

NIKKEI IMAGES



Tiled entryway to the Morimoto building at 328 Powell Street, Vancouver, BC, ca.1920



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Editorial Committee:

Beth Carter; Stanley Fukawa, Grace Hama, Frank Kamiya, Kaye Kishibe, Linda Reid, Edzard Teubert, Mitsuo Yesaki, Carl Yokota

Editorial Design:

Kaori Ide

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NNMHC
6688 Southoaks Crescent,
Burnaby, B.C., V5E 4M7
Canada
tel: (604) 777-7000
fax: (604) 777-7001
jcnm@nikkeiplace.org
www.jcnm.ca
www.nikkeiimages.com

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Morimoto became a prominent figure in the Japanese community as an art dealer, opening several stores selling Japanese art and imported goods.

Although Morimoto only leased the U. Morimoto & Co. Dry Goods store from 1920-1921, the building's occupants collectively attributed to the breadth of history it shares today. Built in 1912, the buildings' first businesses were as a Japanese Tea Room, Japanese Rooms, and the Kane Shooting Gallery. The name of the Japanese Rooms changed to become the Stanley Rooms and then to the King Rooms, which continues to the present and are still used for accommodation. However, the Japanese Tea Room went through more dramatic changes to become a dry goods store (occupied at different times by owners Yamarichi, Higashiyama, and Morimoto) and later was the home of the Canadian Japanese Social Athletic Club in the 1920s.

The 328 Powell Street building had seen its fair share of occupants in its time, from populous storefronts to the bleak occupancy of today. This building may soon be gentrified like its local neighbours, but hopefully through its changes, the signage 'Morimoto' will be preserved and serve as a historical and cultural icon to new occupants and visitors of the area.

Big Changes with Nikkei Images

by Beth Carter

You may notice some changes to this edition of Nikkei Images! With a streamlined new design and a new printer, the Editorial committee is very excited to present this improved edition of the inhouse journal of the Japanese Canadian National Museum. The wonderful historical and cultural content will remain the same, but thanks to the design prowess of Kwantlen Polytechnic University graphic design student, Kaori Ide, we have increased the number of photographs and the page layouts are much easier to read. Thank you to Kaori for all her hard work!

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank outgoing member Christine Kondo, who is leaving our committee to spend more time with her family. Christine made numerous contributions to Nikkei Images and we will really miss her. Thanks!

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The Faces of 328 Powell Street

by Carmen Lam

With gentrification of neighbouring streets, passing through Powell Street today shows the absence of a once busy Japanese community with merchant shops, homes and schools. The community strived through tough times amidst economic hardship and conflict. One such example was the 1907 Asian-riot when European-Canadians provoked by employment losses to Asian workers who were widely accepting lower wages attacked storefronts and homes in Chinatown and Japantown. All Japanese residents were forcibly relocated to other parts of B.C. or Canada in 1942, but today, though many Japanese have returned to Vancouver, it is the architecture and signage of the original buildings that tell the story of the early Japanese Canadians and reveals Japantown's cultural past.

The cover photo was taken in 1991 for the Powell Street News and Oral History Project. The existent 'Morimoto' tile insignia at 328 Powell Street could be considered historic street typography in Vancouver. Once the entrance to U. Morimoto & Co. Dry Goods store, the strategically laid tiles have left the most recognizable mark, not just to the building, but also to Powell Street itself.

Hailing from the village Hitonose in Hiroshima, Japan, Umetaro Morimoto and his family settled in the Davie Street neighbourhood of Vancouver for almost 20 years. Beginning his career as a labourer before succeeding as a businessman, Morimoto became more than an average storeowner. Persevering through the first Great War,



Figure 1. Gitaro and Tane Hirota with Hayao. (Hirota Family photo, ca. 1912)
 Figure 2. 17-year old Hayao Hirota. (Hirota Family photo, 1927)
 Figure 3. Asakichi Obayashi. (Hirota Family photo, date unknown)
 Figure 4. Yonematsu and Mitsukan with their children. (Hirota Family photo, ca. 1890)
 Figure 5. Kakuyoshi and Tomino Obayashi. (Hirota Family photo, date unknown)

My great grandfather, Kunimatsu Hirota (1834-1890), was born in a small fishing village on the island of Yuge (You-geh). Yuge is a small island 6 km long and 2 km wide and some 10 sq km in area located in the Inland Sea between the mainland of Japan, Honshu, and Japan's largest island, Shikoku, that sits on the underbelly of Japan.

My grandfather, Gitaro (1874-1946), married Tane Hanaoka (1875-1956) in the 1890's. He then shipped on a Norwegian three-masted schooner out of Yokohama in 1899 as an assistant cook. The ship sailed to San Francisco and then to New York via Cape Horn and then returned to Yokohama within a year. Two daughters, Kin-ue (1901-) and Kunie (1908-) were born in Yuge.

Gitaro left for Canada in 1900 to fish for salmon on the Fraser River and established himself in the small fishing community of Ladner in British Columbia. He returned to Japan for his wife and together they sailed for Canada in 1908 or 1909 leaving the two daughters to be raised by relatives in Yuge. My father, Hayao (1910-2001) was born in Ladner, B.C. He is shown in the photograph between his parents in a wide brimmed hat and holding a flower. He appears to be wearing a dress!

Hayao was followed by three younger siblings, Masae Shimi-

zu (1911-), Masue Umebayashi (1912-), and Suwa Hirota (1915-). All four, born in Canada, were taken to Yuge by their parents to be raised and educated in Japan. This was apparently common practice among those who could afford to accompany their children to Japan during their formative years. The date they left for Japan is unknown though it was certainly after Suwa was born and when Hayao would have been at least 5 years old.

Hayao and his three younger sisters returned to Canada around 1926 after Hayao had finished middle school in Yuge. He enrolled in grade school in Steveston, British Columbia but did not last a year. Having to help his father fish at night, he would fall asleep in the classroom during the day. His formal Canadian education in English was thus ended when his father needed his undivided assistance in fishing. Our second photo of Hayao was taken at the age of seventeen and he is now wearing "plus fours"!

Hayao purchased a houseboat and a fishing boat for \$800 in 1934. He partitioned the houseboat into two rooms and a bathroom for use during the summer fishing season. Hayao was an inveterate animal lover and took in a stray cat. Soon the houseboat was populated with a number of cats and kittens. However his idyllic life as a bachelor was quickly curtailed by overriding

events.

My genetic roots on my mother's side reside in an Obayashi family from Uoshima, Japan. Uoshima (Uo means fish and shima means island) is a small island about 1 km. by 2 km. in size and three sq. km. in area and about 12 km. south east of Yuge. The population of Uoshima village in 1998 was 369 and is slowly shrinking.

My great, great grandfather, Asakichi Obayashi was born in Uoshima village in the 1860's. He is shown in the earliest known photograph of the family line wearing a suit, a ruffled collar, and a bowler hat.

From his humble birth in a small fishing village in a very rural province of Japan to a point in time where he dresses in western clothing for a photograph is a story that calls out to be told but is now lost to us. He married Tami (maiden name unknown, mnu) and had one child my great grandfather Yonematsu Obayashi. Yonematsu married Mitsukan (mnu) and, unlike his father before him, proceeded to father eight children, the first being my grandmother, Asano Obayashi (1891-1987). Two of the younger sisters, Kusue and Nobuko, as well as two brothers, Ryoza and Michio are shown standing with their parents in a family photograph taken probably in the late 1890's.

