



LEGACY OF THE PLAINS MUSEUM

Volume 6, Issue 2

Japanese Hall Newsletter

Welcome to the Spring 2026 edition of the Japanese Hall Newsletter. We have news about events happening in May and June, an update on our completed addition, a great story about Julie Ushio's project to decorate graves, how to research your family's genealogy, and a history harvest event to digitize family histories. Thanks for your support and interest in the Hall. If you find yourself in a situation where making a gift to the Hall is feasible, please let us know as we in the early planning stages for new exhibits in our lower level and to update our archives and exhibit space.

Vickie Sakurada Schaepler, project director ■ Kim Hachiya, newsletter editor

Our American Stories: Celebrating 250 Years!

Join us June 6, 2026, for the opening day celebration of the Legacy of The Plains Museum's celebration of the United States' 250th birthday year. "Our American Stories: Celebrating 250 Years" features exhibits and a day of presentations. We have partnered with several different organizations to highlight the history of the High Plains regions and Nebraska.

The day's events are:

10:00 a.m. "Abraham Lincoln, America's Greatest Political Orator" Using humor, lawyer-like reasoning or biblically inspired prose, Lincoln saved our country with his words and defined the meaning of the American Revolution for future generations. Presented by Fred Nielsen, a history professor from the University of Nebraska at Omaha who focuses on 19th Century U.S. history.

11:00 a.m. "Death, Poverty, and Bread: How German Russians Found Success in Nebraska." Presented by Karen Keehr from the Germans from Russia museum in Lincoln.

1:30 p.m. Japanese American Quilt Panel Discussion of a 30-year project. Created in 1995 by Japanese American women from the High Plains, these quilts reflect the journeys of their families, sometimes through extreme hardship with Gaman (Perseverance), one stitch at a time.

2:30 p.m. "The Mexican People of the Panhandle." Presented by Jackie Cervantes Guzman.

3:30 p.m. "Quilts of Valor." The Quilts of Valor project honors veterans and active-duty personnel for their service and sacrifice in serving our nation. Hear how the organization works, and how it awards handmade quilts in a ceremony that manifests "Thank you." Presented by Peggy Maunier.

Special Exhibits from the museum's collection, including a camel hair quilt and a driftwood spinning wheel from our Germans from Russia collection, will be displayed. The rotating gallery will include a 42-star flag from the 1800s, several military uniforms and Quilts of Valor.

Continued on page 4

Colorado JA Women's Quilt Project Showcased

In 1995, several Japanese American women from Colorado viewed an exhibit of quilts from the Smithsonian and they had the idea to create quilts representing the Japanese American story. Eventually, nine quilts representing 84 families from Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming were created and displayed as the Japanese American Women's Quilt Project in Arvada, Colorado.

The quilts were first displayed in 1995, then eventually were stored by the Japanese American Resource Center of Colorado. In 2025, they were re-exhibited at the Rocky Mountain Quilt Center in Golden; several of these original quilts are loaned by JARCC for a temporary exhibit at Legacy of the Plains Museum and Japanese Hall and History Project.

The rectangular quilts are each about 3 feet by 5 feet. Made to look like scrolls, each has six different small hand-sewn squares (72 total) that tell 72 different family

Continued on page 4



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Japanese American
Resource Center
of Colorado



Memorial Day Japanese Graves Decorating Project

By Julie Ushio

In Japan, there is a tradition of *ohaka mairi*, of visiting, caring for, and paying respect at the graves of one's relatives and ancestors. The early Japanese who came to Nebraska in the early 1900s, with no family in America to mourn their deaths, extended this tradition to caring for the graves of friends who died and were buried far from home. Gradually, as people moved away, some of these graves were forgotten. Over the years, the Japanese women in the community walked the cemeteries, discovered these old graves, and began to place flowers on every Japanese grave in the area on Memorial Day. When the Issei women passed, their Nisei daughters and members of the Friendly Circle (a women's service club at Japanese Hall) continued the tradition.

About 17 years ago, I became a member of the Friendly Circle and returned every Memorial Day to help decorate the Scottsbluff graves. I worked with Kay Hara (then in her 90s), Miyeko Hara (in her 80s), and Charlene Kishiyama Broughton, the president of the Friendly Circle. At that time, there was a single typewritten list with a few grave locations noted like, "near the sixth tree by east exit" but over the years, trees had been cut down. Luckily, the women knew the locations and soon, so did I.

Fortunately, Lianne Sato was working at Fairview Cemetery one Memorial Day weekend and was able to go through the cemetery files and put together a database of Japanese graves and this database pretty much correlated with the typewritten list.

With the passing of Kay and Charlene, Mick Hara and I continued to decorate the Scottsbluff graves and took over the other cemeteries that were decorated by other women in the Friendly Circle, so I was able to learn the location of all the graves. When Mick became frailer, I continued to do it on my own for a few years until I was unable to make the trip back from where I live in Hawaii on a regular basis.

