brown, leading to a two-year interval during which the South Asian Studies concentration is not offered.

2002 The fifth director of the CSREA is Evelyn Hu-DeHart, Professor of History.

2003 Medha Devanoghi ’05 and Amita Manghnani ’06, facilitators of the South Asian Women’s Collective (SAWC), lead a campaign to remove SAWC from the SASA umbrella. SAWC – originally founded in the
early 1990s by a group of South Asian women, including Sharmila Thakkar ’95, to create a space for South Asian women to discuss issues pertaining to their lives at Brown and in the world – is constituted as an independent student group.

**2004** Rajiv Vohra, Professor of Economics, is appointed Dean of the Faculty at Brown. He is the first person of Asian (and South Asian) descent to hold this position.

**2004-5** SASA's education co-chair Sushil Jacob ’05 expands Political Action Weekend (PAW), the original education and political action component of SASA, into a series, and plans a semester of events focusing on development issues in South Asia.

**2005** The Southeast Asian Coalition (SEACO) is created as a space for Southeast Asian students on campus, particularly those underrepresented by existing student organizations. Goals include increasing both the Southeast Asian presence at Brown and awareness of issues affecting Southeast Asian communities, pushing for a Southeast concentration and more Southeast professors at Brown, and increasing interaction and community-building with Southeast Asians off campus.

**2006** The Asian/Asian American Student Resource Center is founded. The center, on the third floor of the TWC, is a result of an Independent Reading and Research project on Asian/Asian American History at Brown, conducted by a small group of students under the guidance of Professor Robert Lee. Intended to foster Asian/Asian American community at Brown and increase awareness of Asian/Asian American history at Brown, it houses historical archives, a library, resource materials, and a meeting space.
Sources:

Archives, John Hay Library.

Archives, Third World Center.

http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/TWC/

http://www.brown.edu/Faculty/Faculty_Governance/facbulletin/March99Issue/mcIlwain.htm


“South Asian Studies Program Proposal,” submitted to the Provost and Academic Council by the South Asia Faculty Group on December 11, 1999 (revised May 14, 2002).