Finding aid for the Mollie Wilson Murphy Papers

Collection number: 2000.378

Japanese American National Museum
Los Angeles, California

Processed by:
Marlon Romero, Kelly Gates
Date Completed:
2014
Encoded by:
Yoko Shimojo, Lauren Zuchowski

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Mollie Wilson Murphy papers
Dates: 1942-1945
Collection number: 2000.378
Creator: Murphy, Mollie Wilson, 1923-
Collection Size: 0.50 linear feet
Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Los Angeles, California 90012

Abstract: Mollie Wilson Murphy was an African-American woman who lived in Boyle Heights during World War II. She had many Japanese-American friends who were forced into concentration camps during the war. This collection comprises of the correspondences between Mollie and her friends in camp. The Mollie Wilson Papers include correspondence, school photographs, and miscellaneous photos in Boyle Heights of Mollie and friends before the war, during and after camp. There are also mimeographs, and newspaper clippings.

Physical location: Japanese American National Museum 100 North Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 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
All requests for permission to publish, reproduce, or quote from materials in this collection must be submitted to the Hirasaki National Resource Center at the Japanese American National Museum (collections@janm.org).

Project Information
This finding aid was created as part of a project funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. The project started in 2007. Project Director was Cris Paschild. Project Archivists were Yoko Shimojo and Marlon Romero.

Preferred Citation

Alternative Forms of Material Available
The collection has been scanned and made available through Densho (http://ddr.densho.org/collections/#ddr-janm).

Acquisition Information

Biography / Administrative History
Mollie Murphy grew up on Boulder Street between Evergreen and Sloat in Boyle Heights. Her brother Atoy graduated from Roosevelt in the late 1930s and Mollie graduated in summer 1943. The two of them had many close Japanese American friends and it seems that their street was very heterogeneous. Mollie wrote in a correspondence, "As a child, I vividly remember that on my street alone there were ten different ethnic families residing harmoniously together. My mother learned to cook from Jewish people, because she had not been taught by her own mother. It often amazed me how my mother could communicate with Mrs. Kokoris or Mrs. Akahoshi, because neither of them could speak English and my
mother couldn't speak Greek nor Japanese! It goes to show, that when it comes to mutual problems, you don't always need words to express your thoughts.” Throughout the war, Mollie corresponded with a number of her Japanese American girlfriends. Their correspondences extend the duration of the World War II exclusion, from the assembly centers (Santa Anita and Pomona) to the camps (Amache, Heart Mountain, Manzanar, Gila River, and Poston) to relocation.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

These letters provide the opportunity to explore the incarceration experience from a non-Japanese perspective and reveals how Nisei teenagers represented their experiences to their non-Japanese American peers. Mollie’s relationship with a number of these individuals continued well past World War II and into the present. For additional resources, refer to the Japanese American National Museum’s Boyle Heights Oral History Project located in the museum’s Hirasaki National Resource Center. Most recently, Mollie Wilson Murphy along with Mary (Murakami) Nishi and Sandie (Saito) Okada, participated in a collaborative interview for the Japanese American National Museum’s Boyle Heights Oral History Project in 2002.

**Arrangement**

Letters have been broken down based on sender.

Series 1 : Letters
Series 2: Photographs
Series 3: Documents

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.

Murphy, Mollie Wilson, 1923-
Ikeda, Tomoko
Murakami, Mary
Igasaki, Lillian
Nagahiro, Haruko
Shimohochi, Yuri
Imamura, Miyeko
Saito, Violet
Saito, Sandie
Yoshigai, June
Nishioka, Sadae
Akahoshi, Chiyo
Japanese Americans
African Americans
World War II
Arizona
Wyoming
California
Colorado
Boyle Heights (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Justice Department Camps, Santa Fe
Jerome Relocation Center (Ark.)
Gila River Relocation Center
Heart Mountain Relocation Center (Wyo.)
Manzanar War Relocation Center
Poston Relocation Center (Ariz.)
Granada Relocation Center
Letters

General Physical Description note: 16 folders.

Box 1, Folder 1  
Tomoko Ikeda 1942
General Physical Description note: 1 letter.
Scope and Contents note
One letter written by Tomoko Ikeda to Molly Wilson and dated June 10, 1942. The letter was written from an assembly center and mentions adjusting to food and missing school. Includes item numbered 2000.378.1.

Box 1, Folder 4,  
Box 1, Folder 3  
Sandie Saito
General Physical Description note: 20 items.
Scope and Contents note
14 letters, 5 postcards, and 1 card written by Sandie Saito to Molly Wilson. Letters are dated from April 3, 1942 to January 25, 1945. Correspondence begins when Sandie Saito was at the Santa Anita Assembly Center but continues through her time at Amache as well as her new residence in Chicago, Illinois. Includes items numbered 2000.378.3A-T.

