



Nikkei Images

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Pioneer Issei: Tomekichi Homma's Fight for the Franchise

by Andrea Geiger-Adams

On October 19, 1900, in a deliberate challenge to the law that excluded B.C.'s naturalized Japanese citizens from the vote, Tomekichi Homma applied to have his name added to the voters' list for Vancouver, B.C. As Homma had anticipated, the collector of voters, Thomas Cunningham, refused.¹ On October 25, 1900, less than a week later, Homma filed a lawsuit challenging Cunningham's refusal and the provision of the *Provincial Voters Act* on which he relied.²

In 1895, even though British Columbia's own records identified just 130 naturalized Japanese immigrants in B.C., the B.C. Legislature had amended the *Provincial Voters Act* to add naturalized citizens of Japanese ancestry to those already excluded from the franchise.³ As amended, the *Provincial Voters Act* provided "[n]o Chinaman, Japanese, or Indian shall have his name placed on the Register of Voters for any Electoral District."⁴ Because the term "Japanese," as used in the statute, referred not just to anyone who was a "native of the Japanese Empire or its dependencies not born of British parents," but also to "any person of the Japanese race, naturalized or not," the amendment applied not only to Japanese immigrants, but also to any children born in Canada to British subjects of Japanese descent.⁵ Any collector of voters who violated the Act and added the name of any-

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Tomekichi Homma. (Homma Family photo, ca. 1900)

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Announcements

JCNM Travelling Exhibitions:

Re-shaping Memories, Owning History

Hamilton, ON - Jackson Square Mall
March 1 - April 30, 2003
Toronto, ON - JC Cultural Centre
June 21 - September 21, 2003 (tentative)

Unearthed from the Silence

North Vancouver, B.C.
February 4 - April 13, 2003
Richmond, B.C.
Late April to July 2003 (tentative)

Second Annual Nikkei Week
Theme: Salmon Canneries
September 20 - September 28, 2003

Steveston Judo Club
Reunion Barbeque
August 2, 2003

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one of Asian descent to the voters list was subject to a fifty dollar fine and up to one month's imprisonment.⁶

Homma's challenge to the *Provincial Voters Act* was initially part of a larger, coordinated effort by members of the Japanese immigrant community to confront an unjust law. Thomas Cunningham reported that several other naturalized Japanese immigrants had also applied to have their names added to the *Provincial Voters List* at the same time.⁷ Homma was chosen as the public face of the legal challenge, however, both because the resources of the Japanese immigrant community were limited and the cost of filing multiple lawsuits prohibitive,⁸ and because he had already assumed a leadership role within B.C.'s Japanese immigrant community in other contexts. Homma, who had arrived in Canada in the mid-1880s,⁹ had played a central role in organizing the *Gyosha Dantai* (Japanese Fisherman's Association) in 1897 and had served as its chairman until 1899.¹⁰ He was also already well known within the Japanese immigrant community for his determination and strength of spirit.¹¹ But public opinion within the Japanese community as to the wisdom of mounting a public challenge to the *Provincial Voters Act* was divided. Although members of the *Gyosha Dantai* staunchly supported Homma's efforts and worked hard to collect funds to help pay the legal fees that quickly accumulated,¹² others—many of them young people who had only recently arrived from Japan—doubted that any individual could win a lawsuit against the government and feared that aggravating the Provincial authorities would only make things more difficult for Japanese immigrants already dependent on their good will.¹³ The Japanese consul also distanced himself from Homma's case, explaining to a local reporter that "once a Japanese be-

comes a naturalized British subject, he passes out of my jurisdiction, and I keep track of him no longer."¹⁴

Homma's case was first argued before Chief Judge McColl of the Vancouver County Court on November 29, 1900.¹⁵ Homma's argument that the B.C. Legislature did not have the power to exclude any subset of its naturalized male citizens rested on three basic sources of law. First was section 91 of the *British North America Act* which listed "Naturalization & Aliens" as a subject over which the Dominion government had exclusive control.¹⁶ Second was Canada's *Naturalization Act* passed by the Dominion government pursuant to its power over naturalization, which stated that every naturalized citizen was entitled to "all political and other rights, powers and privileges to which a natural-born British subject [was] entitled within Canada."¹⁷ And third was an 1899 decision by the Judicial Committee of the British Privy Council, at that time the highest court of appeal for cases arising in Canada. In that case, *Union Colliery Company v. Bryden*, the Privy Council had expressly declared that Canada's Dominion government was "invested with exclusive authority in all matters which directly concern the rights, privileges, and disabilities" of aliens resident in Canada, "naturalized or not."¹⁸ For all these reasons, Homma's lawyer argued, the B.C. Legislature lacked the power to deny the franchise to its naturalized citizens, and the legislation that tried to do otherwise was *ultra vires*.¹⁹ Cunningham's lawyer, to the contrary, argued on behalf of his client and the Province, that the question of who could vote in provincial elections was an issue of "purely local concern" over which the Dominion government had no authority.²⁰

Judge McColl handed down his decision the day after he heard

argument in the case. He agreed with both sides that the outcome turned on the narrow constitutional question whether it was the Dominion or Provincial government that had the power to determine the rights and privileges of naturalized citizens. And he agreed with Homma that *Bryden* was binding. For that reason, he concluded, the only possible decision he could reach was that the B.C. Legislature lacked the power to pass any legislation that denied the franchise to just some of its naturalized citizens.²¹ While Judge McColl suggested that he reached this conclusion reluctantly, he was not insensitive to the broader ramifications of the Legislature's action, expressing concern about B.C.'s attempt to create two separate classes of citizens. "The residence within the Province of large numbers of persons," he wrote, "British subjects in name but doomed to perpetual exclusion from any part in the passage of legislation affecting their property and civil rights would surely not be to the advantage of Canada, and might even become a source of national danger."²²

The provincial government, however, ignored Judge McColl's concerns about the danger of creating two separate classes among its male citizens, and acted instead to immediately appeal his decision. On March 8, 1901, the B.C. Supreme Court heard arguments in the Province's appeal and, just a day later, it affirmed Judge McColl's decision. Although the judges expressed some sympathy for the Province's position, they agreed that they were bound by the Privy Council's decision in *Bryden*. As one judge explained, the Privy Council itself had noted in *Bryden* that the *Naturalization Act*—passed by the Dominion government pursuant to its power over naturalization—expressly provided:

An alien to whom a certificate of naturalization is granted shall, within Canada, be entitled to all political and other rights, powers and privileges, and be subject to all obligations to which a natural-born British subject is entitled or subject within Canada.²⁴

"Political rights," he added, "is a very wide expression, and is defined as "being those rights which belong to . . . an individual member of a nation, as distinguished from . . . [the] local rights of a citizen."²⁵ As such, the law was clear that "an alien, when naturalized, shall, [in] Canada, have all the ordinary and inherent rights and privileges of a Canadian, or of a natural-born British subject."²⁶ Another judge agreed: "Political rights, powers and privileges," he wrote, "are very general terms, and import the right of exercising the franchise."²⁷

The Provincial government again refused to accept the court's ruling. Although the *Provincial Voters Act* did not provide for a direct appeal to the Privy Council, the Province requested a waiver that would allow it to file such an appeal. The B.C. Supreme Court granted its request, assuming correctly that the Privy Council would accept it.²⁸ In June 1901, D. M. Eberts, attorney general for British Columbia, wrote to the London barrister who was to argue the case for the Province to the Privy Council, listing the various points British Columbia wished to make.²⁹ It was the guarantee of "political rights" in Canada's *Naturalization Act*, Eberts wrote, that the B.C. courts had seen as the stumbling block. But a large class of native-born British subjects—women—whose claim to citizenship was not in question, was excluded from the franchise.³⁰ From that it followed, Eberts argued, that a province was entitled to deny the vote to any other class of citizens it chose.

