



*Finding a Path Forward*

**ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER  
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS THEME STUDY**

*Edited by Franklin Odo*





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## Essay 8



# The Architectural Legacy of Japanese America

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Efforts to capture the contributions made by people of Japanese ancestry to the built environment and cultural landscape of America are complicated by the limits of existing scholarship on the subject.<sup>1</sup> A few topics have received considerable attention, particularly the influence of Western architects in Meiji-era Japan;<sup>2</sup> the European and American craze for all things Japanese in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a phenomenon known as Japonisme or Japanism; and its impact on the work of American architects such as Greene & Greene and Frank Lloyd Wright.<sup>3</sup> However, far less is known about Japanese American historical agency in shaping the physical fabric of America, including sites of Nikkei (Japanese American, overseas Japanese) settlement and community development (in North America); the entry of Japanese immigrants and their American-born children into the environmental design professions; and the impact of

The Japanese pagoda at the National Park Seminary, a women's finishing school in Maryland, was originally built as the sorority house for Chi Psi Epsilon, along with a myriad of eclectically styled buildings, creating an unusual campus that borrowed from English, Italian, Swiss, and Dutch design sensibilities.

Photo by Jack Boucher for HABS; courtesy of the Library of Congress.



broader social and political forces, particularly anti-immigrant sentiment and racial discrimination, on their development as architects and landscape architects. This essay extends existing scholarship with new research on the built environment and cultural landscape of Japanese America. It also documents the careers of environmental designers of Japanese ancestry whose education or practice occurred, all or in part, within a U.S. context.

A few exceptional individuals, notably architect Minoru Yamasaki and landscape architect Bob Hideo Sasaki, broke through to the top reaches of their professions in the 20th century. However, most environmental designers of Japanese ancestry, particularly in the first half of the 20th century, found that a racially segregated society set boundaries on opportunity, more or less constraining where they could comfortably work and live, who they could enlist as mentors and clients, and the types of projects they were commissioned to undertake. Some capitalized on the fashion for Japanese design by using their presumed expertise in Japanese aesthetics to create a place for themselves in professional practice, even Nisei (American-born children of Japanese immigrants) who had spent little time in Japan and whose design education was grounded in the same Beaux-Arts and Modernist traditions as their Caucasian peers.

Patronage from within Nikkei communities launched or sustained the careers of many architects and landscape designers of Japanese ancestry, particularly in the first half of the 20th century. All were affected by the waves of anti-Japanese sentiment that crested repeatedly during the 20th century, as well as by institutional racism that stranded Issei who settled in America as aliens ineligible to citizenship, state laws that undermined Issei property ownership and leasing, anti-Japanese campaigns, and ultimately the removal and mass incarceration of 120,000 innocent people during World War II.

While the fashion for Japanese design that swept through Europe and America during the last quarter of the 19th and first quarter of the 20th century deeply influenced architecture and gardens as well as other art forms, America unlike Europe was a locus of Japanese immigration and a site of persistent anti-immigrant sentiment. Rising interest in buildings and landscapes in the Japanese style created a demand for design, construction, and landscaping skills that the Japanese possessed; at the same time, racial hierarchies circum-

scribed their place within American society, whose boundaries would continually be tested over the course of the 20th century. Racial privilege meant that Japanese style, in the hands of white artists, architects, collectors, and public audiences, was one of many aesthetic options in a vast sea of choices that included Spanish Colonial Revival, Italianate, and more. This was not the case for people of Japanese ancestry, who were stereotyped as useful experts in their “native” culture. This was even true for Nisei, who enjoyed birthright citizenship but were continually pressed to assimilate into the American mainstream by minimizing signs of cultural difference.

Throughout the 20th century, the aesthetic embrace of all things Japanese was poised in continual tension with anti-Japanese popular sentiment, particularly in the western region of the United States. Immigrants and their American-born children were the direct objects of racist hostility, an animus periodically projected onto their real property that broadcast permanent signs of Japanese settlement in the U.S., leading to vandalism, looting, and arson. Euro-Americans sometimes viewed inscriptions of cultural difference in the built environment and landscape with fascination, essentially as an exotic spectacle for their own amusement, but that sentiment also had a darker side when deep strains of nativism flared up, rendering signs of a permanent foreign presence on American soil objects of intolerance. In this respect, the experiences of Japanese Americans in the first half of the 20th century have much in common with those of other minorities.

As is generally the case with the development of the built environment, design professionals created only a small fraction of the physical infrastructure of Japanese American communities, while most places were produced through vernacular processes. For that reason, an exclusive focus on the work of credentialed professionals risks overlooking the myriad ways many people of Japanese ancestry, without specialized academic training, shaped the environments in which they have lived and worked since earliest immigration, both in urban and rural settings. In addition to architects and landscape architects, a long stream of carpenters, contractors, gardeners, growers, nursery owners, and others have left their imprints on the land. Complicating the picture, architects sometimes worked closely with community members on the construction of key

buildings, particularly Buddhist temples, to minimize costs and maximize engagement, further blurring the lines between academic and vernacular methods of producing architecture. For these reasons, this overview attends both to professionally designed and to vernacular elements of the built environment and cultural landscape; exceptional examples of buildings and landscapes created by design professionals, as well as the common places that constitute the architectural legacy of Japanese America.

### JAPAN IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Those who left Japan and came to America during the last quarter of the 19th and first quarter of the 20th centuries carried more than luggage with them across the Pacific. They also brought culturally specific ideas about how buildings and landscapes ought to look and, in some cases, possessed the skills needed to (re)create them on U.S. soil and adapt them to new circumstances. Traditional Japanese cultural practices informed immigrants' conceptions of what seemed necessary, right, and beautiful about buildings and landscapes and how they should be made. But those conventions were profoundly disrupted by the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which not only opened up relations between Japan and the world powers of the day but also propelled the Imperial Government to seek equal standing among them by embracing the scientific, technological, and military achievements of the West.

It was in this context that the Meiji Emperor promoted Western practices for the design of some of the most significant new buildings, including the Tsukiji Hotel (1868), which served foreigners, and the First Mitsui Bank Headquarters (1872). Designed, at first, by foreign architects and then by an emerging class of Japanese professionals, the earliest of these Western-style buildings were located in the port city of Yokohama, in Tokyo, and other places where there was a foreign presence. As the fashion for European and American building practices took hold, the Meiji Government further diffused Western style architecture in the primary school buildings it sponsored.

The new possibilities for entering architecture through a professional education opened the design of buildings to young men from a wider range of backgrounds than the apprenticeship model permitted, but

it also sharpened the class distinction between designers and builders.<sup>3</sup> These combined developments—professionalization, modernization, and Western emulation—meant that academically prepared young men interested in a career in *kenchiku gaku* or architecture considered college study in the U.S. to be a career currency of value in a transnational context. They and their American-born children would benefit from the rise of formal programs of study in architecture and landscape architecture at public universities on the west coast of the U.S., particularly the University of California and University of Washington, which were located in cities and surrounding regions that over the course of several decades of sustained immigration had become home to substantial Nikkei communities.

