

# ***Summer 2023 Japanese Hall Newsletter***



## **Updates: Building Progress Exhibits**

### **Opening Update**

### **Outreach Activities**

Opening at History Nebraska with John Miyoshi, Susan Ugai, Vickie Sakurada Schaepler, Kathern Endecott, Kim Hachiya, Steve Kay, Nathan Tye and Sharon Ishii-Jordan

***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.***

**We have weathered setbacks, are not yet open, but are making progress.  
Grand Opening is delayed to 2024.**

**\*Please visit the Smithsonian: Righting a Wrong and the Legacy of the Plains, History Nebraska Exhibit: Preserving a Legacy: Japanese in Nebraska on display in Lincoln at History Nebraska until September 30, 2023.**

**It Has Been A While:** Due to the unforeseen issues of contracting with a new Exhibit Company and finalizing approvals for the Hall Building. we had many unknowns. We continued our outreach efforts by participating in many events including our exhibit with History Nebraska.

The Accession Committee has been very busy documenting the many wonderful artifact donations that continue to arrive.

We are excited to get this Summer 2023 update Newsletter out to all of you.

## **Building Update**

After much time, energy, and expense, the decision has been made not to construct the proposed building addition. Our architect has been working with the NE State Fire Marshal's office since November 2022, to determine

necessary changes the addition would require. We have worked hard to preserve and, in some cases, bring back the original look and feel of Japanese Hall. Alterations to the entryway will severely impact the historical elements of the hall and impact the access for us to greet visitors. The installation of a sprinkler system (both floors) and firewall separation within the new addition between the stairway and the lift. The latter two items create significant cost increases.

The one item we have left to meet the State Fire Marshal's requirements is separation of the basement and main floor. This will be accomplished by construction of a firewall and door at the bottom of the stairs. Our contractor

has this on his schedule. Once completed we can allow the public into the building's main floor, after we get permission from the state fire marshal. Our plan is to allow the public to come in and view

the completed entryway and use the temporary exhibits we created with History Nebraska.

We have a list of numerous small items to get the building and grounds ready for use that are being worked on, the most significant being ground grade work to keep drainage water away from the building.



Kokyo Taiko Drums: Maureen Brase (Houchin), Deb Sturgeon, Sara Suganuma Bishop. Performing in Opening Ceremony at History Nebraska.

## **Japanese Hall Artifacts Exhibited**

A selection of our Artifacts are on loan to the History Nebraska Museum until September 30, 2023

### *Preserving a Legacy: Japanese in Nebraska*

#### **Japanese Hall and LPM Open Two Exhibits at the History Nebraska Museum, Lincoln, NE**

On April 20, 2023, History Nebraska and the Legacy of the Plains Museum celebrated the opening of two exhibits: of the Smithsonian: "Righting a Wrong" exhibit on the incarceration camps during WWII, and "Preserving a Legacy: Japanese in Nebraska from Early Immigration to Present."

The latter celebrates the rich history of Japanese immigration to Nebraska from the early 1900's and Nebraska's role in bringing people out of the camps during WWII. "Preserving a Legacy" includes artifacts from the Legacy of the Plains Museum, History Nebraska, and the contributions of many others.

During WWII, Nebraskans assisted students out of the camps to colleges, to employment opportunities at Boys Town and the Sioux Ordnance Depot outside of Sidney, Nebraska. Advertisements in camp newspapers brought Japanese out of camps due to the shortage of workers on farms and other places.

The "Righting a Wrong Exhibit" also showcases the Congressional Gold Medal Ceremonies that honored the Japanese Americans who fought for their country, the United States of America, as members of the Military Intelligence Service and 100<sup>th</sup>/442 Regimental Combat Team, a segregated unit, which is the most-decorated unit of its size and length of service in US Military History.



Pictured are Sharon Ishii-Jordan, whose mother was at Topaz, Vickie and Kim Hachiya, whose father was at Heart Mountain.

**Thank you** to the primary sponsor, Kawasaki, and the many others who supported the exhibit at History Nebraska. We hope you will enjoy this opportunity to share this important story of overcoming adversity and honoring the immigrants and heroes of our state.

## **Amache Pilgrimage**

The Amache National Historic Act was signed into law in March of 2023, making Amache National Historic Site or the Granada War Relocation Center Site the newest of the National Parks.