On December 17, 1901, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council reversed the B.C. courts' decisions, upholding the amendment to the *Provincial Voters Act* which the courts below had ruled invalid. It began by carefully disclaiming the racially discriminatory consequences of its ruling. The "policy or impolicy of [an enactment] which excludes a particular race from the franchise," the Privy Council declared, was not a topic it was entitled to consider. The only question before it, in its view, was whether it was the Province or the Dominion government that had the power to determine the rights and privileges of naturalized Canadian citizens.³¹

But the Privy Council did not discuss either section 91 of the *British North America Act* or Canada's *Naturalization Act*. Instead—apparently unable to find any direct precedent in Canada or any other commonwealth country that would justify the conclusion that political rights did not necessarily include the right to vote—the Privy Council turned to a source of law it would normally not have considered binding, persuasive, or even relevant—an outdated 1863 edition of an American legal treatise called *Lawrence's Wheaton*,³² published during the American Civil War. Brushing aside the fundamental differences in the history and constitutional structure of Canada and the United States, the Privy Council extracted a single sentence from *Lawrence's Wheaton*, using that language as the only direct precedent for its conclusion: "(in the United States) the power of naturalization is nominally exclusive in the Federal Government, its operation in the most important particulars, especially as to the right of suffrage, is made to depend on the local constitution and laws."³³

Although the Privy Council offered

no explanation as to why Canadian law would follow U.S. law in this regard—even assuming this sentence accurately stated U.S. law—the Privy Council declared that it followed from this language that the reference to “political rights” in Canada’s *Naturalization Act* did not necessarily include the right to vote in Canadian provinces.³⁴

Not only did the Privy Council fail to acknowledge that U.S. Constitutional law necessarily has no bearing in Canada, it also ignored the fact that the particular doctrine it invoked had its origin in the specific history of the formation of the United States, and particularly the need to accommodate the concerns of slave states that local control over the attributes of citizenship be preserved in order to maintain racial boundaries.³⁵ The Privy Council also ignored the broader point made by Lawrence in his own discussion of the phrase it extracted from his treatise. While the individual states retained the practical power to define voter qualifications, Lawrence had explained, those qualifications had to “apply equally to all classes of citizens in the State, whether native or naturalized.”³⁶

The Privy Council distinguished its own prior decision in *Bryden*. Even though it had declared in that case, seemingly unequivocally, that the Dominion government’s power with regard to naturalization included the power to determine “the consequences of naturalization” and “the rights and privileges pertaining to residents in Canada after they have been naturalized,” it now—in what one legal scholar has called “one of the most interesting constitutional somersaults in Canadian history”—disclaimed its prior pronouncement.³⁸ *Bryden*, the Privy Council summarily announced in *Homma*, “depended upon totally different grounds.” In that case, it

now said, it had merely invalidated a law intended to keep Chinese immigrants from being able to earn a living in B.C. It was obvious, it declared, that question had “no relation to the question whether any naturalized person has an inherent right to the suffrage within the province in which he resides.”³⁹ In fact, because being listed on the provincial voters list was a prerequisite to obtaining various kinds of occupational licenses, the Privy Council’s decision did deny Canadian citizens of Asian ancestry the ability to earn a living in various areas of employment. Occupations closed to B.C. citizens of Japanese and Chinese ancestry as a result of the Privy Council’s decision included pharmacy, law, handlogging, jobs on public works projects and, ironically, mining.⁴⁰ Naturalized citizens of Asian descent were also not allowed to hold public office or to serve on juries.⁴¹

The B.C. press celebrated the Privy Council’s decision. “No Japanese Need Apply to be Voters,” trumpeted the *Vancouver Daily Province* after news arrived from London that the Privy Council had reversed the lower courts’ decisions.⁴² The *Victoria Daily Colonist* agreed: “We are relieved from the possibility of having polling booths swamped by a horde of Orientals who are totally unfitted either by custom or education to exercise the ballot, and whose voting would completely demoralize politics.”⁴³

During the decades that followed the handing down of the Privy Council’s decision, Homma largely withdrew from the leadership roles he had previously assumed within the Japanese immigrant community, moving onto the grounds of the Great Northern Cannery in West Vancouver and spending his time with his family.⁴⁴ Financial support from the larger Japanese community had petered out before the case was com-

pleted, and it was his own family on whom the financial burden fell. Keay Homma reports that his father never talked about his role in challenging the *Provincial Voters Act* in his children’s presence.⁴⁵ Many of those who had criticized Homma for proceeding with the case to begin with felt justified in their concern, and some even blamed him for the Privy Council’s decision.⁴⁶ By 1945, Tomekichi Homma was largely confined to a single room by a stroke that had left him partially paralyzed. The room was almost bare, his son Keay Homma recalls, adorned only by a single portrait of the King and Queen of England which hung on one wall⁴⁷—ongoing, if mute, testimony to his awareness of his status as a British subject.

Not until March 1949, under pressure from the federal government of Canada which had itself only just restored the federal franchise to its Japanese Canadian citizens, did the B.C. Legislature introduce legislation to permit citizens of Japanese ancestry to vote. Homma did not live to see that day. He died on October 28, 1945, in the B.C. interior, still barred from returning to the coast after having been forced to move inland in 1942 as part of Canada’s World War II relocation of its Japanese Canadian citizens.

Homma’s action in challenging the *Provincial Voters Act* demonstrates that he understood the power of legal process to effect change within Western society. His deliberate challenge to an unjust and racist law anticipated by fifty years the case challenging racist practices in the American South that culminated in the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, which galvanized the Civil Rights Movement in the United States by outlawing segregated public schools. Had the Privy Council honestly weighed and interpreted the appli-

cable law, Homma might well have succeeded in putting civil rights law in Canada on an entirely new footing. The fact that both the lower courts that considered Homma's case were convinced that they had no alternative, under the law as it existed at the time, but to overturn the discriminatory provisions of the *Provincial Voters Act*, demonstrates the strength of Homma's argument that the legislation was invalid. Homma failed in his effort to overturn the exclusionary amendment to the *Provincial Voters Act* only because the Privy Council adopted an artifice that was both legally and logically unsound.

¹ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, October 28, 1900.

² *Vancouver Daily Province*, October 27, 1900.

³ *Vancouver Daily Province*, December 1, 1900.

⁴ *Provincial Voters Act*, c. 20 [February 21, 1895]. Immigrants from India were excluded from the franchise in 1907 when the *Provincial Voters Act* was amended to add "Hindu" to those excluded from the franchise in B.C. in 1907. *Provincial Voters Act* [1907], c.16, s.3.

⁵ *Provincial Voters Act*, c. 20 [February 21, 1895].

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Vancouver Daily Province*, October 27, 1900.

⁸ *Ibid.*; Shigeharu Koyama, *Nikkei Kanada Imin no Chichi: Homma Tomekichi Oo no Shogai [The Father of Japanese Immigrants in Canada: The Life of Tomekichi Homma]* (Tokyo: 1996) 61-62.

⁹ Homma was born in *Onigoye-mura*, Chiba-ken on June 6, 1865. Homma Collection, File 94/88, Japanese Canadian National Museum, Burnaby, B.C.

¹⁰ Japanese Canadian National Museum, Burnaby, B.C., File 94/88.

¹¹ Jinshiro Nakayama, *Kanada Doho Hatten Taikan* (1922).

¹² Koyama, 61-62. Koyama reports that Homma's supporters were able to raise just over \$1500—a fairly substantial sum at that time—over a 2-year period based on donations by members of the Japanese immigrant community of \$1.50 at a time. *Ibid.*

¹³ Koyama, 66.

¹⁴ *Vancouver Daily Province*, December 1, 1900.

¹⁵ *Victoria Daily Colonist*. November 30, 1900, p.2. Homma was represented in that action by local barrister R.W. Harris of the law firm Harris & Bull.

