
A guide to the George Shima photograph and media collection, 1912-1926

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2013

A Guide to the George Shima photograph and media collection

P87-031

San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, National Park Service

2013, National Park Service

Title: George Shima photograph and media collection

Date: 1912-1926

Identifier/Call Number: P87-031 (SAFR 23366)

Creator: Shima, George

Physical Description: 2 items.

Repository: San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Historic Documents Department

Building E, Fort Mason

San Francisco, CA 94123

Abstract: The George Shima photograph and media collection, 1912-1926, (SAFR 23366, P87-031) is comprised of one photograph and one documentary film related to George Shima, a Japanese immigrant who became a successful farmer in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta region of California. The collection has been processed to the Item level and is open for use.

Physical Location: San Francisco Maritime NHP, Historic Documents Department

Language(s): In English and Japanese.

Access

This collection is open for use unless otherwise noted.

Publication and Use Rights

Some material may be copyrighted or restricted. It is the researcher's obligation to determine and satisfy copyright or other case restrictions when publishing or otherwise distributing materials found in the collections.

Processing Note

The collection file contains one sheet of correspondence addressed to Rindge Shima, son of George Shima, along with photocopies of three photographs showing GEORGE SHIMA (built 1912; tugboat) underway in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta region and at a regatta in Stockton, California. The photocopies are poor and the source of the original photographs is unknown. The collection file also contains photocopies of a twenty-four part newspaper article series on the history of the San Joaquin River delta region titled "The Delta Story" written by William J. Rodgers which likely appeared in the Stockton Record newspaper in 1951. Part fourteen is not in the file. The series mentions George Shima in some of the installments.

Description Notes: Dates refer to when the original photograph and film footage was taken. The items in this collection are copies that were made much later than when the originals were created.

The descriptions in this collection guide were compiled using the best available sources of information. Such sources include the creator's annotations or descriptions, collection accession files, primary and secondary source material and subject matter experts. While every effort was made to provide accurate information, in the event that you find any errors in this guide please contact the reference staff in order for us to evaluate and make corrections to this guide.

Please cite the title and collection number in any correspondence with our staff.

Preferred Citation

[Item description], [Location within collection organization identified by Collection Number/Series Number/File Unit Number/Item Number], P87-031 (SAFR 23366), George Shima photograph and media collection, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park

Acquisition Information

SAFR-00001

GOGA-01216

SAFR-00001 is a blanket accession that was transferred from the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) to the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park in September 1988. GGNRA had previously acquired the collection from the San

Francisco Maritime Museum when it became a unit of the National Park Service in 1977.

GOGA-01216 is a gift from Rindge Shima, son of George Shima, to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Maritime Unit in 1987.

Historical or Biographical Note

George Shima (1864-1926) was an immigrant from Japan who came to be known as the "Potato King" due to his success in farming the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta region of California from the 1890s until his death in 1926.

George Shima was born as Kinji Ushijima in Kurume on the island of Kyushu, Japan in 1864. He was born into a family of farmers, yet he studied Chinese classics and poetry in Tokyo. After unsuccessfully gaining entrance to Hitotsubashi University due to failing to pass the English language examination requirement, he was inspired to travel to the United States to learn the language. Sometime after his arrival in California in 1889, he adopted George Shima as his English name.

After first working as a domestic servant, Shima sought work as a farm laborer in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta of California. Over time, Shima was given the opportunity to lease farmland to grow his own crops. His successful experimentations with growing potatoes in the delta environment allowed him to continue to purchase and lease large tracts of farmland. By 1906 he was known as the "Potato King" of California.

Through his Empire Navigation Company, Shima maintained a fleet of vessels, including tugboats, barges, and launches, in order to transport his goods to cities in the area. Stephens Brothers of Stockton, California, built the vessel GEORGE SHIMA (built 1912; tugboat), among others, for him. Shima was the first shipper to grade and wash potatoes prior to shipment as well as the first to sell potatoes with a trademark, using red bags labeled "Shima Fancy." Shima achieved success despite the challenges of both the physical environment, including occasional crop-ruining floods, as well as racial discrimination. Shima and his wife Shimeko had three children, a daughter named Taye and sons Togo and Rindge. They lived in a home purchased by Shima in 1909 in Berkeley, California. That same year, Shima became the first president of the Japanese Association of America.

George Shima died in 1926. The Shima Center at San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton, California, is named in his honor, and "offers instruction in agriculture and natural resources, broadcasting, fine arts, home economics (including early childhood education), business and photography" (San Joaquin Delta College).

