Finding aid for the Fukuda and Whitney Families Papers

Collection number: 2008.16

Descriptive Summary
Title: Fukuda and Whitney families papers
Dates (inclusive): 1940-1995
Dates (bulk): 1942-1943
Collection number: 2008.16
Collection Size: 1 linear foot (2 boxes, 1 folder, 1 lamp stand)
Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Los Angeles, California 90012
Creator: Fukuda, Fumiko
Creator: Fukuda, Louise
Creator: Whitney, Olive Harrison
Abstract: The collection contains materials sent between the Fukuda and Whitney families during WWII; primarily letters from Fumiko Fukuda at Poston to Mrs. Olive Whitney in Upland from 1942 to 1943. Items include mostly correspondence, research materials, photos, and information about both families.
Access
By appointment only. Please contact the Collections Management and Access Unit (collections@janm.org). Advanced notice is required.
Publication Rights
All requests for permission to publish, reproduce, or quote from materials in this collection must be submitted to the Collections Management and Access Unit at the Japanese American National Museum (collections@janm.org).
Preferred Citation
Acquisition Information
The collection was acquired in 2007 as a gift of the George H. Whitney and Isabel C. Whitney Family Trust.
Processing Information
Letters were transcribed by Isabel and George Whitney prior to donation. Many extra photocopies and duplicates were discarded. A container list and finding aid was created in 2017 by Jamie Henricks.
Biographical Note
The Fukuda family was connected to the Whitney family by way of the Whitneys’ home in Upland, California. Mr. Fukuda (a widowed father of 7 daughters) was the caretaker of the Whitneys’ property and lived in a home on the grounds. Fumiko Fukuda lived with her father in the caretaker’s home prior to evacuation and was a companion to Mrs. Olive Whitney. After being forced to evacuate, Mr. Fukuda and five of his daughters were sent to Poston Relocation Center and lived together in one room. One daughter (Alma) and her husband and son were at Santa Anita Assembly Center before requesting a transfer to Poston. Mrs. Whitney kept the Fukuda family’s cat at her Upland home, and frequently sent care packages and goods the family requested (paper, cowboy boots, cloth, canned fruit, and many other items). The Whitneys and Fukudas corresponded almost daily, commenting on camp life and Catholicism (to which some of the daughters and Mrs. Whitney had converted). During the war, Mr. Whitney was frequently ill, and both their sons were abroad with the Navy.
Mrs. Whitney died unexpectedly in 1943 in a car crash, and the Whitneys tried to request that Fumiko be released from Poston to care for Mr. Whitney in Upland, but the request was denied. The families continued to correspond for a while, but writing dropped off dramatically after the Fukudas traveled to Oregon and Utah to try resettling and when Mr. Whitney died in 1945.
Mrs. Whitney’s daughter-in-law, Isabel, collected items related to the Fukudas and Whitneys in the early 1970s. She transcribed all of the letters, did research about Poston and Japanese Americans, and hoped to publish a book about the
Fukudas in the early 1990s. The book project fell through, and the collection was eventually donated to the Japanese American National Museum.

Fukuda family members:
- Hichirouyemon Fukuda [Fukuda, or Mr. Fukuda] (2/19/1874 – 2/15/1946)
- Kotora Sugsta Fukuda [Mrs. Fukuda] (12/24/1889 – 9/30/1926)
- Alma Fukuda Watari (husband Jimmy Watari, son Layne Watari)
- Shizue “Sue” Fukuda Ono
- Dorothy “Dot” Fukuda Itami
- Louise “Lou” Fukuda Sagata

Whitney family members:
- Alden Bradford Whitney [Mr. Whitney] (12/1/1885-5/7/1945)
- Olive Harrison Whitney [Mrs. Whitney] (12/29/1884-2/10/1943)

Scope and Content
The collection contains materials sent between the Fukuda and Whitney families during and after WWII, and some correspondence in the 1970s and 1990s. The collection is primarily letters from Fumiko Fukuda at Poston to Mrs. Olive Whitney in Upland from 1942 to 1943. The collection was assembled, and organized, and transcribed by Isabel Whitney. Though the families wrote letters back and forth, the majority of the remaining collection are letters received by Mrs. Whitney. The bulk of the letters are from Fumiko, but also include letters from Louise (whose cat was cared for by Mrs. Whitney) and the other sisters. Louise collected a group of letters from Mrs. Whitney, which Louise sent to Isabel. Fumiko’s husband collected a group of letters and ephemera from the Whitney family, which he sent to Isabel. Other letters come from Mrs. Sanderson (the Whitneys’ housekeeper), George and Braddo, Catholic priests, and others.

The letters are mostly descriptions of camp life (including a diagram of their barracks layout, descriptions of food and activities, jobs, and other details) and requests for items sent to camp. There is also a handful of letters and items about Catholicism, as a few of the daughters converted to Catholicism and tried to attend church at Poston. Aside from correspondence and ephemera, there are photos, research materials, and information about both families. One large portrait is of the Fukuda family (including Mr. Fukuda, all seven daughters, and one grandson). Isabel Whitney collected many files of information about Poston and the Fukuda family members, probably to supplement a potential book project. Three audiocassettes of an interview with Isabel and George Whitney are included. Also included in the collection is a large piece of carved manzanita wood, possibly originally a vase, but eventually turned into a lamp base.

Arrangement
Previous arrangement was preserved when possible. Collection materials arrived in multiple binders, and original binder number (ex: Binder VIII) is noted on the new folders.

Indexing Terms
Japanese Americans--Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945
Poston Relocation Center (Ariz.)
Upland (Calif.)
Catholic Church

Folder list for the Fukuda and Whitney families papers.