¹⁶ *The Constitution Act, 1867* (the *British North America Act*), s. 91, sub-s. 25.

¹⁷ *Naturalization Act of Canada*, s. 15, R.S.C. c. 113.

¹⁸ *Union Colliery Company of British Columbia, Limited v. Bryden* [1899], A.C. 580 (P.C.), 587.

¹⁹ *In re the Provincial Elections Act and In re Tomey Homma, a Japanese*, [1900] 7 B.C.R. 368 (Co. Ct.), 369. *Ultra vires* literally means "outside the powers of."

Henry Campbell Black, *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing Co., 1951) 1692, 1742.

²⁰ 7 B.C.R. 371-372.

²¹ *In re the Provincial Elections Act and In re Tomey Homma, a Japanese*, [1900] 7 B.C.R. 368 (Co. Ct.), 372; *Victoria Daily Colonist*, November 30, 1900.

²² 7 B.C.R. 372.

²³ *In re the Provincial Elections Act and In re Tomey Homma, a Japanese*, [1901] 8 B.C.R. 76, 80 (Walkem, J.).

²⁴ *Naturalization Act of Canada*, R.S.C. 1886, c. 113, quoted in *In re Homma*, 8 B.C.R. 79.

²⁵ 8 B.C.R. 79.

²⁶ 8 B.C.R. 79.

²⁷ 8 B.C.R. 82.

²⁸ 8 B.C.R. 83-84.

²⁹ Letter from D. M Eberts, Attorney General, to Christopher Robinson, Esq., K.C., London, England dated June 29, 1901 published in the *Victoria Daily Colonist* on January 3, 1903.

³⁰ Local newspaper editors also frequently invoked this idea. See, for example, the *Victoria Daily Colonist*, April 25, 1905 (rationalizing the exclusion of people of Japanese ancestry from the franchise on the ground that "not even all British subjects were entitled to vote" and citing the fact that women were not allowed to vote as a telling example).

³¹ *Cunningham v. Homma*, [1903] A.C. 151, 155 (J.C.P.C.).

³² Henry Wheaton, LL.D., *Elements of International Law*, 2nd annotated edition edited by William Beach Lawrence in 1863 and published in 1864 ("*Lawrence's Wheaton*") (London, 1864). It was D.M. Eberts, B.C.'s Attorney General, who first suggested that the Privy Council rely on U.S. law. Letter from D. M. Eberts, Attorney General, to Christopher Robinson, Esq., K.C., London, England dated June 29, 1901 published in the *Victoria Daily Colonist* on January 3, 1903.

³³ [1903] A.C. 156, quoting *Lawrence's Wheaton*, 903 (2nd annotated ed. 1864). The phrase "in the United States" is in the original. Thus, there can be no question that the Privy Council was aware that the phrase it extracted occurred within the context of a discussion of U.S. law and policy.

³⁴ [1903] A.C. 156.

³⁵ See, for example, *Lawrence's Wheaton*, 904; Von Holst, 19.

³⁶ *Lawrence's Wheaton*, 909.

³⁷ Ross Lambertson, "After *Union Colliery [Bryden]*: Law, Race, and Class in the Coalmines of British Columbia," in Hamar Foster and John McLaren, eds., *Essays*

in the History of Canadian Law, Vol. 6 (British Columbia and the Yukon). Toronto: Osgoode Society, 1981.

³⁸ *Bryden*, [1899] A.C. 586.

³⁹ [1903] A.C. 157. While most other Canadian provinces did not exclude naturalized Japanese citizens from the franchise, this was of little practical consequence since 95% of all Japanese immigrants in Canada lived in British Columbia.

⁴⁰ University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections and University Archives Division, "Legal Status of the Japanese in Canada," (1936), Japanese Canadian Collection, No. 12-7 (citing pertinent statutes) [author unknown].

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Vancouver Daily Province*, December 17, 1902.

⁴³ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, December 18, 1902.

⁴⁴ Conversation with Keay Homma, January 19, 1998; *Nikkei no Koe (Nikkei Voice)*, Vol. 13, No. 10 (December 1999/January 2000).

⁴⁵ Conversation with Keay Homma, June 7, 2002.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* See also *Nikkei no Koe*, Vol. 13, No. 10 (noting that Homma was very likely exposed to public censure within the Japanese immigrant community for his role in the case).

⁴⁷ Conversation with Keay Homma, January 19, 1998.

⁴⁸ *The New Canadian*, March 12, 1949. The legislation was introduced in March 1949, just three weeks before the federal government's restoration of the franchise was to take effect on March 31, 1949.

⁴⁹ Japanese Canadian National Museum, Burnaby,

B.C., File 94/88. *

Andrea Geiger-Adams is a Ph.D. candidate in History at the University of Washington who is working on a dissertation on Meiji-era Japanese immigrants to Canada and the western United States. Her interest in the legal barriers encountered by Japanese immigrants in North America stems in part from the fact that she was originally trained as a lawyer. After graduating from law school in 1991, she worked for judges at the Washington Court of Appeals and the federal trial court in Seattle for a total of 7 years, an experience she draws on in critiquing the Privy Council's decision. Her interest in Meiji-era Japanese immigrants also stems from the fact that she lived in Japan for a number of years as a child, with the result that there is still much about Japan that is very natsukashii to her. This essay is a condensed version of a longer article that will be published next year in a collection of essays on North American Nikkei history put out by the University of Washington Press. Andrea would like to thank the Homma family as a whole, and Keay and Terri Homma in particular, for the support and encouragement they have shown her from the very beginning of her research—long before there was any prospect that it would be published. She would also like to express her appreciation to the Japanese Canadian National Museum and its staff for their interest and assistance at every turn.

Tomekichi Homma by Yoshimaru Abe

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to express my gratitude for having kindly invited me and my wife as part of the Homma family to this memorable Nikkei Week celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the immigration of Japanese to Canada, and also for giving me this opportunity to talk about my father-in-law, Tomekichi Homma.

First of all, please allow me to briefly introduce myself. My name is Yoshimaru Abe. I live in Winnipeg. I was born on March 24, 1914, near the beginning of the First World War in the fishing village of Minato in Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan and grew up there. In the spring of 1927, right after finishing elementary school, I moved with my older brother and sister to Port Hammond in the Fraser Valley where my parents had just started farming. We enjoyed for the first time the experience of all of us living together as a family. I went to public school starting from the first grade in order to learn English, the most important preparation for my new life in Canada. I skipped some grades and finished the 8 grades in four years. This was, of course, very important to my future welfare.

At that time, there were about 500 Japanese Canadian farm families in Hammond, Haney, Whonnock, Mission, and other communities in the Fraser Valley. These families had pioneered strawberry farms. Just as our family was achieving economic security with all the children grown up, war between Japan and the United States broke out with the attack on Pearl Harbor. This incident instantly destroyed the foundation that Japanese Canadians had built after many years of struggle. Earlier, in the fall of 1941, when anti-Japanese feelings were daily increasing in British Columbia due to the Japanese Army's invasion of Manchuria and China, I had become engaged to Tomekichi Homma's eldest daughter, Yoshi, and on January 25, 1942 under strict wartime controls, married her at Maple Ridge Buddhist Church. Very shortly after that, a general evacuation of Japanese was ordered.

Due to time limitations, I will not dwell on the accomplishments of Tomekichi Homma who became a legend in Japanese Canadian history for his contribution to the movement for voting rights in 1900. These are

available in books and documents published over the years. Instead, I would like to tell you about the time when I first met Tomekichi Homma after my engagement to his daughter. I still vividly remember the day I visited his apartment at the Great Northern Cannery. He was sitting on his bed with Yoshi's support. He smiled at me, shook hands, and did not let go of my hand. He did not have the full use of his limbs, nor was he able to talk after he had suffered a stroke several years before. I could not understand him but Yoshi was accustomed to his speech and transmitted what he was trying to say to me. I remember there were numerous newspaper clippings in the bookshelf near his bed. Earlier, in 1927, the very year I had immigrated to Canada, a fire had broken out next door, burned down my future father-in-law's apartment and destroyed all of his valuable diaries and books. I regret that I was never able to see anything he had handwritten.