While Japan's interest in Western architecture was growing, Europeans and Americans were developing a fascination with all things Japanese. Master carpenters and gardeners who possessed a knowledge of traditional design and construction practices played an instrumental role in bringing Japanese designs to the American public: first at international expositions that featured Japanese pavilions, tea houses, and gardens; then for elite clients who sought to reproduce what they had seen at fairs on their private estates.

### THE 1876 CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION AND THE POPULARIZATION OF JAPANESE CULTURE IN AMERICA

Japanese carpenters skilled in traditional woodworking and construction practices were brought to America to erect Japan's exhibit for the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, which would be the American public's first direct exposure to Japanese architecture. The exhibit featured a Bazaar and Tea House among other architectural and landscape elements. Originally built and dismantled in Japan, the structures were shipped by boat and train to Philadelphia and reassembled on the fairgrounds by a team that included more than a dozen skilled laborers including carpenters, a plasterer, and an expert in roof tiling.

The Philadelphia Centennial was just the first of many expositions that would feature exhibits housed in grand architectural pavilions sponsored by the Japanese government. Less than two decades later at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the Japanese government's exhibit of Ho-o-Den (also known



A view of the 1893 Chicago World's fair; the roofs of the Japanese exhibition buildings can be seen on the far left. Photogravure produced by D. Appleton and Co.; courtesy of the Library of Congress.

as Phoenix Hall), along with a Bazaar and Tea House sponsored by the Tea Merchants Guild of Japan, used the same process of building assembly, but symbolically elevated the role of a professional architect, **Masamichi Kuru** (1848-1915), over the skills of master carpenters.<sup>5</sup>

Japan's exhibits at international expositions emphasized the nation's modernity, particularly its capacity to produce raw materials, manufactures, arts, and other goods for global markets, but its exposition architecture was decidedly historical, modeled on some of the nation's greatest treasures. The tensions between modernity and tradition embodied the paradox Japan faced in trying to establish an equal status with Western empires on the world stage. It needed to demonstrate its modernity, something that was addressed by emulating Western systems and rapidly building industrial capacity; at the same time, it needed to address Western perceptions of Asia's inferiority to Western cultures by demonstrating it possessed the hallmarks of a civilized nation. The Imperial government's strategy for demonstrating its cultural equality was to mount extravagant displays of its rich architectural and landscape heritage at an extended series of international expositions. Though some Americans traveled to Japan in this period, the majority formed their impressions through newspaper and magazine accounts, visits to expositions, and increasingly through exposure to Japanese goods entering the marketplace. Those who lived in western cities with substantial Nikkei communities had more direct exposure to Japanese immigrants, though the

realities of segregation significantly limited interracial contact in many social spheres in the prewar period.

Beginning in the mid-1880s and fully taking hold at the turn of the century, a series of promoters established simulated Japanese villages, populated by Japanese people, that toured America, set up shop at highly trafficked tourist destinations such as Atlantic City, and complemented the official Japanese exhibit at world's fairs. The earliest were organized by the Deakin brothers, San Francisco importers of Asian art goods who established a road show that consisted of a simulated Japanese village with artisans producing their wares. In a sense, their theatrical production was a spectacular advertisement and loss leader for their import business. Toward that end, they imported 50 tons of Japanese goods to furnish the simulated village, whose arts and crafts were offered for sale to those who paid the price of admission.

Beginning in the last decade of the 19th century, **Peter Yumeto Kushibiki** (1865-1924) took over where the Deakins left off in finding ways to package Japanese people in a mock village setting as a form of commercial entertainment. After securing his position as the Imperial Government's liaison to international expositions and his place as a prime concessionaire, Kushibiki criss-crossed Europe on promotional tours before taking up residence in cities such as Saint Louis and San Francisco for the duration of their fairs. By 1914, he had accrued 25 years of experience managing Japanese concessions and exhibits at U.S. world's fairs and had worked the European exposition circuit with equal intensity.

## JAPANESE GARDENS AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN

One of the best-known Japanese gardens in America, in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, was developed through a combination of design, maintenance, and continual improvement by **Makoto Hagiwara** (1854-1925) and his family. Makoto Hagiwara left Japan as a young man in the first wave of overseas migration to the U.S. mainland, which made him an Issei. Starting with the tea garden developed for the 1894 California Mid-winter Exposition in San Francisco, Hagiwara struck an agreement with the park superintendent to create and maintain a permanent Japanese garden at Golden Gate Park, which grew to encompass a five-acre site that continues to be one of the city's most valued public destinations. For the Hagiwara family, the garden was their life's work and home for nearly 50 years, a status that abruptly ended when they were forcibly removed to internment camps during World War II. Another spectacular Hagiwara creation, located 20 miles south of San Francisco, is the Japanese garden on the Eugene De Sabla estate, named Higurashi-En, which has survived to the present day and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Driven to create a spectacular backdrop for their collection of Asian art and artifacts, Los Angeles-based

brothers Adolph and Eugene Bernheimer, German immigrants who made their fortune in cotton, began building a Japanese-style mansion on Whitley Hill in 1911 on a site looking down on Hollywood Boulevard. Modeled on a Kyoto palace, it was designed by New York architect Franklin M. Small with Walter Webber as the local supervising architect. Japanese carpenters completed the grand residence called *Yamashiro* in 1914. The Bernheimers imported a Japanese pagoda over 600 years old to lend authenticity to a creation that otherwise was an Orientalist fantasy. Their acquisition of the pagoda, however, points to the inseparability of purchasing and transporting authentic examples of Japanese architecture from the larger collecting activities of the wealthy.<sup>6</sup>

Japanism grew its deepest American roots in the field of garden design. Nearly 3,000 miles away from Pocantico, beginning in the first decade of the 20th century, the Japanese garden that railroad tycoon Henry H. Huntington installed on his San Marino, California, estate had much in common with Kykuit. In 1911, Huntington purchased a Japanese commercial garden George Turner Marsh had established in Pasadena and moved it, in its entirety, to his nearby San Marino Ranch.

Beyond the design and maintenance of formal gardens and related structures, Japanese immigrants played



**Japanese Tea Garden, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco.** The garden was designed by Japanese landscape architect **Makoto Hagiwara**. Photo by Carol Highsmith, 2012; courtesy of the Library of Congress.

a wider role in agriculture, driving the transformation of raw stump and brush covered land into acreage suitable for agricultural production. The vernacular built environment and cultural landscape associated with orchards and truck farms, flower fields and nurseries, growers' associations, and public markets is part and parcel of the architectural heritage of Japanese America. Many Issei men arrived with the construction skills needed to build their first small homes – often simple shacks – erect barns, put up fencing, and cultivate the landscape, collaborating with friends and neighbors to get projects done. Male bachelors were the earliest settlers, but once they decided to enter farming and send for picture brides, many hurried to build their own small cabins, even on leased land,<sup>7</sup> moving them when necessary to nearby land where they farmed.