Now, after a hiatus of several years, decorating the Japanese graves will resume this Memorial Day.

On May 22, 23, and 24, Japanese graves will be decorated at cemeteries in the Scottsbluff area. Volunteers interested in learning the locations of graves are invited to attend. Anyone can attend on any of the three days.



Julie Ushio

May 2011, Charlene Kishiyama Broughton, Kay Hara, Miyeko Hara, decorating Scottsbluff graves.



Grave of S. Satow, the oldest grave in Fairview Cemetery, 1909.



The purpose of this project is to form a group of volunteers who will carry on this tradition in future years. This is a work detail, not a presentation, but as time permits, stories of early Issei buried will be shared. The cemeteries and dates are as follows:

Friday, May 22: Alliance Cemetery, Nebraska Veterans' Cemetery in Alliance, Bayard Cemetery, and East Lawn Cemetery in Minatare.

Saturday, May 23: Fairview Cemetery in Scottsbluff, and Sunset Memorial Park, outside of Scottsbluff.

Sunday, May 24: Mitchell Cemetery, Mitchell Valley Cemetery, Forest Lawn Cemetery in Morrill, Valley View Cemetery in Torrington, Wyoming, and West Lawn Cemetery in Gering.

The largest group of graves (and the need for the most volunteers) will be on Saturday, May 23, at Fairview Cemetery in Scottsbluff. Fairview Cemetery has about 150 Japanese graves, the largest number of Japanese graves in the state of Nebraska. For those interested in participating, please meet at 10 a.m., in the parking lot of the cemetery office. Fairview Cemetery is located at 4109 5th Avenue, Scottsbluff. Bring a screwdriver (to punch holes in the ground), garden gloves to brush away grass clippings and clean around the gravestones. Wear comfortable walking shoes, jeans, and bring a rain poncho if it looks like it might rain. Plastic flowers will be provided. After locating and decorating the graves at Fairview Cemetery, we will continue to Sunset Memorial Park.

Japanese graves in Mitchell Cemetery



■ For the Alliance graves on Friday May 22, please meet at 10 a.m. at the information kiosk at the entrance, at the Alliance City Cemetery, 2323 CR 58, Alliance Nebraska.

■ For the Mitchell, Morrill, Torrington, and Gering cemeteries on Sunday, May 24, please meet at 10 a.m. in the parking lot of the Legacy of the Plains Museum in Gering. Given the driving, it would be helpful to carpool.

■ Resources and notebooks about these graves will be housed at Japanese Hall at the Legacy of the Plains Museum. There is an Excel database of all the graves in Fairview Cemetery and Sunset Memorial. A notebook for Fairview Cemetery contains a photo of each grave, along with pertinent grave information. Other notebooks contain information and photos of graves at Mitchell, Morrill, Alliance, Bayard, Torrington, and Gering, along with the original typewritten list of graves, funeral programs, obituaries, census data, family histories, and newspaper clippings.

Fortunately, local newspapers in the early 1900s often wrote obituaries or stories of tragedies that give us a glimpse into some of the lives of the early Japanese buried in local cemeteries. Many young men died from railroad accidents and diseases. But there was murder too. In 1909, a man named Osawa was shot by another Japanese who disappeared but was later apprehended in Denver and brought back for trial. During the winter of 1918, there were several deaths from Spanish Flu, which struck the Japanese community especially hard. In 1919, a car stalled on the railroad tracks and was struck by a train, killing several people including a Japanese father and his baby. An obituary in 1920 noted the passing of prominent businessman S. Ishii, owner of the Royal Café (his gravestone is the largest of all the Japanese gravestones in the cemetery.)

Besides the young Japanese men and women whose lives were cut short by tragedy, there are also the graves of Issei who lived long lives. Graves of husbands and wives who raised families, farmed, ran businesses, and graves of their Nisei children, and Sansei grandchildren. These graves continue to be tended by their descendants who still live in the area.

But I must confess, it is old Japanese graves, the lonely ones, lives cut short, buried far from home, that pull me most. We need to not only decorate and remember these graves, but document them too. It is my hope that someday, as information on these Japanese graves becomes more accessible, someone in Japan will discover a long lost relative and ancestor here in Nebraska.

There is a saying that a person dies three deaths. First, when their body ceases to function. Second, when their body is buried. Third, when no one says their name. When we walk through the cemetery and stop to place a flower on a grave, we are taking rollcall, noting each grave and every name, acknowledging that this person once lived here too.

For more information or questions,
email julieushio.writes@gmail.com

Anderson to lead digitization efforts at the Japanese Hall in June

Do you have documents, photographs, or other historical materials about the Japanese American community across Nebraska, Wyoming, and Colorado that you aren't sure what to do with? Have you hoped more people knew about Japanese American history in the Midwest and Great Plains? Consider contributing or joining the Japanese Hall Digitization Project June 3-6, 2026, at the Legacy of the Plains Museum!