Here is another story about my father-in-law. He used to work as a watchman at the cannery. One day, a child fell in the water and my father-in-law jumped into the water, and rescued him. From that time, my father-in-law became close friends with this child's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Cox because he had saved their child's life. After my father-in-law became paralyzed, they found out that he had not been receiving the government Old Age Pension.

My father-in-law's oldest son, Joe, who had become the head of the family, was reluctant to apply for the Canadian government pension for his father because he felt that it was a son's duty to look after his father and not to rely on the government. Joe did not want to lose face in the eyes of the community. Mr. and Mrs. Cox convinced my father-in-law by saying, "*You are a full Ca-*

nadian citizen by naturalization. Every Canadian citizen over 65 years of age is entitled to receive the pension under the present system." They registered him and enabled him to receive the pension of—I believe—twenty-five dollars a month at that time.

Jinshiro Nakayama is known as an intellectual leader in early Japanese Canadian history. Mr. Nakayama asked my father-in-law as a senior leader in the Nikkei community for his complete support in a project to compile the history of Japanese Canadians. My father-in-law had already retired and was planning to enjoy his remaining years with his family at the Great Northern Cannery. However, due to the importance of the work and being the kind of person who, once asked, could not withdraw his support, he spent many days away from home and in 1922, after seven years of hard work, two masterpieces, *Canada no Hoko* (Treasures of Canada) and *Canada Doho Hatten Taikan Furoku* (An Appendix to the Directory of the Development of Japanese Canadians) were completed.

These two books are highly appreciated in the study of Japanese Canadian history today, but my wife recalls her mother complaining that because her father was gone to Vancouver for months after Mr. Nakayama asked for his assistance, it created a hardship for the family.

Soon after the war ended, the federal government closed concentration camps and shifted its priorities to carrying out a policy to move Japanese Canadians east of the Rocky Mountains. There was a lot of uncertainty among Nikkei about whether to go to Japan or remain in Canada. At that time, although it was normally illegal in British Columbia for Nikkei to work on Crown Land (land owned by the Federal or Provincial governments) because this

was permitted only to people who had the right to vote, this racist law was temporarily ignored during wartime due to the shortage of workers. With the end of the war, normal times returned and roughly 800 Nikkei persons faced the loss of their jobs because they did not have the right to vote.

In 1947, the National Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association (NJCCA) was established and the first convention was held in Toronto. Representing the British Columbia chapter, Tomekichi's son, Seiji Homma, attended the convention and asked for help on this matter of prohibitions against working on Crown Land based on race. George Tanaka, the Executive Secretary of the NJCCA, committed himself to the abolition of these discriminatory measures. The National Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association submitted a letter of protest to the provincial government. On January 29, 1948, Seiji Homma and their attorney, Mr. Norris, had a meeting with government officials in Victoria and turned in a brief. The British Columbia government announced that it would temporarily stop enforcing the above discriminatory regulations. The Vancouver Province newspaper reported that the provincial government's decision was an embarrassment to many Canadians. In a short time, the tireless efforts of the National Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association and its British Columbia chapter moved public opinion to remove these shameful laws forever. However for Seiji Homma it was not only an important accomplishment but his destiny as well.

His father, long ago, had begun the movement for the franchise for Japanese Canadians, had taken the fight to the Privy Council and had lost in the historic Homma Incident. In partnership with George Tanaka,

Continued on page 8

of the National Japanese Canadian Citizens Association, he fought this huge issue. In March of 1949, these two second generation Japanese Canadians were sitting in the gallery of the British Columbia legislature in Victoria and listening very carefully to every word of the Attorney General, Gordon Wismer reading bill No. 43. This is the way that the long-awaited end came in an instant to the half-century of struggle. Nikkei, who had long endured injustice and humiliation, achieved equal rights as *Seiji Homma. (Homma Family photo, ca. 1955)*



Canadian citizens. Later, the CCF Member of the Legislature Harold Winch rushed into one of the rooms at the Empress Hotel in Victoria where Seiji and George were waiting for the court decision and shouted "You've got it!" and brought them the good news. You can imagine how they felt when they hugged each other for joy recalling 16 years of hardship.

In 1977, celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Japanese Canadian Immigration, the City of Richmond acknowledged Tomekichi Homma's contributions to the development of the fishery and for instigating the fight for the voting rights of minorities. In honour of Tomekichi Homma, they decided to name a new high school after him. The construction of the school was suspended for years due to political change and economic depression, but in the spring of 1990, my brother-in-law, Keay, in Delta brought me unexpected news that the construction was underway. And in the next year, I received an invitation from Ms. Patricia Gudlaugson, Chair of the School Board of the City of Richmond, to the

official opening ceremony of the Tomekichi Homma Elementary School on October 1. I attended this sunny ceremony with my wife and two daughters.

Tomekichi Homma's extraordinary life ended on October 28, 1945 in Slocan City (at age 80) attended by people who came from all over the country to mourn his death. On that day once again, with my wife and two children who were born at the Tashme Relocation Camp, I was reminded of my father-in-law's glorious days and greatness.

Time has flowed like a dream. My wife and I celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary this spring and I turned 88 years old this year. I am very thankful to the spirits for their blessings, and moreover, for this great opportunity to give this speech today on my father-in-law and his accomplishments.

Thank you very much for your attention. *

The translation is by Prof. Tina Tajima, of Shirayuri College, Tokyo who was at the gathering, with editing for local content by Stan Fukawa.

Personal Recollections of Tomekichi Homma

by **Keiko Tenney-Sean Homma**

Good evening everyone. I am so pleased to have been asked to speak at this assembly.

I am one of Tomekichi Homma's many grandchildren. On behalf of the Homma family, I would like to express our gratitude for this opportunity to share a personal recollection about the life of my grandfather, Tomekichi Homma as seen through the eyes of his children.

We thank those who are responsible for making the decision to include this evening's lecture as part of the week's celebration and festivities marking the 125th Nikkei anniversary. We would especially like to thank Mr. Stanley Fukawa and Mr. Mitsuo

Hayashi for their efforts in facilitating this evening.

Tomekichi Homma was a man of few words in situations such as this, but I am sure that he would have made a special effort to recognise the generosity of the Nikkei planning committee members and the work of Ms. Andrea Geiger-Adams.

We would like to extend a special thank you to Andrea. Your effort and commitment to research, investigate, and review my grandfather's legal challenge is most sincerely appreciated. Please accept our gratitude with high regard.

The memories shared this

evening will reflect who Tomekichi was as a father and a husband. When my grandfather first arrived in Canada, he as well as others, encountered political and occupational inequalities as an Asian. He was unable to:

- vote in municipal, provincial and federal elections,
- own crown land,
- partake of juror's duty,
- vote for school trustees or to be elected as a trustee,
- be nominated to the provincial legislature or municipal office,
- freely work in any profession. He was restricted to labour in the fishing, farming, lumbering and mining

industries.

As a result of these barriers, my grandfather became a pioneer civil rights activist. He worked tirelessly for the dignity of Japanese Canadians. His sense of commitment and purpose played a central role in helping him, along with others, to establish:

- the first Japanese language school,
- the first Japanese language newspaper,
- the first Japanese fishermen's hospital,
- the first Japanese fishermen's association, of which he was the first president.

His actions galvanized the Japanese Canadian Community to work towards change. Therefore, in 1900, it was no surprise when Tomekichi Homma challenged the Provincial Voter's Act.