Asano's younger brother, Yori-ichi, became the reeve of one of

The Hirota/Obayashi Families

Family History Series No. 12

by Theodore T. Hirota

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the many islands in the Inland Sea. Jutaro Obayashi (1873-1954), no relation, married Asano Obayashi (1891-1987) in Japan and immigrated to Canada to become what the Japanese call Issei, that is, the first generation in a new land. He began his residency in Steveston. He moved from a small fishing village on an island in the Inland Sea of Japan to a small fishing village at the mouth of the Fraser River! A daughter, Hideko (1914-2003) was born in the Japanese Fishermen's hospital on Number One Road at Chatham Street in Steveston and is identified as a Nisei (second generation). A son, Hatsuzo (1915-1984), was born the following year. My mother, Tetsuko (1917-2003), was born on March 13, 1917. At the age of eighteen months, my mother and her older siblings, Hideko and Hatsuzo, accompanied their mother, Asano, to Uoshima. Asano returned to Canada while the children remained in Japan and were raised by an aunt Tomino (a niece of Jutaro Obayashi) and uncle, Kakuyoshi Obayashi (shown in formal dress,

possibly in a wedding photograph) in Uoshima.

The Obayashi home, established by funds sent by Jutaro Obayashi from Canada, was rented and maintained by Kakuyoshi and Tomino. The house, still in existence, is located on the hillside at the edge of the village and overlooks the harbour below.

The path up to the house is very steep. The only road in the village runs along the harbour front. Kakuyoshi's first-born, a son named Hisashi, served in the military as a soldier and died in the war. A second son, Kensaku served in the navy and also perished in the war.

Kakuyoshi's third son, Shinobu (1922-2007), attended primary school with my mother Tetsuko in the village. The school is still standing but is now a teachers' residence. Shinobu later traveled to the nearby island of Yuge and enrolled in the Yuge National College of Maritime Technology (first established as the Yuge Seamen's School in 1901). He later obtained his credentials as a ship's captain and then traveled the

world. Shinobu retired from a life on the sea and lived with his wife Miyako (nee Kanaoka) (1923-) on the family property until his death in 2007.

Both of Shinobu's parents, Kakuyoshi and Tomino Obayashi, were buried in the backyard overlooking the garden. Kazue Fujita, Shinobu's niece and his closest remaining relative in Uoshima (everyone else has left the island to find work), looked after the welfare of Shinobu and Miyako.

In March of 1927 my mother and my uncle Hatsuzo returned to Canada aboard the steamship S.S. Alabama Maru bound for Victoria, B.C. Japanese who were educated in Japan and returned to Canada are called kibe. Originally, the S.S. Alabama was a 1,940-tonne, coal-carrying collier built in Newcastle, England in 1879. The ship went aground near the Eden lighthouse, New South Wales, Australia in 1916 but was refloated with little damage. The ship eventually was sold to Japanese interests in 1925 and renamed the S.S. Alabama Maru.



A year after the Obayashi kibe returned to Canada, a sister Teruko (1928-) was born in Steveston.

Asano's mother, Mitsu Kan was the subject of a dodoitsu (a four line, 26-syllable poem that is sometimes performed as a folk song accompanied by a three-stringed musical instrument called a shamisen) written by Mitsu Kan's father, Shinzo Kan under the pen name "Kan Shoyen":

Momiji gonyaniya
Hooki wa eranu
Musume Mitsujo no
Sode de haku

(Author's Translation)
In the maple leaf dye shop
A broom is not required
Daughter Mitsujo is now
Sweeping with her sleeve

PHOTO Left:
Tetsuko Obayashi. (Hirota Family photo, ca. 1934)

PHOTO Below:
Engagement photograph of Tetsuko and Hayao Hirota. (Hirota Family photo, 1935)

According to my mother, Tetsuko, the dye shop was offered to Shinzo Kan as a reward for services rendered to a lord in the area. The dye shop sold cloth to samurai warriors.

Much less is known about my maternal grandfather, Jutaro. He also was an Obayashi but not related, and clearly from another island since he was married and had two children, Tameichi (m) and a girl before he left Japan for Canada with Asano. Tameichi had two children Tameko (f) and Kazutaka (m), both residing in Japan. Details regarding Jutaro's other life came to light during a search for roots by one of the relatives. Jutaro was the first of five children born to Hide Obayashi (mnu). Her husband's father (my great, great grandfather) was Kigiro Obayashi of whom only the name is known. Jutaro's other siblings were Otokichi (m), Yuri (f), Yumatsu (m), and Ichizo (m). Otokichi was the most prolific of the siblings with nine children. Only two of the nine are known; the sixth-born, Sawaichi ended up on a sugar-beet farm in Alberta with my parents during the evacuation of the Japanese-Canadians from the west coast of British Columbia and the last-born sibling, Tamino married Kakuyoshi Obayashi (did he change his last name?) and established residency in the house built with funds from her uncle, Jutaro.

My mother, Tetsuko, returned to Steveston at age 10 according to records of the S.S. Alabama Maru. The earliest known formal photograph of Tetsuko is shown at about age 17-18. A formal photograph taken on February 14, 1935 marked her engagement to Hayao Hirota at age 18.

My mother's inordinate fear of animals ensured that dad's menagerie of cats were banished from the houseboat and from their lives. They were married on December 14, 1935 in Steveston, B.C and took up residence in a home in Ladner.

My brother, Yoshiaki (Jackson) was born on September 27, 1936 in Steveston. He is a Sansei or third generation. In December 1936, Hayao purchased the Walker Em-



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Obayashi home on Uoshima.
(Hirota Family photo, 1987)



Obayashi grave on Uoshima.
(Hirota Family photo, 1987)

porium that occupies lots # 17 and 18 on Moncton Street opposite the Hepworth Building for the taxes that owed on the property. Hayao partitioned the former hardware store into a corner garage, furniture store, and a pool hall. Hayao's brother-in-law, Taro Shimizu, an experienced auto mechanic working on Gore Avenue in Vancouver became a partner in the enterprise named River Garage. Hayao fished during the summer fishing season and then worked in the garage with Shimizu in the winter months. Teruyuki (Theodore) was born on September 27, 1938, exactly two years to the day after his older brother.

The family was evacuated on May 15, 1942 to Alberta to work on a sugar beet farm near Turin north of Lethbridge. After two years of back-breaking work during the growing season and no work at all during the winter months, the family savings were nearly depleted. The family left for Chapleau, Ontario, a town 125 miles north of Sault St. Marie, to join Tetsuko's sister and her family. Hayao began work full time as a labourer for the C.P.R. As the railway system moved from steam locomotion to diesel power in the late 1940s, Hayao used his combustion engine knowledge from his mechanic's experience in Steveston to complete a correspondence course in diesel mechanics and advanced to a higher paying position within the C.P.R.

After Bill 198 amended the Dominion Elections Act on June 15, 1948 such that Japanese Canadians now had the right to vote, wartime restrictions on travel to and domicile in B.C. were lifted. Eileen San-ae, a sister to Jackson and Ted, was

born on August 1, 1949 in Chapleau, Ontario.

In the spring of 1952, Hayao decided to return to B.C. to begin fishing again after a hiatus of 10 years. Hayao, his wife Tetsuko, and Eileen left by train to a life that was no longer regulated by a company whistle in a company town but by the seasons of the year. Sons Jackson and Ted accompanied by their maternal grandparents left for B.C. after the school year was over. Jackson and Ted attended Richmond High School with many other returnees. The return of many Japanese Canadians to the west coast after seven or more years especially those whose fathers left the occupation of salmon fishing, resonates with the return of the salmon to the rivers of British Columbia, albeit after only four years at sea. Many other Japanese Canadians, perhaps the majority, did not return but instead remained where they had been scattered in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. In the majority of cases, intermarriage within the younger generations of Sansei and Yonsei (fourth generation) to non-Japanese has left and will leave their offspring with perhaps only the name as recognizably Japanese.

Jackson graduated from the University of Idaho with a Masters degree in visual arts and mar-

ried Gladys Schuster (1946-). Both became school teachers. They had two boys, Jonathan Michael (1975-) and Matthew James (1976-) both born in Chilliwack, B.C. Jackson helped establish the only Japanese Tozan climbing kiln in Canada on a hillside at Malaspina College in Nanaimo, B.C.

