Chica Sugino Papers

Japanese American National Museum
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Finding aid for the Chica Sugino Papers

Collection number: 99.99

Descriptive Summary
Title: Chica Sugino papers
Dates (inclusive): 1910s-1980s
Dates (bulk): 1940s
Collection number: 99.99
Creator: Sugino, Chica, 1888-1986
Collection Size: 4 linear feet
Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.) Los Angeles, California 90012

Abstract: Chica Sugino was an Issei research analyst for Alexander Leighton, head of the War Relocation Authority's (WRA) Sociological Research Bureau at Poston Relocation Center. Her research contributed to Leighton's book, The Governing of Men, one of the first monographs published on the Japanese American wartime experience. The collection contains photographs, correspondence, research notes, manuscript drafts, newspapers, audio recordings, and WRA publications spanning from the 1910s to the 1980s.


Access
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Preferred Citation

Biographical Note
Chica Sugino was an Issei research analyst for Alexander Leighton, head of the WRA's Sociological Research Bureau at Poston. Her research contributed to Leighton's book, The Governing of Men, one of the first monographs published on the Japanese American wartime experience.

Born Chica Tadakuma in 1888 in Taiwan, Sugino spent most of her early childhood in Japan. In 1906, she and her family came to the United States where her father worked as a cobbler and her mother as a teacher and seamstress. With the family struggling financially, in 1915, Sugino's father arranged for her and her older sister to take ballet lessons in the hopes that they would be able to earn a living performing on stage. Unsuccessful in vaudeville, Sugino and her sister traveled to Hollywood to find work in movies and to establish themselves as performers. Sugino's career as an entertainer was cut short, however, when her sister eloped in 1917.

Leaving show business behind her, Sugino attended USC on a scholarship, where she studied sociology and graduated in 1924. That same year she married Kenzo Arthur Sugino, one of the first practicing Issei optometrists in Little Tokyo. Together, the couple had three children: Arthur (aka Techy) in 1925, Paul in 1927, and Elizabeth in 1931. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, their family life was disrupted when Kenzo was arrested by the FBI and incarcerated at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) center in Tujunga as an alien enemy. Sugino and her children were forced to relocate to Poston, Arizona where Kenzo eventually joined them. During her time at Poston, Sugino worked as a research analyst for the Sociological Research Bureau, simultaneously earning course credit from the University of Chicago's graduate program in sociology. After she and her family returned to Los Angeles, Sugino was active in the Women's Welfare Service program, organizing donations of old stockings to provide work for women in Japan. At the age of 98, Sugino passed away in 1986.

Scope and Content
The Chica Sugino Papers contain photographs, correspondence, research notes, manuscript drafts, newspapers, audio recordings, and WRA publications spanning from the 1910s to the 1980s. The bulk of the collection consists of materials dating from the early 1940s related to Sugino's research for the WRA's Sociological Research Bureau on the forced exclusion of Japanese Americans. The collection also contains a great deal of materials documenting Sugino's wartime
experience at the Poston concentration camp. Also in the collection are microfilmed reels of camp and assembly center newspapers. During her later years, Sugino devoted her time to writing a manuscript based on her life. Drafts and a complete copy of her unpublished book can be found in the collection as well as audio reel recordings of Sugino reading aloud her manuscript.

**Arrangement**

In processing the collection, the materials were reorganized by series since there did not appear to be any preexisting organization. Original folder titles were retained with titles assigned by the processor indicated with brackets. The collection is organized into eleven series.

**Indexing Terms**

Sugino, Chica  
Japanese Americans—Evacuation and relocation, 1942-1945  
World War, 1939-1945  
Poston Relocation Center (Ariz.)  
United States. War Relocation Authority. Sociological Research Bureau

**Box 1** Series 1 *Writings 1934-1984*

Physical Description: 26 folders  
Scope and Content  
This series contains short stories and poems by Sugino as well as *Sakura*, her unpublished book based on her life. Papers by Sugino for the Sociological Research Bureau are not included in this series and can be found under Research and Activities.

**Box 2,3** Series 2 *Correspondence 1919-1983*

Physical Description: 30 folders  
Scope and Content  
This series contains correspondence between Sugino and her family and friends. Items that may be of special interest are letters regarding Kenzo Sugino's arrest and the correspondence between Sugino and her husband while he was incarcerated in the Tujunga Detention Center. Also in the series are correspondence between Sugino and her friends who were helping her and her family while they were in Poston. Correspondence with Alexander Leighton and other members of the Sociological Research Bureau can be found in the Research and activities series. Similarly, correspondence related to her activities such as the Women's Welfare Service can also be found under Research and activities.

**Box 4,15** Series 3 *Photographs 1910s-1980s*

Physical Description: 12 folders  
Scope and Content  
This series contains photographs of Sugino and her family and friends. Only a few photographs are from her days as a vaudevillian performer. Included in the series are photographs from a Sociological Research Bureau trip.

**Box 4,15** Series 4 *Personal Documents and Items 1910s-1940s*

Physical Description: 13 folders  
Scope and Content  
This series contains a wide assortment of personal documents and items belonging to Sugino and her family. Materials in this series include financial records, application forms, report card, passport, and marriage certificate. Also in the series are war ration books belonging to Sugino's daughter, Elizabeth.
Box 5  
**Series 5** Ephemera 1940s-1968  
**Physical Description:** 17 folders  
**Scope and Content**  
This series contains items such as booklets, pamphlets, and programs. Pamphlets published by the WRA can be found in the WRA publications series.

Box 5,15  
**Series 6** Newspapers and Periodicals 1922-1967  
**Physical Description:** 22 folders  
**Scope and Content**  
This series contains magazines, newspapers, newspaper clippings, and newsletters; some are in Japanese.

Box 6,7,8  
**Series 7** Research and Activities 1924-1964  
**Physical Description:** 1.5 linear feet  
**Scope and Content**  
This is a broad series that includes documents related to Sugino’s research for the Sociological Research Bureau, as well as her club and community activities. Some materials related to her research are difficult to distinguish from her other activities at Poston and may be mixed together.

Box 8,9,10  
**Series 8** WRA publications 1940s  
**Physical Description:** 6 folders, 10 books  
**Scope and Content**  
This series contains pamphlets and booklets published by the War Relocation Authority (WRA). Non-WRA publications sent with WRA materials by Alexander Leighton to Sugino were kept together and placed under this series as well.

Box 11  
**Series 9** Journals 1917-1962  
**Physical Description:** 5 folders  
**Scope and Content**  
This series contains Sugino’s daily planners.

Box 12,13,14  
**Series 10** Sound Recordings  
**Physical Description:** 28 records, 20 audio reels  
**Scope and Content**  
This series contains Japanese 78 rpm phonographic albums and audio reel recordings of Sugino reading aloud her manuscript Sakura. Also in the series is the microphone that Sugino used.

Box in HNRC  
**Series 11** Microfilm  
**Physical Description:** 22 reels  
**Scope and Content**  
This series contains microfilmed reels of camp and assembly newspapers which can be accessed in the Manabi and Sumi Hirasaki National Resource Center. (Item number 1999.88 "Camp Newspapers").