As you would imagine, taking an instrumental role in all these endeavours took a toll on his family life. It became my Grandmother's responsibility to look after the children and the family household. Even though Grandpa had five naughty,

mischievous rascals, each day it was Grandma who would go to people's homes to apologize for the behaviour of her *yuncha bozoos*. On each of these countless occasions when the boys got out of hand and made trouble, Granddad always chose never to strike his children; not one of them, not once, not ever.

In spite of not having a lot of time with their father, my aunt and dad have shared fond memories of him. Winter evenings would be spent sitting together around the potbellied stove. Seven youngsters listening in rapture to their father as he told exciting and action-packed stories of samurai, landlords, battles, and adventure. Moans and groans from the children would be heard when their father would announce, "*Enough tonight. We do again tomorrow.*" Then the band of Homma children would end their evening, scampering, shoulder to shoulder, lined in a row mimicking their father as he did his calisthenics. You see, Grandpa believed strong body, strong mind.

Grandfather sought fulfillment and joy in the daily rituals of life.

Walking in solitude along the shoreline each morning at six o'clock. Sometimes, as a child my father would accompany him. This was my grandfather's quiet time to reflect, to seek guidance, and to put things into perspective.

Ojichan instilled in his children, if you are going to live in Canada, you have to be a good Canadian. Learn English, abide by the law, and be like all Canadians.

In closing, my grandfather believed in the dignity of humankind and the vast potential of the mind. His endeavours have affected and helped shape the present lives of five generations of the Homma clan. We are here as examples reflecting his strong belief that Canada is a country of boundless diversity and opportunities. He lived and let us live by Gandhi's words, "*We must be the change we wish to see in the world.*" *

Ms. Homma gave this address at the Manzo Nagano and Tomekichi Homma Japanese Canadian Pioneers Night on September 18, 2002.

Recent Archive Acquisitions at JCNM by Tim Savage

Among the recently donated archives at the Museum are fascinating sources for researchers in Japanese Canadian history. Just a few of the highlights that may be mentioned include materials from the pre-WW II period such as the following:

- the Toshio Odamura Collection, records and artifacts of the Odamura family's life in Steveston in the 1920s and 1930s, and later in Slocan in the 1940s,
- the Mary Ohara Collection, assembled by a longtime dedicated JCNM volunteer, includes her materials from the internment and post-war relocation to Japan, and also records her part in recent Gulf Island commemorations,

- the Roy Ito Collection, from the author of **Stories of My People** and **We Went to War**, provides a significant insight into his wartime experience serving as a sergeant in the Canadian Intelligence Corps,

- the Marie Katsuno Fonds, from another dedicated JCNM volunteer and internment survivor speaker, also spans the pre-war years from West Vancouver to Tashme to relocation to Japan, told in albums of remarkable photographs,

- the Jitaro and Sumiko Tanaka Collection, which includes their uniquely important diary of wartime experience with original documents relating to Jitaro Tanaka's role as a representative of Japanese in that period,

- the fonds of Toyo Takata, also well-known for his community leadership in Toronto and the author of **Nikkei Legacy**, includes a sound recording telling the story of his experience,

- and two groups of records from the redress era, the Randy Enomoto Fonds and the Harry Yonekura Fonds, provide a view from Vancouver and Toronto respectively of the movement for redress and the redress implementation in the 1980s and 1990s.

These few are only a handful of many more that are establishing the national scope of the Museum archives, laying a foundation for future exhibitions, some already playing a role in the now touring inaugural **exhibition Reshaping**

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Memory, Owing History. The Museum welcomes the donation of archives and artifacts to preserve the heritage of Japanese Canadians for future generations. *

I Was Not a Good Detective by Sakuya Nishimura

I embarked on a small project, while volunteering at the Japanese Canadian National Museum, to translate a diary handwritten in Japanese. The diary book was printed by Hakubunkan in Tokyo, with the cover title, “**Diary for the Year Taisho 16**”. However, there was no *Taisho 16* because Emperor Taisho passed away at the end of December of *Taisho 15*. Consequently, the remainder of the year, which was less than a week, was referred to as *Showa 1*. This means *Taisho 16* was actually *Showa 2*, or 1937.

An antique dealer found this diary in Vancouver and knowing a Japanese person wrote it, donated the diary to the JCNM. There was no name in the diary, address, age, nothing. I studied the diary and found it very difficult to read because of the ineligible handwriting and the use of either archaic or inappropriate *kanji* characters. I like to think that I can translate anything in Japanese, but was foiled by this diary. I tried to decipher his handwriting and would end up with a headache after thirty minutes of concentration without resolving anything. After a few trials, I decided to find out as much as possible about the diary instead of trying to decipher the handwriting. I gathered maps, reference books and a Japanese encyclopaedia to determine as much as possible about the diarist.

The results of my investigation were as follows. I was not able to determine the name of the diarist, but he lived in either a lumber or railroad camp supervised by a Japanese boss. He sometimes wrote, “...went back to the train after work...”, so I assumed he lived in a boxcar. At this time, people working on the railroads often were accommodated in boxcars. He mentions there were eight work camps nearby, which were occupied by small groups of Japanese. The diarist was interested in literature and used to send his *haiku* poems or essays to local newspapers and magazines. He wrote in his diary, “...again I could not find my haiku in this issue...” or “...a person admired my poem and so I am happy today...”.

I was able to determine the diarist sent his *haiku* to the OHSHU NIPPO. There is no record of this newspaper in Canada. The BANKO SHUKO was the first Japanese newspaper published in Vancouver. So I tried to find the newspaper in the United States and found it in **Amerika Shunju Hachijunen (American Chronicles 80 Years)**, written by Kazuo Ito. Ito wrote several books about Japanese immigrants in North America. The OHSHU NIPPO was published in Portland, Oregon, so the diarist’s work camp was in the United States. On one occasion, the diarist took a six and a half hour train trip to a Japanese bank in Seattle. He also noted a four hour train trip to ? (written with a *kanji* character that I could not find in my dictionary) and therefore was not able to determine the city. I wrote to Professor Norio Tamura of the Tokyo Keizai University, who specializes in the study of Japanese immigrants to North America, for assistance in identifying the city. He kindly responded that the first *kanji* was fabricated by combining the character for stone and tree, and joined with the *kanji* for city as an acronym for Portland, Oregon. He also included a copy of his paper about the city of Portland. Some geographic names on the North American continent were rendered in *kanji* characters in the following ways.

Oregon state:	央州	Oh-Shuu	“Oh” state or province
Yakima	燒馬	yaki-Ma	roasted or fried horse
Tacoma	田駒	ta-koma	rice-paddy colt
Sacramento	桜府	sakura-Fu	the cherry blossom capital/metropolis
Seattle	沙港	Sha-Koh	“Sha” port
Oakland	王府	Oh-Fu	“Oh” capital/metropolis
Washington	華州	Hwa-Shuu	“Hwa” state or province*
San Francisco	桑港	Soh-Koh	“Soh” port*
Hollywood	聖林	Sei-Rin	holy forest

Hollywood (Sei-Rin) is the only one of these examples which is not a phonetic approximation of the place name.

The location of the diarist’s work camp, by train travel, was six and a half hours from Seattle and four hours

from Portland. I estimate his camp was located east or west of Portland along the Columbia River, though I don't have an old map of the area showing the railroads.

The diarist went to Alaska during the summer of 1928. He worked in a cannery for three months and did not want to return because of the hard work and low wages. After returning from Alaska, he worked on a local farm harvesting celery. He could not harvest as much celery as the experienced labourers and he was inept at making crates for shipping produce to market. Harvesting in late autumn became difficult because the celery became icy cold and extremely brittle. The diarist daydreamed about poetry while working, which may have resulted in a hand injury through carelessness.

The diarist periodically read Japanese magazines such as BUNGEI SHUNJU or KAIZO, which are no longer published. He was occasionally asked by the newspaper publisher to submit a poem. On such occasions, he quit work early for his weekly bath and shave to transform himself from a worker to a writer.

