

Finding aid created by Megan Waldau.

Japanese American National Museum

100 North Central Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Email: collections@janm.org

URL: <http://www.janm.org/>

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Finding aid for the Sakamoto-Sasano Family Collection

Collection number: 2018.10

Descriptive Summary

Title: Sakamoto-Sasano Family collection

Dates (inclusive): 1908-1998

Dates (bulk): 1942-1945

Collection number: 2018.10

Collection Size: 4 linear feet (9 boxes)

Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)

Los Angeles, California 90012

Creator: Sasano, Taye Sakamoto

Creator: Takahashi, Chiyoko Sakamoto

Creator: Sasano, Frances Kazuko

Creator: Yoshida, Louise Atsuko Sasano

Abstract: This collection contains documents, objects, and ephemera from the Sakamoto-Sasano family. The belongings of matriarch Taye Sakamoto Sasano, her sister Chiyoko Sakamoto Takahashi, and her two daughters Louise Sasano Yoshida and Frances Sasano make up the bulk of the collection. Yearbooks, school notebooks, scrapbooks, diaries, and notes from friends characterize Frances and Louise's lives as teens and young adults experiencing incarceration. Photos, citizenship documents, business cards, and letters characterize lives of familial support and financial success and after being released from camp. Letters from Richard DeQueiroz, Frances' partner she met in camp, illustrate the trying transition between camp and life after incarceration through the perspective of young adults in love.

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 (collections@janm.org). Advanced notice is required.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Sakamoto-Sasano Family Collection. 2018.10, Japanese American National Museum. Los Angeles, CA.

Acquisition Information

The collection was acquired in 2018 as a gift of Scott and Jennifer Yoshida.

Processing Information

Though many of the items were identified and labeled by the Sakamoto-Sasano family prior to donation, the items were fully processed and described by Megan Waldau. A container list and finding aid was created by Megan Waldau in 2019.

Biographical Note

Taye (b. March 5, 1901) immigrated to the United States from Japan aboard the American Maru on January 2, 1903 with her mother Kume Sakamoto (b. September 3, 1883) and her father Hisamatsu Sakamoto (d. 1925). Taye attended school in Napa, California from 1908 to 1917 until she moved with her family to Boyle Heights, Los Angeles and attended high school at Polytechnic High School. Her sister, Chiyoko (b. June 30, 1912), was born in the United States, automatically making her an American citizen.

After the early passing of her and Taye's father and because of her citizenship status, Chiyoko was required to work at a young age to support her family. In high school, Chiyoko worked in a law office in Los Angeles as a law secretary, where she was introduced to the legal profession. After graduating from American University in Los Angeles in 1938, Chiyoko was the first Asian American woman to pass the California State Bar Examination. She later opened her own private practice in an office adjacent to the historic Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, later a part of the original location of the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles.

Taye married Yoshikichi Sasano and raised her children, daughters Frances (b. August 5, 1926) and Louise (b. January 6, 1929) and son Allen (b. February 15, 1933), in Santa Maria, California until Executive Order 9066 mandated the forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. Yoshikichi was taken by the FBI and incarcerated at the Tuna Canyon Detention Center. Taye moved her family to meet Chiyoko in Los Angeles so they would not be separated during their move to Santa Anita Assembly Center.

The Sakamoto-Sasano family was later relocated to Granada (Amache) Relocation Center where they reunited with Yoshikichi. At Amache, the daughters attended and excelled at school, Amache Junior High and Amache High School. Louise and Frances collected their school-days ephemera into scrapbooks, including dance invitations, paper crafts made with limited resources, club installation social fliers, doodles and notes from friends.

Frances left Amache early on a program to attend college in Connecticut while being housed by a family in exchange for babysitting services. Before she left Amache, she was dating Richard DeQueiroz (b. August 27, 1927), a fellow student at Amache High School from Los Angeles. When she left, they decided to write to each other every day until they were reunited. Richard and Frances reunited at Amache to see their families for Christmas in 1944 and got secretly engaged to be married on June 22nd, 1948 or 1949, after they had grown up a bit and finished college. Their correspondence continued for four years but they never married.

While at Amache, Chiyoko served as legal counsel and provided guidance to residents. She left Amache early to marry Tooru Takahashi, a fellow Amachean. He took up farming and formed a partnership with Jorge Kondo, a Mexican-born Japanese lettuce grower, to create KITTYs Vegetable Distributors Inc., where Chiyoko served as legal counsel while maintaining her own private law practice. After the rest of the family was released from Amache, the family moved back to Los Angeles to rebuild their life together. Louise, Chiyoko, Taye, Taye's mother Kume, and Louise's brother Allen all lived together in one home.

Louise Sasano graduated from Dorsey High School in Los Angeles in the spring of 1946. This was where Taye took citizenship classes at night in 1954, in preparation for the naturalization test, where she was a part of the first wave of Issei (first generation Japanese immigrants) to obtain citizenship. After finishing school at Hartford Junior College in Connecticut, Frances returned home to Los Angeles and attended the University of Southern California (USC). She graduated in 1954 with a degree in social studies, and moved to New York City to work for the United Nations. Frances would later work for the Times-Mirror Company (now the Los Angeles Times), Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM) Studios, and other movie industry studios in audience research.

The post-war period was difficult for Louise as she sometimes struggled to make ends meet while working at typing and bookkeeping jobs. After a divorce, Louise took an offer from her mother and sister to move in with them. Louise's son (and donor of this collection), Scott Yoshida, was raised in the home of women who truly supported each other.

Chiyoko helped Louise and hired at her Uncle Tooru's vegetable business (and later Chiyoko's business after Tooru's passing in 1982) and take Louise and Frances on vacations to China, Greece, Turkey, Washington D.C., and more. Chiyoko retired from her private law practice in 1990 at the age of 78.

Taye helped maintain the household while Louise and Frances worked, and despite having a severe heart attack, Taye was energetic and did not slow down until the last few years of her life. Frances retired in 2001 to take care of Louise, suffering from colon cancer. After Louise passed, Frances moved into the post-war Los Angeles home to be closer to Louise's son Scott and his family. Frances was the last of her generation in the family and lived by the philosophy "family comes first" to the very end. These women are survived by Scott Yoshida and his family.

Sakamoto-Sasano family members:

- Kume Sakamoto (9/3/1883-11/30/1973)
- Hisamatsu Sakamoto (d. 1925)
- Taye Sakamoto Sasano (3/5/1901-7/29/1989)
- Yoshikichi Sasano (2/1/1890-7/1971)
- Chiyoko Sakamoto Takahashi (6/30/1912-12/2/1994)
- Tooru Takahashi (8/30/1919-7/23/1982)
- Gene Akira Sakamoto (7/14/1904-1/23/1981)
- Richard Kiyoshi Sakamoto (9/24/1919-8/2/2003)
- Frances Kazuko Sasano (8/5/1926-5/18/2014)
- Louise Atusuko Sasano Yoshida (1/6/1929-2/12/2001)
- Allen Hideki Sasano (2/15/1933-12/2/2014)
- Scott Yoshida (b. 3/24/1956)

Scope and Content

This collection contains schoolwork, photographs, diaries, autograph books, scrapbooks, yearbooks, letters, immigrant identification documents, jewelry, and other ephemera. Photographs range from 1908 to 1998, while documents, schoolwork, and other ephemera are mainly from camp years 1942 to 1945. There is a detailed list of all items in the collection linked below.

Arrangement

Materials are arranged thematically, and into groupings based on the family member represented when possible.

Indexing Terms

Japanese Americans--Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945

Granada Relocation Center

[Folder list for the Sakamoto-Sasano Family collection.](#)