While all Issei shared certain cultural ideas about the landscape, even as specific practices varied by their prefecture of origin, some also possessed landscape-related occupational knowledge from a family background in agriculture. Others found their way into farming, gardening, floriculture, and related fields after arriving in the U.S. as they navigated the complex terrain of occupational discrimination to establish themselves in niches where employment or entrepreneurship were viable options for Japanese immigrants. While the full range of vernacular architecture associated with Japanese America is beyond the scope of this project, two examples illustrate the impact of nursery owners and gardeners in shaping the American landscape.

From the beginning, degree programs in landscape architecture were deeply affected by the Japan craze, creating a cadre of white landscape architects who offered their services designing Japanese gardens as one among many stylistic options. They typically operated with only a superficial knowledge of the subject, but possessed credentials that allowed them to compete with designers whose expertise was based on their experience and ethnic identity. Still, the experiences of the Domoto family in Oakland and Fujitaro Kubota in Seattle illustrate the porous boundaries between commercial gardening companies as engines of economic support for Japanese American families and landscape design as an outlet for creative expression in the first half of the 20th century.

Issei immigrants to San Francisco, the Domoto

brothers essentially stumbled on the nursery enterprise as the most successful of several import/export schemes from which they had tried to make a living. They opened up a new economic niche for Japanese immigrants to California in the nursery industry and market for cut flowers. Immigrating in the 1880s while still teenagers, **Kantero and Motonoshin Domoto** (whose American nicknames were Tom and Henry) got their start importing Mandarin oranges from Wakayama Prefecture, which they sold on the streets of San Francisco.

By the 1890s, the Domoto brothers were importing and distributing a wide variety of Japanese plants and shrubs while leading the development of San Francisco's cut-flower market. An 1895 catalogue for their nursery business describes many of the plants the Domoto Brothers added to the California landscape from ferns, chrysanthemums, camellias, and rare lily bulbs to fruits such as mandarin oranges, persimmons, plums, and quince. Their routine trips back to Japan brought new plants as well as floricultural talent to America, since the Domoto brothers recruited top graduates of Japanese agricultural colleges to return with them to America, bringing new expertise to bear on plant cultivation in the Bay Area. The business became such a center of expertise, and played such an important role in the education of growers, that it acquired the nickname "Domoto College." A 1912 article in the *San Francisco Call* suggests Domoto Nursery was the largest nursery in the state, with its greenhouse and shed occupying 500,000 square feet.<sup>8</sup>

As the eldest in a large family with only two sons, **Toichi Domoto's** (1902-2001) plans for a professional career in mechanical engineering, which he had first recognized while tinkering with machines and work processes as a youth at the nursery, inevitably bent back toward responsibility for the family business, despite a clearly articulated disinterest in plants. Starting out in his desired field at Stanford University in 1921, he quickly observed that college graduates of Japanese ancestry faced discrimination on the U.S. job market and that Japanese companies were reluctant to hire Nisei.

The Issei generation of Domoto brothers by then were in their 60s and ready for retirement, closing their nursery around the time of Toichi's 1926 return from college. He developed a nursery business of his own on more than 20 acres in Hayward, focusing on cyclamen

and primrose. Domoto's expertise, contributions to the creation of new hybrids, generosity in sharing his knowledge, and leadership in the industry were well recognized during his lifetime, including with a 1962 award from the California Horticultural Society and a term of leadership as CHS's President.

Toichi's younger brother **Kaneji Domoto** (1913-2002) would successfully translate an interest in architecture and landscape architecture into a half-century's career in the field. But for him, apprenticeship provided a steadier path into environmental design than a college degree, though he didn't lack for the opportunity to pursue higher education.

Kaneji briefly studied science at Stanford and landscape architecture at Berkeley before being recruited as a laborer to construct Japanese gardens for the 1939 Treasure Island Exposition and the New York World's Fair, work for which a childhood in the family nursery business had prepared him. Though this would be the start of a career as an expert in Japanese landscape design, Kaneji actually had never set eyes on Japan in the prewar period, so his knowledge was based entirely on his experience in the U.S. and any books he had read on the subject.

### **JAPANESE CARPENTRY AND JOINERY: THE INFLUENCE OF THE VERNACULAR**

The abundant literature on Japan's exhibits at American expositions might leave the mistaken impression that Japanese craft skill was appropriated exclusively by Euro-Americans for public amusement and private benefit by elite property owners. However, those same skills were yoked to the social and physical development of Nikkei communities, a fact that has been overlooked due to scholarly emphasis on exposition architecture as the launching pad for the Japan craze in American popular culture.

Underlying the construction of shrines used by followers of the Shinto religion, for example, was the shrine carpenter's knowledge of religious practices, including rituals performed at successive stages of building. This was certainly true for the Nikkei carpenters who built Wakamiya Inari Shrine in 1914 in an industrial area of Honolulu.<sup>9</sup> Founded by Shinto priest Yoshio Akizaki, the shrine is attributed to a Japanese architect by the name of Haschun, possibly an inaccurate transcription of Hokushin, one of two carpenters working in Honolulu in the period. Although little is known about the earliest phases of its design and construction, it could not have been built without the carpentry skills



The Wakamiya Inari Shrine in Waipahu, Hawai'i, was painted bright red in reverence to Inari, the Japanese god of foxes, agriculture, industry, and prosperity. Photo by Joel Bradshaw; courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



The Jinsha Mission shrine is the only major Shinto shrine in Maui and one of the best preserved examples of the traditional shrine-building techniques employed by Japanese carpenters. Photo by Joel Bradshaw; courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, licensed under Creative Commons.

of *miyadaiku*, specialists in shrines and temples, whose capacity to produce fine joinery was combined with a knowledge of Shinto ritual. It is the last extant example of Inari Shrine architecture on O'ahu.

Maui's Jinsha Mission is the only remaining example of six Shinto shrines that once served the island's Japanese immigrant population. It was built from 1915 to 1917 on land leased from the Hawai'i Commercial & Sugar Plantation beside a Japanese elementary school.<sup>10</sup>

Under head carpenter (Seiichi) Tomokiyo, a master from Japan, and (Ichisaburo) Takata, the small shrine section was built first, followed by the larger ceremonial hall, completed under the direction of master carpenter Ichitaro Takata, also from Japan. The major portions of both, in the traditional manner, were built without the use of nails or paint.<sup>11</sup>

Tomokiyo was an Issei from Wailuku who also built other temples, such as Paia Mantokuji in 1921.

While many skilled designers, builders, and gardeners were sojourners who worked on specific projects before returning to Japan, some craftsmen settled on a permanent basis and developed a substantial portfolio building the physical infrastructure of Japanese American

communities, including on the mainland. The most talented and prolific among them were **Shinzaburo** (1878-1958) and **Gentaro** (1883-1953) **Nishiura**, brothers born in Japan's Nara and Mie prefectures respectively, who learned carpentry from their father Tsurukichi Fukuyama Nishiura.