He made entries in his diary only during January and February 1927 and some days in March 1928. He was not a dedicated diarist. Some pages of the diary have been torn out. Thus, I could not identify the diarist and failed in my detective project.

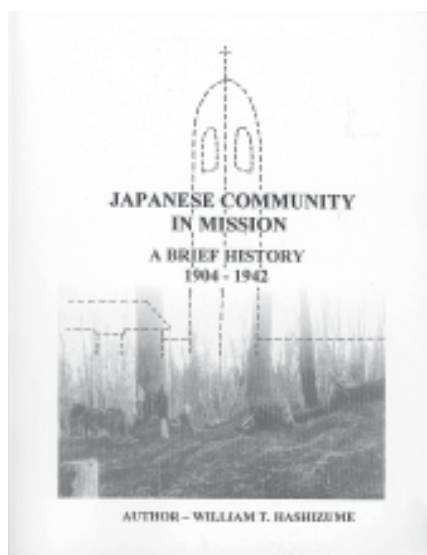
I would like to point out that during the 1920s, Japanese immigrants could enter North America through the ports of San Francisco, Portland, Tacoma, Seattle and Victoria. Several hundred Japanese entered through Portland, but they soon left either for the agricultural fields in California or railway maintenance jobs in Idaho, Montana and Nebraska. *

Mrs. Sakuya Nishimura volunteers every Tuesday at the JAPANESE CANADIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM cataloguing and translating archival material. Her article was originally printed in Japanese in the NIKKEI VOICE, September 2002. Vol. 24.

*Stan Fukawa's notes: the names for Washington state and San Francisco were probably borrowed from the Chinese rendering of these names in kanji because the Chinese readings are more fitting. 華 is pronounced "hwa" and 桑 is read "sang" so that the names can be seen as the state of Hwa (for Washington) and the port of Sang (for San Francisco). It is possible that the kanji name for Seattle is also derived from the Chinese usage because 沙 is pronounced "sha" in both languages.

This borrowing is quite common and explains why England is called Ei-ko-ku or "Ei" country in Japanese. In Chinese, 英 is pronounced "Ying" and the name means the country of Ying. Because Chinese names are short, the Chinese frequently abbreviate non-Chinese names to one syllable plus a title.

Book Review by Midge Ayukawa



William Tasaburo Hashizume's book: **Japanese Community in Mission, A Brief History, 1904-1942** was a monumental undertaking since his sources were scarce and the early pioneers are no longer available for consultation. But his lifetime experiences were definite assets. Bill was born in Mission, BC, went to Japan in 1939 while in his teens, graduated from a technical college in 1942, served in the Japanese Navy, and returned to Canada in 1954. After retiring from his engineering position at the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, he immersed himself in his effort to pre-

serve the history of this former Japanese community in the Fraser Valley. Fluently bilingual, he thoroughly researched Japanese books published in the twenties, the TAIRIKU NIPPO [Vancouver Japanese language newspaper, 1907-1941], and various municipal records and has completed a book which will be much appreciated by not only the descendants of these pioneers but also by historians. He has now preserved important information on the educational, church, and other social organizations, and the farming cooperatives. Especially interesting is his detailed explanation of the *yobiyose*

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system by which male immigrants came to Canada after the Gentleman's Agreement of 1908. To date, historians have had to rely heavily on Yamaga Yasutaro's **Hene'e Nokaishi** [History of the Haney Agricultural Association] for

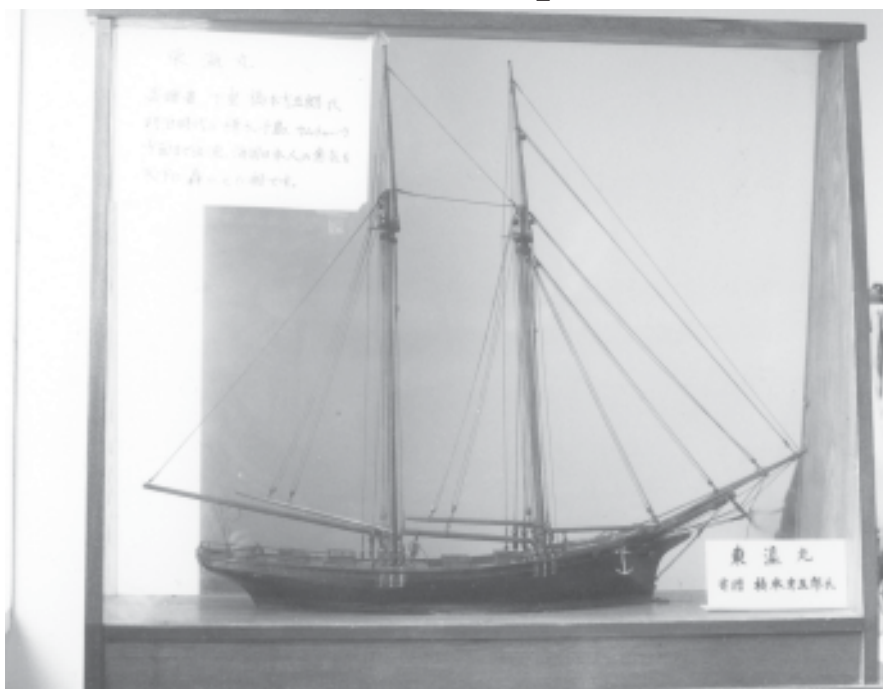
any information on the Fraser Valley berry industry previously dominated by the Japanese Canadians.

As a personal note, I am certain that my children will find it especially interesting that they are related to the largest "clan" that was in

Mission, the Shikaze.

The book is available for \$40 from the author. Laser copies of rare photographs in the book can also be ordered for \$3 a copy and \$1 for postage. Address: 24 Marsh Road, Scarborough, Ontario, M1K 1Y8. *

Sources of Historical and Genealogical Information in Japan by Mitsuo Yesaki



Model of the TOEI MARU in the Shimosato Elementary School. (Yesaki Family photo, 1998)

Since the autumn of 1998, I have traveled to Japan on two occasions to visit my eldest sister. During these visits, I spent some time looking for information about my roots. I visited individuals, government offices and museums in Wakayama, Tokyo, Kanagawa and Shizuoka Prefectures, on an informal basis, searching for historical and genealogical information of immigrants to Canada. This article describes the information I gathered during my visits and my impressions of the best sources of information in Japan.

Most of my time on my first visit was spent in Shimosato, Wakayama, Japan, a small village of my ancestors on the southeast coast of the Kii Peninsula. I inquired at the Shimosato Elementary School for in-

formation of Saigoro Hashimoto, the first known immigrant from this village. The school had a model of Hashimoto's pelagic sealing schooner **DAI-ICHI TOEI MARU** in the principal's office and a mounted fur seal in storage under the staircase on the main floor. The principal also provided me with a 3-page summary of Hashimoto's life history. Hashimoto apparently transported various Shimosato immigrants to Victoria on his trips to this coast to follow the migrating seals into the Bering Sea. His 95-year old daughter was still living in the family home; her past memory was good and she was able to identify her father in a group picture of brothers and cousins from our family collection. Relatives related that Toyomatsu (Dennojo) Ezaki was

the master carpenter that built the **TOEI MARU**. He had also immigrated to Canada and returned after a short stay because of a severe illness. I was unable to find collaborative documents or photographs to support these stories.

I next visited the Shimosato Municipal Office (*yaku-ba*) for information of my paternal grandfather. No records were kept at this office, but an official telephoned the Katsuura Municipal Office where all records for the district are held. With my grandfather's name and the number of his domicile (*banchi*), functionaries at the central office were able to locate his file and fax it to Shimosato after about a day. Information is given out only to direct descendants for a service charge of approximately ten Canadian dollars per file. Information in this file included the names of his parents, wife and marriage date, children and birth dates. With my great grandfather's name and the domicile number, I could have requested his file and progressed backwards to the ancestor that originally took up residence at the present site. I do not know if it is possible to trace one's lineage further without the domicile number. Apparently, a distant relative was able to trace his ancestors back 22 generations. Whether he was able to trace his lineage through the municipal office is unknown.