Donna D. Anderson, JHHP Advisory Council member and assistant professor of History at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, will be at the Japanese Hall to scan photographs, documents, and books related to the tri-state Japanese American community for an open-access digital archive. Hosted by UNL's Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, the digital archive enables community members and the public alike to explore Asian American histories of the Midwest and Great Plains, helping preserve and raise awareness of these histories.

The two years since the Hall's opening have introduced hundreds of visitors to the histories of the Japanese Americans in the Valley and surrounding areas. Digitization opens opportunities to extend engagement with the Hall's materials and relieves the demand on docents and volunteers for additional context. Perhaps most importantly, it adds a safeguard to the Hall's materials by ensuring digital copies are kept safe in case of item deterioration, natural disaster, or theft.

In addition to digitizing materials, Donna will conduct oral history interviews of the sansei (third-generation) or any other Japanese

American community members to be added to the digital archive. Rather than a sit-down interview with prepared questions, participants of the oral history interviews will be asked to bring a collection of documents, items, or photographs that represent their stories and histories to share with Donna on video. (Imagine a show and tell of sorts!) Participants can expect the conversations to take between 60 and 90 minutes.

The digital archive will launch to the public in June 2028 at the Hall's 100th-anniversary celebration. If you are interested in contributing materials to scan, recording an oral history interview, or volunteering with the digitization efforts, please fill out this [Goo-
gle Form](https://forms.gle/YXUHoVr38Aq9pLCz6) (or <https://forms.gle/YXUHoVr38Aq9pLCz6>) by May 15, 2026. Donna will then contact you with scheduling details and further information. For any additional questions, please review the [FAQ sheet](#) and/or email Donna directly at danderson79@nebraska.edu. Thank you for your support and consideration in participating in this project!



Donna Anderson

Our American Stories: Celebrating 250 Years!

continued from page 1

Also on exhibit are items from the International Quilt Museum at UNL, such as educational quilts commemorating 9/11 victims (including those from Nebraska), and a quilted chair. Also on exhibit are nine quilts made by Japanese American women from Colorado and Nebraska on loan through the Japanese American Resource Center of Colorado. (See sidebar)

Funding from Humanities Nebraska, Legacy of the Plains Museum, and Platte Valley Companies support this event.

These exhibits will be on view June 1-July 19.

Additionally, UNL Professor Donna Anderson will be at the Hall June 5-7 on a History Harvest project. See the accompanying story in this newsletter for more information.

Colorado JA Women's Quilt Project Showcased *continued from page 1*

stories. Each is made using traditional Japanese sewing techniques. The squares describe how women held their families together during the early to mid-20th century and exemplify the spirit of Gaman – perseverance. These often-touching stories tell the histories that may have been lost. They reflect the lives of their families who sometimes lived through extreme hardship. The quilts memorialize evacuations, incarcerations and other restrictions during WWII.

At the June 6 event, a panel discussion will occur with folks whose families and friends participated in the creation of the Japanese American quilts. These panelists include families from the western Nebraska whose stories will tell times of tragedy, hope and success.

The stories reflect the early Japanese immigration in the late 1800s and early 1900s, those who were forcibly removed and sent to camps during WWII and families who came to live, work and thrive on the High Plains. These quilts keep the stories alive for future generations to learn. Included with this special exhibit is a booklet available for purchase describing how each quilt square was created, and a video of families telling their stories.



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Tracing Your Japanese American Roots: A Guide for Beginners

By Regan Nanbara



Regan Nanbara

Many of us share a common inheritance — boxes tucked in attics and basements holding photographs of unknown relatives, handwritten notes in Japanese, and family stories passed down but never documented. If you've ever wondered about the *issei* who emigrated from Japan and built lives on the plains, you may be surprised by how much you can discover — often for free, and from the comfort of your own home.

Start Simply

The easiest place to begin is familysearch.org, where creating a free account gives you access to millions of digitized U.S. records. Search your ancestors' names and you may find pas-

senger manifests revealing the ship they arrived on, U.S. census records (now publicly available through 1950), and WWI and WWII draft registration cards. Be patient with misspellings — record-keepers didn't always transcribe Japanese names accurately — but the information you find may open surprising doors.

Dig Deeper with the Koseki

Once you've gathered some post-immigration records, the natural next step is tracing the Japanese family tree through the *koseki*, or family register. This official document lists household members and records life events including births, marriages, deaths, and adoptions. To request your *issei*'s *koseki*, you'll need their *honsekichi* — the village where they were last registered in Japan. This detail often appears in passenger manifests, census records, alien registration cards, their Japanese passport, and even cemetery headstones.

Resources to Guide You

Several organizations and individuals have made this process much more accessible:

- familysearch.org/rootstech — a free video library with sessions on Japanese American genealogy
- jccnc.org — introductory resources from a professional genealogist specializing in Japanese American heritage, Linda Harms Okazaki
- facebook.com/groups/japanese.family.history A private Facebook group free to join. Over 3,000 members who can offer encouragement and guidance. Led by Marty Wolf.
- findagrave.com and billiongraves.com — for locating headstone photos
- mykoseki.com — a tool to find the current municipal office corresponding to your ancestor's *honsekichi*
- densho.org — focused on incarceration history with a growing genealogy video library

The greatest investment is your time — but the rewards of connecting with your heritage are immeasurable. Where will your search begin?