Jackson retired from his art technician position at Malaspina College to continue potting and fishing recreationally for salmon. Ted graduated from the University of British Columbia, married Nancy Sakiyama (1939-) in Steveston on June 1, 1963 and went on to graduate school at the University of Toronto. Ted began teaching psychology at the University of Wind-



Jackson Hirota beside the Tozan kiln near Nanaimo. (Hirota Family photo, ca. 2000)

sor in 1969. Two girls, Susan Elaine (1969-) and Sandra Jane (1971-) were born in Windsor. Susan, a graduate of the University of Windsor Law School, married Mark Lucier (1966-) a fellow graduate who became a teacher and they had two children, Alexandra Lauren (2000-) and Noah Daniel (2003-). Susan at present is employed by the legal department of the City of Windsor. Sandra also graduated with a degree from the university in psychology and moved to Japan in 2000 to teach English to young children. Sandra returned to live and work in Victoria, B.C. in 2006.

Eileen graduated from the University of British Columbia and married Robert Gilchrist (1945-) a fellow teacher. Both received a Masters degree in counseling from the University of Arizona. They have two children, Karen Sayuri (1978-) born in New Westminster and Michael Kiyoshi (1980-) born in Kimberly, B.C. In 1987 Eileen traveled with her family on a backpacking and sight-seeing tour of Japan, with a side visit to her relatives in Yuge and Uoshima Islands in the Inland Sea. After climbing the steep hillside to Shinobu's house overlooking the Uoshima harbor, she was taken on a hakamari (cemetery visit) to the ancestral site some distance behind Shinobu's back garden. Another relative carrying a chabin (teapot) full of water accompanied them to the gravesite where the water was poured over the granite gravestone in a cleansing ritual of reverence. At the foot of the gravesite, Shinobu in clear and unaccented English surprised Eileen with the declaration "Here are your roots!" The emotions that were evoked brought

tears to her eyes and rendered her utterly speechless. The events that had transpired to place her there at the gravesite of her ancestors and the overwhelming clarity of her genetic connection to what lay before her on this wooded slope on a miniscule island half way around the world from where she was born was not lost on her.

Eileen remarried in Kimberly, B.C. in July 1996 to Brian Niven (1950-) an engineer and took up residency in Calgary, Alberta. They relocated to a 25-acre farm in the Kooteney Valley just outside of Creston to pursue Eileen's interest in water-colour painting in the Hirota Gallery attached to her home.

She presently markets both her paintings and Jackson's pottery from the studio. She is shown in front of her home/studio with her brother Ted.

The last part of this family history contains a reference to a legacy to be left for future generations. The legacy consists of a storyline that encompasses seven generations (five of which are in Canada) and stretches over about 150 years. Not long in terms of written history, in fact, a nano sec in time, but long enough for future generations to meaningfully grasp the connectedness across families and to place in perspective whatever links the connections might provide to look back to the past and to appreciate the line that extends to the future.

The saddest part that I experienced in writing this family history was the lost opportunity to talk to my parents about more of what had happened in their lives and the missing information that is now unavailable that would have filled in

large gaps in the chronology. Some of the information about my paternal grandfather's travel to New York and my mother's stories about the written poetry of her great, great grandfather are priceless nuggets that were unearthed through questions and recorded at a time when I was only casually interested in my heritage for which I am now thankful that they were not lost.



A Sewing Pattern for a Young Boy's Sailor Suit made from Newspapers, c. 1912. Oikawa Family Collection, JCNM 2009.2.13

Treasures of the Museum

A Sewing Pattern for a Boy's Sailor Suit

by Alexis Jensen

It looks like a jumble of old newspapers pinned together, right? It is nothing special, nothing overtly historical. But you would be wrong. This wondrous artefact is brimming with history and is an important piece exemplifying the interlacing of Japanese and Canadian cultures.

The material used for this artefact is an abundant hodge-podge of several Japanese and Canadian newspapers like the CANADA SHINPO dated July 9th, Meiji 42 (1909) and THE VANCOUVER WORLD dated July 29, 1912. Publications like CANADA SHINPO and the NEW CANADIAN show that the Japanese population living in Canada was large enough to support at least two Japanese publications. And if you look closely the advertisements in the CANADA SHINPO are in both English and Japanese. The presence of both newspapers and their bilingualism shows the integration of the seamstress's family, and the Japanese Canadian community as a whole, into Canada.

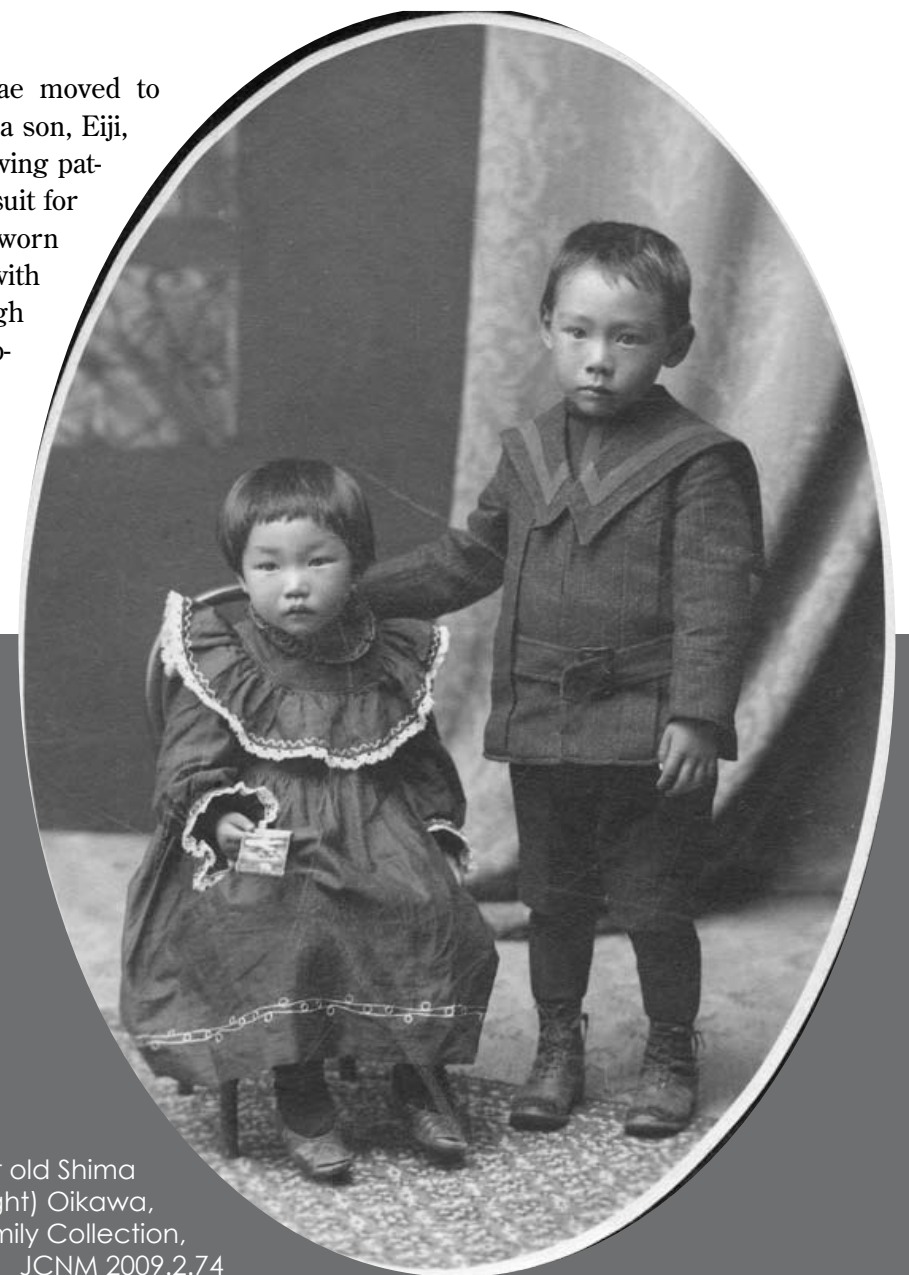
In their second incarnation, the newspapers have been cut up into a sewing pattern to make a young boy's sailor suit. Again this shows the joining of cultures with Japanese women applying their traditional sewing techniques and skills to a Canadian-style outfit - that of a little sailor.

