

Winter 2024 Japanese Hall Newsletter



Kabuki Theater at Japanese Hall – CIRCA 1930

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.*

JAPANESE HALL GRAND OPENING: JUNE 8, 2024

We are excited to announce the Grand Opening of Japanese Hall will be Saturday, June 8, 2024, at the Hall's location on the Legacy of the Plains Museum campus in Gering. All activities at the Museum will be free of charge that day. All times are Mountain Daylight Time.

The schedule of events is not solid, but here's a brief schedule to help your planning.

- 9 a.m. Museum and grounds open (free)
- 10 a.m. Ribbon Cutting and Festivities (free)
- 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Japanese Hall open for tours; we are planning activities for children and adults, including taiko drummers, koto players, games and tours. (free)
- 5:30 p.m. Celebration and banquet, Gering Civic Center, 1050 M St., Gering. (RSVP required; cost per person to be determined)

Since 2015, the Japanese Hall Project with Legacy of the Plains has planned, relocated and renovated the hall and exhibits including a look at the early Issei migration to the U.S. and to the High Plains; their livelihoods in business and agriculture; coping with racism and prejudice; experiences during WWII and other military operations; cultural, artistic and athletic activities; the current and future state of Japanese Americans in the High Plains. Most items in the exhibits have been donated to the museum by families. These items include heirloom dolls, clothing, dinnerware, books, paper goods and photographs. For more information, **Click on the link below**, then if needed click on Japanese Hall at top right.

<https://legacyoftheplains.org/plan-a-visit/exhibits/outdoor-exhibits/coming-soon-japanese-hall/>

Make hotel reservations now as availability is limited

If you are planning to attend, make your hotel/motel reservations as soon as possible. The Nebraska Cattlemen's Ball, a large event that raises funds for cancer research, is the same weekend in Scotts Bluff County. This event attracts many, and hotel rooms may be difficult to book. A list of Scotts Bluff County hotels can be found here:

<https://visitscottsbluff.com/directory/categories/places-to-stay/>

Nearby accommodations may be available in Alliance (53 miles); Kimball (41 miles); Sidney (73 miles); Oshkosh (76 miles) and Torrington, Wyoming (35 miles).

By Kim Hachiya

Exhibits and Building Update

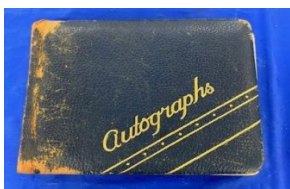
The final design of the exhibits is underway, and we have included here a preview of the designs by our exhibits' developer Upland Design. It's hard to visualize the final product; the detail, planning, writing and decisions on artifacts have been underway for many months. We are thrilled to see the products and fabrication of the first pedestals that will support the acrylic display cases that protect and display the artifacts. The exhibit team has seen a sneak preview of some of the finished pieces, and installation is slated to begin in March. Most aspects of the building itself have been completed, though we have additional sidewalks to install and additional grading issues to complete. We are close to our goal of preserving the Japanese immigrant story of Nebraska and the High Plains.



Design Elements and a sneak preview of main gallery



Exhibit Display Items Under Construction



Manzuchi Hashimoto, Autograph Book

Discovering Artifacts and the Stories Behind Them

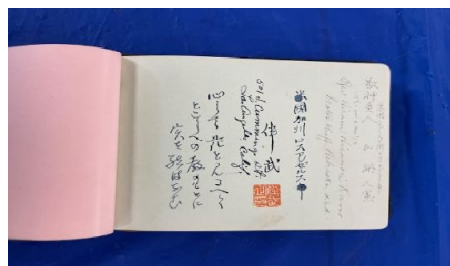
By Vickie Sakurada Schaepler

We are astonished at the artifacts we have received for our collection. Some would not have been discovered if it were not for families, excited about our project, who took the time to look at their families' artifacts and begin to look at their own stories.

