INVENTORY OF THE VIRGINIA B. LOWERS COLLECTION, 1945-1946

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Virginia B. Lowers Collection
Dates: 1945-1946
Collection Number: Consult repository.
Creator: Lowers, Virginia B.
Extent: 1 box .20 linear feet
Repository: California State University, Dominguez Hills Archives and Special Collections

Abstract: This collection contains one box of three letters addressed to Virginia B. Lowers, a former high school teacher at University High School in Los Angeles, California. The letter from Masaru Teshiba contains information regarding his experiences as an incarceree mostly while at Tule Lake Segregation Center, the letter from Thomas A. Reeves details his combat experiences, and the letter from W.W. [Escherich] describes events during his trips to Maui, Tientsin China, and Okinawa.

Language: Collection material is in English

Access
There are no access restrictions on this collection.

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Preferred Citation
[Title of item], Virginia B. Lowers Collection, Courtesy of the Department of Archives and Special Collections. University Library. California State University, Dominguez Hills

Acquisition Information
Library acquisition

Tule Lake History
On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which gave the military the authority to exclude any citizen who posed a threat to national security. As a result, approximately 120,000 Japanese-Americans living on the West Coast were removed and incarcerated in concentration camps. The Tule Lake Incarceration Center was the largest of the ten concentration camps with approximately 18,000 internees, and was located close to the California-Oregon border near the town of Newell, California and 10 miles south of the town of Tulelake. On February 8, 1943, the War Department and War Relocation Authority (WRA) distributed a questionnaire in order to assess the loyalty of those housed in concentration camps. The questionnaire was difficult and complex, which led to uncertainty and confusion. Failure to complete the questionnaire, as well as questions answered in an unsatisfactory manner caused a great number of incarcerees to be deemed “disloyal” and sent to Tule Lake Segregation Center- the designated location “disloyal” incarceree.

On July 1, 1944 Public Law 405 also known as the Denaturalization Act was signed into law by President Roosevelt, allowing any citizen to renounce their United States citizenship. This, along with the announcement in December 1944 that incarceration camps would close within a year, left incarcerees faced with many difficult decisions about their future. Many incarcerees imprisoned at Tule Lake felt that renunciation would be their best option due to a variety of reasons. Some believed that renunciation would allow them to remain in Tule Lake until the war was over, while others believed that if they didn’t renounce they would be separated from their families- especially if Issei were deported. Others felt pressure from pro-Japanese groups, or renounced in anger over how they were treated by the United States government. This was problematic because once an incarceree renounced, it became difficult to reverse that decision.

While visiting Tule Lake in July 1945, Wayne M. Collins, an attorney based out of San Francisco, California was alerted to the renunciants’ predicament in regards to the Denaturalization Act. Believing the Denaturalization Act to be unconstitutional,
Collins assisted renunciants by preparing sample letters to the U.S. attorney general asking for their United States citizenship to be reinstated, citing coercion and duress as a main factor. In September 1945, renunciants formed the Tule Lake Defense Committee and hired Collins as their attorney. On November 13, 1945, Collins was able to stop a mass deportation two days before it was set to begin by filing for habeas corpus and obtaining a court order, which forbade deportation. As a result, starting in December 1945, the Department of Justice agreed to hearings for those who did not want to be deported and were also willing to provide an explanation why. Collins worked for over fourteen years to rescind deportation, void renunciation, and reinstate U.S. citizenship for thousands of Japanese-Americans.

**Fort Lincoln Internment Camp History**

Located south of Bismarck, North Dakota, Fort Lincoln Internment Camp initially held German and Italian seamen who were captured in U.S. waters in 1939. After the outbreak of World War II, Fort Lincoln was expanded so it could hold both Japanese and German internees, but shortly after their arrival in 1942, the Japanese-American internees were transferred to other camps. Fort Lincoln would remain solely a German occupied camp until February 1945, when approximately 650 “recalcitrant” Japanese Americans- many of whom had renounced their American citizenship, were transferred from the War Relocation Authority (WRA) camp in Tule Lake, California, and internment camps in Santa Fe, New Mexico to Fort Lincoln. Later that year, over half of the internees at Fort Lincoln were deported to Japan.

