



Oral Histories of the Japanese American Community in St. Louis Collection (S0682)

Collection Number: S0682

Collection Title: Oral Histories of the Japanese American Community in St. Louis Collection

Dates: 1903-1988

Creator: Smith, H. W. (Herman W.) 1943-

Abstract: The Oral Histories of the Japanese American Community in St. Louis Collection documents the experience of Japanese Americans relocation into internment camps and to what life was like for Japanese Americans post-relocation. It includes tapes and transcripts of the oral history interviews conducted as part of Herm Smith's documentation project, which began in 1984. Also included in the collection are the records of the St. Louis Chapter of the Japanese American Citizen League (JACL), which Smith collected during the project. The JACL materials date from the 1950s to the 1970s, and consist of newsletters, newspaper clippings, financial ledgers, meeting minutes, and correspondence, which document the group's efforts to protect the civil rights of Japanese Americans.

Collection Size: 7 cubic feet
(68 folders, 1134 photographs, 21 cassette tapes, 8 books, 6 scrapbooks)

Language: The majority of the collection materials are in English. A small portion of the collection is in Japanese.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at stlouis@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

Restrictions on Use: The Donor has given and assigned to the University all rights of copyright, which the Donor has in the Materials and in such of the Donor's works as may be found among any collections of Materials received by the University from others.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Oral Histories of the Japanese American Community in St. Louis Collection* (S0682); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

Donor Information: The records were donated to the University of Missouri by Herm Smith on June 4, 1992 (Accession No. SA3064).

Processed by: Western Historical Manuscript Collection staff in June 1992. Revised by AJ Medlock and Zachary Palitzsch in October 2019.

Historical Note:

The impetus for the Oral Histories of the Japanese Americans in St. Louis came from Herman Smith, a sociologist at the University of Missouri, St. Louis (UMSL). Smith was keenly aware of the cultural disconnect between first-generation Japanese American citizens and their descendants and wanted to preserve the Japanese American community's historical memory. In 1984, he began collecting information on Japanese Americans in St. Louis and the United States.

In 1987, Smith collaborated with his fellow sociologists at UMSL, Roy Grob and Mary Burrows, to begin collecting oral histories of St. Louis's Japanese American community based on Smith's research. Smith also collaborated with the St. Louis chapter of the Japanese American Citizens' League (JACL), securing \$2,000 on October 5, 1987, to begin the project.

The project, known as the Oral Histories of the Japanese American Community in St. Louis, conducted oral histories with the few remaining first-generation Japanese immigrants (Issei) and their second-generation progeny (Nisei), from 1987 to 1988. Much of the content discussed in the interviews documented the interviewees' experiences in the internment camps during World War II and their lives following their release from the camps.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following seven series with five subseries:

Oral Histories Project

Interview Resources

Interview Transcripts

Oral History Tapes

Japanese American Publications

Japanese American Histories

Japanese American Citizens' League Records

Photographs

JACL Member Photographs

Slides

Books

Oversize

Scope and Content Note:

Oral Histories Project

This series contains journal articles, newspapers clippings, oral history tapes, and interview transcripts related to the administration of the Oral Histories of the Japanese American Community in St. Louis. Included in this series are reference materials and articles related to Japanese American ancestry, values, and culture that Smith, Burrows, and Grob used to develop

and plan the project. This series is divided into three subseries: Interview Resources, Interview Transcripts, and Oral History Tapes. Each subseries is arranged in chronological order.

The Interview Resources subseries contains transcripts from previously interviewed Japanese American individuals, articles and reports on how to collect oral histories, a list of names of potential interviewees, and handwritten notes on preparing for the interview. Also included in this subseries is a detailed family history and tree of George Hasegawa, whose family immigrated to the United States around 1906. Some materials in folder five of this subseries are in Japanese.

The Interview Transcripts subseries contains transcriptions of the oral histories project leaders conducted from 1987 to 1988. The transcripts include handwritten notes taken by the interviewers during the oral history sessions, as well as newspaper articles provided by the interviewees. Interviewees of interest include St. Louis architect Richard T. Henmi, whose architecture firm, Henmi and Associates (formerly Maura, Russell, & Crowell), designed numerous locally famous buildings in St. Louis, including Busch Memorial Stadium. This subseries is incomplete, as it does not contain transcripts for all of the oral history participants. The materials in this subseries date from 1987 to 1988.

The Oral History Tapes subseries contains the cassette tapes recorded during the interviews. Most of the recording sessions took place over multiple days, many of which have multiple tapes per interview. The materials in this subseries date from 1987 to 1988 and are arranged chronologically.

