INVENTORY OF THE CSU JAPANESE AMERICAN DIGITIZATION PROJECT COLLECTION, 1915-1994

Finding aid prepared by Maureen Burns.
California State University, Dominguez Hills
Archives & Special Collections
University Library, Room 5039
1000 E. Victoria Street
Carson, California 90747
Phone: (310) 243-3895
URL: http://www.csudh.edu/archives/csudh/index.html
©2015
Descriptive Summary

Title: CSU Japanese American Digitization Project Collection

Dates: 1915-1994

Collection Number: Consult repository.

Collector: California State University, Dominguez Hills.

Extent: 608 digital items

Repository: California State University, Dominguez Hills Archives and Special Collections

Abstract: The central focus of the California State University Japanese American Digitization Project is the digitization and access to primary materials related to the history and progress of Japanese Americans in their communities. An enormous range of subjects and archival materials central to Japanese-American life before, during, and after World War II are in this digital collection including: letters, photographs, oral histories, camp publications, papers of camp administrators and counselors, poetry, art works, leases, certificates and other documents to prove citizenship, and school yearbooks.

Language: Collection material is in English

Access

There are no access restrictions on this collection.

Publication Rights

All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted in writing to the Director of Archives and Special Collections. Permission for publication is given on behalf of Special Collections as the owner of the physical materials and not intended to include or imply permission of the copyright holder, which must also be obtained.

Preferred Citation

[Title of item], California State University Japanese American Digitization Project Collection,. Courtesy of the Department of Archives and Special Collections. University Library. California State University, Dominguez Hills

Acquisition Information

The materials were donated to the Archives and Special Collection departments of the various California State University campuses.

Processing Information

Donated collections were processed by the respective CSU campus repositories. The digital collection was processed during 2014-2015 by Sue Tyson and Summer Espinoza at CSU Dominguez Hills.

History

The story of the Japanese Americans in the Modern era – their migration to this country, the Alien Land laws under which they lived, and their incarceration during World War II – is a complex local and state topic as well as a national subject of great historical impact. The history of the Japanese in the United States began with Commodore Perry’s gunboat diplomacy policy in 1868. The first small numbers of Japanese came to the West Coast in 1869. Larger groups did not begin arriving on the West Coast until after the Exclusion Act of 1882, which completely stopped the immigration of Chinese laborers. The Japanese workers were brought in as replacements to work on the railroads and mines. With the California Alien Land Laws of 1913 and 1924, all Asian immigrants were ineligible for citizenship and could not legally own or lease land.

In the two months that followed the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor by Imperial Japanese forces, a wave of hysteria and fear merged with the tradition of anti-Asian xenophobia. By late February 1942 a Japanese submarine made a futile attempt to bomb oil fields in Santa Barbara. Within a day or so artillery outposts throughout Los Angeles County shot blindly at non-existent Japanese aircraft. The shrapnel landed on homes throughout Los Angeles and Long Beach. The ensuing hysteria opened the door for an attack on the rights of Japanese Americans not only by local, state and national politicians, but also military brass and commercial interests. In February, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, the net result of which was that over 120,000 first generation Japanese Americans (Issei) and second generation Japanese Americans (Nisei) were to be excluded from coastal regions, and sent first to assembly centers and then to inland camps.
During the middle of March 1942, the War Relocation Authority was established as a civilian agency responsible for relocation. In April 1942 the Wartime Civilian Control Agency (WCCA) was established by the military to coordinate the mass removal to temporary local and regional ‘assembly centers.’ Business owners lost their businesses, Tenant farmers lost their leases. College and other students were uprooted from their studies. Family life was irrevocably harmed. Japanese American citizens were told to get on buses with what they could carry and were dropped off at racetracks, fairgrounds or other bleak locales, which served as their homes for several months. Later these citizens were transported to unfinished camps where the communal mess halls, latrines and barracks allowed for little or no privacy. Most of them were scattered in higher elevation desert areas in Arizona, Utah, California and Colorado. The camps were run by the War Relocation Authority.

Various other camps were created by the Department of Justice (DOJ). These camps were for “enemy aliens” and citizens of Latin American countries, especially Peru. The camp at Crystal City, Texas was among these DOJ camps. Alleged “troublemakers” at WRA camps were threatened with exile to the DOJ camps or other less known “isolation centers” such as one in Moab, Utah. During the years in the camps Issei and Nisei alike were threatened with deportation if behavior was not circumspect or certain vague survey questions were not answered in the right way.

When the U.S. allowed Japanese Americans to serve in the military, many young men in the camps joined the 442nd Regimental Combat Team of the United States Army, both to get out of camps and express patriotism. The 442nd was among the most decorated units of its size in the history of the United States Army. In early 1945 the camps began to close and by the end of the year all the camps were closed except Tule Lake which closed in 1946. While formerly imprisoned Japanese Americans worked to rebuild their lives in the late 1940s and 1950s, many citizens in the 1960s became increasingly convinced that incarceration had been a violation of basic human rights. By the 1980s Japanese American citizens sought redress for the incarceration period. In 1988 formerly incarcerated survivors were paid $20,000.

Scope and Content
The collection contains letters, photographs, oral histories, camp publications, papers of camp administrators and counselors, poetry, art works, leases, certificates and other documents to prove citizenship, and school yearbooks. The initial project digitized papers, photographs, and media, such as audio and video.

The material was accumulated by the various California State University Archives and Special Collections from a number of donors. The majority of the material is focused on the evacuation and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. However, there are also pre-war materials related to early immigration and land laws as well as post-war items through redress when incarcerated survivors were paid $20,000.

Arrangement
Collection arranged according to numbering and naming schemes of contributing repositories

Subjects
World War, 1939-1945--Evacuation of civilians--United States.
Concentration camps--United States.
Japanese Americans--Civil rights.
Japanese Americans--Reparations.
Land tenure--Law and legislation.