Finding Aid for the West Adams Christian Church Records

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Descriptive Summary
Title: West Adams Christian Church records
Dates: 1904-1969
Collection number: 2005.136
Creator: West Adams Christian Church
Collection Size: 16 linear feet
Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Los Angeles, California 90012
Abstract: The collection consists of documents, photographs, and a small number of three-dimensional artifacts produced or housed by the West Adams Christian Church (formerly the Japanese Christian Church) from its inception in 1908 to the 1970s. During World War II the All People's Church used the Japanese Christian Church's facilities, thereby preserving all pre-war records at the facility. The collections' strengths include Japanese language material from the 1920s-1930s, detailed correspondence and reports on resettlement and the return of church members to the area, and an associated book collection (see 2004.227). In addition to materials produced by the church, newsletters of other churches and local/regional ecumenical organizations were collected and housed in the church's office, and are included in the collection. These include Southern California Japanese Christian Church Federation reports, summer school (held annually at Terminal Island Baptist Church) newsletters and other documents.
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).
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 Director was Cris Paschild. Project Archivists were Yoko Shimojo and Marlon Romero.
Biography / Administrative History
In 1904, as part of the Disciples of Christ's ministry to the Issei men living and working near Los Angeles at the turn of the twentieth century, the denomination funded the Japanese Christian Institute which served as temporary housing for immigrants and through which ministers conducted English and Bible lessons. The Institute was supervised by the United Christian Missionary Society, the Disciples of Christ's missions organization. In 1908, the Japanese Christian Church was initiated by a group of Japanese immigrants as part of the Institute's outreach activities. The first Japanese pastor, Teizo Kawai, was invited in 1909 from Japan and the Institute and church moved to 936 Wall Street in 1911. By this time, the Institute was also conducting kindergarten classes for children and sewing classes for women.
In 1923, Kojiro Unoura replaced Teizo Kawai as head pastor. Reverend Unoura served the church from 1923-1969 and the majority of the correspondence and subject files were compiled by him. Unoura was born in the Japanese village of Wakatsu, 50 miles north of Sendai, in 1890. He was given away for adoption to a relative's family at a young age and had an unhappy childhood. He left Japan in 1907 at the age of 17, going first to British Columbia and eventually making his way to the United States, working at times on a railroad crew. He wrote that he converted to Christianity because of the kindness shown him by the first family he met in the United States. He eventually attended the University of Southern California, receiving his B.A. in 1917. He attended the Pacific School of Religion for his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1918 and was ordained in 1919 at Berkeley. He served as pastor of the Berkeley Japanese Christian Church from 1919 to 1923. He was then transferred to the Japanese Christian Church in Los Angeles in 1923 and served primarily as pastor of the Japanese-speaking congregation. He was also concerned with the variety of social and cultural challenges faced by both Issei and Nisei, and collected a large amount of material on diverse issues such as Communism, Nisei occupational news, marital counseling, and intergenerational communication challenges.

In 1926, as the Nisei generation grew older, a self-supporting Japanese language school was started by the church to assist Issei parents and Nisei children communicate better with each other. In 1930, a new Educational Building was dedicated at 822 East 20th Street. By 1933, the Nisei English-speaking congregation began meeting on its own with a separate board and largely supporting themselves. Charles Severns served as the pastor of the Young People's Church, as the English-speaking service was called, until at least 1936. (This overview based on information in Japanese Christian Church pamphlets, particularly "History of Japanese Christian Institute, 1904-1934," prepared in conjunction with the 30th anniversary celebration of the Institute.)

During World War II, Rev. Unoura was first incarcerated at Heart Mountain and then resettled to Rocky Ford, Colorado, returning to the West Coast soon after the exclusion order was lifted. Charles Severns, remaining in Los Angeles, helped to keep track of property owned by church members forced to relocate with their families to WRA camps (correspondence and records related to these properties is included in the collection). Throughout the war, Rev. Unoura maintained communication with other church members scattered across the country (much of this correspondence is in the collection) and after returning to the West Coast, he helped church members find new places to live and regain their possessions. During this time the Disciples of Christ made a decision to close the Japanese Christian Church, feeling that an ethnically specific church no longer served its purpose, and to ask church members to begin attending mainstream churches instead. Rev. Unoura argued that given the hardship and trauma of incarceration, Japanese Americans would especially benefit from having a church where they would feel like they belonged and could also nurture intergenerational relationships. The Disciples of Christ told Unoura that he could keep an Issei congregation, but that he could no longer minister to the Nisei, who presumably were expected to attend white Disciples of Christ churches. The denomination eventually agreed to keep the Japanese Christian Church open. It was reorganized as West Adams Christian Church in 1948 and the current church building, located at 3625 West Adams Boulevard, was completed in 1950 and remains active to today.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The West Adams Christian Church Records contain correspondence, documents, maps, photographs, printed materials, and three-dimensional artifacts spanning from 1904 to 1969. The collection's strengths include Japanese language material from the 1920s and 1930s and detailed correspondence and reports on resettlement and the return of church members to the Los Angeles area after the war.

