Guide to the Higaki Family Papers MSS.2019.01.31

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SJSU Special Collections & Archives
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Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: SJSU Special Collections & Archives
Title: Higaki Family Papers
source: Higaki, Steve
creator: Higaki family
creator: Miwa, Mae, 1925-2018
source: San José State University. Library. Special Collections & Archives
Identifier/Call Number: MSS.2019.01.31
Physical Description: 2 boxes (1.46 linear feet)
Date (inclusive): 1932-2012
Abstract: This collection contains two photo albums with photographs taken between 1932-1945 of Japanese Americans, the Poston Arizona Japanese Internment Camp, and other locations in California and Arizona. Includes an eight page article written in 1943 by John W. Powell on Poston and the internment of Japanese Americans, a 1943 Poston High School Yearbook, a 1945 photo book on life in Poston, and various photo books/pamphlets pertaining to the Japanese American Citizens League, Mountain View Buddhist Temple, California Chrysanthemum Growers Association and the California Flower Market. Collection has a gap in dates between 1945 and 1966.
Biographical / Historical
Mae Miwa Higaki (born Mae Miwa) (1925-2018) was born in San Juan Bautista, California to Japanese immigrant parents Nobukichi (1881-1970) and Tama Miwa (1896-1993). Mae had two brothers, Harry Masaru Miwa (b. 1920) and Frank Hidenobu Miwa (1922-2008). She attended the San Juan Bautista Japanese School along with her Brother Frank in San Benito County California, graduating in 1940, and was a high school sophomore in Hollister in 1941. Mae graduated high school in 1943 while in the Poston War Relocation Camp. Harry Masaru Miwa received a BA in Agriculture from UC Berkeley in 1950.
In April 1942, Japanese, and Japanese American residents of San Benito County, including the Miwa family were relocated to a makeshift camp at the Salinas Assembly Center in California. In June 1942, they were loaded onto a train and unknowingly taken to the Poston War Relocation Center in Arizona. The Poston War Relocation Center (originally named Colorado River Relocation Center), founded by the War Relocation Authority was built in early 1942 by Del Webb on the Colorado River Indian Reservation (to the objections of the Tribal Council) in Yuma County (now part of La Paz County) in Southwest Arizona. Poston's peak population was over 17,000, with most internees coming from Southern California. Poston War Relocation Center closed in 1945, with the land being returned to the Colorado River Indian Tribes.
Following the end of WWII, in September 1945, the Miwa family left the Poston War Relocation Center, Mae left to Los Angeles, eventually ending up in the Bay Area. Nobukichi and Tama returned to San Juan Bautista, afterwards resettling in Watsonville California.
Nobuo Higaki (1886-1980) was born in the Kōchi Prefecture, Japan in 1886. In 1906 he emigrated from Japan, arriving in Seattle, and by 1910 was living in San Francisco. That same year he purchased land in Redwood City shortly before the California Alien Land Law of 1913 was passed, which was largely directed at preventing Japanese immigrants from owning land. Nobuo started a flower nursery (later incorporated as Bay City Flower Co. in the 1950s) on the land he owned in Redwood City. Still presently operating, Bay City Flower Co. has been run by the Higaki family for four generations and over 100 years. In 1918 Nobuo married Motoko Kuboichi (1900-1981), and had 6 children in addition to adopting one. Nobuo Higaki was one of the founding members of the California Chrysanthemum Growers Association which was formed in 1931, and was also on the board of directors of The California Flower Market 1937-1938.
In 1942 Nobuo was sent to the Fort Lincoln Internment Camp outside of Bismarck, North Dakota, while the rest of the Higaki family evacuated to Kimberly, Idaho where Nobuo rejoined them after being released in 1945, with the Higaki family returning to the flower nursery in Redwood City in 1946.
Naomi Higaki (b. 1924) was Nobuo and Motoko’s fourth child - he attended high school at Sequoia High School in Redwood City California, and worked at Bay City Flower Co. as a nurseryman. He married Mae Miwa in 1953 in San Jose. Mae and Naomi Higaki were active members of the Mountain View Buddhist Temple for many years.
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Preferred Citation
Higaki Family Papers, MSS-2019-01-31, San Jose State University Library, Special Collections & Archives

Processing Information
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Related Materials
John M. Flaherty Collection of Japanese Internment Records, MSS-2006-05-02, San José State University Library Special Collections and Archives.
San José State University Japanese-American Internment Research Collection, MSS-2010-08-23, San José State University Library Special Collections and Archives.
Willard E. Schmidt Papers, MSS-2007-09-01, San José State University Library Special Collections and Archives.

Scope and Contents
This collection contains materials belonging to the Higaki family portraying Japanese American life and communities in California, spanning 1932-2012 with a gap between 1945-1966. It includes two photo albums with photos taken between 1932-1945, depicting the Miwa family and larger Japanese community before, during, and after being interned at the Poston War Relocation Center during WWII, several JACL publications, and various photobooks relating to the Mountain View Buddhist Temple, the California Flower Market, and an anniversary photobook of the California Chrysanthemum Growers association.