I was informed that the Buddhist Temples of the villages are good sources of genealogical information. I did not inquire at the Shimosato



Photograph of Saigoro Hashimoto identified by his 95 year old daughter. Front row from the left: Nizo Suruda (cousin), Hashimoto, Eiji Rokumatsu (cousin). Back row: Rinzo Hashimoto (brother), Saiichi Suruda (cousin), Rinshiro Madokoro (brother). (Yesaki Family photo, ca. 1930)

Buddhist Temple as the priest was not in residence and villagers were ignorant of his whereabouts. The family plots in the cemetery had four headstones on grandfather's side and five headstones on grandmother's side. Names were engraved on all the headstones, as were the birth and death dates on many.

The nearest public library was in Katsuura, three railway stations away. This library did not have any information on Saigoro Hashimoto or other immigrants. A larger public library in Shingu also did not have any information on Hashimoto and had one book with a section on immigrants to Canada. The Wakayama City Public Library had a special room for books about immigrants mainly in North and South America. There are 7,000 volumes in this collection as well as newspapers and magazines. A brochure describing this collection has been given to the Japanese Canadian National Museum. All three libraries that I visited did not have photograph collections.

Prior to my departure for Japan, I had written to Mr. Nishihama

of the America-mura Museum about my pending visit with Harold Steves to the museum. He met us at a *ryokan* in Mio and gave us a short tour of the village and the museum, which was atop a mountain with a panoramic view of the Pacific Ocean, the coastline and the settlements of Mio and Gobo. The building was partitioned into a refreshment parlour in front and the museum in the back. The artifacts and photographs were well displayed with descriptions in Japanese and English. There were about 100 photographs in the museum collection, mostly of people. We did not have sufficient time to inquire about their documents collection.

In Shimosato, I visited relatives and others with parents who had immigrated to Canada to seek life histories, photographs and documents. One of my father's cousins was able to recount his father's life history in some detail. Hidekichi, second son of Toyomatsu Ezaki, assisted his father in building the *TOEI MARU* and upon its completion crewed aboard the vessel with Saigoro Hashimoto for three years. He immigrated to

Canada and found employment in the Skeena River, where he gillnetted during the salmon season and built boats in the off-season. In the mid-1920s, he spent some time in San Mateo Bay and built at least one seine boat for Toyojiro Nakamoto. I was able to borrow seven photographs from his family collection. Another of my father's cousins could not provide information of either his grandfather Toyomatsu or his father Matsusuke, but he did have a box-full of old photographs. He was not interested in keeping them and offered to give me the entire collection. Unfortunately, I did not take him up on his offer and only took twelve photographs taken in British Columbia, including five photographs of the *Wakayama-ken Sein-in-kai*. Yet another of my father's cousins was not able to provide information of her father Toshihiko and had only a few photographs from British Columbia.

On my second trip to Japan, I stopped in Tokyo, Yokohama and Shimizu before traveling to Shimosato. Hiroko Takamura, a visiting professor I'd met at the Special Collections Library of the University of British Columbia, contacted me at my hotel in Tokyo and kindly accompanied me to the Diplomatic Record Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Gaimusho*) the following day. I was interested in determining when my grandfather immigrated to Canada. The Japanese Government kept records of all immigrants leaving the country after overseas travel restrictions were lifted in the Meiji Era. The names of immigrants are on microfilms by year, province and village. We started searching the 1898 records. The microfilm readers were automatic, so we simply typed in the province and the microfilm would be reeled to Wakayama. We then scrolled through the names searching for Jinshiro Ezaki from Shimosato.

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We also searched through the 1899, 1900 and 1901 records, but unfortunately could not find any record for my grandfather. There were records of a Shintaro Ezaki and Toyota Ezaki from Shimosato immigrating to Canada in 1899. Jinshiro either immigrated outside the years perused or traveled under another name. However, we did find the record of my great grandfather Toyomatsu Ezaki immigrating in 1898, confirming stories of relatives in Japan and here of him spending a short period in British Columbia. All records are written in old Japanese with archaic *kanji*, so anyone perusing these records needs to have a good working knowledge of Japanese. My Japanese is rudimentary so I would not have been able to access this database without the assistance of Hiroko Takamura. This deficiency and the lack of time prevented me from inquiring for further information stored in the Diplomatic Record Office. A former diplomat with the Japanese Consulate in Vancouver informed me that some old documents from this consulate are available in Tokyo.

The following morning, I visited the NYK (Nippon Yusen Kaisha)

Maritime Museum in Yokohama seeking information of the *S.S. AKI MARU*, the steamship on which grandmother and father immigrated in 1915. The vessel was built by Mitsubishi Zosencho of Nagasaki in 1903. The *S.S. AKI MARU* took about 15 days for the trans-Pacific crossing from Yokohama to Victoria. Third-class fare was approximately \$43 (85 yen) with European meals and \$33 with Japanese food. Third-class passengers were billeted in staterooms built for eight persons. I was not able to obtain employment records of persons from Shimosato that sought employment with NYK, as most of the company records were lost during the World War II saturation bombings of Tokyo and Yokohama.

I had visited most of my relatives for information of ancestors on my first visit to Shimosato, so on my second visit, I contacted descendants of immigrants from the village. A daughter of Takematsu Matsumoto did not have any photographs from British Columbia to show me. There were many photographs, but apparently they were lent to various people over the years and were never re-

turned. Matsumoto had immigrated to British Columbia in the 1890s, fished out of Steveston and was president of the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society in 1904. He left the salmon fishery and operated a hotel/boarding house on Alexander Street. He moved his family back to Shimosato in 1923 to enroll the children in school. He remained in Vancouver until just before the outbreak of World War II. The grandson of Nizo Suruda also did not have any old photographs from North America. Suruda immigrated to British Columbia aboard the *TOEI MARU* in about 1894.

My general impression is that the best sources of information about immigrants to Canada are their relatives and descendants, who may have old photographs, documents and anecdotes. Other excellent sources of information are the municipal offices in Japan and the Diplomatic Record Office in Tokyo. The libraries and the public and private museums that I visited had few photographs in their collections. I cannot comment on their book and document collections because of my inability to read Japanese. *

Steve Turnbull Appointed Manager Curator of JCNM

The Japanese Canadian National Museum is pleased to introduce, Steve Turnbull, Manager Curator of the national museum and heritage programs.

Turnbull has lived in BC for most of his life and has worked in the museum community for 20 years. In addition to his museum experience, Turnbull also has completed his Masters of Museum Studies Administration at the University of Toronto and is a certified secondary school teacher. He has worked for the Burnaby Heritage Museum as Assistant Curator and Education Director, and as President and Director of the BC Museum Association.