**Scope and Content**

The Virginia B. Lowers Collection (1945-1946) contains three letters written to Virginia Lowers during World War II.

1. **Letter 1: Thomas A. Reeves to Virginia Lowers, July 4, 1945.**

   In this letter, Thomas Reeves updates Miss Lowers on his recent combat experiences in which he was injured and subsequently received the Purple Heart as well as other accolades for his time in action.


   In this letter [Escherich] informs Miss Lowers about his promotion to captain of a ship, as well as his trips to Maui, Tientsin China, and Okinawa, including brief descriptions about landscapes and climates.

3. **Letter 3: Masaru Teshiba to Virginia Lowers, January 24, 1946.**

   In this letter, Masaru Teshiba writes to Miss Lowers, his former English teacher from 1942 at University High School in Los Angeles, California. He describes his experience of being removed first to the Manzanar Incarceration Camp and eventually to Tule Lake. The decision to move to Tule Lake was motivated, according to Teshiba, to reunite with his father who had already been brought to Tule Lake. He notes in this letter that the “majority [of people] it seemed were loyal to Japan.” Teshiba recalls that during his time at Tule Lake, he witnessed many activities that could be considered pro-Japanese, such as the celebration of Japanese national holidays, and the establishment of Japanese schools and organized clubs. After rumors started regarding the possibility of deportation, Teshiba felt as if his citizenship was unimportant when faced with the prospect that his family might be separated. This along with his self-proclaimed boredom and his desire for “new excitement” compelled Teshiba to join an organization of pro-Japanese so that he could renounce his American citizenship. Teshiba then explains that his purpose for writing to his former teacher is to request a character reference from her, as his lawyer, Wayne M. Collins explained, such a recommendation from a “Caucasian person” would be beneficial in making the case that he should be able remain in the United States as a citizen. Also included is a short note to the censor requesting that this letter be mailed although it is perhaps too long. Each page of his letter is stamped with “Detained Alien Mail Examined”.

**Arrangement**

Arranged in 1 box.

**Subjects**

Concentration camps--United States
Japanese Americans--Pacific States--History--20th century
Japanese Americans
Japanese Americans—California
Tule Lake Relocation Center (Calif.)--1940-1950
Japanese Americans -- Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945
World War, 1939-1945 - California
Manzanar War Relocation Center

**Personal Names**

Collins, Wayne M.

**Geographic Areas**
Tulelake (Calif.)
Newell (Calif.)
Manzanar (Calif.)
Fort Lincoln (Burleigh County, N.D.)
University High School (Los Angeles, Calif.)

**Related Material**

This collection is part of the California State University Japanese American Digitization Project. For related materials please consult: http://csujad.com

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### 1 Virginia B. Lowers Collection

**Physical Description:** .20 linear ft., 1 box

**Scope and Content Note**

This collection contains one box of three letters addressed to Virginia B. Lowers, a former high school teacher at University High School in Los Angeles, California. The letter from Masaru Teshiba contains information regarding his experiences as an incarceree mostly while at Tule Lake Segregation Center, the letter from Thomas A. Reeves details his combat experiences, and the letter from W.W. [Escherich] describes events during his trips to Maui, Tientsin China, and Okinawa.

**Letter 1** Letter from Thomas A. Reeves to Virginia B. Lowers July 4, 1945

*Note*

For full record see:

**Letter 2** Letter from W.W. [Escherich] to Virginia B. Lowers March 1, 1946

*Note*

For full record see:

**Letter 3** Letter from Masaru Teshiba to Virginia B. Lowers while Teshiba was incarcerated at the Fort Lincoln Camp in Bismarck, North Dakota January 24, 1946

*Note*

For full record see:
http://cdm16855.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16855coll4/id/7042