About Regan Nanbara

I am a *sansei* born and raised in Gering, Nebraska. My *issei* grandparents, Sasuke (Roy) and Tomo Hosaka and Rinnosuke (Tom) and Oto Nanbara, were among those who built lives and community on the western Nebraska plains.

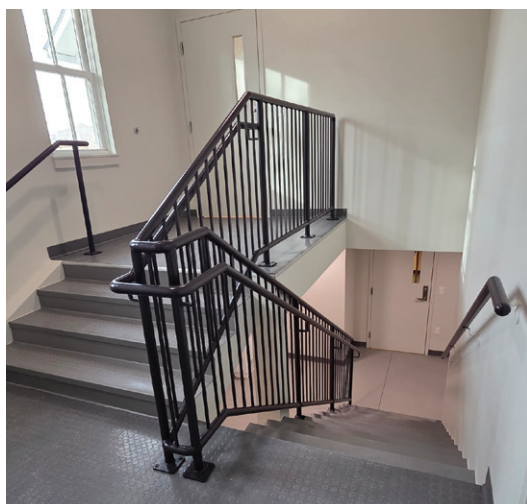
My interest in family genealogy grew from a fortunate collision of circumstances. When our mother moved into assisted living, selling the family home meant reckoning with nearly a century's

worth of photographs, documents, and keepsakes. The Japanese Hall Project offered a meaningful place to donate many of those treasures — but first, someone had to go through them. Then came a quiet remark from my mother: that she believed an uncle was buried in the Mitchell cemetery. That single, unverified detail was enough to set me down the research path. Aided by my own admitted OCD tendencies and a stretch of time between jobs, an amateur genealogist was born.

Japanese Hall Addition Complete

By John Miyoshi, Japanese Hall Project Manager

Prior to the opening of Japanese Hall in June of 2024 there was momentum for opening the basement to the general public. When the building operated as a community hall, this is the area where the kitchen was located and was the site of many activities including dinners, summer schools, celebrations and many other events. Our obstacles were the zoning and safety requirements for a second exit and ADA access. During the building move and remodel this cost seemed too large and expensive for us to overcome. At our Grand Opening it became very clear that access to the lower level was in high demand.



Access to the basement was always a priority to Vickie Sakurada Schaepler and the Japanese Hall Committee. In 2022 we were coming out of Covid and finding an architect who could help us proved to be difficult. Russ Reisig, our contractor for the building move and remodel, introduced us to Jack Green who put together a series of drawings that would place a small building at the northeast corner of Japanese Hall that would house stairs that functioned as the second exit, a lift and a ground-level access door that would connect the main Hall with the basement's kitchen. The plan looked great, but getting approval from the Nebraska State Fire Marshal's Office was the expensive sticking point. Our plan for public access to the lower level was put on hold.

After the opening of Japanese Hall, we decided to make another push to allow access to the lower level. Jack Baker and Associates who had performed work for us in the past had merged with JEO, a statewide engineering firm out of Wahoo. With the additional architectural and engineering support Baker felt an economical solution could be found. Carlo Holmes was our JEO project manager whose great leadership assembled a team that proved to be just what we needed. With preliminary blessing from the State Fire Marshal's office, plans were completed in February, 2025, and bids opened on June 12, 2025, at a contracted cost of \$334,997.13. Anderson-Shaw Construction from Scottsbluff submitted the low bid and proved to be a very knowledgeable and competent choice. Kent Martindale, the on-site construction leader, kept the project on time, on budget and was always available when decisions needed to be made. It was comforting for me and the JEO team to have Kent leading the new construction.

With construction and final inspections completed on time (12-31-25) the State Fire Marshal's Office, Gering Zoning and Gering Fire Department issued our Occupancy Permit on January 8, 2026.

Our addition located on the east end of the building (to the north), is 23 feet, 7 inches by 16 feet, 6 inches. On the main level you enter the addition where the former emergency exit was located. On the landing you can access the lift or take the 11 stairs to the middle landing. This upper level has three south facing windows that match the windows and trim in the main hall. On the middle landing you have access to the ground level exterior door (facing north), the lift or you can proceed down 6 steps to the basement level. The basement level has access to the lift or into the basement kitchen. The basement area of the addition has a designated "Shelter In Place" area to be used during storms or other emergencies and has an independent telephone.

(Editor's note: access to the lower level will allow the public access to our lower-level restrooms and gives space to have additional items on display, provide space for our acquisitions team, and improve storage. We have a team now working to develop new exhibits for this space.)