Larger photo album includes pre-WWII photos in San Benito County depicting various family portraits of the Miwa family including childhood photos of Mae and her siblings, the Fremont School and San Justo school, and other Japanese individuals/families in and around San Benito County. Bulk of the second half of the larger photo album has assorted group and individual portraits of Japanese Americans in Poston, and several group photos of the Poston Core Class of ‘42 and ‘43 one of which includes a full list of student names from the core class, including Mae Miwa.

The smaller photo album's bulk of photos were taken at Poston and depict various buildings, people, and events at the War Relocation Center, including an elevated panoramic shot of the Poston War Relocation Camp in Arizona, and documentation of several community events at Poston, such as dances, classrooms in session, and other activities. Numerous photos taken at Poston are portraits of individual internees, many of which are labeled by name. Also includes a photo of a barber shop in Parker, Arizona with "Japs Keep Out You Rats" sign on door. The last portion of this album depicts life after Poston, and contains numerous autographed Photos of Frank Miwa, Harry Miwa, and other Japanese Americans with many handwritten dedications to Mae.

This collection also includes an eight page article written by John W. Powell describing life at Poston, and criticism of Japanese internment camps as well as condemning the treatment of Japanese and Japanese Americans during WWII. Powell served as chief of the community management division at Poston, and spoke at the 1943 Poston High School graduation ceremony in which Mae attended.

Contains Mojave Memos, a 1943 Poston High School yearbook with Mae Miwa autographed on cover and various expositions on life in Poston by students including descriptions of the different high school’s departments/classes. Also includes Mohaveland, a 1945 photobook depicting the different blocks and people of Poston including captions and descriptions of photographic subjects.

Included in this collection are a 1966 Japanese Americans Citizens League booklet detailing its history and the history of Japanese Americans in the United States, and a 1985 San Benito County Japanese American Reunion booklet sponsored by the San Benito County JACL with numerous congratulatory letters from various officials and offers a history of the Japanese community in San Benito County from the 1880s to 1985.

Later materials relate to the Higaki family’s involvement with the Mountain View Buddhist Temple including several anniversary photobooks documenting the members and history of the Temple, an anniversary photobook of the California Flower Market with membership rosters and written/photographic history of the organization, as well as an anniversary photobook of the California Chrysanthemum Growers Association detailing its history and membership over the years.

Arrangement
Collection is arranged chronologically.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Japanese Americans -- Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945
Japanese Americans -- Pictorial works
Japanese Americans -- Social life and customs
Poston War Relocation Center
Buddhist temples -- Mountain View (Calif.)
California Chrysanthemum Growers Association
Japanese American Citizens’ League -- California
California Flower Market (San Francisco, Calif.)
World War, 1939-1945 -- Evacuation of civilians
Higaki, Steve
Higaki family
Miwa, Mae, 1925-2018
San José State University, Library, Special Collections & Archives

Box 1
Box 1
Photo Album 1932-1943
Photo Album 1943-1945
Box 2, Folder 1
Box 2, Folder 1
America's Refugee's: Exodus and Diaspora by John W. Powell - 1943
Box 2, Folder 2
Box 2, Folder 2
Mojave Memos - 1943
box 2, Folder 3
box 2, Folder 3
Mohaveland - 1945
box 2, Folder 4
box 2, Folder 4
Japanese American Citizens League Booklet - 1966
Box 2, Folder 5
Box 2, Folder 5
Michael Kenji Yamada Memorial Service Program - 1969
Language of Material: Material in English and Japanese
Box 2, Folder 6
Box 2, Folder 6
Mountain View Buddhist Temple New Temple Dedication Booklets - 1979
Language of Material: English and Japanese
Box 2, Folder 7
Box 2, Folder 7
Kiku Kumiai, Fifty Years California Chrysanthemum Growers Association 50th Anniversary Photo Book - 1981
Box 2, Folder 8
Box 2, Folder 8
Palo Alto Judo Club Thirtieth Anniversary - 1982
Box 2, Folder 9
Box 2, Folder 9
The San Benito County Japanese American Reunion - 1985
Box 2, Folder 10
Box 2, Folder 10
Mountain View Buddhist Temple 25th Anniversary - 1986
Language of Material: English and Japanese
Box 2, Folder 11
Box 2, Folder 11
Sasaki Family Service & Banquet Farewell Memorial Service Program - 1990
Box 2, Folder 12
Box 2, Folder 12
Echo: Mountain View Buddhist Temple Photograph Documentary Book - 1990
Box 2, Folder 13
Box 2, Folder 13
Mountain View Buddhist Temple Mortgage Retirement Celebration Booklet - 1993
Language of Material: English and Japanese
Box 2, Folder 14
Box 2, Folder 14
Mountain View Buddhist Temple Senior Appreciation Program - 1995
Box 2, Folder 15
Box 2, Folder 15
Mountain View Buddhist Temple Senior Appreciation Programs - 1996
Box 2, Folder 16
Box 2, Folder 16
Echo II: Mountain View Buddhist Temple 50th Anniversary Photograph Book - 2011
Box 2, Folder 17
Box 2, Folder 17
Faces of The California Flower Market 100 Years in Pictures: 1912-2012