Gayle Hashimoto Rojas often thought she did not have much to add to our Nebraska Stories. Originally from Hawaii, Gayle moved to Nebraska in 1982. She shared the story of her grandfather, Manzuchi Hashimoto, who was picked up in Hawaii and incarcerated in a Department of Justice (DOJ) camp on the mainland after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He was eventually released and sent to Amache Incarceration camp in Colorado in 1944.

Found in his collection was an Autograph Book with an autograph from Fr. Hiram Hisanori Kano of Scottsbluff and North Platte, Nebraska. As a leader in the Japanese community, Fr. Hiram Kano was the only Japanese person from Nebraska who remained incarcerated for over two years in a Department of Justice camps. He was picked up on December 7, 1941, in North Platte. Also, picked up was Mike Masaoka, who was speaking to the Japanese Americanization Society in North Platte about joining the Japanese American Citizens League. He was quickly released due to the intervention of a senator from Utah.

Gayle's collection also had a beautiful corsage made of seashells made by her grandmother, Fuku Hidaka, while she was at Tule Lake. Sadly, the family lost their son, Pvt. Eiji Hidaka when he was killed on November 2, 1943, while serving with the 100th Battalion of Hawaii near Salerno, Italy, in the Salerno to Cassino Campaign.



Japanese Exhibit Opens

By Vickie Sakurada Schaepler

Congratulations to the Lincoln County Historical Museum on the opening of the Japanese Exhibit to commemorate the Japanese, who settled in the North Platte, Lincoln County area. Roy Yanagida was assisted by Steve Kay, in spearheading this project. Director, Jim Griffin and Jeanne Daily, worked tirelessly on the amazing exhibits and interactive options. Steve is a member of the Japanese Hall Advisory Council, is a researcher and historian with expertise on Fr. Hiram Hisanori Kano. Hershey, Nebraska, was the childhood home of Ben Kuroki, famous for his service during World War II in the Air Corp and a National Hero. He is the subject of a documentary by the public broadcasting system called "Most Honorable Son." North Platte also had other Japanese Americans who served in the 442nd and Nurses Corp during WWII. North Platte was home of the famous Canteen operation, which welcomed many troops as they traveled across the country by train during WWII.



Roy Yanagida; Steve Kay; North Platte Mayor Brandon Kelliher; Deputy Counsel General of Japan in Chicago, Naoya Kishi; and Jim Griffin



Kimono is one of many items donated to the project

JACL Recognition

Dr. Sharon Ishii-Jordan was recognized by the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) with the distinguished Ruby Pin for her leadership, locally in Omaha, the Midwest district, and National levels. Sharon is an active member of the Japanese Hall Advisory Council and several committees. In addition, she has provided National training through educator training workshops across the nation with Greg Marutani, Japanese American stories and the camps. For more than four decades she has held various leadership positions with the JACL. She also leads a dance troupe, teaching Japanese dance to youth.



Dr. Sharon Ishii-Jordan

Consul General Tajima sees Western Nebraska

By Vickie Sakurada Schaepler

In a farewell tour to the 10-state Chicago Region of the Japanese Consulate, Consul General Hiroshi Tajima made a trip to western Nebraska, seeing the North Platte and Scottsbluff regions where early immigration of the Japanese was larger than eastern Nebraska. CG Tajima saw the new Japanese exhibits at the Lincoln County Historical Museum, Buffalo Bill Ranch, and the Golden Spike Tower overlooking Bailey Yards with dignitaries from the North Platte area presenting him with a handmade cowboy hat.

In the Scotts Bluff region, he toured Chimney Rock, stood atop Scotts Bluff National Monument, and toured the Legacy of the Plains Museum including Japanese Hall, where he was able to view many of the artifacts in the archival area and was able to see firsthand the impact of the early Japanese Immigrants. A dinner was hosted on his behalf with many Japanese American families represented and invited members of the community excited to share this history.

Pictures on next page



CG Tajima with new hat with dignitaries Steve Kay; North Platte Yoko Lawing; Brandon Kelliher, Mayor, North Platte; Hiroshi Tajima; Consul-General of Japan in Chicago; Senator Mike Jacobson; Vickie Schaepler; and Gary Person, President and CEO of the North Platte Area Chamber and Development Corporation.