The collection is organized into 14 series divided by subjects and type of materials.

**Series 1: Japanese Christian Church, 1910-1964 (3 linear feet)**

This series contains materials from the Japanese Christian Church. It is organized alphabetically by type of records. Folders organized by topics can be found under "Events" and "Subjects." Includes materials in Japanese. Other materials of the Japanese Christian Church can also be found under the series by type of materials.

**Series 2: West Adams Christian Church (post-war), 1947-1969 (8 folders)**

This series contains materials from the West Adams Christian Church during the post war period. It is organized alphabetically by type of records.

**Series 3: Japanese Christian Institute, 1921-1942 (16 folders)**

This series contains materials from the Japanese Christian Institute, mainly financial records. It is organized alphabetically by type of records.


This series contains materials from the United Christian Missionary Society. It is organized alphabetically by type of records. The series contains a large amount of correspondence to B. E. Watson from United Christian Missionary Society.

**Series 5: Young People's Church, 1928-1942 (20 folders)**

This series contains materials from the Young People's Church including materials from summer school. The folders...
organized by topics can be found under "Events" and "Subjects." Includes materials in Japanese.

Series 6: Other Institutions, 1907-1960 (31 folders)
This series contains materials from other institutions such as publications from various Christian institutions, reports from the Japanese Church Federation, and materials from summer schools. The sub-series is organized alphabetically by type of records. The folders organized by topics can be found under "Subjects." Includes materials in Japanese.

Series 7: Rev. Unoura, 1917-1963 (4 linear feet)
This series contains materials from Reverend Kojiro Unoura. It is organized alphabetically by type of records. Folders organized by topics can be found under "Subjects." The bulk of the series consists of correspondence organized alphabetically by institutions and individuals. Also in the series are materials on valuables and properties left behind by congregation members due to their forced relocation during World War II. Under correspondence, there are letters from Rev. Unoura and his wife addressing to their son from the camp. Includes materials in Japanese.

Series 8: Charles Severns files (World War II), 1937-1956 (20 folders)
This series contains materials from Charles Severns' files. It is organized alphabetically by type of records. Reports by Rev. Unoura on church member's properties are included.

Series 9: Miscellaneous, 1918-1950 (15 folders)
This series contains a variety of materials that do not belong to any of the series above. It is from variety of sources including the Japanese Christian Church and some are unclear. It is organized alphabetically by type of records. Includes materials in Japanese.

Series 10: Bound Materials, 1906-1931 (26 folders)
This series contains bound materials such as address books, ledgers, record books and roll books. Majority of them are from the Japanese Christian Church. The sub-series is organized alphabetically by type of records. Includes materials in Japanese.

Series 11: Oversized Materials, 1911-1963 (15 folders)
This series contains oversized materials stored in different shaped boxes. It is from different sources including the West Adams Church and the Japanese Christian Church. The sub-series is organized alphabetically by type of records. Most of the scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings. Also in the series are blue prints of West Adams Church. Includes materials in Japanese.

Series 12: Photographs, Negatives, 1919-1968 (1 linear feet)
This series contains photographs and glass negatives stored in flat boxes. Some photos are in an album, framed or loose. The album is from the Japanese Christian Church and the others are unclear. There is one panorama of Rev. Unoura's commencement from University of Southern California.

Series 13: Publications, 1904-1930 (5 folders)
This series contains publications mostly related to Christianity including the Holy Bible. The publications belonged to the Japanese Christian Church and the United Christian Missionary. The publications are organized alphabetically by titles.