On May 19-21, 2023, as a part of understanding this history, Vickie Schaepler followed the family of Annie Takamatsu Hagihara as they attended the Amache Pilgrimage. We researched the Sioux Ordnance Depot as Annie and her sister, Eriene, came out of Amache to work there, bringing her mother, Takino, who was a widower with them. (Fall 2021 JH Newsletter)

The Pilgrimage was an opportunity for families who have a connection with the site to learn and share stories of incarceration. Many others attended, who wanted to learn more about the camps. The community of Granada has a museum and hosted a lunch at their High School for all the participants – some had traveled great distances to participate. Hosted by the Amache Preservation Society, the University of Denver, the National Park Service, and the community of Granada. Many other organizations were included, the event created many special and poignant moments.

Local high school teacher, John Hopper and his students began a project to interview surviving incarcerates. Their work gained notice. Archaeologists from the University of Denver began to bring students who, with other groups, worked to restore a guard tower and barracks. It's now a National Historic Site, one of the closest camps to Japanese Hall and a part of the High Plains history.



Dr. Bonnie Clarke of the University of Denver, showing the “Desolate Site” of the Camp and the archeological finds at Amache.



Restored Guard Tower: Jim Higahara, Von Bartlett, Diane Hill, Sharon Bartlett, Linda Austin, Bob Higahara, Kenji Bartlett and Greg Hill, family sharing the history of Annie Takamatsu Higahara.



## **Upland to the Rescue**

### **Japanese Hall Exhibit Update**

The Japanese Hall and History Project had a major setback last year when our former exhibit company, ended their contract and closed their doors. We worked diligently to find a new company and thought we would still open this year but sadly we were unable to achieve that goal. With a few building update issues, and the exhibit design team change, we decided to focus on getting our building opened and complete our exhibits.

The new company *Upland Exhibits* of Newton, Kansas, (formerly Flint Hills Design) is on target with a new schedule. We have been busy creating text, following new processes, choosing artifacts, and photographs to create the experience we hope each of you will enjoy.

The new date for opening is late spring of 2024. Our team of volunteers both in Gering and throughout the region have been clarifying, writing, and accessioning items.

Upland's team made their first trip to the site in January and braved the winter weather of Nebraska to meet with our team and to see, the site, the Legacy of the Plains Museum, and our Japanese Hall.

The accession team filled the building with our artifacts and Upland formed a vision of what will be our future exhibits. We are now meeting regularly with their team and look forward to completing the design, ready for installation in March 2024.



(Bottom Left Column Picture) Vickie Schaepler and Diane Mercer met with Upland Design's Jocelyn Wilkinson and Anthony Esau.



Showcasing Artifacts, 1 of many tables of items donated to the Project.

## Outreach Update

The **Kawasaki Reading Room** hosted an exhibition, lecture, and reception at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to highlight the history of the Japanese in Nebraska on March 24, 2023. The event was well attended and welcomed many students. Thank you to **Madoka Wayoro** and her staff for hosting the event and giving us this opportunity.

The **Trails and Rails Museum** in Kearney, Nebraska, hosted a one-day workshop on April 1, 2023. This event included an exhibition put on by the Legacy of the Plains: Japanese Hall Project on the history of the Japanese in Nebraska. Mariko Nagai of the Japanese Outreach initiative presented on Japanese Culture, school, her home and gave opportunities to be creative by teaching participants how to make rice balls and creating a cherry blossom tree.

The **Asian Cultural and Community Center of Lincoln** invited us to participate in their Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Celebration in May. The event highlighted many Asian countries, with dances, booths, and other exhibits. Reiko Loukoto, of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and Mariko Nagai of the Japanese Outreach Initiative brought students from UNO to demonstrate and teach origami, play games, write names in Japanese and help our project greet participants and show the history of the Japanese in Nebraska.

## Asian Community and Cultural Fair – Lincoln, April 30. 2023



**Making Rice Balls at the Trails and Rails  
Museum Kearney, NE**



Reiko Loukoto, UNO, Mariko Nagai, Japanese Outreach Initiative, Vickie Schaepler, and Diane Mercer, Legacy Of The Plains and the Friends of Japan students from UNO.

