

# 2021 Summer Newsletter

## Next Issue

Interview with Vickie Sakurada Schaepler  
– Her inspiration for this project

Interview with Dave Wolf, Museum  
Director – Value of this new project

Outline of Social Media Plan

## Project

A Japanese Hall built in 1928 by members of the Japanese community and continued to function as a Japanese Hall until 2018 has been relocated to the Legacy of the Plains Museum (LPM) in Gering, NE. Here, the history of the Japanese and Japanese Americans from Nebraska and the High Plains will be preserved.

*Photo Credits: Dr. Don Gentry, Gering, NE  
And Vickie Sakurada Schaepler*



### Update from John Miyoshi

The Project's construction plan was the relocation of building and then remodeling with new utilities, insulation, weather sealing, museum quality lighting and windows installed. Also, building to be brought into compliance with all state and local codes. Goal is to maximize museum space while keeping the building as close to original as possible. Progress is entering its final construction steps.

Our building was moved to Legacy of the Plains Museum on December 10th 2019, then Covid 19

stopped much of the planned 2020 construction. Our contractors under the leadership of general contractor Russ Reisig have had a very good winter.



Outside the building we have restored three original windows that were removed during World War II. Two new ADA parking pads have been installed along with ADA compliant sidewalks that allow entry into the remodeled building with no steps. Items in progress are outside repairs painting, gutters and eventually a new yard.

As you enter Japanese Hall the entryway will have a more open feel. Ceilings have been vaulted and light from the reinstalled window provides extra brightness. The entryway floor has been raised to match the Hall eliminating the cumbersome ramp. Steel beams were installed in the west walls for needed stability.

Our Main Hall has been restored with treatment of old walls, new electrical wiring, insulation, and drywall. The ceiling fiber tiles were removed and the original beadboard ceiling restored and painted. Windows were replaced with a similar look and style with panes of museum grade UV glass. The asbestos floor tiles were removed, and the original pine floors are now sanded and sealed. New track lighting will be installed along with the three original lighting globes that were preserved.



Stairs to the basement have been replaced with less slope and larger landings on each step along with more headroom. The basement looks much the same with a few changes. With the expanded basement area there is now a large storage closet along the west wall. Along the east wall we now have one restroom, a utility room and a smaller kitchen.

John Miyoshi has done most of the “heavy lifting” supervising the construction.

John is a third generation American-Japanese. His grandparents immigrated to the United States in 1909 and 1916 and settled on a family farming operation near Hershey, Nebraska, that is still in the Miyoshi name. He received both B.S. and M.S. degrees from the University of Nebraska. The last 33 years of his career were with the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District including 23 years as General Manager. Under Miyoshi’s leadership the NRD constructed several major watershed and flood damage reduction projects including Lake Wanhoo. John and his wife Carol have four children and ten grandchildren, all are living within 30 miles of Wahoo.

We would like to recognize John’s enormous volunteer efforts and those of his great group of



contractors that include: Russell's Excavation & Construction: – Russ Reisig: Superior Construction – Tim Blomenkamp: Dyna-Tech Electric – James Burger: Independent Plumbing and Heating – Mark & Deb Sitzman: Gompert Environmental – Henry Gompert: Great Plains Asbestos Control: Twin City Roofing: and our engineering firm: Baker and Associates – Jack Baker.



### **Exhibits and Displays Update**

The third phase of our project is completion of the exhibits and displays. The exhibits will be an essential part of telling the story and the costs were estimated by exhibit firms. We have started initial work with Root House Design ("RHD") to outline the projected exhibits and what can be done in the development of the exhibit. Fundraising will determine the actual completion of some areas.

RHD has been contracted to complete initial planning for exhibits after contacting three companies. RHD was one of three companies considered. Two of the firms were similar in cost with RHD being familiar to the LOPM as they were instrumental in designing the main museum. They have outlined the phases for completion of the exhibits throughout our project.

### **Fund Raising Update**

The Japanese Hall Project has continued to raise funds in pledges, grants, and donations to complete the three-phase project to move the building, renovate the structure, improve the

grounds and complete exhibits. We have been slowed by the pandemic, but the Peter Kiewit Foundation has pledged an additional grant of \$50,000 if we complete our challenge goal. We have raised just over \$600,000 and need to raise \$135,000 to achieve this goal and earn the challenge grant. Overall completion of the project will be late in 2021 depending on fundraising success and our contractors. Thank you to everyone for your support and donations!



John Miyoshi, Vickie Schaepler & Russ Reisig



### **Newsletter Contact Information:**

[JHALLNews@legacyoftheplains.org](mailto:JHALLNews@legacyoftheplains.org)

Please send us Email Addresses or Name and UPSP Address to add your family and friends to our Distribution List.

**Additional Pictures of the Move and Renovations December 10th, 2019**



***Leaving Original Basement Behind***



***New Basement***



***Moving Through Power Lines***



***Lining Up with New Basement***



***Rock of Ages***



***Nearly Completed Exterior***





***Renovated Entry Way***



***Interior Renovations Started***



***Basement Supports***



***Floor Wall and Ceiling Repairs complete***

## **Donation Information:**

Checks may be sent to the **Oregon Trail Community Foundation (OTCF), Japanese Hall Project**, P.O. Box 1344, 115 W. Railway Street, Scottsbluff, NE 69363-1344 or the **LPM-Japanese Hall Project at 2930 Old Oregon Trail, Gering, NE 69341**. **Any size donation is appreciated.** The OTCF and LPM are 501 (C) (3). Checks must be written to: OTCF-Japanese Hall Project or LPM-Japanese Hall Project for us to receive credit. You may also contribute directly to the fund at the Oregon Trail Community Website at: <https://www.otcf.org/donate-to-a-fund> Thank you for your interest in preserving this unique part of Nebraska history!

I/We want to contribute \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Name(s) or Company Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

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I would like my donation to be “In Honor Of” \_\_\_\_\_ or “in Memory Of” \_\_\_\_\_

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**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

*The following are categories to be honored or recognized: **Copper Sponsor:** \$100 to \$499, **Bronze Sponsor:** \$500 to \$999, **Silver Sponsor:** \$1,000 TO \$4999, **Gold Sponsor:** \$5,000 to \$9,999, **DIAMOND Sponsor:** \$10,000 or \$19,999. Platinum Sponsor: \$20,000 or more. These names may change depending on the recommendations of the established board. For questions: [japanesehall@legacyoftheplains.org](mailto:japanesehall@legacyoftheplains.org) Vickie Sakurada Schaepler 308-293-0181, or Legacy of the Plains Museum, David Wolf, director, 308-436-1989.*

**Advisory Council: LOP Japanese Hall & History Center OTCF/LPM-JH**

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