Finding aid for the Herbert V. Nicholson Papers

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Finding aid for the Herbert V. Nicholson Papers

Collection number: 2003.1

Japanese American National Museum
Los Angeles, California

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Herbert V. Nicholson papers
Dates: 1943-1992
Bulk Dates: 1953-1954
Collection number: 2003.1
Collector: Nicholson, Herbert Victor, 1892-
Collection Size: 4 folders
Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Los Angeles, California 90012
Abstract: This collection consists of letters written to the Nicholson family, largely related to the Friendship Home in Pasadena, California. Herbert Nicholson was a reverend and a missionary in Japan for much of his adult life. The collection also includes publications, including books written by Herbert Nicholson, and photographs.
Physical location: Japanese American National Museum, 100 North Central Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90012
Access
By appointment only. Please Contact the Collections Management and Access Unit by email (collections@janm.org) or telephone (213-830-5615).
Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
Acquisition Information
Biography / Administrative History
Reverend Herbert V. Nicholson was a Quaker minister and missionary who spent his life working on the evangelical circuit in Japan. Born in Rochester, New York in 1892, Nicholson spent his early childhood in Greater New York before moving with his family to the suburbs of Philadelphia. Nicholson attended a number of Quaker schools, including the prestigious Westlawn Boarding School, before attending Haverford College. Shorting after graduation, Nicholson worked as a secondary school teacher back in his hometown before ultimately decided to become a missionary. Assigned to Japan in 1915, Nicholson worked diligently under the supervision of the Quakers and was soon among their most conversant speakers of Japanese. He met and married his wife, Madeline Waterhouse, in Yokohama and the couple had three children, Virginia, Samuel, and Donald. The Nicholson family returned to the United States when Japan began to invade China in 1939. After renting a home in Pasadena, Reverend Nicholson was assigned by the Quakers to work at the West Los Angeles Community Methodist Church.
A charismatic preacher, Nicholson won over not only the Nisei congregation, but their parents who were impressed with his Japanese language skills. Nicholson's longtime affiliation with the Japanese and Japanese American community proved
important in the context of their forced removal. Nicholson and his family were tireless defenders of Japanese Americans throughout the war. Nicholson was one of two ministers who helped Japanese Americans on Terminal Island leave their homes. Driving for over 30 hours, Nicholson helped a number of families store their valuables temporarily before bringing them to the camps, something he did throughout the war for Japanese American families. In another instance, Nicholson visited Assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy and worked toward bringing about a plan of action with respect to resettlement.

In 1945 the Friendship Home was established by Ichi Kojima in Pasadena, California as an after-care home for discharged tuberculosis patients. Both Herbert and Madeline were involved with the Friendship Home, visiting often while they were in the United States and continuing to write letter with Kojima while living in Japan. The Friendship Home’s history is rooted in the forced removal of Japanese Americans following the passage of Executive Order 9066 and the transfer of 156 Japanese American tuberculosis patients from Olive View Sanitarium in Sylmar, California to the War Relocation Authority’s Hillcrest Detention Facility in La Crescenta, California. Kojima’s husband, Kenji, was one of these patients and following his death in 1945 she decided to dedicate her life to caring for tuberculosis patients. The Friendship Home officially opened its doors in 1945 to patients recently discharged from the Hillcrest Detention Facility and could house up to fifteen patients at a time. Kojima worked at the Friendship from 1945 until her retirement in 1954 and Paul Hashimoto took over the Friendship Home until its closure in 1976.

After the war, the Nicholson family returned to Japan. In one of their many trips between the U.S. and Japan, Herbert brought thousands of goats, sheep, chicken and other types of livestock to help many of the small towns devastated by wartime. He soon became known as "Uncle Goat" and was honored with an Imperial Decoration, 4th Class of the Sacred Treasure for his efforts.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The collection is largely comprised of letters written to the Nicholsons with many of them dealing with Ichi Kojima’s retirement and other Friendship Home business. There are also letters to members of the Nicholson family about missionary work and other subjects unrelated to the Friendship Home. In addition to the letters, there is a Friendship home inventory and a copy of the pamphlet “My Experience with the Wartime Relocation of Japanese” by Esther B. Rhoads and a copy of the Friends Journal from November 1992. There are also photographs of the Hirashiki family, who were employed at the Friendship Home.