**Other Events:**

Asian Cultural Fair, 501 E. Walker Road, North Platte, NE, August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Japanese Ambience Festival, Lauritzen Gardens, Omaha, NE, October 7-8, 2023

**Japanese Consulate of Chicago Supporting Nebraska**

Consul General Tajima and his staff have supported the efforts of many, sharing activities and history in Nebraska. He spoke at the opening ceremonies of the "Preserving a Legacy Event" at History Nebraska, attended the Japanese Festival at University of Nebraska at Kearney in February, visited the Trails and Rails Museum in Kearney, and has met with numerous individuals to enhance the relationship between Japan and Nebraska. He also sent a representative to help open the Lincoln County Historical Museum. We thank the Japanese Consulate of Chicago for its support.



Bob Evnen, Nebraska Secretary of State; Vickie Sakurada Schaepler; Counsel General Tajima; Jill Dolberg, Interim Director and CEO of History Nebraska, Andrew Schilling, Honorary Consul of Japan for Nebraska, at the History Nebraska grand opening activities.



University of Nebraska-Kearney, Japanese Festival, February 2023.



## A Few More Pictures:

More Artifacts on loan and on display at History Nebraska Museum until September 30, 2023.



## Quilts of Valor Presented to Japanese American Veterans at Legacy of the Plains

In a touching ceremony at the Legacy of the Plains Museum on March 4, 2023, Quilts of Valor were presented to five area Japanese Americans who served in the Armed Forces. The group included Bill Aratani, Fred Sakurada, Leonard Sakurada, Dennis Morimoto and Nick Sakurada. Also, pictured are Nancy Sakurada who made the quilts and Hisaya (Pete) Okamoto and Katy Sakurada. The Honor Guard for the ceremonies was provided by the Gering Legion and trumpet by Steve Stanec. Many came to honor the group. Thank you to community members who helped us celebrate their service. *(Editor: I give a special salute to my featured Uncles and Aunts.)*

## Links of Interest

**Eagle Café Remembered:** The following article appeared in the Great Plains Quarterly on the Eagle Café a local favorite from 1912 to 1967. Still remembered by many we decided to include the link by Roger Aden:  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/17/article/892291/pdf>

**The Military Intelligence Service** was little known, but several from the High Plains and Nebraska served in this unit. Many were Japanese Americans who served as the translators, interrogators and interpreters who helped win WWII.

Highlighting two sources of information. Featured on PBS called “**Armed with Language**”  
<https://www.pbs.org/video/armed-with-language-j17oiy/>

or on YouTube and a book called “Bridge to the Sun”:

The Secret Role of Japanese Americans, who fought in the Pacific in World War II by Bruce Henderson.

## Newsletter Contact Information:

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Please send us Email Addresses or Name and USPS Address to add your family and friends to our distribution List. Or mail your requests to:

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Do you have stories to share with our project?

Also, send us information you would like added to Links of Interest, as an item of interest.

Letters to the Editor can also be submitted.



**Donations** may be made to: Oregon Trail Community Foundation: **OTCF-Japanese Hall**, P.O. Box 1344, 115 W. Railway Street, Scottsbluff, NE 69363-1344.

Or to the Legacy of the Plains Museum, **LPM-Japanese Hall**, 2930 Old Oregon Trail, Gering, NE 69341.

The OTCF and LPM are 501 (C) (3) Organizations. As you approach year end remember that your donations are tax deductible. Checks should be written to: **OTCF-Japanese Hall or LPM-Japanese Hall** for us to receive credit.

You may also contribute at the Oregon Trail Community Website at:

<https://otcf.org/japanese-hall/japanesehall.html>

OR --- Use this **QR** from your Smart Phone:



*Thanks to Cathy McDaniel for  
providing this QR.*

If you would like recognition or wish to donate in memory of or in honor of an individual, please contact: [Japanesehall@legacyoftheplains.org](mailto:Japanesehall@legacyoftheplains.org) for donation recognition information. Thank you for your interest in preserving this unique part of Nebraska history.

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

George Behringer, Honorary Counsel of Japan, Emeritus, Omaha, NE  
Katherine Endacott, Pleasant Dale, NE  
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Kim Hachiya, Lincoln, NE  
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#### **Other Support**

Anita Marcus, Lyman, NE  
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