Total cost for Japanese Hall Addition:

Anderson-Shaw Construction	\$ 334,997
Contingency (budget - \$35,000)	16,774
JEO – Engineering/Architect	60,800
Jack Green Architect	20,000

TOTAL \$ 432,547

Legacy of the Plains Wins IMLS Grant

The Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) announced that the Legacy of the Plains Museum has been awarded a Museums for America Grant. The Museum will receive a total of \$227,728 over the next two years, which will help with the reorganization project.



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Executive Director Dave Wolf was excited to hear of the award. "We applied thinking we would not receive it the first year, but could revise and get it the second. It was a very welcomed surprise."

The reorganization project has the museum staff and volunteers going through each item in our collections to ensure they are cataloged, location specified, and an accurate description is entered into our database, Wolf said. The project will enhance our collection management system, allow our committees to make informed decisions about new donations, and improve our exhibits.

The grant will be used to hire a full-time archivist. Along with cataloging our collections, they will also focus on the digitization of our collections. The grant also allows us to provide a public viewing option, so people with an internet connection will be able to enjoy all the wonderful pieces of history we have in our archives.

We will also be able to hire three interns/part-time staffers. The part-time positions will be split between the archives, collections, and Japanese Hall projects. They can work up to 30 hours a week and will be assisting the new archivist and our Curator, Kaidin Phelan, with this project.

Wolf is excited to get some of these projects completed. "We have several storage areas that need to be gone through and cataloged, artifacts to be organized and documents to be scanned. The grant will allow us to hire staffers to work with our great volunteer base to complete a task that we thought we could not get done."

The grant will also provide funding for archival and preservation supplies, tables, laptops, and other items that will be used to complete the project. The museum has to match the funds, and we are using existing salaries, budget expenses, and volunteer hours to match the funds. New spending will be around \$6,000.

"We want to thank IMLS for their support of Legacy of the Plains Museum," Wolf said.

If you or anyone you know are interested in helping with the project, please have them contact Dave Wolf at 308-436-1989 or email him at director@legacyoftheplains.org.

Addition Is Complete and Fully Paid, Thanks to Your Generosity!

By Vickie Sakurada Schaepler

Thank you to those who have been so generous with your donations and pledges for our project. We could not have done it without you and we appreciate each gift no matter how small or large that has made our project a success. An anonymous donor issued a challenge grant last fall, and we are happy to report that we recently received a pledge and are extremely close to meeting that challenge.

The addition is completed and paid for without going into debt. Our challenge grant has helped us to add to our exhibits and archival space funds, so we are now beginning to plan our archival and research area, which our exhibits team has deemed our greatest need. We have several committed council

members who have been able to secure additional resources to preserve our Japanese American legacy for future generations and recognize those who helped support our families along the way.

We are excited to partner with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Center for Digital Research in the Humanities to preserve our records for the future, under the leadership of Donna Anderson, a UNL professor and member of our advisory board. We are also excited to partner with the Japanese American Resource Center of Colorado with our mutual goal of preserving the Japanese immigrant stories for future generations. Thank you to everyone who has made this possible.



Japanese Hall Veterans Project Seeks Artifacts and Stories

By Diane Mercer

The Japanese Hall Veterans Project is collecting information on Japanese- American veterans who served in the U.S. Military. If you or someone you know is a veteran of Japanese ancestry with ties to Nebraska and the High Plains, please submit information and photography to support the project. The plan is to have an interactive display showcasing the information and preserving the important role Japanese Americans played in the military.

Japanese Hall Military Collections

Japanese Hall has had several collections donated which included military artifacts, documents, books, photos, and stories. Although the majority are from World War II, we also have a few items related to Korea and Vietnam.

In this newsletter we are highlighting some of the military-related artifacts and stories from the Hall that may be new to you. We have several uniforms, individual photos, documents, patches and medals from WWII, Korea and Vietnam. Some of the WWII books include a 1943 442nd RCT album; 1946 book "Americans; the Story of the 442nd Combat Team"; a booklet "442nd Combat Team" compiled by members of the 442nd; the 1945 "FM 8-5 Ware Department Field Manual"; and a booklet titled "Combat Tips for Fifth Army Infantry Replacement".

Group photos include a 1943 Medical Detachment 442nd Infantry team in Fort Shelby and a 1942 Company C IN BT in Camp Robinson, Arkansas.

We recently received a framed copy of a regional Japanese Surrender letter. Representatives from the Japanese government and Allied forces had signed the official Japanese Instrument of Surrender letter September 2, 1945, which effectively ended World War II. The regional surrender letters ensured that everyone was aware that the war had ended. The surrender letter we have was signed in Singapore on 12 September 1945.

Another unique item we received is a photo of a quilt that was sent from a woman's Singapore POW camp to the men's POW camp. Each block on that quilt had hidden disguised clues so that the husbands would know their wives were still alive. The Singapore POW camp included American missionaries and soldiers, including members of the Lost Battalion.



