Finding aid for the Frances Cushman Pierce Papers

Collection number: 2000.310

Descriptive Summary
Title: Frances Cushman Pierce papers
Dates: 1975-1994
Collection number: 2000.310
Collection Size: 1 folder
Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Los Angeles, California 90012
Creator: Pierce, Frances Cushman
Abstract: The collection contains materials collected by Frances Cushman Pierce dating from 1975 to 1994. Items are primarily survey responses from her former students, but also include JACL newsletters, correspondence, materials related to a 1994 Poston III reunion, and two typed chronologies.
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
The collection was acquired in 1993 as a gift of Catherine Harris.
Processing Information
A finding aid was created in 2017 by Jamie Henricks.
Biographical Note
Frances Cushman Pierce was an assistant principal at Poston I High School (1942-1943) and principal at Poston III High School from 1943 to 1944. Frances was the youngest of five children of Reverend Charles and Belle Cushman, and born in Victor, Iowa December 31, 1907. She graduated from Iowa State Teacher’s College, then taught at the American Community School in Beirut, Lebanon. After returning to the United States, she completed graduate work at the University of Chicago, served as a psychologist for an experimental school run by the university, and then worked as the Director of Guidance and Research for Highland Park and Lake Forest High Schools (suburbs of Chicago). She resigned from that position to go to Poston, Arizona from 1942-1944, after hearing about the relocation camp on the radio. She traveled to San Francisco over her summer break to inquire about work with the War Relocation Authority, and chose an assignment at Poston because it was the first camp she heard about. After Poston, she was appointed superintendent of the Indian School in Phoenix (the first woman to be appointed) in October of 1944. Her next position was with the Office of Indian Affairs as the Superintendent of Secondary Education, and continued after that to aid Native American families affected by the Missouri River Basin Project (after construction of a dam required families move out of the reservoir area). While working on the Missouri River project, she met and married her husband Clinton G. Pierce (a forester) in 1950, and the couple later two adopted two girls. They lived in Billings, Montana. She passed away November 2, 1997.
Scope and Content
The collection contains materials collected by Frances Cushman Pierce dating from 1975 to 1994. Items include survey responses sent to Frances from her former students, including information on former camp locations, occupation and education, family members, and personal thoughts on relocation and camp life (approximately 28 responses). Also included are two JACL newsletters describing Frances’ background and survey, correspondence, materials related to a 1994 Poston III reunion, and two typed chronologies.
Related Materials
Other collections in the museum related to camp educators include the Clara Breed collection (93.75). Other collections also hold surveys and responses about camp life.

**Arrangement**

Previous arrangement was preserved.

**Indexing Terms**

Japanese Americans--Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945
Poston Relocation Center (Ariz.)

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Tulare County JACL Newsletter, Issue 34 February 18, 1977
Tulare County JACL Newsletter, Issue 35 March 18, 1977
Letter from Frances, with bibliography for unfinished project August 22, 1993
Letter from Frances to Catherine September 5, 1993
Letter from Frances about the April 1994 Poston reunion April 28, 1994
Excerpts from the Poston Camp III reunion program April 1994
Poston Camp III reunion notice with schedule
Surveys and responses from Frances Cushman Pierce’s former students, including information on former camp locations, occupation and education, family members, and personal thoughts on relocation and camp life (approximately 28 responses) 1975
Typed chronology of events related to or described in Jeanne Wakatsuke’s “Farewell to Manzanar” (events from 1869-1952) undated
Typed evacuation chronology, abbreviated from Bosworth’s “America’s Concentration Camps” undated