The sewing pattern was cut by Yae Oikawa. Yae was the second wife of the famous Jinzaburo Oikawa. Jinzaburo Oikawa was a man who set his fortunes on Canada, becoming a luminary in a new international entrepreneurial class that emerged during the transitional period between feudal and modern times in Meiji-era Japan. He came to Canada in 1897 and built up a business, finally mortgaging Don Island on the Fraser River and setting up a colony for Japanese to immigrate to. Over the years, Jinzaburo went back and forth between Japan and Canada, shuttling Japanese men and women over. In the end, it is estimated he brought over 400 hundred people to Canada to help them begin their new life.

Jinzaburo's second wife, Yae moved to Canada and there gave birth to a son, Eiji, and a daughter, Shima. This sewing pattern was used to make a sailor suit for Eiji; an outfit similar to the one worn by him, seen here in the picture with his sister. This artefact, though rich in history, is not rich in a happy history. The same year THE VANCOUVER WORLD newspa-

per was used to sew the sailor suit was the same year young Eiji drowned. This tragic event was something the Oikawa family never recovered from and most likely contributed to their final move back to Japan in 1917.

The sewing pattern brings about a sad tale but it is also a tale of perseverance, ingenuity and a mixing of cultures.



A Studio Portrait of three year old Shima (left) and five year old Eiji (right) Oikawa, Before 1912. Oikawa Family Collection, JCNM 2009.2.74

The Tanaka Tofu Shop on Powell Street

Memories of Min and Bud Tanaka

Recorded by Stan Fukawa / Edited by Mickey Tanaka

Bud, Bill, Min, Mike, Miki and Sam Tanaka (aged 88, 86, 84, 82, 80 and 78) are six of the eight surviving Tanaka siblings whose parents owned a tofu shop on Powell Street in Vancouver's Japantown until 1942 when, as Nikkei, they were forced to leave the Pacific coast. From the brothers' memories, we are able to tell the story of their family business before WWII. An earlier issue of Nikkei Images had this description of the Tanaka tofu shop.

At the back of 451 was the Tanaka Tofu establishment. Mr. Tanaka owned the building and rented it out to stores in the front with residences in the back, and ran his business in the back from a separate building. [Nikkei Images, July 1997, p. 4, Judy Inouye script for the JCNM walking tour, a part of the Powell Street Festival: which began in 1977.]

The parents were Ichijiro and Miki (nee Tsuji) who emigrated from Hassaka, a village near Hikone in Shiga prefecture. Ichijiro was born in 1886 and arrived in Canada in 1903. Miki was born in the same village in 1891 and came as a picture bride in 1911. They eventually had ten children, one son dying within a month of birth, one daughter when she was 19. The other two survivors are Sayo Hattori age 96 and Masa Yada, 91.



Mr. and Mrs. Tanaka at their 50th anniversary celebration, 1961. Tanaka Family photo.



Tanaka Children, 1941. Tanaka Family photo.
L – R: Osamu Sam, Shigeru Bill, Mitsuru Miki, Kazuo Bud,
Masako, Minoru, Akira Mike

The Tanakas opened their business in 1913 when the original owner of the tofu shop, Miwa Ono returned to Japan. Before opening the tofu shop, Ichijiro worked in sawmills in Vancouver and Tacoma. Miki did some housework and cooking in a boarding house. Being from Shiga prefecture, he came from a region renowned for its Omi Shonin entrepreneurial spirit. Omi-no-kuni or Go-shu was the fiefdom which became Shiga prefecture after the Meiji Restoration.

There is a learned society today called the Omi Shonin Research Society which has been studying the legacy of the entrepreneurial tradition of Shiga prefecture in some of the largest corporations in Japan and even among immigrants to Canada. A Japanese scholar, Prof. Toshiji Sasaki, noted in Nihonjin Kanada Imin-shi that in the prewar period, almost half the merchants in Vancouver's Japantown were from Shiga prefecture although they were only 20 percent of Japanese immigrants to Canada. Being of that tradition, they were more likely to take a commercial path as the next step up in their life histories rather than buying farmland or a fishing boat. (See Nikkei Images, Autumn 2001 for the biography of another Shiga prefecture immigrant to Canada, Sataro Kuwahara, who established a retail business in Calgary which was expanded by his sons, Hiroshi and Tom.)

The Tanaka tofu shop is shown on the JCNM map of Japantown as 451B Powell St. but it did not front onto Powell St. It was actually located on the lane behind Powell St. and accessed by a narrow breezeway connecting Powell St. to the lane.

This breezeway was closed and built over not that long ago when, for a time, a post-WW II nisei, Shig Hirai, whose parents came from Shiga prefecture, opened a branch of his Fujiya chain next door. Prior to 1942, Mr. Tanaka rented out space in the building at 451A Powell St.

The brothers guess that their mother, Miki woke around 4 a.m. every morning to begin the tofu making. She had to complete the first two or three batches of tofu before the Japanese peddlers picked up their orders at 6 a.m. to sell on their rounds in the outer areas of the Vancouver Japanese community like Kitsilano and Fairview. The nearby grocery stores were supplied with not only the Tanaka tofu but also the product of their competition - there were three other tofu shops in Japantown at that time (see details below). Mr. Tanaka or the boys delivered to the local shops and even to families as far away as Seymour St.

There was a lot of work in making the tofu. After the soy beans were soaked overnight to soften, they were ground with added water through a stone mill turned by an electric motor. (The stones have been donated to the JCNM). The sons remember that there was a lot of o-kara ("bean curd lees" or residue consisting mainly of the shell of the bean) compared with what would be left today because of the advancement in machinery. The o-kara which they gave away to customers who came by was but a small portion of the quantity of fibrous residue created in the tofu-making process. Most of it was put into 45-gallon drums to be taken away by

pig farmers, probably for free. It is a very nutritious by-product but it requires the addition of expensive ingredients to make it taste good. Mary Ohara has included an o-kara recipe as part of her "Internment Recipes" in the cook book "Everyone's a Chef" published by the Auxiliary of the Nikkei Museum and Heritage Centre in 2006. This includes bacon and shiitake mushrooms and chikuwa (fish-cake), making it a fairly expensive recipe for the tough times that characterized most of the pre-war period in the Nikkei community.

The ground beans, the milk and the water was boiled before filtering - first through a coarse cloth bag and then through a fine one. The lees were squeezed to obtain every drop of soy bean liquid to which was added a traditional sea-water-based coagulant called nigari and gently stirred until the slurry began to curdle and set. It was then poured into a wooden box lined with a fine cloth. Controlled pressure was applied to remove the water which drained through openings in the box. After the tofu had set it was sliced into cubes and placed in a large tub (ikesu) with running cold water in an era before widespread refrigeration.

The wooden box's inside dimensions were 10 inches by 28 inches by 10 inches. Since the tofu in the box was cut into 14 pieces, each piece was 5 inches by 4 inches by 4 inches and was thought to weigh about a pound. According to earlier descriptions at the JCNM, in the earliest days of the Tanaka shop, they sold tofu for five cents a piece and produced about 50 cakes. By 1941, their production was up to

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250 cakes a day and they sold for ten cents .

Some of the tofu was deep-fried to make abura-age or aburage which could be split to make the Inari zushi or be used as a sort of meat substitute for those occasions when meat was avoided for religious reasons. In those days, Buddhists often marked significant anniversaries of the death-days of ancestors by observing the traditional Buddhist meat prohibitions which were introduced to Japan in the sixth century. Aburage sold at three for ten cents.