Box 1, Folder 7,  
Box 1, Folder 6  
Mary Murakami
General Physical Description note: 17 items.
Scope and Contents note
15 letters and 2 postcards written by Mary Murakami to Molly/Mollie Wilson. Dates range from June 4, 1942 to February 10, 1945 and are written from Poston and Minneapolis, Minnesota. Includes items numbered 2000.378.A-Q.

Box 1, Folder 10  
"Little Kennie"
General Physical Description note: 1 item.
Scope and Contents note
A children’s birthday card with envelope addressed to Molly Wilson. The card is for Millard turning 4 years old and features two cats. Letter is signed “Little Kennie” and envelope is post-marked March 6, 1945. Includes items numbered 2000.378.8.

Box 1, Folder 11  
Lillian Igasaki
General Physical Description note: 6 items.
Scope and Contents note
Six letters written to Mollie/Molly Wilson from Lillian "Nobie" Igasaki while she was interned at Manzanar and later relocated to Waukesha, Wisconsin. Dates range from April 14, 1943 to July 20, 1944. Includes items numbered 2000.378.9A-10D.

Box 1, Folder 12  
Haruko Nagahiro
General Physical Description note: 1 item.
Scope and Contents note
Postcard addressed to Molly Wilson dated May 20, 1942 from Haruko Nagahiro upon arriving at the Pomona assembly center. Includes item numbered 2000.378.11.

Box 1, Folder 13  
Sako
General Physical Description note: 2 items.
Scope and Contents note
1 letter with envelope and 1 postcard addressed to Mollie Wilson from Sako while at Poston. Dated December 7, 1944 and December 23, 1944. Includes items numbered 2000.378.12A-B.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 14</th>
<th>Yuri Shimohochi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Physical Description note:</strong> 7 items.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Contents note</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total of 7 letters with envelopes addressed to Molly Wilson from Yuri Shimohochi while incarcerated at Heart Mountain and later after her relocation to Lawrence, Kansas. Dated August 1, 1942 through December 23, 1944. Includes items numbered 2000.378.13A-G.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 15</th>
<th>Miyeko Imamura</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>General Physical Description note:</strong> 6 items.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Contents note</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total of 6 letters addressed to Molly Wilson from Miyeko Imamura while incarcerated at Heart Mountain. Letters are dated from August 6, 1942 to December 19, 1944. Includes items numbered 2000.378.14A-F.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 16</th>
<th>Violet Saito</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>General Physical Description note:</strong> 13 items.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Contents note</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>13 letters written to Molly Wilson from Violet Saito while incarcerated at Amache and later after she has relocated to Chicago, Illinois. Letters are dated from June 24, 1942 to January 29, 1945. Includes items numbered 2000.378.15A-M.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 17</th>
<th>June Yoshigai</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>General Physical Description note:</strong> 12 items.</td>
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<td><strong>Scope and Contents note</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total of 12 letters written to Molly Wilson from June Yoshigai spanning her time at Santa Anita Assembly Center, Gila River, and De Kalb, Illinois. Letters are dated from May 30, 1942 to January 22, 1945. Includes items numbered 2000.378.16A-L.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 18</th>
<th>Sadae Nishioka</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Physical Description note:</strong> Letters addressed to Mollie Wilson from Sadae Nishioka during her incarceration at Poston. Letters are dated June 11, 1942 to August 11, 1943. Includes items numbered 2000.378.17A-F.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 20, Box 1, Folder 19</th>
<th>Chiyeko Akahoshi</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>General Physical Description note:</strong> 17 items.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Contents note</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total of 17 letters addressed to Molly Wilson from Chiyeko Akahoshi during her incarceration at Manzanar. Letters are dated April 28, 1942 to January 20, 1945. Includes items numbered 2000.378.18A-Q.</td>
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<th>Photographs</th>
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<td><strong>General Physical Description note:</strong> 2 folders.</td>
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<th>Box 1, Folder 2</th>
<th>Ca. 1940</th>
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<td><strong>General Physical Description note:</strong> 1 item.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Contents note</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Photographs

Box 1, Folder 21

Ca. 1940

General Physical Description note: 1 item.
Scope and Contents note
A portion of a scrapbook page containing 8 portraits of Japanese American girls. Some of the portraits contain inscriptions to Molly Wilson on the photos while others are written on the page next to the photographs. Ca. 1940s. Some of the girls identified are: Mary Yano, Kazuko Matsuda, Dorothy [Takiya], Katsumi Hirooka, Lillian Igasaki. Includes items numbered 2000.378.19.