Immigrating through Hawai'i, where their carpentry skills proved useful in the shipbuilding industry, the Nishiura brothers arrived on the mainland in 1906, settling in Northern California's Santa Clara County. Like many Issei carpenters between the wars, Shinzaburo's occupa-

tion was sometimes enumerated in the Federal Census as a farmer, since building projects were sporadic and farming was a constant in rural areas.

One of their earliest projects was to build San Jose's first Buddhist Temple, where they worshipped, with architect K. Taketa (ca. 1908-13). They also built Okida Hall (aka Aikido Hall), the Watanabe Building, Palm Garden Bar, Shanghai Restaurant, and numerous residences in Santa Clara County.<sup>12</sup> Deep knowledge of Buddhist religious and architectural traditions are reflected in the project widely regarded as the Nishiura brothers' masterpiece, a second generation temple for San Jose's Buddhist community, the Hongwanji Buddhist Church Betsuin, designed by Issei architect **George Gentoku Shimamoto** (1904-1994) and completed by the Nishiura Brothers in 1937. It is considered to be the best example of Japanese Buddhist architecture in America.

The Japanese government typically sent an architect to supervise the construction of their pavilion at international expositions, such as Goichi Takeda at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. Such was the Nishiura brothers' reputation that they were asked to assemble the buildings, both in San Francisco in 1915 and later at Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island in 1939. Interestingly, many of the structures they and other Japanese carpenters built as sites of public spectacle and amusement had second lives of direct benefit to Japanese Americans. And when they were moved to their new homes, Japanese carpenters skilled in traditional construction methods were needed to reconstruct them.

Some buildings created for Japan's exhibits at expositions were recycled from fair to fair. Houses displayed in St. Louis reportedly first appeared at the National Industrial Exposition in Osaka one year earlier.<sup>13</sup> Other exposition architecture remained on site long after the fair had closed, offered as permanent gifts from Japan to the host city and the American public. Japan's proposal for building a temple, Ho-o-den, and garden on the Wooded Island for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition was planned from the start as a permanent gift to remain on the site. It stood in Jackson Park for more than 50 years, until it was lost in a fire.

On rare occasions, the Japanese Imperial family made spectacular gifts of exposition buildings to individuals after the fair. The best example of this involved three exquisitely crafted buildings on display at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition, which the Imperial family gifted to Issei chemist **Dr. Jokichi Takamine** (1854-1922). Shipped by rail to New York State, Takamine used the buildings as his summer home, Sho-fu-Den.

Dr. Takamine was not the only Issei to have the opportunity to acquire and repurpose exposition architecture for residential use, but most of the others only secured bits and pieces rather than entire buildings. The Hirasaki family acquired the model Silk Room from

Japan's exhibit at the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition and moved it to their 400-acre garlic farm in Gilroy, California, which had been established by then for 20 years.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to creating a new residence that incorporated elements of exposition architecture, the Hirasakis commissioned **Kaneji Domoto**, who had grown up at his father's Domoto Brothers Nursery in Oakland, to create a surrounding landscape and garden design, which he completed before the war. In all of these ways, the architectural and landscape work the Hirasaki family commissioned just before World War II sat squarely at the crossroads of exposition architecture, immigrant skills in the building trades, Japanese participation in agriculture and the nursery business, the rise of Japanese American communities, and an emerging generation of Nisei environmental design professionals.

Components of the Japanese exhibit at the 1939 San Francisco exposition also found new homes in more public settings within Japanese American communities. The fair's Japanese wooden bridge, for example, was dismantled and relocated to Gilroy Hot Springs after new owner **Harry Kyusaburo Sakata** (1885-1971), who had made his mark growing lettuce, beans, and berries



The Japanese exhibition hall at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, as seen from the Ferris wheel. Stereograph produced by Underwood & Underwood; courtesy of the Library of Congress.



The Japanese teahouse at Kykuit was commissioned in 1960 by Nelson Rockefeller and designed by Junzō Yoshimura, who had previously designed a house for the Museum of Modern Art. David Engel, a landscape artist who had studied in Kyoto, was hired to redesign the garden. Photo by HABS, courtesy of the Library of Congress.

in Lompoc and then Watsonville for two decades before acquiring an existing eight-acre resort in 1938, renaming it Gilroy Yamato, and creating a welcoming destination for Japanese Americans. The Nishiura brothers helped him build cabins there. Through adaptive reuse, Sakata converted a typical American resort into a place that evoked traditional cultural practices in Japan. Sakata was acquainted with hot springs in the Wakayama prefecture from which he had emigrated. He envisioned Gilroy Yamato as a place of rest and relaxation for aging Issei that would evoke the familiarity and comfort of rural hot springs back in the old country.

While the earliest buildings on Sakata's property dated to the resort's Victorian era origins and many cabins were added in the 1910s and 20s, post-1938 additions principally were the work of architects, garden designers, and carpenters of Japanese descent.

### ARCHITECTURE IN NIKKEI COMMUNITIES

Elite white patrons put Japanese immigrant carpenters to work building Japanese-style homes, teahouses, and

garden structures on their estates, but the carpenters' main client base was found in Nikkei communities. To a far greater extent than in urban areas, rural towns, and surrounding agricultural communities, such as Hamakua, Hawai'i; and San Jose, Fresno, and Watsonville, California, were home to Issei men who had acquired carpentry skills before leaving Japan, whether they primarily identified as carpenters or farmers.

The absence of Japanese immigrants from the existing narrative about the evolution of American design gives short shrift to their complex relationship not just to Japanese tradition but Japoneseque fashions. Arriving at a time when the Japanism already was in vogue, their services were marshaled to feed the growing American appetite for Japanese things, while their own buildings inevitably were influenced by the same craze that filtered Japanese tradition through the sieve of American taste.

The abundance of Buddhist temples in America, erected by Japanese immigrants in virtually every site of Nikkei settlement, combined with the availability of sources to document their planning, financing, design,

construction, and use, makes them a helpful starting point for analyzing the complex social, political, economic, and cultural dynamics that shaped Nikkei building projects.

While the concentration of immigrants with particular religious affiliations varied by community, Buddhists were the clear majority and among them Jodo Shinshu or “Pure Land” Buddhism predominated. As a result, the vast majority of temples built from around 1908 to the present were erected by local groups that gathered under the broad umbrella of the Buddhist Mission, which during WW II was renamed Buddhist Churches of America (BCA). The national headquarters, based in San Francisco, provided a conduit to the mother temple in Japan, a relationship that was critical to maintain for many reasons, not the least of which was the need to recruit Japanese clergy to America, which could be a difficult sell and even when successful, required continual replenishment as ministers took up residence for a while, moved on to larger congregations, or had reasons to return to the native land.

