Finding aid for the Japanese Farm Survey for Defense Records

Collection number: 2007.11

Descriptive Summary
Title: Japanese Farm Survey for Defense records
Dates: 1940-1942
Collection number: 2007.11
Collection Size: 2 linear feet (2 boxes)
Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Los Angeles, California 90012
Abstract: This collection contains information collected during two surveys of Japanese farmers in the Los Angeles area in 1940 and 1942. The first survey relates to farms along major power transmission lines and aqueducts (1940) and the second to farms in Los Angeles County (1942). A few letters, some notes, and a color coordinated key are also included.
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
Gift of the County of Los Angeles, Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures.
Processing Information
Existing folder titles were preserved when possible. The collection was processed in 2016 by Jamie Henricks.
Historical Note
The work for the first survey (1940) was requested by the Los Angeles County Agricultural Commission, and carried out by department inspectors Charles Yerxa, Harry Perkins, and Frank Woods. Inspections were made at 147 properties, primarily Japanese, though other "resident aliens" surveyed included Germans, Italians, Filipinos, and Chinese. The inspectors were instructed to obtain information by asking casual and indirect questions and made notes about the people they interviewed, usually commenting on how intelligent the interviewees seemed or that the individuals did not seem suspicious of the questioning. It was concluded in a December 8, 1941 letter that 80-90% of farms owned by Japanese individuals were being run by non-citizens. The survey was forwarded to a Mr. Ryan the day after Pearl Harbor, and this information was included at the beginning of a second survey conducted in January 1942. There is less information about the second survey, and there are no maps to explain what the key letters (A-R) correspond to. The second survey contains much more detailed and personal information about the people working at each farm (including names, ages, genders, citizenship, registration numbers, ports of entry, etc) as well as financial information, crop details, and projections for the future of each farm.
These survey documents were last held at the County of Los Angeles, Department of Agricultural Commissioner and Weights and Measures.
Scope and Content
This collection contains information collected during two surveys of Japanese farmers in the Los Angeles area in 1940 and 1942. The first survey relates to farms along major power transmission lines and aqueducts (1940) and the second to farms in Los Angeles County (1942). A few letters, some notes, and a color coordinated key are also included, but there is no map of farms included.
The first survey was conducted in 1940, but was handed over with more correspondence in a letter dated December 8, 1941 (the day after Pearl Harbor). This survey is shorter, includes a general survey report for each aqueduct or transmission line, and then has one page of information for each farmer interviewed. It includes observations about the
individuals and their land holdings, their proximity to power lines, their level of English proficiency, and their personal backgrounds. A handful of other “resident aliens” are included who are not Japanese.

The second survey was conducted in January 1942 and contains two to three pages of detailed information for each farmer surveyed. It includes information about farm location, and questions about workers employed and their citizenships, number and type of crops, whether they will seek loans to try to buy more land, use of pesticides, marketing and membership in organizations, and whether or not there are labor or finance troubles or shortages expected.

Related Materials

The museum holds other collections related to Japanese Americans and farming. One in particular is the Masakazu Iwata Papers, which includes his book "Planted in Good Soil" and extensive research notes about Japanese American farmers.

Arrangement

Original arrangement was preserved. The collection is grouped by survey, and within each survey by areas surveyed.

Indexing Terms

Japanese American farmers – History
Agriculture – California – History
Agricultural surveys – California

Introduction – key, correspondence, notes 1940-1941
Survey forms (10 folders, separated by power line name) September-October 1940
LA County Farmer Survey forms, Keys A-R (26 folders) January 1942
LA County Farmer Survey notes and tallies January 1942