Box 1, Folder 22

Ca. 1940

General Physical Description note: 11 items.
Scope and Contents note
1 b&w photo (2000.378.20) of 2 women and men, posed in front of railing on a bridge. They appear to be in a park. Behind them are trees and in the distance in the lower left is a house. The women are wearing dresses and overcoats. The couple on the right is Fred Nishi and Mary Murakami with friends Kim Nagano and Micky Nagano. The men appear to be wearing suits. Taken in Minneapolis during the war. Photo autographed in corner: To Molly. With Love, Mary. 1 portion of a scrapbook page corner (2000.378.21) containing an image of a young girl, Yuri Shimobuchi. She is wearing a polka-dotted blouse and jacket. Autographed on upper left and lower right corners: To Molly, From Yuri Shimobuchi. 1 b&w photo (2000.378.22) of Violet Saito posing in front of barracks in Amache camp on her graduation day. She is wearing a dress with a corsage near her left shoulder and a bow in her hair. Autographed on front: Dearest Mollie, Love Violet '43. On back: June 24, 1943, Graduation day. 1 portion of a scrapbook page corner (2000.378.23) containing b&w photos. Left photo is of Lillian Sadae Nishioka wearing a thin lei or necklace. Right photo is of Frances Nishioka. Left photo autographed: To Molly, Sadae. Right photo autographed: Frances Nishioka. 1 b&w photo (2000.378.24) of Sandie Saito standing in the west end of the football field in Amache, Colorado. Sandie is wearing a collared shirt, Roosevelt High School letterman's sweater and shirt, and a bow in her hair. Behind her are barracks and 2 men. Caption along bottom edge reads: January 23, 1943. Photo autographed on front: To Molly, [illegible] Sandie. On back: This picture was taken way at the west end of the football field. 1 b&w photo (2000.378.25) attached to torn portion of a scrapbook page. Photo is a headshot of Sandie Saito. She is wearing a collared blouse and jacket. Flowers, leaves and ivy frame her face, left, lower left, and upper right edges. Behind her on right is a column. Autographed on front: To Molly, Always, Sandie. 4 b&w photographs attached to torn portion of a scrapbook page (2000.378.26). L to R: 3 headshots of Kazuko Akahoshi. In the first photo she is wearing a light colored top, artificial flowers behind her on right side. Next two photos she is wearing the same top, collared blouse with flowers, and a bow in her hair. Same flowers behind her. Fourth picture is a headshot of Miyeko Imamura. She is wearing a collared blouse and vest, and a bow in her hair. Flowers, leaves & ivy frame her face, left, lower left, and upper right edges and corners. Column behind her on right. 1 b&w photo of Kumiko and Sandie Saito (2000.378.27) (L to R). Both are standing and Kumiko has her arms around Sandie's neck. Kumiko has a scarf around her hair tied at top. She is wearing a striped, long sleeved shirt and knee length skirt. Sandie also has scarf around her hair tied at bottom. She is wearing a short sleeved shirt and knee length skirt. Behind them is a hedge. In the distance are palm trees, buildings and telephone poles. 1 b&w portrait of Chiyeko Akahoshi (2000.378.28). Chiyeko has curly hair and a bow in her hair. She is wearing a short-sleeved blouse and floral vest. Autographed on back: To Molly, Always, Chiyeko Akahoshi. November 27, 1943. 1 b&w photo of Michiko Mary Harada (2000.378.29). She is wearing a short-sleeved collared shirt and pants, hair pulled back. She is standing on grass. Behind her is a sidewalk and tall hedges. Further back is a building. 1 b&w image of 3 girls posed in front of a house (2000.378.30). L to R: Chiyeko Akahoshi, Kazuko Akahoshi, and Yoko Akahoshi. Chiyeko and Kazuko are wearing short-sleeved dresses. Behind them are steps that appear to lead to the porch of a house. Large bush to the right. Photo is slightly blurry.
Box 1, Folder 5  **Kampus Krier and Echoes**  
General Physical Description note: 3 folders.  
Scope and Contents note  
Assortment of school newspapers, “Kampus Krier” published by the Poston Senior High School and “Echoes” published by the journalism class of the Heart Mountain High School. These items are very fragile. Includes items numbered 2000.378.4

Box 1, Folder 8  **Address to the Sheriffs of California 1944**  
General Physical Description note: 1 item.  
Scope and Contents note  
Three page mimeographed copy of a speech entitled “Address to the Sheriffs of California” by Robert W. Kenny. Kenny was the Attorney General of California. The speech was from the sheriff’s meeting in Sacramento, California on March 16, 1945. The pages have been torn in half and are very fragile. Includes items numbered 2000.378.6.

Box 1, Folder 9  **Racism and Reason 1945**  
General Physical Description note: 1 item.  
Scope and Contents note  
Six page mimeographed copy of a speech entitled “Racism and Reason” published by the Department of the Interior, War Relocation Authority. Address was to be delivered by Dillon S. Myer, director of the W.R.A. at an interfaith meeting sponsored by the Pacific Coast Committee on American Principles and Fair Play in Los Angeles on October 7, 1944. Includes items numbered 2000.378.7.