Another tofu product which they remembered their mother making was what she called hiryo-zu - a deep-fried tofu dish with seeds and vegetables inside. Contemporary cook books describe ganmodoki (its present name) as a deep-fried dish made of crumbled tofu with yama-imo (a type of yam), sesame seeds and finely chopped vegetables such as gobo (burdock), carrots, onions, ginkgo nuts. These are shaped into three-inch patties or one-and-a-half inch balls. In the Tanaka shop this was made from day-old tofu which was difficult to keep fresh for very long in just running water. Min Tanaka is amazed at the length of time commercial tofu keeps today before reaching the “Best Before” date.

Besides tofu products, the Tanakas made and sold konnyaku which is a gelatinous product included in such traditional dishes as o-den. Konnyaku does not have much flavour but is valued for its texture. Konnyaku in those days sold for five cents for a 4 inch by 4 inch by 1 inch piece.

The Wakabayashi family had a



tofu shop at 439 ½ Powell St. right next door to them in the lane and the Tanakas marvel at the fact that relations were very cordial between the two families despite their being rivals in the same business. “Our tofu was softer, but the Wakabayashi aburage was better for making Inari zushi because it split open much more easily. The two other shops producing tofu in Japantown were the Chiba shop at 206 Main and the Miyazaki shop at 216 Gore. One of the chores of the Tanaka children was to stamp the Tanaka name on the paper used to wrap the tofu so that when customers saw it in the grocery stores alongside tofu from other shops, they could identify it. They still remember which grocers and fish shops carried their tofu.

Growing up in the Powell St. neighbourhood across the street from Oppenheimer Park, the children lived the life of Vancouver Nisei - attending Strathcona Elementary and Britannia High, as well as the Japanese Language School after English school was over. The other large minority group was the

Chinese and although China and Japan were not on good terms internationally, it seems that locally when there was a race-fight, the Asians stuck together against the white kids. The Asahi baseball players were, of course, the neighbourhood heroes.

When the Pacific War began and the government announced a plan to forcibly move all Nikkei away from the Pacific coast, Mr. Tanaka opted to move the family to a “self-supporting community” in 1942 rather than face being split up with adult males aged 18-45 (Mr. Tanaka and two sons) being sent to road camps and women, children and elderly males being sent to government-built internment camps in the Kootenays. The “self-supporting” designation meant that they had to build their own houses and rely completely on their own resources for their survival. The family took their tofu-making equipment with them to Lillooet but only made tofu after a few years when requested to do so by a neighbour, Mrs. Kaminishi. They only made

it about once a week in Lillooet as they had no electric motor and the boys had to take turns supplying the muscle power to grind the soy beans.

After the lifting of the restrictions on travel and settlement on Japanese Canadians in 1949, the family returned to the coast with children dispersing to schools and jobs. They did not re-enter the tofu business.

Looking back, the brothers think that what happened due to the

war was good for their mother who was saved from those long hours day after day as a tofu-maker in Vancouver. In Lillooet, Mrs. Tanaka also learned the secret of making the abura-age so that it would split better and be more suited to making Inari zushi - it was double-frying. This had eluded her until it was too late to be of any commercial benefit. Mr. Tanaka died in 1982 (aged 96) and Mrs. Tanaka in 1981 (aged 90).

By coincidence a post-war tofu

maker who also started on Powell Street but of Chinese descent, has since become the most successful tofu-maker in Canada. That family still owns the Sunrise Produce Market at Powell St. and Gore Ave where they began making tofu from a back room to sell to their customers. Their side-business benefited from the tremendous boom in tofu and related soy products in North America starting at that time. Health-conscious people discovered the dangers of red meat and animal fat and began trying to overcome their taste prejudices. Since then, denser variants of tofu have morphed into vegetarian weiners and burgers and ground round, while lighter variants have become desserts.

The Sunrise company grew fairly quickly, initially expanding by purchasing tofu making equipment from Japan to raise their production to one thousand pounds of tofu per day. Today, they have about 300 employees across Canada and make 5 tonnes of tofu per day and are a multi-million dollar industry. No doubt, the increase in Asian immigration has played a large role in increasing the demand for tofu as well as the growth in popularity of Asian cuisine. As in many commercial ventures, timing was a key factor.

Mike Tanaka says that their mother discouraged the sons from going into the tofu business when they returned to the coast because she thought the work too hard and the hours too long. Of course, she had not envisioned the development of machinery to change the working conditions. It is still anyone’s guess as to what might have

The Family Legacy

• 日系文化センター設立記念家族歴 •

This Family Legacy is made in Honour of: カナダ日系史にこの名が刻まれることを願う。

ICHIJIRO & MIKI (TSUJI) TANAKA

Name/氏名

田中 市次郎 みき

Kanji Name/漢字での氏名

April 8, 1886 - May 17, 1982

March 10, 1891 - May 28, 1981

Birthdate/生年月日

Born in Shigaken Hikoneshi Hassakacho, Japan

Died in Vancouver, BC

Birthplace/出生地

Immigrated 1903 and Miki in 1911

Married June, 1911 in Victoria, BC

Date(s) of Immigration/移住年月日

Family Members/家族・親族氏名

Tatsu (deceased)	Sayo Hattori	Masako Yada
Kazuo Bud	Shigeru Bill	Minoru Bob
Akira Mike	Mitsuru Miki	Osamu Sam

The Family Legacy was made in commemoration of the Capital Campaign to build the National Nikkei Heritage Centre.
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Tanaka Family History Form.

happened if any of the Japanese Powell St. tofu makers had continued in the business through the war years and beyond. We might all be eating Japanese tofu instead of the Chinese varieties to which we have become accustomed.

The twenty nine years in the tofu business may have been arduous but if the Tanaka family is any indication, eating lots of tofu more than makes up for those hardships. Father Ichijiro lived to 96, mother Miki to 90 and the children are following their example in living to a good age.

Errata - Winter 2009

Twice was Nice: Page 4
We apologize for miscaptioning Malcolm Brodie who is the Mayor of the City of Richmond (rather than Malcolm Campbell)

Shoji Nishihata: Page 16
Ray Otsu should have been Ray Ota and the boys were sponsored by Komajiro Nishihata.

Nakamura Florist:
Page 22
Unidentified person should be Misa Nakamura.

The Japanese Population of Steveston at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

by Mitsuo Yesaki

No one knows when the Japanese first arrived in the Steveston area, though they probably arrived soon after the establishment of a fishing camp. A fish barge to collect salmon was anchored beside a slough on the southwest corner of Lulu Island by Marshall English to supply the Brownsville Cannery he built near New Westminster in 1878. During the initial years of the camp, most of the fishermen remained in the Steveston area only for the two-month duration of the sockeye salmon season. With the end of fishing, the Japanese fishermen left to find work in the major population centers, lumber camps and mills, and charcoal kilns. A few Japanese may have remained to build skiffs during the off-fishing season.

The present estimates of the population of Steveston for 1891, 1901 and 1911 were gleaned from the copies of the original national census lists available on microfiche. For this study, Steveston was arbitrarily defined as the area bounded by the Gulf of Georgia on the west, Steveston Highway (Number 9 Road) on the north, Number 2 Road on the east and the Fraser River on the south. Harold Steves assisted in determining the people to be included within the Steveston Highway and Number 2 Road boundaries by identifying known persons on the census lists.