Any community that achieved significant size built several generations of temples over the course of the 20th century, remodeled their structures, added annexes to accommodate new needs, relocated when forced to by redevelopment and freeway construction, and in later years often added income producing properties to their portfolios. All told, the building programs loosely the present were erected by local groups that gathered under the broad umbrella of the Buddhist Mission, which during WW II was renamed Buddhist Churches of America (BCA). The national headquarters, based in San Francisco, provided a conduit to the mother temple in Japan, a relationship that was critical to maintain for many reasons, not the least of which was the need to recruit Japanese clergy to America, which could be a difficult sell and even when successful, required continual replenishment as ministers took up residence for a while, moved on to larger congregations, or had reasons to return to the native land.

Any community that achieved significant size built several generations of temples over the course of the 20th century, remodeled their structures, added annexes to accommodate new needs, relocated when forced to by redevelopment and freeway construction, and in later years often added income producing properties to their

portfolios. All told, the building programs loosely gathered under the wide umbrella of BCA comprised a vital segment of the overall architecture of Japanese America. These buildings didn’t merely constitute a functional or stylistic type. Rather, they reflected the underlying coherence of shared spiritual beliefs and ritual practices that constituted American Jodo Shinshu tradition. Still, American Jodo Shinshu congregations slowly integrated Christian practices into the design of their religious buildings and worship services, as indicated in the growing use of the term church rather than temples.

Major architectural firms of the day led by Caucasian architects sometimes won commissions to design key Japanese American community buildings, including Buddhist temples. The firm of Saunders & Lawton made a rather crude attempt at Japanese style in their design for the Seattle Buddhist Church, which stood from 1908 until 1939. Approximately 35 miles south, architect Frederick Heath of the firm Heath, Gove and Bell, who had worked on many local schools, was hired in 1922 to design Tacoma’s Nihongo Gakko, or Japanese Language School, and George Wesley Bullard was commissioned in 1930 to design the Tacoma Buddhist Temple.

Fundraising for the 1908 Seattle project knitted together urban and rural settlements in the interest of establishing a regional hub for Buddhists in the Pacific Northwest. Thus, funds were solicited not just in the major cities of Seattle and Tacoma but also in the saw-mills of Mukilteo and Bellingham canneries. Navigating restrictions on property ownership by aliens ineligible to citizenship led to alliances with trusted Caucasians who held the majority of corporate stock for Issei. Building the physical infrastructure of Nihonmachi played a central role in consolidating social relationships and political alliances within and beyond the Japanese American community. Given the property restrictions imposed on Issei, it is notable that temples and language schools figured prominently among the handful of buildings that were Nikkei owned and controlled, even when the arrangements on paper indicated white deed holders.

As women immigrated, families formed, and Nisei were born with citizenship and property rights in the U.S., community institutions expanded to support social life, leading to new investments in purpose-built temples and churches, community halls, and language schools. The living rooms and rental spaces where Issei had

held their first meetings simply needed to be functional from the standpoint of size and location. But making an investment in purchasing lots, adapting existing structures to meet organizational needs, and fundraising to erect new buildings required capital, mobilization, and making deliberate choices about how to represent their cultural identity in built form.

Considering the full range of Issei-sponsored building projects, religious architecture was the type most likely to incorporate traditional Japanese architectural elements, particularly shrines and temples located in small cities and towns that served as hubs for surrounding agricultural areas. Community buildings produced in Hawaii's plantation era are among the most traditional of Issei creations. The Hamakua Jodo Mission is the only surviving Buddhist Temple in which the carpenters used *Shakkan-ho*, the traditional Japanese system of measurement, to create the plan. The reason it drove this building's design can be traced to its carpenter, **Umekichi Tanaka** (1859-?), who was the son of a shrine carpenter who arrived in Hawai'i with substantial experience building temples in Japan using the *Shakkan-ho* system.

The early immigration and settlement of Japanese in the Hawaiian Islands, including the work they did building plantations and constructing key Nikkei community institutions, provided some advantage in gaining a toehold in the Territory's construction industry. As early as 1900, Japanese immigrants were a significant force in the multi-ethnic building trades of Hawai'i including carpenters, cabinetmakers, stonemasons, and contractors. Many Issei arrived on the U.S. mainland intending to work as carpenters only to encounter the hostility of white working men in building trades unions who limited their membership to Caucasians and routinely passed anti-immigrant planks at national conventions. The centrality of organized labor in the formation of the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League, which first convened in San Francisco in 1905 (renamed three years later the Asiatic Exclusion League), explains why Japanese carpenters in California formed their own ethnic unions and how they were pushed to the lowest rungs of mainstream carpentry work and pressed to rely on the Japanese American community for patronage.

The spread of Alien Land Acts in the western region, beginning in California in 1913 and extending north to Oregon and Washington in the early 1920s,

undermined the real property interests of the Issei and prompted evasive action and made it risky to broadcast property ownership or possession of long-term leases. In this context, the limited use of Japanese construction methods and styles may neither be a sign of rapid cultural assimilation, as one scholar suggested, nor reflective of an aesthetic preference for Western architecture, as the Meiji era building program would suggest. Rather, it may have reflected a choice of strategic invisibility to protect the Nikkei's collective interests.

Yuji Ichioka's pioneering study *Issei* (1988) documented the role that the Japanese Association played in trying to win rights for Japanese immigrants to reside permanently in the U.S and resist the exclusionists on multiple fronts, including by promoting the appearance of assimilation among immigrants.<sup>15</sup> Self-policing initially was aimed at eradicating stigmatized activities such as prostitution and gambling that tainted the larger Nikkei community. But in its most virulent form, hostility toward immigrants extended to everyone who spoke, wrote, or read in Japanese or continued to follow Japanese rather than Western etiquette in anything from the use of eating utensils to the way that husbands and wives moved together through public space. Signs of respect for the Emperor or attachment to the only country where Issei had citizenship invariably fed nativist suspicions. It was in this context that the Japanese Association launched a broader Americanization campaign to reduce the outward signs of difference that exclusionists used to justify their beliefs about the supposedly inassimilable nature of Japanese immigrants. As Ichioka astutely observed, the Americanization campaign never was intended to change the hearts and minds of Japanese immigrants, only to sooth the easily ruffled feathers of Americans through the appearance of collective conformity to their expectations. To use the popular Japanese proverb Ichioka favored to explain the concept: "*go ni ite wa go ni shitagae*," which translated to "If you go to a place, obey its customs" or "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

But the proverb only advised doing as the Romans do, not becoming one of them. *Gaimenteki doka* by definition meant conforming only in outward appearance to deflect racial hostility and prevent individual actions from negatively affecting the whole community. But a minority of Nikkei disagreed with that strategy, finding it an inadequate response to the problems they encoun-

tered. Instead they believed *Naimenteki doka* to be the right approach, which required a sincere adoption of American behavior and values.