Series 14: 3D Objects, 1939 (1 object)
This series contains a wooden object: a plaque, baseball 1939 Kalifans "B" champions.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog. West Adams Christian Church
Christianity
Unoura, Kojiro
Severns, Charles
Church buildings
California
Los Angeles (calif.)
20th-century America
Series 1 Japanese Christian Church 1910-1964

Binders ca 1946

physical description: 2 folders

Booklets 1946-1948

physical description: 3 folders

Bulletins 1926-1929

Cards 1930s

Conferences 1933-1941

physical description: 2 folders

Correspondences 1914-1949

physical description: 4 folders

Directories 1931-1940

physical description: 4 folders

Events 1928-1941

physical description: 7 folders

Ledgers 1913

Lists

Minutes 1933-1941

physical description: 7 folders

Newsletters 1925-1974

physical description: 20 folders
Series 1 Japanese Christian Church 1910-1964
Newsletters 1925-1974

Finding Aid for the West Adams Christian Church Records
2005.136

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**Notebooks 1915-1958**
Physical Description: 5 folders

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**Photographs 1924-1938**
Physical Description: 2 folders

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**Poster Papers**
Physical Description: 2 folders

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**Programs 1933-1941**
Physical Description: 2 folders

---

**Receipts 1924-1931**

---

**Reports 1929-1938**
Physical Description: 4 folders

---

**Roll Books 1924-1927**
Physical Description: 2 folders

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**Scrapbooks 1931-1934**

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**Subjects 1931-1946**
Physical Description: 3 folders

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**Miscellaneous 1910-1964**
Physical Description: 3 folders

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**Box 3**
Series 2 **West Adams Christian Church (post-war) 1947-1969**
Physical Description: 8 folders
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contains materials from the West Adams Christian Church during the post war period. It is organized alphabetically by type of records.

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**Booklets**

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**Correspondences 1948-1969**
### Events 1950s-1960s

**Reports 1947-1966**
- Physical Description: 5 folders

### Series 3 Japanese Christian Institute 1921-1942
- Physical Description: 16 folders
- **Series Scope and Content Summary**
  - This series contains materials from the Japanese Christian Institute, mainly financial records. It is organized alphabetically by type of records.

### Correspondences 1921-1942
- Physical Description: 3 folders

### Notebooks 1924-1930

### Photographs

### Receipts 1931-1942
- Physical Description: 5 folders

### Reports 1921-1925
- Physical Description: 3 folders

### Miscellaneous 1922-1939
- Physical Description: 2 folders

### Series 4 United Christian Missionary Society 1918-1960
- Physical Description: 21 folders
- **Series Scope and Content Summary**
  - This series contains materials from the United Christian Missionary Society. It is organized alphabetically by type of records. The series contains a large amount of correspondence to B. E. Watson from United Christian Missionary Society.

### Correspondences 1925-1927
- Physical Description: 10 folders

### Maps 1923

### Notebooks 1948
Notes 1965-1966

Printed Materials 1919-1924
  Physical Description: 2 folders

Reports 1924-1960
  Physical Description: 2 folders

Subjects 1925-1927

Miscellaneous 1918-1927
  Physical Description: 2 folders

Box 5
Series 5 Young People's Church 1928-1942
  Physical Description: 20 folders
  Series Scope and Content Summary
  This series contains materials from the Young People's Church including materials from
  summer school. The folders organized by topics can be found under "Events" and "Subjects."
  Includes materials in Japanese.

Events

Financial 1930-1942

Meetings 1938-1940

Newsletters 1931-1939
  Physical Description: 4 folders

Programs 1933-1938

Records 1928-1942
  Physical Description: 4 folders

Roll Books 1939-1942
  Physical Description: 5 folders
Series 5 Young People's Church 1928-1942
Subjects 1931-1941

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Subjects 1931-1941</th>
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**Miscellaneous**

Box 6

Series 6 Other Institutions 1907-1960

| Physical Description: 31 folders |

Series Scope and Content Summary

This series contains materials from other institutions such as publications from various Christian institutions, reports from the Japanese Church Federation, and materials from summer schools. The sub-series is organized alphabetically by type of records. The folders organized by topics can be found under "Subjects." Includes materials in Japanese.