Sources:

- Hata, Don and Nadine. "George Shima: 'The Potato King of California,'" *Journal of the West* 25, no. 1 (1986): 55-63.
- Hongo, Florence M., ed. *Japanese American Journey: The Story of a People*. San Mateo, CA: Japanese American Curriculum Project, Inc., 1985.
- Rogers, William J. "The Delta Story," *Stockton Record* (Stockton, CA), July 1951.
- San Joaquin Delta College. "From Cluster to Center." San Joaquin Delta College. Accessed March 26, 2013. http://www.deltacollege.edu/dept/publicinfo/cluster_to_center.html.

Collection Scope and Content

The George Shima photograph and media collection, 1912-1926, (SAFR 23366, P87-031) is comprised of one photograph and one documentary film related to George Shima, a Japanese immigrant who became a successful farmer in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta region of California. The collection has been processed to the Item level and is open for use.

Contains one black-and-white photographic print showing GEORGE SHIMA (built 1912; tugboat) alongside KONGO (barge) at an unidentified pier, possibly in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, between 1912-1926. The collection also contains one documentary VHS videocassette with black-and-white footage of laborers performing various activities on George Shima's farm in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta region, including views of men loading sacks of potatoes onto a barge and scenes of a towboat pulling a barge. The video also contains footage of George Shima's three children, Taye, Togo, and Rindge, at their home in Berkeley, California.

Collection Arrangement

Not arranged due to the small size of the collection.

Related Materials

Related SFMNHP photograph collection: Shima Maru (built 1909; launch) photograph, circa 1909-1926. SFMNHP, (SAFR 23197, P90-060). Consists of (1) black-and-white 8 x 10 inch photographic copy print showing a starboard broadside view of SHIMA MARU with a group of Japanese male and female passengers posing on board.

Related SFMNHP object collection: House, 1912. SFMNHP, (SAFR 16186). Wheelhouse of GEORGE SHIMA (built 1912; tugboat).

Separated SFMNH Material: A book titled Japanese American Journey: The Story of a People by the Japanese American Curriculum Project, Inc. (San Mateo, CA: Japanese American Curriculum Project, Inc., 1985) was transferred to the SF Maritime NHP Library in 1987. Library catalog number E184 J3 J336 1985.

This material is located at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park

On Shima Center [videorecording], [1979]. Bancroft Library, VIDEO/C 78. Appears to be the same video as P87-031.2, but with approximately 1 minute of extra footage at the beginning. Documentary about life on George Shima Farm in the San Joaquin Valley; harvesting by East Indian laborers and other farm work are presented. The Shima family home in Berkeley, California, is also shown. Original film made in 1914 by a film crew from Japan. Available electronically through the Internet Archive at http://archive.org/details/cabemrc_00003.

This material is located at University of California, Berkeley. Bancroft Library.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Barges

Towboats

Tugboats

Japanese Americans

Potato industry

Ushijima, Kinji, 1864-1926

George Shima (built 1912; tugboat)

Delta Region (Calif.)

Berkeley (Calif.)

Black-and-white prints (photographs)

Gelatin silver prints

Videocassettes

Shared
photograph
collections box

Item No. 1. **George Shima (built 1912; tugboat) alongside Kongo (barge) at an unidentified pier, possibly in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, 1912-1926**

Extent: 1 photograph.

Physical Description: 1 black-and-white photographic print, 8 x 10 in.

Scope and Content Note

KONGO is loaded with numerous sacks, possibly filled with potatoes. GEORGE SHIMA partially in view, with only the top of the wheelhouse and the stern in view. An unidentified motor vessel is also in the foreground.

Shared
videocassette
collections box

Item No. 2. **George Shima farm and home documentary film, circa 1914**

Extent: 1 videocassette.

Physical Description: 1/2 in. VHS videocassette

Scope and Content Note

Approximately 14 minutes of black-and-white footage showing laborers harvesting potatoes, operating mowing machines, and baling hay on George Shima's farm in the Delta region of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers in California. Near the 5 minute mark, there is approximately 1 minute and 30 seconds of footage showing the laborers loading sacks of potatoes onto a barge followed by scenes of a launch towing the barge. Also contains footage of George Shima's three children, Taye, Togo, and Rindge, at their home in Berkeley, California. The video ends with brief footage of George Shima. Title cards are in Japanese. An English narrator translates the titles.