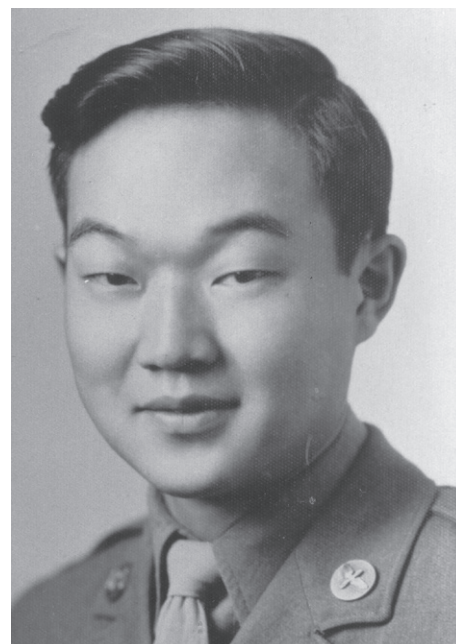
Dennis Morimoto, Vietnam, Engineer Battalion



Ted Nanbara, WWII, 442nd RCT



George Abe, WWII, Counterintelligence



Carl Kubo, WWII, Medic

We also have a number of artifacts and documents from Occupied Japan. Paul Christian was stationed in Occupied Japan 1946 - 1949. We scanned his scrapbook which included photos and handwritten notes documenting the poverty he saw, people he met, and experiences of the American soldiers there. They also portray day to day work like the silk worm process, farming and even making umbrellas. A donation from Jerry Kishiyama confirmed how difficult life was in Japan after the war. His collection includes translated letters from families in Japan who were struggling to survive during that same timeframe.



Fred Hara's military pants



Variety of military items



Tom Tomoi, US Army, Korea



Joe Shinmori, WWII, 442nd Co. L



New Hire Joins Japanese Hall Team

Adyn Yamamoto has been hired as part of the Institute for Museum and Library Services grant. Here's a bit about her:

Hello! My name is Adyn Yamamoto and I'm so excited to join the team at Legacy of the Plains. I've been hired as a part time Archivist and Docent for Japanese Hall.

I started as a volunteer for the Brighton museum in Colorado and discovered a passion for preserving and making history accessible. It is a privilege to be part of an

organization that plays such an important role here, and I am eager to contribute to its continued growth and success.

Growing up, I've always been interested in and pursued learning about various cultures, music and languages. It has pushed me to learn a few languages, master software specialized in artistic creations and eat as many unique foods as possible. I hope this new chapter continues this trend!

JHall Advisory Council

Ever wonder who is involved with Japanese Hall? Vickie Schaepler has several groups with the main group being her Advisory Council, which meets quarterly. There are subgroups as well, including a new group developing exhibits. Plans call for a strategic planning team and a fundraising team. We meet as needed via Zoom. If you are interested in being part of any team, contact Vickie at vschaepler@gmail.com.



Members of the Japanese Hall Advisory Council who attended the May 6, 2025, event: Back row L-R: Paul Snyder, Steve Kay, Dennis Morimoto, John Miyoshi, Kim Hachiya, Regan Nanbara, Dave Wolf, Rick Meyers, Rita Stinner. Front row L-R: Vickie Schaepler, Diane Mercer, Julie Ushio, Sharon Ishii-Jordan, Cindy Yamamoto.

Japanese Hall Documentary Wins Award

The Nebraska Public Media documentary "Rescuing Japanese Hall" received first place in the category of Soft Feature in the 2026 Midwest Broadcast Journalists Association (MBJA) Seavareid Awards. This region includes broadcast media from Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska. The association's "soft feature category" recognizes "excellence in human-interest, lifestyle, or light-hearted journalism, focusing

on compelling storytelling rather than hard news. Soft Features focus on storytelling quality, audio/video, and originality."

Congratulations to executive producer Kay Hall and others from Nebraska Public Media for this documentary. To view it, click here: <https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/en/series-media/nebraska-stories-video/season-16-video-15886/rescuing-japanese-hall-50027609/>

Join the Legacy of the Plains in celebrating the United States' history through a series of presentations Saturday, June 6, 2026.

All events are free and open to the public.



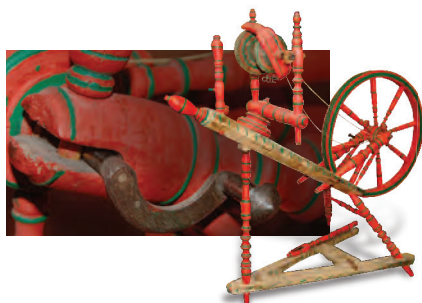
10:00 **"Abraham Lincoln, America's Greatest Political Orator"** Using humor, lawyer-like reason or biblically inspired prose, Lincoln saved our country with his words and defined the meaning of the American Revolution for future generations. ***Presented by Fred Nielsen***



11:00 **"Death, Poverty, and Bread: How German Russians found Success in Nebraska."** ***Karen Keehr, Germans from Russia Museum***



1:30 **Japanese American Quilt Panel Discussion:** Created in 1995 by Japanese American women from the High Plains, these quilts reflect the journeys of their families, sometimes through extreme hardship with Gaman (Perseverance), one stitch at a time.