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**Books 1925**

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**Flyers**

| Physical Description: 3 folders |

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**Newsletter 1930-1947**

| Physical Description: 9 folders |

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**Reports 1934-1946**

| Physical Description: 2 folders |

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**Serials 1907-1948**

| Physical Description: 2 folders |

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**Subjects 1928-1960**

| Physical Description: 11 folders |

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**Miscellaneous 1930-1932**

| Physical Description: 3 folders |

Box 6-10

Series 7 Rev. Unoura 1917-1963

| Physical Description: 4 linear feet |

Series Scope and Content Summary

This series contains materials from Reverend Kojiro Unoura. It is organized alphabetically by type of records. Folders organized by topics can be found under "Subjects." The bulk of the series consists of correspondence organized alphabetically by institutions and individuals. Also in the series are materials on valuables and properties left behind by congregation members due to their forced relocation during World War II. Under correspondence, there are letters from Rev. Unoura and his wife addressing to their son from the camp. Includes materials in Japanese.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series 7Rev. Unoura 1917-1963</th>
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<tr>
<td>Booklet 1929, 1948</td>
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<td>Physical Description: 2 folders</td>
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<td>Clippings 1947-1961</td>
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<td>Physical Description: 2 folders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correspondences 1925-1959</td>
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<td>Physical Description: 47 folders</td>
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<td>Diaries 1965-1969</td>
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<td>Physical Description: 4 items</td>
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<td>Financial 1942-1958</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Description: 3 folders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lists</td>
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<td>Notebooks 1945</td>
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<td>Programs 1948-1949</td>
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<td>Reports 1942-1955</td>
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<td>Physical Description: 5 folders</td>
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<td>Statistics 1930-1946</td>
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<td>Subjects 1917-1963</td>
</tr>
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<td>Physical Description: 62 folders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous 1943-1957</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Series 8 Charles Severns' files (World War II) 1937-1956

Box 10

Series 8 Charles Severns' files (World War II) 1937-1956

Physical Description: 20 folders

Series Scope and Content Summary

This series contains materials from Charles Severns' files. It is organized alphabetically by type of records. Reports by Rev. Unoura on church member's properties are included.

Correspondences 1937-1956

Physical Description: 9 folders

Financial 1941-1947

Physical Description: 8 folders

Reports 1942-1944

Physical Description: 3 folders

Box 11

Series 9 Miscellaneous 1918-1950

Physical Description: 15 folders

Series Scope and Content Summary

This series contains a variety of materials that do not belong to any of the series above. It is from a variety of sources including the Japanese Christian Church and some are unclear. It is organized alphabetically by type of records. Includes materials in Japanese.

Booklets 1924, 1927

Business cards

Certificates 1932-1936

Events 1936

Financial 1925-1936

Physical Description: 2 folders

Forms 1919, 1925

Physical Description: 2 folders

Newsletters 1918-1950

Sermons 1921-1949

Physical Description: 3 folders
Miscellaneous 1925-1926

Box 12

Series 10 Bound Materials 1906-1931
Physical Description: 26 folders
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contains bound materials such as address books, ledgers, record books and roll books. Majority of them are from the Japanese Christian Church. The sub-series is organized alphabetically by type of records. Includes materials in Japanese.

Address books 1907-1927
Physical Description: 2 folders

Ledgers 1908-1931
Physical Description: 12 folders

Records 1906-1932
Physical Description: 8 folders

Roll books 1919-1932
Physical Description: 4 folders

Series 11 Oversized Materials 1911-1963
Physical Description: 15 folders
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contains oversized materials stored in different shaped boxes. It is from different sources including the West Adams Church and the Japanese Christian Church. The sub-series is organized alphabetically by type of records. Most of the scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings. Also in the series are blue prints of West Adams Church. Includes materials in Japanese.

Blue prints 1950, 1953
Physical Description: 2 items

Certificates 1911-1912, 1962
Physical Description: 2 folders

Clippings 1951-1956

Scrapbooks 1941-1963
Physical Description: 9 folders
Series 11 Oversized Materials 1911-1963
Photographs 1932-1936

Photographs 1932-1936

Box 16-19 Series 12 **Photographs, Negatives 1919-1968**

Physical Description: 1 linear feet

Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contains photographs and glass negatives stored in flat boxes. Some photos are in an album, framed or loose. The album is from the Japanese Christian Church and the others are unclear. There is one panorama of Rev. Unoura's commencement from University of Southern California.

Photographs 1919-1968

Physical Description: 2 small boxes

Glass negatives

Physical Description: 8 plates

Box 20 Series 13 **Publications 1904-1930**

Physical Description: 5 folders

Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contains publications mostly related to Christianity including the Holy Bible. The publications belonged to the Japanese Christian Church and the United Christian Missionary. The publications are organized alphabetically by titles.

Books 1904-1930

Physical Description: 5 items

Box 21 Series 14 **3D Objects 1939**

Physical Description: 1 item

Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contains a wooden object: a plaque, baseball 1939 Kalifans "B" champions.