Japanese American Publications

This series consists of newspaper articles, brochures, magazines, books, reviews, and newsletters related to Japanese Americans in the United States. Included in this series are brochures and booklets from World War II about the relocation of Japanese American citizens. Some booklets, which were published by the War Relocation Authority, attempt to convince its readers of the “Japanese Problem,” and describe the living conditions at the relocation centers as “ample.” Other booklets, post-dating the end of World War II, discuss the unnecessary act of keeping the Japanese American people in the camps. One booklet, titled *What We’re Fighting For*, describes an unidentified American World War II veteran who was outraged that the United States persecuted and forcibly relocated Japanese American citizens, comparing the government’s actions to Nazi Germany. Other publications in this series include The Japanese American Library’s *Bulletin*, JACL’s *Kon-Nichi- Wa*, St. Louis JACL’s *The View*, and the National Pacific/Asian Resource Center on Aging’s Update. The materials span from 1906 to 1988 and are arranged chronologically. Folder number 26 contains “Etchugami sen nanga,” an article with the title written partially with Japanese characters.

Japanese American Histories

This series includes reports, articles, books, classroom materials, and newspaper clippings containing information on the history, art, and music of both Japanese and Japanese Americans. Included in this series are information on Tule Lake, Rohwer, and Manzanar Relocation Centers; documentation on Japanese life in Hawaii; and reports and papers on Japanese American society and culture. Other materials of interest include a copy of the Civilian Exclusion Order No. 5, which required the evacuation of all persons of Japanese ancestry in the city and county of San

Francisco by noon on April 7, 1942. This series also contains various works on Japanese art, pottery, and music. The materials span from 1942 to 1982 and are arranged chronologically. In this subseries, folder number 35 contains materials written partially in Japanese.

Japanese American Citizens' League Records

This series contains information relating to the Japanese American Citizens' League (JACL), which includes correspondence, directories, newsletters, financial ledgers, and meeting minutes documenting the group's efforts to secure the civil rights of Japanese Americans, as well as to preserve the St. Louis Japanese American community's culture and history. Included in this series is information regarding St. Louis JACL's Full Moon Festival, a festival celebrating Japanese heritage. Additionally, this series provides information on the 12th Biennial Midwest and Eastern District JACL Convention, a weekend of workshops and discussions on future planning and U.S./Japanese relations. The materials span from 1957 to 1988 and are arranged chronologically.

Photographs

This series contains photographs of the Japanese American community in St. Louis, including members from JACL. The photographs depict the Oral Histories of the Japanese American Community in St. Louis interviewees, JACL members and relatives, events, banquets, bar-b-ques, and festivals. A few of the photographs are original photographs of some of the families before and after their move to America, while most of them are copies of original photographs. This series is arranged chronologically and spans from 1910 to 1988.

The Slides subseries include slides from events, festivals, and picnics sponsored by JACL. Most of the individuals depicted in the slides are members of JACL or are the families of the members. There are also slides taken by members of the Shutter Bugs, a photography club made up of JACL members. The materials in this collection are arranged chronologically and spans from 1957 to 1987.

Books

This series contains books concerning the historical and political events surrounding the anti-Japanese movement before, during, and after the Second World War. There is also an international management book and a book about the history of the Atsuta Jingu shrine. The books in this series include: *Report from Round-Eye Country* by Pete Hironaka; *From Japs to Japanese* by Dennis Ogawa; *The Experience of Japanese Americans in the United States* by Japanese American Citizens' League; *The Politics of Prejudice* by Roger Daniels; *Bring Home the World* by Stephen H. Rhinesmith; *Atsuta Jingu*; and the first and second printings of *Executive Order 9066* by Maisie and Richard Conrat. The book in folder number 76, *Atsuta Jingu*, is partially written in Japanese.

Oversize

This series contains scrapbooks, maps, and newspaper clippings documenting early Japanese/American relations, as well as a scrapbook with photographs created by the St. Louis JACL photography club. This series also includes the *Yellow Pearl*, which is a collection of art, music, and literature created by Asian Americans. Additionally, there is a map of the number of

Japanese in the United States in 1970. There are also copies of the *Tulean Dispatch Daily*, a newspaper written, edited, and printed by and for the Tule Lake Relocation Center inhabitants; newspaper articles documenting the first settlement of Japanese Americans in St. Louis during the 1904 World's Fair; and newspaper clippings documenting the rise of the anti-Japanese movement in the early 1900s. These materials are arranged chronologically and spans from 1903 to 1959.

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