Buddhists especially were targeted during waves of anti-immigrant organizing and corresponding Americanization campaigns led by local Japanese Associations. Non-Buddhists who subscribed to *Naimenteki doka* were concerned that divergent cultural and religious practices waved a red cape in the face of a riled up bull, reinforcing stereotypes that made things harder for everyone. But taken to its logical extreme, genuine assimilation required not just speaking English, wearing American clothes, eating American food with the right utensils, and mirroring other American practices, but actually embracing Christianity.

Japanese Christian churches exemplified *Naimenteki doka* in their conformity to standard plans for religious architecture. Evidence that *Gaimenteki doka* shaped the architecture of Nihonmachi in the first two decades of the 20th century can be found in the sharp differences between building façades and interiors of other property types. The Japanese proverb “*Deru kugi wa utareru*” sheds light on the underlying logic of building practices in Nikkei communities. Translated into English it means: “The nail that sticks up gets hit.” While many community structures were created with unremarkable façades, interiors often were designed, decorated, and used to maintain traditional cultural practices, even as successive generations put their own spin on standard American practices.

Designed and built in 1909 by the white architectural firm of Thompson & Thompson, Nippon Kan Hall fit well into the existing urban fabric of mixed-use buildings in Seattle’s growing Japantown. Nevertheless, the stage inside the hall was designed to receive a *hanamichi* or runway extension needed for *shibai*, Japanese theatrical performances.<sup>16</sup> Panama Hotel was designed with a *furoya* or public bathhouse in the basement. And regardless of architectural style, *gakuen*, or language schools, were explicitly designed to educate Nisei in Japanese language, history, culture, and etiquette.

Demographic shifts over time often stimulate new programs of building and adaptive reuse to better suit the emerging needs of a community. This was precisely what had occasioned the shift from housing for bachelors to family-oriented construction in the 1910s and

which gave rise to the addition of gymnasias for Nisei at Buddhist temples in the decades that followed. But subjugated minorities also were subject to shifting political winds that made original design decisions problematic years later. The example of Seattle’s Maneki restaurant illustrates the impact of periodic waves of anti-immigrant sentiment on the built environment.

Established in 1904, Maneki restaurant drew on traditional Japanese architectural features to create an environment in which the most conventional forms of Japanese hospitality could be enacted. A *torii* gate marked the entry into the Japanese garden in which the *tatami*-matted restaurant was set—complete with *kimono*-clad waitresses who evoked old world *geisha* entertaining gentlemen. These traditional gestures made it *the* place in Seattle for Issei men to entertain visiting Japanese dignitaries and business clients. The oasis of traditional space in an otherwise modern Nihonmachi supported the performance of elaborate Japanese rituals of hospitality that prescribed gender norms; assigned seating according to status; and guided dining etiquette, including eating and drinking rituals.

But a little more than a decade after Maneki opened, when returning WWI veterans targeted Japanese immigrants as the purported cause for their unemployment, the leaders of Seattle’s Japanese Association rallied to tone down signs of difference that fueled the exclusionists’ claims. Under the ethos of *Gaimenteki doka*, one of their first actions was to press Nihonmachi businesses to take down signboards in Japanese. Electric signs weren’t necessarily removed, but they were darkened. One of the first targets was the neon sign at Maneki, with its iconic beckoning cat (*maneki-neko*). Removing Japanese signs didn’t diminish the restaurant’s role in the Nikkei community or the function of other critical places such as the A-B Employment Agency, since Nihonmachi was navigable from memory or by word of mouth.

## JAPANESE AMERICAN ARCHITECTS

West coast public universities, such as the University of Washington and University of California, Berkeley, where there were substantial Japanese American communities, proved to be critical points of entry for people of Japanese ancestry seeking to study architecture and establish careers in the profession. There was, as well, a slow trickle of Japanese citizens into architectural degree

programs in the Midwest and east coast, for example at the University of Michigan and Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. But the vast majority of architects of Japanese ancestry were educated and established practices near Japanese immigrant centers of settlement. Ironically, the deep disruption of removal and internment during World War II, and patterns of dispersal from postwar resettlement, would lead Nisei to attend schools previously not considered, such as Washington University and Syracuse. As a result, many Japanese American architects developed successful practices in the postwar period in places previously unimaginable during the interwar years, including the unlikely settings of Waterloo, Iowa, and Raleigh, North Carolina.

One of the first known Japanese nationals to attend a U.S. college in preparation for a career in building design was **Saburo (aka Sabro) Ozasa** (1878-1915), a native of Nagasaki who immigrated in the closing years of the 19th century and attended the University of Oregon from 1903 to 1907. Ozasa obtained upwards of 15 commissions in his short 18-month career. Most were commercial buildings for Asian American clients, but this portfolio also included six residential structures. His known body of work in Seattle includes the Panama Hotel, Cascade Investment house, Specie Bank of Seattle, John Eckel residence, and R. Malan house.

Ozasa's most significant American project, the Panama Hotel (1910), is sited at the heart of Seattle's Japantown. Built approximately 20 years into the development of the city's Nihonmachi, amidst a flurry of Japantown projects that anticipated an increased Japanese presence in Seattle for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909 (not all of which were completed on time), the Panama Hotel was designed as a single room occupancy hotel for workingmen, with retail space at street level, and a commercial *senjo* (Japanese public bathhouse) and laundry, Hashidate-Yu, in its basement. Still extant with a high degree of integrity, the Panama Hotel was declared a National Historic Landmark in 2006.

Nisei architect **Kichio Allen Arai** (1901-1966) built his career on the patronage of Pacific Northwest Buddhist assemblies in an era with limited professional opportunities beyond the Japanese American community. Established in 1914, the Department of Architecture at the University of Washington, where Arai pursued undergraduate education, adhered to the prevailing

Beaux-Arts pedagogy in its first two decades of operation. Emulating the educational practices of the French Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the curriculum of American architecture schools, such as the University of Washington and UC Berkeley, equated a working knowledge of the world's architectural heritage with a combination of Classical antiquity as a model for composition massing and form and the succession of architectural styles that had gained fashion in Europe, including Baroque and Rococo, for decorative detail.

But for students of Japanese descent such as Arai, who gained admission to UW, UC, or other architecture degree programs in the 1920s and entered the profession during the interwar years, a Beaux-Arts education did not fully prepare them for the ways that racism would shape the course of their careers. Arai and others repeatedly would be tapped for their presumed knowledge of Japanese design and cultural practices that had no place in a Beaux-Arts curriculum devoted to the Western canon.

While still a student at the University of Washington, Arai gained a toehold in architecture assisting with the expansion of Seattle's Nihon Go Gakko or Japanese Language School. Organized in 1902 but constructed in 1913, the school's original wooden structure was designed by Japanese architect S. Shimizu in a Western style typical of contemporary school buildings. Arai drew on community ties to enter the profession by representing the property owners in the language school's expansion, helping them to navigate the process of securing a building permit. Listed in the National Register in 1982, Nihon Go Gakko survives as the oldest extant example of a Japanese language school in America.