After being informed of his appointment, Turnbull reiterated his commitment to the community and the museum, "*I am looking forward to this new challenge and hope to meet and work with the Nikkei community to create an active museum of national stature.*"

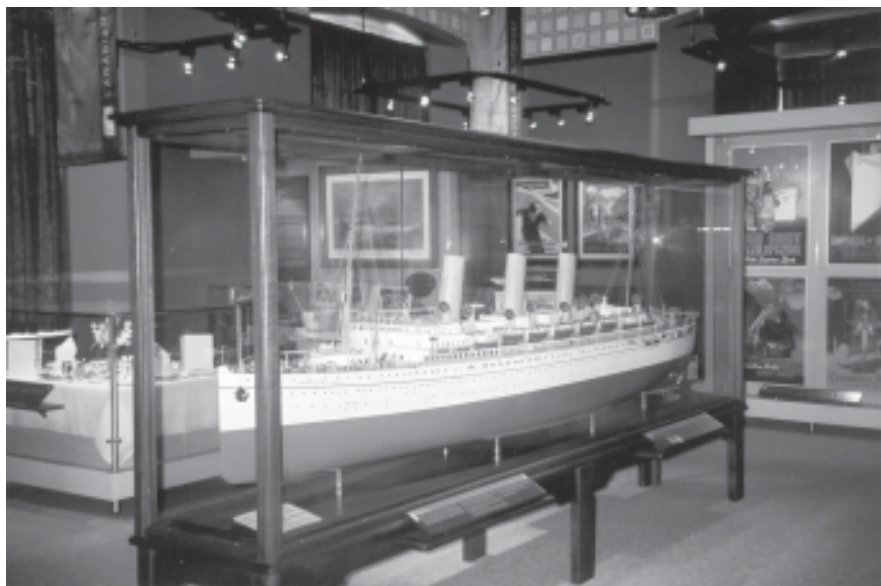
"The Japanese Canadian National Museum Directors and Programs Committee are elated to have a person of Steve's experience and education to help lead the national museum and heritage programs. With the merger of the Japanese Canadian National Museum Heritage Centre Society nearing completion, we look for-

ward to working alongside Steve in fulfilling our vision for a national museum", said Stan Fukawa, President of JCNM. Programs Committee co-chair Frank Kamiya added, "*Being a newcomer to the Nikkei community, our board and committee are delighted to work alongside Steve as he gets to know the people and the history of our community. With the ideas, community partnership and exhibits and program experience in museums that Steve brings, combined with the knowledge and community experience of the Programs Committee, we feel the museum will become a stronger organization.*" *

Ties to the *EMPRESS* by Carl Yokota

It must have been a thrill for Masakazu Yokota on May 23, 1929; not only was it his fifteenth birthday, but he was on board the Canadian Pacific Steamship Line's *EMPRESS OF ASIA* bound for Vancouver. He had embarked on his ocean journey as a steerage-class passenger from Kobe after arriving from Mio-mura in Wakayama Prefecture. The eldest son of my grandfather, Bunkichi Yokota, Masakazu was to join his father in Steveston and fish for salmon on the Fraser River. Although born in Steveston, Masakazu received his early schooling in Japan. Eleven days after leaving Kobe, the Empress of Asia arrived in Vancouver on June 1, 1929. Tragically, one year later on July 30, 1930, young Masakazu lost his life in a fishing accident on the Fraser River.

On May 3, 2001, the University of British Columbia officially unveiled the Wallace B. Chung and Madeline H. Chung Collection and Reading Room on the second floor of the historic Main Library building. This rare collection of the Canadian



Model of the EMPRESS OF ASIA. (Carl Yokota photo, 2002)

Pacific Railway and Steamship Line, early Canadian exploration and Asian immigration artifacts and memorabilia has been made available through the generous donation of the Chung family.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is a four-meter long scale model of the *EMPRESS OF ASIA*, which is housed in its own handcrafted wood and glass display case. This model took Dr. Wallace Chung, a well-respected surgeon and retired faculty member of the University of British Columbia, over 4000 hours to painstakingly reconstruct to its present magnificent condition. When I first learned of this extraordinary exhibit, I knew I had to drive out to the Point Grey campus grounds and view the *EMPRESS OF ASIA* model and the other unique artifacts on display.

Seeing the *EMPRESS OF ASIA* model proudly displayed in the center of the exhibition room intrigued me to learn a little more about one of the premier and fastest Trans-Pacific passenger steamships of its era. Completed in 1912 by Fairfield Shipbuilding of Govan, Scotland, the white-hulled *EMPRESS OF ASIA* had a gross tonnage of over 16,900 tons,

measured 570 feet in length, had a beam of 68 feet, and cruised at a service speed of 19 knots. With four passenger levels, 1st class, 2nd class, 3rd class, and oriental steerage, the *EMPRESS OF ASIA* was capable of carrying over 1200 passengers and 500 crew. It had made 307 crossings of the Pacific Ocean up to January 1941 when it was converted into a World War II troop ship. The *EMPRESS OF ASIA* would go on to serve in both the Atlantic and South East Asia theatres. The ship was requisitioned into military service twice before in 1914 and 1918 during the Great War. On February 5, 1942, the *EMPRESS OF ASIA* while on convoy was severely attacked by Japanese dive-bombers and sunk in the waters near Singapore. The remains of the *EMPRESS OF ASIA* were eventually salvaged in 1960, although earlier attempts were made. Artifacts from the ship were eventually recovered in July of 1998, and an exhibition was held at the Singapore Museum of History in February of 2000 chronicling the ship's colorful history and fateful demise.

By coincidence, while visiting Steveston resident Larry



Chung Collection information panel. (Carl Yokota photo, 2002)

Maekawa in the summer of 2001, I learned that in September of 1930, as a young fifteen-year old, he and his family sailed on board the *EMPRESS OF ASIA* from Vancouver to Yokohama. The ocean crossing itself was not very rough with few storms encountered. The ship did, however, pitch up and down in the seas but with very little roll. Larry recalled that accommodations for the Asian steerage passengers, who had the least expensive tickets, were "bare bones", with rows of metal bunk beds on one end and a cluster of tables and chairs on the other in an open floor layout offering no privacy whatsoever. Food served were frequently Chinese dishes and very tasty. For children on board, there was not much

for them to do since they mainly had to stay below deck. Occasionally, a Japanese ship steward would sing Japanese songs and do magic card tricks for the children. Apart from the Japanese, there were a large number of Chinese who were destined for Nagasaki, Hong Kong, or Shanghai, but they were housed in a different area of the ship. As the *EMPRESS OF ASIA* approached Yokohama, Mt. Fuji came into view. Larry recalled vividly how on that memorable occasion some of the older Japanese passengers, some weeping, clasped their hands together and bowed deeply in the direction of their beloved Mt. Fuji. I wonder if young Masakazu was fortunate enough to see Mt. Fuji

on his journey?

Since it's inaugural opening, The Chung Collection has welcomed over 7500 visitors, many to view the showcase model of the *EMPRESS OF ASIA*. For our family, ties to this once splendid Trans-Pacific passenger steamship began well over seventy-two years ago. Having visited this very special exhibition now on three different occasions, I can safely say it is well worth the visit. The Chung Collection is open Tuesday to Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., except on statutory holidays. Admission is free. For additional information or group tour arrangements, contact the University of British Columbia at (604)-822-4365. *

A Call for Pre-War *Oshogatsu* Celebration Stories

Oshogatsu is the most important festival in the Japanese calendar. However, the present day New Year's celebrations are neither as elaborate or prolonged as in the past. This coming winter issue of NIKKEI IMAGES will focus on pre-war *Oshogatsu* celebration stories. We

are interested in receiving stories of how *Oshogatsu* was celebrated in Japantown, Vancouver and in the fishing, farming, lumbering and mining communities along the BC coast. What foods were prepared, who were the guests and the feasting, drinking, singing and dancing enjoyed during

the festivities. Please send typed copies or floppies with stories to the JCNM office at 6688 Southoaks Crescent, Burnaby, BC. V5E 4M7 or to Mitsuo Yesaki at Apt. 1105 - 1740 Comox Street, Vancouver, BC. V6G 2Z1. Stories can also be e-mailed to moeyesaki@aol.com. *

Thank you to renewing members for your continuing support and Welcome to new members between November 16, 2002 and January 18, 2003!

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Tom Yamaura, Vancouver, for donation in March 2002		
Bunji & Marilyn Sakiyama, Richmond, for donation in August 2002.		
Donation in memory of Ruth Martha Hamaguchi, March 20, 1908 to December 22, 2002. Dave Hamaguchi, Richmond.		
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