The salmon canneries on the Fraser River developed in the 1870s around New Westminster as it was the population center of the Lower Mainland. However, the fishing grounds soon shifted from the New Westminster area to the mouth of the Fraser River. Consequently, Marshall English closed the Brownsville Cannery and built the English Cannery in 1882 on the fishing camp site to be closer to the fishing grounds. With the establishment of canneries in the Steveston area, people took up residence in the area, including a few Japanese fishermen with families and boat builders. By 1891, there were four canneries on Steveston waterfront. The census of that year shows a total of 55 Japanese (Table 1). Ten years later, there were approximately 15 operating canneries. The 1901 census shows the population of Steveston increased by 400, all of which resulted from the influx of Japanese. An increase of 100 Caucasians was countered by a comparable decrease in the number of Chinese. The off-fishing season population of Steveston stabilized at slightly over 1,000 in 1911. The increase in numbers of Japanese was compensated by the decline of the Chinese. The Chinese

provided most of the manual input that powered the salmon canneries in the early years of the industry. With increasing mechanization of the various canning processes, Chinese workers became redundant, resulting in their decline in the Twentieth Century.

The original Japanese immigrants to Steveston were essentially fishermen. They were slowly joined by wives and picture brides, so the percentage of women increasing from 4% to 11% from 1891 to 1901 (Table 2). The "Gentleman's Agreement" of 1908 limiting the number of male Japanese immigrants to Canada encouraged the influx of women. The number of adult females more than doubled in 1911 (28%), while that of males decreased.

The number of Japanese lodgers decreased by half from 1901 to 1911, reflecting the breakdown of the fishing boss system of contracting fishermen by the fishing companies (Table 3). Increasingly, Japanese were opting to own their own boats and fishing gear, and negotiating directly with the companies. Fishermen interested in remaining in British Columbia arranged for wives and brides to join them and started raising families.

The occupations of Japanese

males in Steveston did not change significantly from 1901 to 1911 (Table 4). The most significant shifts were the decline in the number of fishermen and an increase in farmers. Low catches from the overfished non-dominant sockeye salmon runs prompted Japanese fishermen to leave the fishery and for a few to take up farming.

The businesses in Steveston changed tremendously during its first 30 years. Caucasians owned all the businesses in 1891 (Table 5). There was an almost four-fold increase in 1901, of which all but two businesses were Caucasian-owned. In 1911, the total number of businesses remained essentially the same, but ownership by Caucasian declined to half. Japanese ownership of businesses climbed from 2 in 1901 to 13 in 1911. The low number of Japanese businesses at the turn of the century is probably underestimated as data from the census shows the number of Japanese males involved in business during these years were similar. This probably resulted from shop owners originally operating from homes and not registering their enterprise with the municipality. Also, shop owners probably did not apply to be listed in the directories.

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Table 1. Population of Steveston by Nationality				
Year	Caucasian	Chinese	Japanese	Total
1891 ¹	243	358	55	656
1901 ²	343	266	461	1070
1911 ³	347	136	566	1049
¹ - Census of Canada, 1891; ² - Census of Canada, 1901; ³ - Census of Canada, 1911.				

Table 2. Sex Ratio of Japanese		
Year	Male	Female
1891 ¹	53	2
1901 ²	392	46
1911 ³	321	123

Table 5. Number of Businesses			
Year	Caucasian	Chinese	Japanese
1891 ⁴	12	-	-
1901 ⁵	42	-	2
1911 ⁶	23	9	13
⁴ - Williams', 1891; ⁵ - Henderson's, 1901; ⁶ - Henderson's, 1911			

Table 3. Population Structure of the Japanese Community								
Year	Head	Wife	Sons	Daughters	Lodgers	Brothers	Sisters	Domestic
1901 ²	85	40	14	9	302	2	-	6
1911 ³	141	109	74	65	162	11	1	3

Table 4. Occupations of the Japanese Males						
Year	# Males	Fisherman	Carpenter	Business	Farmer	Other
1901 ²	392	336	34	11	1	10
1911 ³	321	254	30	14	12	11

The Japanese Cemetery in Broome, Australia

Text and photographs by Stanley Fukawa

Over nine hundred deceased are represented by headstones and memorials in the Japanese cemetery in Broome Australia. Some of the names in stone are of men not buried there but lost at sea due to the cyclones that ravage the coastline. They died because they worked in an extremely dangerous occupation that brought them good money, the respect of their peers and even the respect of the whites who generally thought them to be of an inferior race. The rows of headstones, carved in Japanese characters, have similarities with the military cemeteries in Europe that lie outside their small towns and date back to the same era. The dead are mostly young men far from home - victims of historical circumstance.

It was a surprise to learn that there could be such a concentration of Japanese in a country notorious for its White Australia Policy dating to 1901. Is there anywhere in continental North America a site with as many Japanese graves in one place? Apparently, Aus-



Akira Masuda from Taiji, Wakayama

tralia's tropical northern frontier had to turn to Asian immigrants in those times because the climate was too severe to attract enough white workers to fill all the jobs. In the sugar cane fields of Queensland, Japanese farm workers were imported for a few years to bring in that crop. In the pearl shell industry, the Japanese proved to be such good workers before the laws were passed that after the White Australia Policy was adopted, employers quickly found ways to circumvent those laws.

Broome became an important destination because of its proximity to quantities of the giant mother-of-pearl oyster, the *pinctada maxima*, from whose shells were crafted the beautiful buttons and mother-of-pearl luxury items created by the world's high-fashion dressmakers and designers, as well as the many more modest manufacturers. Initially, these shells were harvested in shallow waters by aboriginal divers who worked without any specialized gear. As these beds



Pinctada Maxima - mother of pearl shell

were depleted, the search led to deeper and deeper waters, requiring diving suits and more professional personnel.

As it turns out, Japanese divers were the most successful and the Australian pearl shell industry recruited them because they were the best and brought the most profit to the owners of the harvesting boats and related businesses. Despite the racist attitudes common in the British Empire of the time and the imposition of language testing to screen the undesirable non-whites out of the immigrant stream, there were ways that influential men could get the workers they wanted without their having to pass the language test. An indenture system was created to allow Japanese divers to be brought in for three-year terms. During this time, they were at the mercy of their employers who could cancel their sponsorship and send them home at any time. The good workers were renewed every three years.

Part of the advantage of the Japanese divers was their working in teams on board ships that had workmates on whose diligence not only their livelihoods but also their very lives depended. Each ship had two divers and each diver when in the water had a tender who kept constant contact with him and made sure that he was safe through the lifeline and air line and the signals communicated through tugs on the lifeline. The fifth Japanese on many of these crews was the engineer. The others were often Malays or other Asian workers. Not only was the common language important but being from the same village or region in Japan meant a common background of expectations and comfort. The first diver was the boat captain, the tenders and engineer were in apprenticeship positions and could become divers themselves—learning by watching and listening. Communication was vital to learning and

teaching and building trust. All crewmen were part of an economic team that shared in the catch—the shells gathered by the divers.

On the dark side of the lucrative pearl shell harvest lay deadly risks. The perils of deep-sea diving came from the crude technology of the time, the common diving ailment known as “the bends,” sharks, the dangerous storms on the north coast of Australia, and diseases such as beriberi which were not well understood. Weather forecasting was rudimentary and sudden storms sank many ships. It is estimated that about ten per cent of the men, on average, died over the years, due to such causes. For divers, the risk was as high as fifty per cent in bad years. The headstones are a clear reminder of the toll taken.

During the heyday of the pearl shell industry from around 1890 to the late 1920s, there were over 400 pearl shell harvesting boats (called ‘luggers’), and 3500 men in the town of Broome. Of these over 2000 were Japanese, with the rest being Malay, Filipino, Chinese, ‘Koepangers’ (from islands north of Australia, arriving via Timor), aborigines and Europeans. Whites were a minority in this multicultural

community but were the most rich and powerful. The downtown area of Broome is today called Chinatown but in earlier times was referred to as Japtown where the boarding houses, shops, restaurants, brothels, bars and gambling dens were situated. Two street addresses that survive to this day are Johnny Chi Lane and Sheba Lane—the latter derived from the Japanese name Shiba and not the Biblical Queen—after the Asian merchants who leased property there.

