Finding Aid for the Riichi Ashizawa papers, 1899-1965 (bulk 1906-1945)

Processed by Ryoko Onishi in the Center for Primary Research and Training (CFPRT), with assistance from Kelley Wolfe Bach11, 2010; machine-readable finding aid created by Caroline Cubé.

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Riichi Ashizawa papers
Date (inclusive): 1899-1965 (bulk 1906-1945)
Collection number: 2010
Creator: Ashizawa, Riichi
Extent: 1 half document box (.25 linear feet) and 1 oversize box
Abstract: Riichi Ashizawa (also known as George Asher) was a photographer and entrepreneur in San Francisco, California. Ashizawa was a Yamanashi native who came to the United States in 1899. He ran businesses such as Yamato Laundry, Asher's Picture House, Asher's Art Shoppe, and Ho-Bi-Do. The collection includes biographical essays written by Ashizawa and photographs (with selected negatives) that he took for the Japanese American communities in the San Francisco area. Photocopies of documents and photographs of his businesses are also included.
Language: Finding aid is written in English.
Language of the Material: Japanese and English
Repository: University of California, Los Angeles. Library Special Collections.
Los Angeles, California 90095-1575
Physical location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact UCLA Library Special Collections for paging information.
Restrictions on Access
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Gift of Ashizawa family
Processing Note
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Preferred Citation
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Biography/History
Issei immigrant, photographer and entrepreneur Riichi Ashizawa (芦芦沢履一) was born in Yamanashi Prefecture in 1882, the second son in his family. He arrived in San Francisco in 1899. In 1901, he became the owner of Yamato Laundry and later Golden Gate Laundry. In 1906, after experiencing the San Francisco earthquake, Ashizawa moved to Chicago, Denver and then Philadelphia. He studied art, chemistry and dyeing textiles during this period. In 1915, Ashizawa returned to San Francisco and worked as a photographer for a Japanese daily newspapers, the Shinsekai Shimbun (formerly Hokubei Mainichi News) and Nichibei-jiji (formerly Nichibei Times). In 1916, Ashizawa started a roving photography business by installing a darkroom in his car, a 1912 Studebaker, and he photographed people and scenery in the Golden Gate Park area. Ashizawa opened an antique and artistic picture framing shop, Asher's Art Shoppe on Sutter Street in 1920. In the same year, he married Susie Suzuki (鈴木壽々) from Yokohama, Japan and later had a son Roy and a daughter Sumiko. During World War II, Ashizawa and his family were incarcerated in the Topaz Relocation Center, also known as the Central Utah Relocation Center, near Delta, Utah. Ashizawa worked as a police officer in the Relocation Center. After the war, Ashizawa resumed his business at Ho-Bi-Do (芳美堂) on Polk Street.
Scope and Content
The collection consists of autobiographical essays, documents and photographs by Riichi Ashizawa (George Asher), related to Yamato Laundry, Golden Gate Laundry, Asher's Picture House, and Asher's Art Shoppe in San Francisco, California. Ashizawa photographed for the Japanese daily newspapers, Shinsekai Shimbun and Nichibei-jiji and documented the local Japanese group
activities such as undo-kai or athletic activities, picnics, arrival of picture brides and so forth. The collection also includes acetate negatives, glass plate negatives, photocopies of business records and correspondence. The photographs, which were taken in San Francisco, Placerville and Los Angeles, California date from approximately 1899 to 1920.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.

Subjects
Ashizawa, Riichi, 1882- --Archives.
Japanese American Research Project (University of California, Los Angeles.) Photographers--California--San Francisco--Archival resources.
Japanese Americans--California--San Francisco--Archival resources.

Genres and Forms of Material
Photographs.

Related Material
Japanese American Research Project Collection of Material about Japanese in the United States (Collection 2010). Available at Library Special Collections, UCLA.

Box 42, Folder 1

Autobiographical sketches in Japanese. 1965

Scope and Content Note
• ものじみ Omoide no mama [As I recall], 16 double leaves.
• 阿沢履一八十三才 = Ashizawa Riichi hachijusan sai; George Richii Ashizawa Age 83 San Francisco, California 2/65, 15 double leaves.
• Issei oral history interview written out San Francisco 3/65, 21 double leaves.
Photographs. 1899-1920