2:30 **"The Mexican People of the Panhandle."** ***Presented by Jackie Cervantes Guzman***

3:30 **Quilts of Valor:** Honoring veterans and active-duty personnel for their service and sacrifice in serving our nation. Hear how the organization works by awarding handmade quilts in a ceremony that manifests *"Thank you."* ***Presented by Peggy Maunier***



Special Exhibits will be available from the museum's collection, including a camel hair quilt and a driftwood spinning wheel from our Germans from Russia collection. The Rotating gallery will include a 42-star flag from the 1800s, several military uniforms and Quilts of Valor and a Lakota Star Quilt.

Quilts made in the Japanese American community, a special quilted chair, and quilts dedicated to those who perished during 9/11 on loan from the International Quilt Museum at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will be displayed from June 6, through July 19.



2930 Old Oregon Trail,
Gering, NE

Japanese Histories of Great Plains/Midwest Digitization Project Interest Form

Description: Between June 3-6, 2026, Donna D. Anderson and staff from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH) will be at the Japanese Hall in Gering, NE to digitize materials on the tri-state Japanese American communities of Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming. If you are interested in participating, whether materials to digitize, record an oral history, or volunteer, please fill out this form and email it back to Donna (danderson79@nebraska.edu) by May 15, 2026.

For more information and frequently asked questions (FAQs) about this project, please click this link or scroll to the end of this form. You are welcome to share this document with anyone else who may be interested in participating!

Thank you for your interest and interest in participating in the digitization efforts!

Name

Primary Contact (Email and/or Phone)

This will be used to confirm your schedule and to communicate further details about the process.

For the following questions, please highlight/bold/select all that apply.

1. How would you like to contribute to the digitization project?
 - ☐ Volunteer (assist with digitization process)
 - ☐ Contribute materials to digitize
 - ☐ Record an Oral History Interview
2. What days will you be in Scottsbluff/Gering during the digitization efforts?
 - ☐ Wednesday, June 3
 - ☐ Thursday, June 4
 - ☐ Friday, June 5
 - ☐ Saturday, June 6
3. If you would like to volunteer, what day/time would you be available.
 - ☐ Wednesday, June 3 - Morning (9am-12pm)
 - ☐ Wednesday, June 3 - Afternoon (1-5pm)
 - ☐ Thursday, June 4 - Morning (9am-12pm)
 - ☐ Thursday, June 4 - Afternoon (1-5pm)
 - ☐ Friday, June 5 - Morning (9am-12pm)
 - ☐ Friday, June 5 - Afternoon (1-5pm)
 - ☐ Saturday, June 6 - Morning (9am-12pm)
4. If you are contributing materials for the digital archive, what day and time would you be available to digitize your materials?
 - ☐ Wednesday, June 3 - Morning (9am-12pm)
 - ☐ Wednesday, June 3 - Afternoon (1-5pm)
 - ☐ Thursday, June 4 - Morning (9am-12pm)
 - ☐ Thursday, June 4 - Afternoon (1-5pm)
 - ☐ Friday, June 5 - Morning (9am-12pm)
 - ☐ Friday, June 5 - Afternoon (1-5pm)
 - ☐ Saturday, June 6 - Morning (9am-12pm)
5. If you are able, please describe what kinds of materials you would like to digitize and approximately how many there are. This will help determine how long the digitization efforts may take.
6. If you are interested in recording an interview/oral history, please select what times you are available. Oral history interviews take between 60-90 minutes.
 - ☐ Thursday, June 4 - Evening (6-8pm)
 - ☐ Friday, June 5 - Morning (9am-12pm)
 - ☐ Friday, June 5 - Afternoon (1-5pm)
 - ☐ Saturday, June 6 - Morning (9am-12pm)
 - ☐ Saturday, June 6 - Afternoon (1-5pm)
7. Are there any scheduling details, concerns, or considerations you would like to share with Donna or the project team?

Japanese Histories of the High Plains/Midwest Digitization Project

Frequently Asked Questions



What is it? “America is in the Heartland” is a digital archive chronicling Asian American histories in the Great Plains and Midwest regions. This project seeks to acknowledge the depth of our communities' experiences and to make our histories visible to Asian American and (more broadly) U.S. history. In this first phase, which will be launched at the Japanese Hall's 100th Anniversary in June 2028, I am focused on recording, documenting, and digitizing Japanese American histories of Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming.

Who is involved in this project? Donna Doan Anderson, the project's lead, is an assistant professor of History at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is from Omaha, Nebraska. She studies the histories of Asian American communities in the Great Plains and Midwest between the late 19th and mid-20th centuries. She is also a member of the Japanese Hall and History Project's Advisory Council and has been involved with the Japanese Hall since 2022.

The digital archive is hosted and supported by UNL's Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH). Joining the Japanese Histories digitization efforts is Co-Director of the CDRH, Andy Jewell, and two other CDRH staff (Laura Weakly and Chad Koch) who specialize in digitizing historical materials and are trained in inputting metadata for the archive's website.