Broome's multiracial composition and racial pecking-order were most clearly exemplified by the seating in Sun Picture Gardens, a movie theatre, with discriminatory seating and ticket prices. It was established in



Statue of Diver, Chinatown, Broome

..... Continued on next page

1916 to show cinema on a large site previously owned by a very successful Japanese merchant as an Emporium. White people paid 2s. 6p. (two shillings, sixpence) and sat in chairs with cushions; Japanese paid the same but sat behind the whites. Chinese and half-castes paid 2s. and sat in deck-chairs; islanders and Malays paid 1s. 6p. and aboriginals paid 1s. The seats were less comfortable as prices dropped. Announcements were made in English, Chinese, Japanese and Arabic. Amazingly, segregated seating by race was abolished only in 1975 despite protests and boycotts.

Earlier, in response to the demands of the Japanese divers for better medical care, a Japanese doctor was brought in in 1910 against the opposition of the local Australian doctor and many of the whites who felt that a Japanese doctor could not possibly be as good as a white one. Even if the Japanese doctor were to be as good, that was also opposed because it would undermine the belief in the superiority of the white race. Dr. Suzuki proved to be an excellent doctor and many whites called on him in preference to the other one.

The belief in the racial superiority of whites and especially of Anglo Saxons was important to many Australian whites and it rankled many of them to see that the smaller Japanese were the best divers and therefore the best-paid workers in the pearl shell industry. Just before the First World War, they called upon a crack team of 12 former Royal Navy divers to come to Australia to undertake trials to help set up a training program to enable white divers to assert their proper place and obtain the reward which was being taken by members of an inferior race. This was called the White Experiment.

The story of this experiment is told in John Bailey's *The White Divers of Broome*, (Macmillan, 2001) – an award-winning book which has gone through 7 printings. This attempt to restore the pride and supremacy of the white race ended in dismal failure after three of the divers died and it became apparent that the white divers were abysmal in their ability to find pearl shells. They could dive to great depths and undertake military assignments but this was not enough to succeed in the pearl shell harvest. The physical and mental



Diver's lead boots next to helmet

strain of the loneliness and long hours was too difficult for them to endure. The plan had to be abandoned.

About half of the Japanese men in Broome have been from Wakayama prefecture. With the coming of the Second World War, most of them were repatriated to Japan and the remainder sent to internment camps in the Australian interior. After the war, the pearl shell industry was revived on a smaller scale because the world's buttons were by then mostly made of plastic and nylon. In 1955, a hundred men from the Taiji area of Wakayama were recruited to work in the pearl shell harvest based on pre-war diving methods. As in Canada, the immigration laws did not permit the free entry of non-whites until the late 1960s, so that they entered Australia under indenture contracts.

Such indenture contracts date back to the beginning of the 20th century when entry began to be denied on the basis of race and did not allow the Japanese workers to bring wives.. As almost no Japanese women were allowed entry on their own after 1901, a huge gender imbalance resulted, encouraging those men who wanted long-term female companionship to cross racial lines. There have been a few cases of Japanese marrying white women but more often with aboriginal or mixed-race women. Even the latter unions were discouraged by the pre-WWII authorities. The results of such unions can be seen in the makeup of the Japanese communities in Australia today

In present-day Broome, there are a few retired and

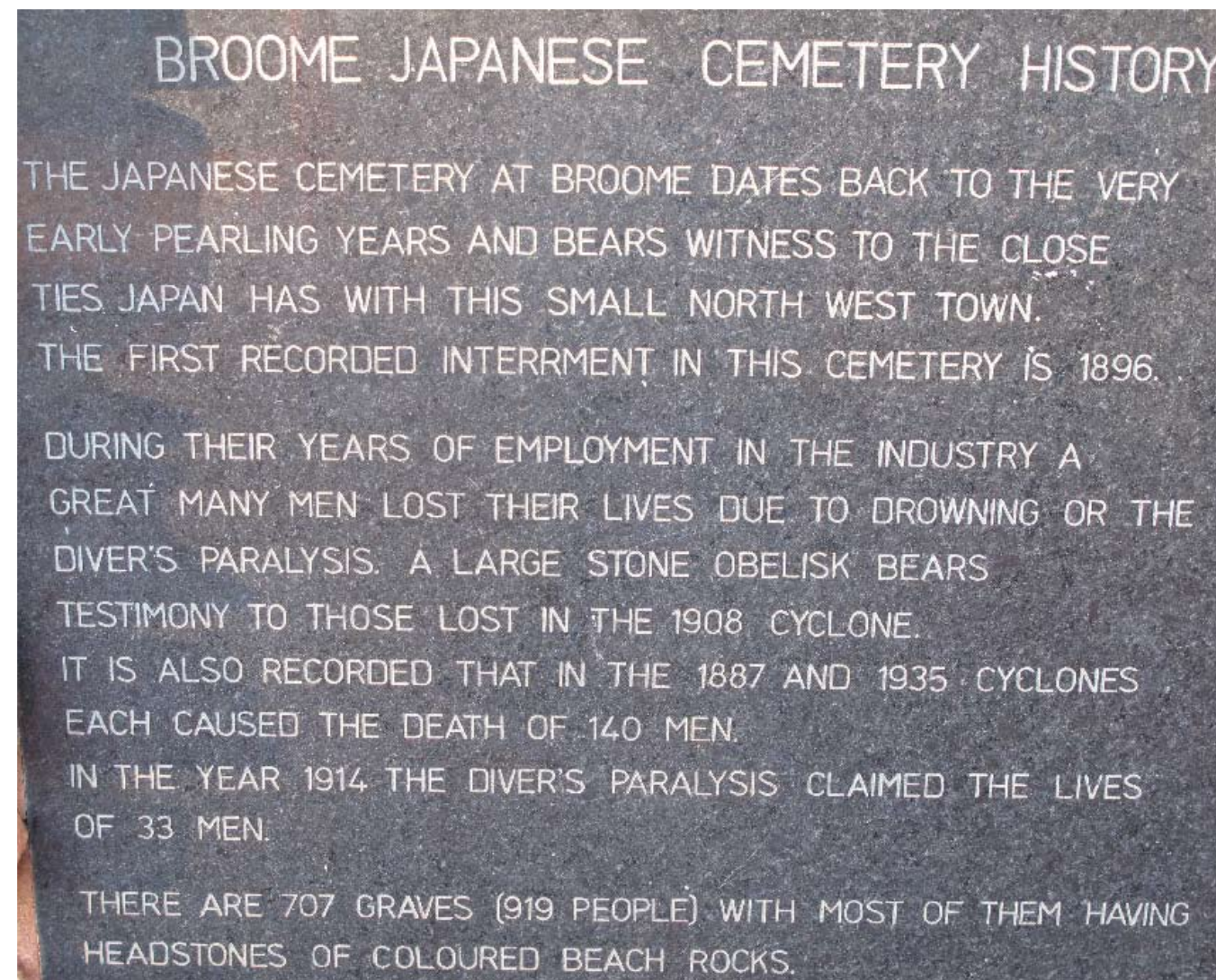
aged divers from the post-war intake but not many other full-blooded Japanese permanent residents. Most residents with Japanese surnames are of mixed-blood. A few streets bear Japanese names but the people who live on them are usually not Japanese and the annual Shinju Matsuri (Pearl Festival) has a Japanese name but it is multicultural like the people, meaning that it features celebrations of Japanese, Chinese, Malay and Indonesian cultural festivities and aboriginal-influenced contemporary musical concerts.

With the pearl shell industry in steep decline, Broome has adapted well and has become the world centre for cultured pearls in an industry developed by Japanese and Australian investors closely tied to the Japanese pearl industry. The warm waters off the

northern Australian coast enable pearls to grow at double the rate of those in Japanese waters and today this corner of Australia accounts for a majority of the world's supply of cultured pearls. It is a trade worth hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

On August 25-27, 2008, as part of the Shinju Matsuri, a company mainly of Japanese migrant artists living in Australia, presented a program called In Repose. It included workshops for students, musical and dance performances and exhibits focused on those buried at the Broome cemetery and their contribution to the community. On the 26th, the main performance was held at the cemetery just before sunset.