Scope and Content Note

- The Ashizawa brothers (from left to right): Riichi, elder brother, Ryohei, younger brother, Buichi. ca. 1899.
- Fresno farmer and his family came from Hawaii. 1904.
- Wagons and bicycles of Mr. K Saruwatari. 1905.
- Front view of Yamato Laundry. 1905 March
- New Year’s party of Yamato Laundry. 1906.
- San Francisco market, Ferran Building and Emporium Department store after the earthquake. 1906 April 18.
- Earthquake rescue center house of Consul Uyeno on Pine and South, wagon belonging to Yamato Laundry to transport emergency foods. 1906 April 19.
- After the fire from the earthquake at the site of Yamato Laundry and Ashizawa and Buichi. 1906 April 20.
- Employees from Golden Rule Laundry and Yamato Laundry after the earthquake. 1906 May.
- The Queen City Dye Works in Denver where Ashizawa studied dyeing and cleaning work. 1907 February.
- Philadelphia Textile where Ashizawa studied art, dyeing and chemistry. 1908 September.
- Group of entertainers wearing kimono and costumes at a picnic. 1908 (glass plate negative see box 152, folder 1).
- The view of wholesale produce market organized by Issei entrepreneurs at the 9th street Los Angeles market. 1911 October 7.
- Group of Japanese dressed for shibai or stage performance. 1915 (glass plate negative see box 152, folder 4).
- Two ladies from inaka [country-side] to a picnic holding cameras. 1915 (glass plate negative see box 152, folder 2).
- Ryohei Ashizawa (from left to right), elder brother; Dr. Tsuchiya, personal physician to Emperor Taisho and Buichi Ashizawa, younger brother standing by a Willy’s knight model 1910 at Laguna Honda. 1915 (glass plate negative see box 152, folder 3).
- Consul Oyama, Mr. & Mrs. 我孫塐 Abiko, Mr. & Mrs. 瓜生Uryū at Panama exhibition in San Francisco. 1915.
- At Okei's grave site, the owner of the land, Louis Veerkamp holding the Tanto dagger given by the first Japanese group farming immigrants, Nakamatsu Colony in Placerville, standing with Japanese visitors. ca. 1915.
- Undōkai [athletic day] by Nihonjin-kai audience surround the performer in a distance at Southwest side of Masonic-Anza Street. 1916 (glass plate negative see box 152, folder 4).
- Naniwabushi performance by Naramura at the Masonic-Anza baseball ground (stadium). ca. 1916 (glass plate negative see box 152, folder 5).
- Wrestlers at sumo tournament waiting for their turn at Masonic-Anza picnic ground. 1916.
- Sumo wrestling tournament. 1916 (glass plate negative see box 152, folder 6).
- Photographic darkroom on Studebaker chassis. 1916.
- Woman performing with shamisen players at Undōkai (athletic day) by Nihonjin-kai at Southeast side of Masonic-Anza. 1916 (glass plate negative see box 152, folder 7).
- Picture brides just arrived aboard Shunyo Maru in San Francisco port. 1919 (glass plate negative see box 152, folder 8).
- A naginata instructor Kaoru Makabe. 1920.
- Asher’s Art Shoppe at 1205 Sutter Street, San Francisco. 1920
Box 42, Folder 3  Photocopies of business correspondence and records of Asher’s Picture House, Asher’s Art Shoppe and his activities during World War II. 1901-1961

Scope and Content Note

- Photocopies of photo of five young men (Miiichi Ashizawa on further right at age 18) in front of the Golden Rule Laundry at 1040 Larkin Street, San Francisco. 1901.
- Driver’s license. 1918 April 19.
- Registration with Local Board. 1918 September 12.
- Certificate of business under fictitious name Asher’s Picture House. 1923.
- Registration documents of Asher’s Art Shoppe. 1923 May 23.
- Permission for Ashizawa to drive his truck into Topaz Relocation Center to secure culinary water for Drum mountain mine. 1943 August 21.
- War Relocation Authority notice of assignment as police officer at $16.00 per month at the Central Utah Relocation Center. 1945 January 2.
- Bill of sales receipt from Topaz Consumer Cooperative Enterprises. 1945 March 23.
- Letter of recommendation of Ashizawa’s mending skills on antiques to Mr. C. Palmer Woodbury of the Japan Centre New York City. 1951 March 5.
- Letter of appreciation from Eleanor M. Muller, Nassau Tavern hotel in Princeton, New Jersey. 1953 November 23.
- Post card invitation from Consul of General of Japan of San Francisco Masao Yagi honoring Ashizawa for his contribution to the U.S.-Japan relationship on the occasion of 100 Years of Japanese-American Amity. 1960 June 14.
- Mrs. Helen Ekerold’s notes for her newspaper article “Bits and Pieces Together Again” on Ashizawa and his antique shop 芳美堂 Hobido. 1961.

Box 42, Folder 4  Photo negatives. 1915-1920

Scope and Content Note

- 海軍大将瓜生 Admiral Uryu (center) at Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco. 1915.
- Japanese group picnic in San Francisco. ca. 1919.

Box 42, Folder 5  Group of Japanese dressed for shibai or stage performance. 1915

Scope and Content Note

Glass plate negative, for photographic print see box 42, folder 2

Box 42, Folder 6  News clipping of Ashizawa’s 1919 roving photography business on Studebaker chassis published in 1953. 1953

Scope and Content Note

Photocopy in folder 3

Box 152, Folder 1  Group of entertainers wearing kimono and costumes at a picnic. 1908

Scope and Content Note

Glass plate negative, for photographic print see box 42, folder 2
Box 152, Folder 2
Two ladies from inaka (country-side) to a picnic. 1915
Scope and Content Note
Glass plate negative, for photographic print see box 42, folder 2

Box 152, Folder 3
Ryohei Ashizawa, elder brother of Ashizawa, Dr. Tsuchiya, a personal physician to Emperor Taisho and Ashizawa’s younger brother, Buichi Ashizawa standing by a Willy’s Knight model 1910 at Laguna Honda. 1915
Scope and Content Note
Glass plate negative, for photographic print see box 42, folder 2

Box 152, Folder 4
Undokai by Nihonjin-kai audience surround the performer in a distance. 1916
Scope and Content Note
Glass plate negative, for photographic print see box 42, folder 2

Box 152, Folder 5
Sumo wrestling tournament. 1916
Scope and Content Note
Glass plate negative, for photographic print see box 42, folder 2

Box 152, Folder 6
Woman performing with shamisen players at undokai by Nihonjin-kai in San Francisco. 1916
Scope and Content Note
Glass plate negative, for photographic print see box 42, folder 2

Box 152, Folder 7
Naniwabushi performance by Naramura at the Masonic-Anza baseball ground (stadium). ca. 1916
Scope and Content Note
Glass plate negative, for photographic print see box 42, folder 2

Box 152, Folder 8
Picture brides just arrived aboard Shunyo Maru in San Francisco port. 1919
Scope and Content Note
Glass plate negative, for photographic print see box 42, folder 2

Box 152, Folder 9
The ship Shunyo-maru arrived in San Francisco Port carrying picture brides. 1920