Arai's prewar work on the Seattle Buddhist Temple, overlapping as it did with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, occurred at a moment when large segments of the American public conflated the Japanese government's actions with the loyalties of Japanese Americans, leading to internment. One ancient aspect of Buddhist iconography that adorned many temples, the *manji*, presented a serious public relations problem for American Buddhists when the Nazi Party adopted the swastika as its emblem. Arai's design marked a transition from the use of the *manji* as a decorative architectural element to other Buddhist symbols less prone to misinterpretation,

for example the eight-spoked Wheel of the Dharma or *dharma chakra*, lotus buds and blossoms.

As international tensions mounted, some Buddhist temples, for example in Oakland, California, removed *manji* from the facades of their buildings.

The original Oakland temple building had the Buddhist swastika design incorporated on its roof end tiles and entryway. However with ever-rising tensions, some of the young members of the temple felt these Buddhist “*manji*” symbols, even though they were the reverse of Hitler’s swastika design were inappropriate for the temple. Therefore, these young men actually climbed onto the roof and removed the symbols and tiles from the building.<sup>17</sup>

Others, including Seattle, concealed or altered *manji* on multiple forms of material culture, including religious artifacts and temple furnishings such as folding chairs, turning the equilateral cross with bent legs into a four-square box by filling in the lines, or by crossing it out entirely. The symbol was a standard element on the facades of prewar Buddhist temples, including at Wapato and Yakima, Washington. But as pressure mounted for Japanese American demonstrations of loyalty to the United States, the symbol, which hung under the front gables of the Yakima Buddhist temple, was carefully snipped out of a prewar photograph, lest viewers wrongly link Buddhist Churches of America with the enemy.

The Seattle Buddhist Church would be Arai’s last prewar commission before America’s entry into WWII brought forced confinement to people of Japanese descent.

In contrast to the local opportunities some pioneering professionals would find in Hawai’i and those that fueled Arai’s career in the Pacific Northwest, those who began college on the mainland sometimes chose to go east to gain entry into the architectural profession and find employment in fields related to their training. The volume and scope of construction in New York City attracted architects of Japanese ancestry even at a time when there was only a small Nikkei community.

In his overview of Issei in New York from 1876 to 1941, Eiichiro Azuma pointed to the differences between settlement patterns in the West, where the majority of

immigrants made their lives, and the East, where a relatively small number settled in New York City beginning in 1876.

Initially, the majority of Issei (first generation Japanese in America) came to New York, not to make quick money and return to Japan, but to engage in U.S.-Japan trade and learn Western ways. Many of these New York Issei came from Tokyo and other large cities, rather than from farming prefectures.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike Issei in the west, New York City had no geographic center of immigrant settlement, although key community institutions developed over time. More frequently than their west coast counterparts, the businessmen and professionals at the core of New York’s Issei community married white American women, the most prosperous among them settling in wealthy suburbs such as Scarsdale.

The son of a contractor in Yamagata, Japan, Iwahiko Tsumanuma (1881-1936) ultimately left his native land after cost overruns on an early project he had supervised hurt the family business. A network of Methodist missionaries eased his passage from Japan to India, where he was baptized under the name Thomas Rockrise and pursued English language studies, and then from Italy to New York. Received by a host family in Akron, Ohio, Tsumanuma/Rockrise, completed his high school education and one year at Buchtel Academy and College (which became the University of Akron in 1913) before attending Syracuse University in 1908 as a student of architecture. Four years later, he graduated with honors and moved to New York City, where he worked for several different architectural firms and organized his countrymen into the Japanese T-Square Club.

As an active member of the Issei business community in New York City, Tsumanuma/Rockrise belonged to the Nippon Club, Japanese Association, and Japan America Society. Patronage within this community provided his first independent commissions, including the design of importer Yamanaka & Company’s new galleries. Tsumanuma/Rockrise extended this project into a new phase with a Yamanaka-sponsored competition that invited Japanese architects in the U.S. and abroad to design an American suburban home in the Japanese style.



The Bank of Manhattan Trust Building, now the Trump Building at 40 Wall Street, is a 71-story skyscraper originally designed by H. Craig Severance and Yasuo Matsui. It was the tallest building in the world for a short time before the completion of the Chrysler Building in Midtown Manhattan. Photo by Irving Underhill; courtesy of the Library of Congress.

In partnership with landscape designer **Takeo Shiota** (1881-1943), whose most publicly acclaimed project was the Japanese Hill-and-Pond Garden at the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens in 1914, Tsumanuma/Rockrise undertook an elaborate interior design for one of the era's most notable Japanophiles, Burton Holmes. A globe-trotting lecturer known for having "invented" the travelogue, Holmes was seeking a temple-like setting within his two-story Central Park apartment to house his extensive collection of mementos. Well documented, the project illustrates the contradictions inherent in the American Japan craze, requiring the deployment of Asian aesthetic tropes in service of distinctively American cultural objectives.

Earning his NY architectural license by 1916, Tsumanuma/Rockrise nevertheless found it difficult to secure clients beyond his primary base of Issei businessmen and Japanophiles in the New York City area. For that reason, he formed partnerships with Shiota and then architect John Thompson, which produced Beaux Arts inspired projects, including an office building in Shanghai and hospital in Kobe, Japan. Upon return to the U.S. he was forced into early retirement due to tuberculosis. His son George Thomas Rockrise (1916-2000) and

grandson Peter would also go on to become architects.

Between the end of Iwahiko Tsumanuma/Thomas Rockrise's career and his son George's entry into the profession, **Yasuo Matsui** (1877-1962) established his reputation designing skyscrapers. Arriving in the U.S. in 1902, Matsui attended UC as an undergraduate in architecture, appearing in the 1907 Register and the 1908 Oakland City Directory. As President of F.H. Dewey & Company in the early 1930s, Matsui designed large buildings, but his passion—hands down—was for the skyscraper, which by 1930 had become the object of an intense height rivalry among architects and developers. H. Craig Severance, as lead architect, with Matsui as associate, attempted to make their contribution to the record with a \$20 million, 71-story tower, the Bank of Manhattan Building sited at 40 Wall Street (1930).<sup>19</sup> They were trying to top the Woolworth Building, if only by 17 feet, but faced a neck-and-neck race with the Chrysler Building, which was under construction by Severance's former partner (which made the competition intensely personal). But their team was trumped when the Chrysler Building's architect unfurled a taller spire kept hidden until the completion of construction.

The near impossibility of succeeding at speculative building projects during the 1930s led Matsui down a path he had intentionally avoided throughout his career: accepting a commission to design a traditional Japanese



A view of the World Trade Center towers, designed by Minoru Yamasaki, from Ellis Island. Photo by Carol Highsmith; courtesy of the Library of Congress.

building. The start of the world war long before the U.S. entered the fray created a great deal of uncertainty about which nations would participate in the 1939 New York World's Fair. When Japan finally committed to the exposition, Matsui was the clear choice to design its Pavilion, having been recommended by the Japanese Consul in New York. Thus his last major project before World War II was a replica of Japan's historic architecture.

