Finding aid for the Murai Family Papers

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Finding aid for the Murai Family Papers

Collection number: 2002.134

Japanese American National Museum
Los Angeles, California

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Meghan Potter

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Meghan Potter

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Murai Family papers

Dates: 1940-1945
Bulk Dates: bulk 1942-1945

Collection number: 2002.134
Creator: Murai family

Collection Size: 0.75 linear feet
Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Los Angeles, California 90012

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
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Preferred Citation

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 Archivist was Yoko Shimojo. Processed by Meghan Potter, with assistance from the Project Archivist in 2009.

Biography
Koh Murai was a chemist, writer and editor of the "Beikoku Sangyo Nippo" (American Industrial Daily) newspaper in Los Angeles from 1936 to 1941. He also edited a commemorative book about Japanese American industry published on the 2600th anniversary of the Japanese imperial line, in 1940. His wife, Mitsu (Fukai), was a teacher from Fukushima who immigrated to the United States in 1913.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Koh Murai was arrested immediately and taken to Fort Missoula, Montana. During the war, he was incarcerated in Fort Livingston, Louisiana, Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Rohwer, Arkansas. Kotaro left the Tanforan Assembly Center for Lincoln, Nebraska to attend the University of Nebraska, then the University of Minnesota to study Organic Chemistry. Throughout this period, Koh and Kotaro on maintained frequent letter correspondence in English. Koh Murai inquired after his son's well being, sent money for school, and encouraged him to study hard.

At some point it appears that Koh Murai was hired by the government to promote resettlement to camp residents. After the war, the parents relocated to Denver, Colorado, where Mitsu worked as a nurse at a Catholic hospital. Koh later wrote a pamphlet in Japanese entitled the "U.S. Citizenship Reader," a guide for Issei taking the naturalization exam (also in the permanent collection under ID number 97.154.35).
After Kotaro Murai passed away, his wife Mary Murai donated the letters, ephemera, photographs and book edited by Koh Murai to the Japanese American National Museum.

**Scope and Content of Collection**
This collection contains letters, ephemera, a book and several photographs. It is divided into four series: Correspondence, Photographs, Ephemera and Publications.

**Indexing Terms**
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.
- Murai, Koh
- Murai, Kotaro
- Japanese Americans
- Montana
- New Mexico
- Arkansas

**Series 1 Correspondence 1942-1945**
**Creator:** Murai family
**Physical Description:** 14 folders
**Series Scope and Content Summary**
This series comprises the bulk of the collection. It contains correspondence from Koh Murai to his son Kotaro Murai, spanning the war years. The earliest letter is dated April 13, 1942 and the last letter is dated December 12, 1945. There is also a letter written to Koh Murai from a representative at the War Relocation Authority in 1944.
**Arrangement**
The letters are arranged chronologically.

**Series 2 Photographs 1943-1944**
**Creator:** Murai family
**Physical Description:** 1 folder
**Series Scope and Content Summary**
This series contains three photographs. One depicts Kotaro Murai at 18, one depicts Kotaro and his mother Mitzu, and the last shows Koh Murai. All were taken in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1943 and 1944.

**Series 3 Ephemera 1944**
**Creator:** Murai family
**Physical Description:** 1 folder
**Series Scope and Content Summary**
This series contains a schedule of the Special Session of Agronomy taught by Koh Murai, offered by the Adult Education Department with the Agriculture Department (Rohwer R. Center, Arkansas).

**Series 4 Publications 1940**
**Creator:** Murai family
**Physical Description:** 1 item
**Series Scope and Content Summary**