When and where will the digitization occur? Between June 3-6, 2026, at the Legacy of the Plains Museum in Gering, Nebraska. If you are interested in contributing, whether as a volunteer or by sharing materials for digitization, you can sign up at this [Google Form link](#) or fill out this form and email it back to Donna (danderson79@nebraska.edu) by May 15, 2026.

Who will use the digital archive? The digital archive is meant for the communities it represents, meaning it will be publicly available to share with family and friends without fees to access materials. I also envision the digital archive to be useful to students and researchers interested in Asian American histories of the Great Plains and Midwest. In the future, I will pursue part-

nerships with local school districts to develop lessons from the digitized materials for K-12 teachers to use in their classrooms.

Why would I participate? There are many reasons you might be interested in participating. You might have some documents, materials, or photographs that feel important or interesting, but you aren't quite sure what to do with them. Or, maybe you have wanted to share your or your family's stories but haven't had opportunities to do so. We welcome all materials and stories!

What can I expect if I bring materials to digitize? There will be four digitization stations—two for photographs & documents, one for 3D items/books, and one for recording oral histories. Each station will be led by a CDRH staff member or UNL faculty member. The station lead will take scans of the material and will ask additional information about the item so they can input relevant data (e.g., categories, dates, names, etc.) on a spreadsheet. This information will be used to tag each scanned item so it can be searchable on the digital archive.

What happens to the materials I bring for digitization? Unless you would like to donate the materials to the Japanese Hall or another organization (e.g., the State Historical Society or the University Archives), you will take all the materials you brought for digitization home with you.

What happens after the materials are digitized? Once your materials are digitized, they will be published on the digital archive and publicly available by June 2028. You will be credited on the digital archive's website as the owner/contributor of your materials.

What if some materials are sensitive, and I would prefer they were published online later? As the rightful owners of your materials, you determine when and how these materials are made available. In other words, we can arrange to refrain from publishing them until after a certain time/event. You can also request to remove your items after digital publication, regardless of the reason.

I am interested in recording an oral history interview. How do I know if my story is important enough? All history is important, and we welcome any/all stories! You do not need a predetermined story to sign up for an oral history interview recording.

What can I expect, and what do I need to prepare for recording an oral history? Oral history interviews usually take between 60 and 90 minutes, depending on what the interviewee wants to share. Rather than a series of specific questions, I will ask participants to bring any important items (e.g., photos, family heirlooms, documents important to you, etc.) and record you telling me about them. Interviews will be recorded through video and audio; however, if you prefer one medium over another, please do not hesitate to let me (Donna) know.

What if I am unable to make it to Gering in June, but still want to contribute materials for digitization? Please email (danderson79@nebraska.edu) or call (402-216-4028) Donna

to arrange another time/place for digitization. I am more than welcome to discuss other options with you!

I am interested in volunteering. What do I need to know?

Volunteers will be assigned 4-hour shifts either in the morning or the afternoon on the days we digitize. You will likely support the station lead in scanning documents and ensuring appropriate information about the item is recorded. You do not need extensive computer/tech knowledge or previous digitization experience to participate!

I still have a question: how can I reach you? Please email Donna D. Anderson at danderson79@nebraska.edu or donnadoananderson@gmail.com if you have any further questions or concerns.

Thank you for considering participating in the Japanese Histories Digitization Project!



**LEGACY
OF THE
PLAINS
MUSEUM**



JAPANESE HALL
AT LEGACY OF THE PLAINS
GERING, NEBRASKA
6-8-2024

Legacy of the Plains Museum

2930 Old Oregon Trail,
Gering, NE 69341

www.legacyoftheplains.org

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Legacy of the Plains Museum
Executive Director
Gering, Nebraska

Vickie Sakurada Schaepler

Japanese Hall Chair and
Coordinator, Kearney,
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Gayle Hashimoto Rojas
Scottsbluff, Nebraska

Jay Shiba
Riva, Maryland

Paul Snyder
Scottsbluff, Nebraska

Rita Stinner
Gering, Nebraska

Dr. Nathan Tye
Kearney, Nebraska

Susan Ugai,
Lincoln, Nebraska

Julie Ushio
Honolulu, Hawaii

Cindy Yamamoto,
Scottsbluff, Nebraska

Links of Interest

- Legacy of the Plains Museum – Japanese Hall and History Project
- Find all the Japanese Hall Newsletters and other items about the hall at www.legacyoftheplains.org. You may need to click on the tab for Japanese Hall in the upper right and scroll down.
- Newsletter contacts: to change your email address, USPS Address, your name or to add friends to the list, email JHALLNews@legacyoftheplains.org
- We are interested in items such as personal stories or links of interest regarding Japanese history in the High Plains.
- To donate to Japanese Hall, contact the Legacy of the Plains Museum. Be sure to designate your donation for Japanese Hall.

Thank you for your interest in preserving this unique part of Nebraska History.