CG Tajima with Buffalo Bill



Kim Hachiya with CG Tajima in Archival Area at Japanese Hall



CG Tajima with a group at LPM including Tatsi Sato the oldest Nisei of the area. B-Row, Jack Preston, Nancy Haney, Wayne Nochi, Gayle Hashimoto Rojas, Kim Hachiya, Sandy Stray, F-Row, Ellen Sato behind Tatsi Sato, Vickie, CG Tajima, Don Gentry.

Trails and Rails Museum

By Vickie Sakurada Schaepler

The Trails and Rails Museum in Kearney, Nebraska, was able to bring the *Smithsonian: Righting a Wrong Exhibits* and the *Preserving a Legacy: Japanese in Nebraska* to Kearney. They had been at the History Nebraska museum in Lincoln from late Spring until early fall. These exhibits, displayed from October through December 2023, in Kearney, brought opportunities for folks to see exhibits never seen before in the area. Many visitors, including several classes, took advantage of the chance to see the history of the incarceration of the Japanese during WWII and Japanese immigration to Nebraska. The exhibit included artifacts from the Legacy of the Plains Museum, it was assembled by History Nebraska and the Legacy of the Plains Museum.

The *Preserving a Legacy: Japanese in Nebraska* will remain at the Kearney Museum until mid-February along with two Theater Curtains that were not displayed in Lincoln. One curtain displaying a Cherry Blossom theme is dated back to 1929: a Crane theater curtain dates from the 1930s. In addition, the Buffalo County Historical Exhibit includes a flag in the process of being repatriated back to Japan, and artifacts from Buffalo County residents, including Hargis Westerfield, a Kearney State College professor and poet who wrote a book of poetry: "Words of Steel" on his war time experiences in the south Pacific during WWII and later in occupied Hiroshima.



Theatre Curtains on Display at the Kearney Museum until mid-February.



Attending Rails and Trails event: Broc Anderson, Trails and Rails, Jill Dohlberg, History Nebraska; Vickie Schaepler; and Mike Boyle, President, Kawasaki.

Sharing Asian Culture

By Vickie Sakurada Schaepler

We were excited to participate in the International Bazaar in North Platte, Nebraska, on August 19, 2023, and Japanese Ambience Festival at Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha, Nebraska, October 7th, and 8th, 2023. Opportunities to share the Japanese Immigration History of Nebraska are enlightening for both visitors and exhibitors. Activities included Kendo, martial arts, dancing, origami, and ikebana. For more information on the Japanese Ambience Festival check their website at www.lauritzengardens.org. The 2024 Japanese Ambience Festival is scheduled for October 5th and 6th.



The North Platte International Festival featured Indian Arts Dancers.



Japanese Hall Booth in Omaha: Ed McNamara, Vickie Schaepler, HC Andrew Schilling, Chicago, Japanese Consulate, Rikidai Sako,.



Visitors at the Japanese Hall Booth including Yoko Lawing, Vickie Schaepler, Vanessa Martinez, and Diane Mercer.



Kim Hachiya, Diane Mercer, Vickie Schaepler, and Sharon Ishii-Jordan

Links of Interest:

Legacy Of The Plains Museum - Japanese Hall and History Project:

Find all the Japanese Hall Newsletters, information on the Grand Opening and a bit of the history of Japanese Hall.

Click on the link below, then if needed click on Japanese Hall upper right,

<https://legacyoftheplains.org/plan-a-visit/exhibits/outdoor-exhibits/coming-soon-japanese-hall/>

Newsletter Contact Information:

JHALLNews@legacyoftheplains.org

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? Let us know - we would like to share them.

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. **Please Designate Your Contributions for Japanese Hall Project.**

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 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

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Katherine Endacott, Pleasant Dale, NE
Dr. Heather Frye, Omaha, NE
Kim Hachiya, Lincoln, NE
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Paul Snyder, Scottsbluff, NE
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Cindy Yamamoto, Scottsbluff, NE

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