



ca.1912 Handmade Cedar Shake Home

Katsuno

PHOTO SELECTION

The NKHA Photo Project committee is extremely grateful to those who generously loaned their collections. Unfortunately all available photos were not mounted because of an overabundance in some categories and limited space. There are, however, some areas which still need to be strengthened. Additional material will continue to be accepted to accomplish the goal of projecting the essence of Issei and Nisei life prior to 1942.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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Endorsers are University of Washington Asian American Studies Program, the Japan America Society of Washington Japanese American Citizens League (Seattle Chapter). Japanese Community Service, the Museum of History and Industry and the King County Historic Preservation Office.

THE NKHA PHOTO EXHIBIT COMMITTEE: Hideo Hoshide, chair, Tama Tokuda, Flo and Harry Fujita, Kaz Ishimitsu, Hana Masuda, Dr. Frank Miyamoto, Ryo Tsai, Tom Tsutakawa and Shigeko Uno. Dr. Tetsuden Kashima, consultant and Sally Sharbaugh, student intern.

Kiosk I The tidelands and regrade maps of Seattle set the scene for the beginnings of an embryo which grew from a recorded statistic of one in the 1880 US Census to a throbbing Japanese settlement. The issei (immigrants from Japan) initially came to the Northwest to work as railroad section hands or sawmill workers. Some were employed as cooks or domestic servants while others toiled long hours harvesting crops. Dairy farms, truck gardens, berry farms and greenhouses became sources of income. The Alaska salmon canneries provided gainful employment during the summer months.

No matter what their occupation or how far away they lived, the issei were drawn to the area radiating outward from 5th and 6th avenue and Jackson and Main street.



ca.1910 Grand Union Laundry

Okamura

Kiosk II By early 1920 Nihonmachi (Japan-Town) was well into its stretch from 1st to 16th avenue and Yesler to Dearborn. The area contained the full gamut of trades and services. In addition to the earlier boarding houses, hotels now abound. Simple Japanese food, festive Chinese dishes, filling beef stew, always with mounds of rice drew the passers-by into the many cafes. Barber-shops, laundry, dye works, drugstores, hardware and mercantile shops, fish and vegetable stands, all were there to meet basic needs. Bankers, lawyers, doctors, a Japanese hospital were there to serve the community. Midwives were available for home births.

For relaxation there were moviehouses and Nihon buro (Japanese hot-tubs). For that special treat there was a confectioner with bite sized sweet-bean dumplings. In the bookstore there were treasures in fact and fiction.

Beyond the mom and pop family operations, a few entrepreneurs with daring and imagination started their own trading, lumber, food processing, fertilizer, beer distribution, fishing and other industries on a large scale.

Kiosk III Dreams of making a fortune and returning to Japan were slowly displaced by a feeling of ambivalence of whether to stay or return. The birth of nisei (second generation) promoted the establishments of roots. Despite the setback experienced by the passage of the Anti Alien Land Law in 1921 which prohibited issei from owning or leasing land and the Immigration Act of 1924 which halted the influx of immigrants from Japan, the families nurtured by the feeling of community carried on.

Weddings were held in American dress often followed by a traditional reception. Go-betweens were kept busy, but nisei often took the initial courtship steps. Wives worked along side of their husbands. Babies were born to herald a new beginning. Those who died were given a formal funeral usually followed by an informal gathering to celebrate the life of the deceased.

Families were no longer centered in the settlement, but were moving out into other neighborhoods. Still, they maintained traditional holiday customs and celebrated festive occasions with other members of the community through the many organizations. There were picnics, undokais (sports events) and kengakudans (conducted tours).

Kiosk IV The pursuit of education was a driving force. There were English Language schools for adults and church sponsored kindergartens to ready nisei for mainstreaming into the public schools. Conversely, children once in grade school were expected to attend Kokugo Gakko (Japanese Language school) after school.

Cooking and sewing schools were formed to learn the American way. At the same time schools to preserve traditional music and dancing, flower arrangements and the like were established.

Churches were a very significant part of family life with many denominations represented in both Christian and Buddhist religions. Local and regional conferences became an annual event for the nisei.



1937 Bellevue Grade School Class

Hashiguchi



1939 Potlatch Parade Float

Asaba/Mamiya

Kiosk V Talent for organizing clubs based on a myriad of mutual interests was utilized in several ways. The Japanese Association had a coordinating function in the community and funneled requests from the Consulate General's office. The association attended to the social welfare of the community and often acted as an intermediary in the case of juvenile or adult offenders. Businesses organized into a Chamber of Commerce and were involved in civic affairs.

The Kenjinkai (prefectural organization) based on the birthplace of the issei was a solidifying business/social networking unit for many.

For the nisei the formation of the Japanese American Citizens League provided a social network, but significant was its emphasis on pride on being an American citizen and its concomitant sense of duty.

Two daily vernacular newspapers which later included English Sections provided a forum for publicity of Japanese community activities as well as current events of Japan. In addition, there was a weekly all English newspaper which not only published articles of interest to the nisei, but also sponsored many sports leagues and a radio program.

Kiosk VI Recreational activities ranged from individual sport such as tennis, skiing or mountain climbing to competitive baseball, football and basketball. Japanese sports events such as judo, kendo and sumo wrestling were evident. Hunting meant more than going after game. Matsutake was the elusive prey! Salmon fishing was a natural pastime for many with 68 pounders to be hooked to go on display in Nihonmachi.

Concerts of nisei singing groups, recitals of various Japanese instruments, a chorus line of women, variety shows put on by various groups were all entertainment. Some were professional performances while others were strictly amateur. Most were held in Nippon Kan



ca.1925 Kabuki Performance

Date/Suguro

The multi-purpose use of Nippon Kan reflected the many facets of Japanese community life: weddings, memorial services, graduations, civic and religious sessions, traditional performances and fund-raising events. The echoes from the walls could be the swish of a kabuki actor striding across the stage or applause for Tolstoy's Resurrection performed in Japanese in 1913!

A hotel occupied the top two floors and shops flanked the main hall. Declared a state historical site in 1978 through the efforts of architect Edward M. Burke, the structure remains as a continuing link with the past. The preservation of its heart belongs to the community.

VIEWING SCHEDULE

March 17 and March 23 from 12:30 - 5:00 p.m.

March 18-22 from 12:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Thereafter by appointment or during Nippon Kan performances. Call (206) 725-6906 or 522-8457 for details. Exhibit will remain for one year.

日本領事館文化保存会
Nippon Kan Heritage Association

PHOTO EXHIBIT PROJECT
628 S. Washington St.
Seattle, WA 98104

The Way It Was: Northwest Issei and Nisei Before 1942



ca.1915

Hayashi/Wakamatsu

This exhibit is a visual documentary of the Japanese community gleaned primarily from private collections. The opening of this mammoth album commemorates the 75th anniversary of Nippon Kan which was the hub of this community life and sustained its cultural heritage.

It will be a trip down memory lane for many. "I was born there!" "That's my grandma!" "There's my uncle's store!" For others it will be a heightening of awareness of the frontier spirit of the immigrant, the joys of courtship and family, the self-contained everyday living, the Americanization process and the solidifying influence of the multi-based organizations.

Suddenly, in the spring of 1942, all of this came to an abrupt end with the removal of all persons of Japanese ancestry, immigrants and citizens alike, from the West Coast.