Australia has undergone an amazing about-face in its recognition of aboriginal rights. For most of the



Plaque with History of Japanese Cemetery

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first two centuries of white colonization and settlement, there was no recognition at all of aboriginal rights to the land. The long prevailing concept of terra nullius put forth the idea that pre-colonial Australia had been an “empty land” not owned by anyone. Late-comers could simply take it over without negotiating with the original inhabitants or compensating them. In the last two decades, large land claims have begun to be recognized. In acknowledgment of the ownership rights of the traditional inhabitants, every public event in Australia now begins with a short welcoming speech by a representative of the traditional owners of the land.

At the Broome In Repose performance, Mrs. Doris Edgar, represented the Yawuru People and welcomed the crowd in her language translated by her daughter into English. She mentioned that her grandfather was Japanese and was buried in that cemetery. In the audience was Akira Masuda, a retired Japanese diver who had come to Broome in 1955 with other Taiji men. He had a brother and a son buried in the cemetery. With him was his wife, a person of aboriginal descent and also their daughter, an organizer of the annual Shinju Matsuri.

Pearl Hamaguchi, another leading member of the Broome Japanese community also participated in the ceremonies which included offering incense and pouring water over the headstones in the traditional Japanese way. One of her granddaughters was among the student performers that evening. Pearl’s husband, Hiroshi, who had come from Wakayama, Japan to Broome at the same time as Masuda, had died in 2007 and was buried in the cemetery. Referred to as “Capt. Hamaguchi” he had been a very successful diver, like Masuda, and had become a pearl shell master and then a pioneer in the cultured pearl business. He retired and sold his business to Paspaley—now the leading Australian pearl company. Pearl and Hiroshi have 6 sons, and some of them are in the pearl business.

Pearl herself has a fascinating multicultural and multiracial background. She is Scottish and Aboriginal on her mother’s side and Chinese and Japanese on her father’s side. She embodies the multicultural legacy of Broome in surprising ways. She was taken from her mother at a time when her father was incarcerated in an internment camp and was subsequently sent to

a residential school in nearby Beagle Bay. This was akin to the experience of many Canadian First Nations children and in Australia this group has been called The Stolen Generation.

Darwin is the closest major city to Broome on the north coast. The Darwin Chinese Temple and Cultural Centre has a library with a set of directories compiled by Dr. Hu Jin Kok, an M.D. (Sydney Medical School) listing the Chinese buried in cemeteries in Australia. The slim volume for the Broome Chinese cemetery has two Japanese names—one of them Yae Yamamoto. Why are there Japanese buried in the Broome Chinese cemetery when there is a Japanese cemetery next door?

When I mentioned this anomaly to Pearl, she said that Yae Yamamoto was her grandmother. Yae, then a young woman in Kumamoto prefecture, had been promised by her father to a man that she did not want to marry. A rebel, she stowed away in a steamer while it was in port and arrived in Australia. In Broome, Yae met and married John Chi (pronounced “cha i”),



Triple headstone for victims of same tragedy



Memorial to Victims of Cyclones of 1908 on left of headstones

originally from Swatow, China, whose entrepreneurial spirit is preserved in what is now a building called Johnny Chi Lane that houses of a string of shops in the heart of Chinatown. He also owned a pearl ‘lugger.’ John and Yae had 5 children but he died in the early 1920s, leaving Yae to raise the family. With the help of the children she operated a ‘long soup’ shop. (Long Soup is similar to what Japanese call ‘ramen’ – a noodle soup with pork and Chinese cabbage in a chicken broth). Their eldest died in Japan of pneumonia where she had been sent for eye surgery. Yae died in Broome in 1935 and three of the children were in Japan during World War II. Two daughters returned to Australia while the younger son died recently in the Kobe Earthquake. The elder son was incarcerated in an Australian internment camp during the war in spite of his Chinese surname. That son has since died and now his son lives in Broome, a well-known musician.

Had Yae taken her husband’s name as is the norm in Japanese culture, her name would not have appeared as Yamamoto but as Chi. It was the Chinese custom of children taking the father’s name but not wives taking their husband’s names, that this woman’s Japanese birth name was listed, making it seem out of place in a Chinese cemetery.

In August, 2009, the Shire Council of Broome

abruptly ended the sister town relationship with Taiji in Wakayama prefecture which dated back to 1981 over the killing of dolphins depicted in a gruesome way in a sensational film called “The Cove.” The Shire was reacting to the worldwide clamor over this incident that we in Canada can understand from a similar reaction to the seal hunt which has united Europeans in a condemnation of an often similarly-depicted Canadian ‘slaughter’ of cute baby seals. The Shire Council gave in very quickly to the uproar and announced that the relationship with Taiji would be re-opened only when that town ceased supporting this cruel and unpopular practice. Shortly thereafter, a number of headstones in the Japanese cemetery were toppled by an anonymous vandal and the Shire locked the gates to the cemetery to prevent further desecration. That this was not an unusual occurrence in the cemetery can be gathered from the minutes of the Shire committee which manages it. From time to time, headstones there were toppled but on this occasion the Shire placed security cameras and locks at the front and rear gates.

The multicultural community in Broome reacted quickly, protesting that the proper action was not to sever ties, but rather to discuss and attempt to understand their situation. For example, how would Australians have responded to a Japanese criticism against

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the culling of kangaroos. The immigrants from Taiji had played a significant role in the development of Broome for over a century and social and economic ties had continued to the present day. The people of Taiji would not have acted in such a self-righteous and unfriendly manner. As the Shire had acted just before the annual Shinju Matsuri, its organizers called off the September 2009 program in protest. Shinju Matsuri had been celebrated since 1970 when it joined together the Japanese O-bon, the Chinese Hung Seng and Filipino Fiesta and later Malaysian Independence Day. It is not just a Japanese festival but one which celebrates the multicultural history of Broome and benefits many businesses by drawing tourists to the town.

In October, 2009, in reaction to the protests, the Shire Council called a special meeting and, after apologies, rescinded the hasty and disrespectful decision which had made headlines across the nation and around the world. Peter Matsumoto who had just joined the Council was absent but there were 14 with Japanese surnames of the 56 people in the gallery. These included Akira Masuda and 6 other Masudas, Pearl and her son Kwayne, Lorna and Anna Kaino, 2 Tanakas and a Matsumoto. There may have been more Nikkei whose ancestry was hidden by a non-Japanese surname.

When the Shire Council took heed of the protests of the multicultural community of Broome and corrected a hasty decision it signaled a change from the old era of a traditional racist thinking which would automatically presume the worst of people of other races.

Footnote:

There is a similar Australian pearl shell centre at Thursday Island on the north Queensland coast, 2000 km. to the east of Broome. This Australian community began recruiting Japanese divers shortly before Broome. The dangers and diseases there have left a Thursday Island Japanese cemetery with over 700 graves. The famous Japanese historical novelist, Ryotaro Shiba, has written a novella titled *Mokuyo-jima no Yakai* (A Thursday Island Soiree) about the Japanese divers there.

It was not just male Japanese immigrants that

ventured abroad in the 19th and early 20th centuries—there were also female immigrants, called *Karayuki-san*, who are often not mentioned. Most of them were sold as young girls, sometimes unwittingly into the sex trade by destitute parents and sent to south-east Asia or some even to North America. So many of them sent money home to help their starving families that it was a major source of foreign currency for Japan in her pre-industrial era. A few of them reached Australia, though they were but a fraction of the male Japanese immigrants to that country.

The Japanese Diaspora promises many fascinating stories.

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Correspondence: Lorna Kaino, who introduced me to the 3 Broome residents.