**Arrangement**

The collection is broken down into the following series:
- Series 1: Letters
- Series 2: Publications
- Series 3: Photographs

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.
- Nicholson, Herbert Victor, 1892-
- Nicholson, Madeline
- Kojima, Ichi
- Ikeda, Seirin
- Tuberculosis
- Quaker missionaries
- World War, 1939-1945
- United States. War Relocation Authority
- Japanese Americans--Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945
- Japanese Americans
- Friendship Home, Pasadena (Calif.)
- Hillcrest Detention Center
- Olive View Sanitarium
- Pasadena (Calif.)
- Japan
Physical Description: 13 letters

Series Scope and Content Summary

Letter to Reverend Nicholson from Chaplain Thomas Eugene West of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and dated May 31, 1943. The letter is written from Camp Shelby, Mississippi and thanking Reverend Nicholson for his words of encouragement. Chaplain West states that he feels his services are well-attended and that he will do his best to convert the young "chaps." (2003.1.12)

Letter to Reverend Nicholson from Seirin Ikeda and dated June 22, 1948. Ikeda was a tuberculosis patient who at one point resided at the Friendship Home but at the time of the letter had been transferred to the Casa Loma Sanatorium in San Louis Obispo, California. The letter includes updates on his deteriorated condition as well as his request to be baptized. (2003.1.9)

Letter to Reverend and Mrs. Nicholson from Seirin Ikeda and dated February 18, 1949. He writes about another tuberculosis patient's upcoming wedding and discusses his love for Lillian but how he would not have been able to give her the life she deserves because of his condition. (2003.1.10)

Letter to Reverend Nicholson from Seirin Ikeda and dated July 17, 1949. The letter includes an update on how Lillian and her new husband are doing as well as an update on his health and news that he may need to undergo another operation. (2003.1.11)

Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson from Ichi Kojima and dated October 25, 1953. Kojima writes about Friendship Home finances and an upcoming trip to National City. On the back of the pages are typed copies of letters to Kojima from the Nicholsons pertaining to finances. (2003.1.8)

Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson from Ichi Kojima and dated November 12, 1953. Kojima writes from San Diego, California and explains her decision to retire and find a replacement for the Friendship Home. Includes envelope. (2003.1.16A-B)

Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson from Ichi Kojima about potential replacements for the Friendship Home. Kojima also inventories purchases made for the Friendship Home. In the letter Kojima mentions Paul Hashimoto, who eventually does manage the Friendship Home after Kojima's retirement. The letter is dated November 27, 1953. (2003.1.7)

Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson from Ichi Kojima and dated December 16, 1953. She discusses her retirement plans, looking for a replacement to manage the Friendship Home, and how she feels too physically weak to continue with the work. (2003.1.6)

Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson from Ichi Kojima and dated February 17, 1954. Kojima discusses her health, accounting, and finding a replacement for her at the Friendship Home. The letter includes an inventory of materials at the Friendship Home and a photograph of two women, Laura and Martha. The envelope is also included. (2003.1.17A-D)

Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson from Ichi Kojima and dated March 1, 1954. The letter discusses the future of the Friendship Home as she plans for her retirement and move to National City, California. (2003.1.5)

Letter to Herbert Nicholson from Massao W. Satow of the Japanese American Citizens League. The letter is dated March 29, 1954 and thanking the Nicholsons for their support during the war effort and the contribution of sixty dollars to their goat fund by the Kingsburg Buddhist Church in Central California. (2003.1.15)

Christmas 1981 newsletter from Madeline and Herbert Nicholson to their friends and family. They discuss their views on redress and how they support the idea of an honorary memorial fund established in honor of the aging Issei; this should be used for nursing homes, retirement homes, and pioneer centers. They strongly state that they do not support individual payments, but instead this more communal approach. The back of the newsletter includes a Japanese translation of the newsletter and a photograph of Herbert Nicholson. (2003.1.14)

Letter to Virginia [Nicholson] from Reverend Ron Heywood and dated January 23, 1984. Reverend Heywood is a member of the Japan Evangelistic Band and he expresses his condolences to Madeline and Herbert's daughter, Virginia Nicholson, for the recent passing of her mother and father. He talks of Herbert's very important work as a goat missionary. (2003.1.13)
Series 2 Publications 1945-1992

Physical Description: 4 books, 1 pamphlet, 1 journal

Series Scope and Content Summary

My Experience with the Wartime Relocation of Japanese by Esther B. Rhoads. (2003.1.4)
Valiant odyssey: Herbert Nicholson in and out of America's concentration camps edited by Michi Weglyn. (2003.1.3)
Treasure in earthen vessels: God's love overflows in peace and war by Herbert Nicholson. 2 copies. (2003.1.19-20)

Series 3 Photographs 1950-1954

Physical Description: 2 photographs

Series Scope and Content Summary