That brief association with the Japanese government cost him dearly two years later when, on December 8, 1941, America declared war on Japan. Matsui was immediately arrested by the FBI as a "potentially dangerous alien" as part of their massive sweep of Japanese nationals living in the area around New York City. Gatherings were banned; those found at social institutions and restaurants were escorted home under armed guard and, after packing a bag, were removed to detention facilities on Ellis Island. Matsui was incarcerated for two months there.<sup>20</sup> Released for the duration of the war, his movements were severely restricted and subject to regular reporting. If the stigma of incarceration wasn't enough, government restrictions on travel and possession of photographic equipment were particularly damaging to his career as an architect.

The west coast and New York metropolitan area were key geographic bases for a growing cadre of environmental designers of Japanese ancestry in the interwar period. Those who came to the Midwest found an early haven in the greater Detroit area on account of the combination of University of Michigan's architecture program, the Cranbrook Academy of Art, **Elie** and then **Eero Saarinen's** architectural firms, and the booming industrial economy of Detroit, which was the fourth largest American city in the mid-20th century.

Perhaps the most noted 20th century architect of Japanese descent, **Minoru Yamasaki** (1912-2008), built his professional portfolio during the decades of the 1930s and 1940s by first moving to New York City, then to the Detroit area, where the pace of development provided greater opportunity to gain experience. Yamasaki graduated with a degree in Architecture from the University of Washington in 1934. He cut his teeth working for the New York City firm of Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, whose reputation had been made as the designers of the Empire State Building, which was the tallest building in the world when it was completed in 1931. In 1945, he moved

to Detroit, working for the architectural firm of Smith, Hinchman & Grylls until his 1949 exit to start his own firm in Troy, Michigan.

The experience of racial discrimination and stereotyping, including the essentialist conflation of minority architects' ancestry with their design expertise, burdened Yamasaki in ways his peers didn't fully grasp. When he finally got the opportunity to do a project outside of the U.S. in the mid-1950s, designing the American Consulate in Kobe, Japan, he found it a relief. For the first time in his professional life, he was regarded as the outsider he actually was to Japanese culture.

Yamasaki's first major period of world travel in 1955 followed the Kobe commission, exposing him to a vast array of historical building types, styles, materials, and construction methods in Japan, East Asia, and Europe. He talked about it as an electrifying experience that provided a wealth of inspiration for the projects that followed, drawing on exposure to global architecture for ideas that could be applied to architectural design generally. Unabashedly modernist in aesthetic sensibility but with an ornamental touch, his work was both praised and criticized by architectural critics and environmental design professionals.

Yamasaki designed San Francisco's Japanese Cultural and Trade Center, which opened in 1968. Set on a five-acre site bordered by Geary Boulevard and Filmore, Post, and Laguna Streets, at the heart of San Francisco's Nihonmachi, the mall consists of three elements: Kinokuniya Mall, Kintetsu Mall, and Miyako Mall divided into East and West sides, anchored at each end by Miyako Hotel and Kabuki Theater. It originated with a 1953 proposal for a shopping center that would be a tourist destination by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Northern California. In 1960, it was presented to the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, ultimately becoming one of the city's first redevelopment projects of the postwar period.

While the intention to revitalize Japantown with the mall was positive, the project became emblematic of the displacement that accompanied most urban development projects, in this case dislocating 1,500 Japantown residents and 50 businesses.<sup>21</sup> So too, it essentially competed with what remained of San Francisco's historic Japantown, "the informal Nihonmachi," according to the Redevelopment Agency, "not to be confused with

the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center.” Nihonmachi itself would have to wait until the Center’s completion before rising to the top of the city’s investment priorities for the neighborhood.

Yamasaki’s design for San Francisco’s Japan Center has been dismissed by architectural critics as “Brutalist slabwork,” while the mall has received mixed reviews that deemed it a vital place despite its “bad architecture.”<sup>22</sup> Intended to draw consumers to Japantown in the face of massive competition from suburban malls, the Center couldn’t completely reverse a long-term trend toward urban disinvestment.

His most famous project by far was the 110-story World Trade Center. It would become transformed from a controversial icon of New York City’s skyline into a terrorist target on September 11, 2001. The tallest building in the world when it opened in 1973, its extreme scale was controversial.

#### **WORLD WAR II, INTERNMENT, AND JAPANESE AMERICAN ARCHITECTS**

While anti-immigrant bias, racial discrimination, and the Japan craze colored the careers of 20th century architects of Japanese ancestry differently than their white counterparts, the removal of people of Japanese ancestry from the west coast and their forced incarceration during World War II had the most profound impact of all. What happened to the physical fabric of Japanese America as a result of the removal of people from their homes and communities; its consequences for the career aspirations of emerging environmental design professionals; and recovery in the postwar period demands a level of attention missing from most histories of American architecture and rise of the architectural profession.

While these issues could be illuminated by studying virtually any Issei or Nisei architecture student or professional who lived through World War II, an examination of one particular cluster of Japanese American and Caucasian peers educated at UC Berkeley in the decade before the war highlights the difference race made in their lives and career trajectories.

Internment cast a long shadow on the professional development of environmental designers. The differential impact of wartime freedom for white architects at the early stages of building a career, and internment for those of Japanese descent, is amply illustrated by the

divergent trajectories of **Vernon Armand De Mars** and three Japanese American peers who studied architecture at UC Berkeley in the 1930s: **Alfred Kazuo Sawahata**, who was in De Mars’ 1931 graduating class; **Hachiro Yuasa**, who received his undergraduate degree in 1933 and Master’s of Architecture in 1935; and **Siberius “Si” Saito**, who graduated in 1938.

De Mars’ time at Berkeley brought him into contact with a number of architecture students of Japanese descent. After graduation, he worked for the National Park Service and then found steady employment from 1936 to 1942 as Western District Architect for the Farm Security Administration’s regional office in San Francisco.

De Mars was central to an emerging circle of progressive planners and designers that formed at the end of the 1930s – Telesis – that had utopian ambitions. Japanese Americans at the edges of this influential circle of environmental design professionals, such as Albert Sawahata, would be swept out due to internment.

Some of the Japanese Americans in this Berkeley-centered circle also found employment in the depths of the Depression with the Farm Security Administration. As De Mars would later recall, Yuasa served as “the project architect for the houses which we were doing,” and developed a specialty in housing types. Despite a common start to their careers, however, De Mars would continue to accrue significant experience during WWII, while the lives of his Japanese American peers would be deeply disrupted.

Si Saito redirected his own creative skills, formerly used in a professional capacity, into documenting Tanforan’s abject conditions. His series of 24 sketches presented a far more honest portrait of living conditions within the architecture of forced confinement than the WRA’s publicity shots did. As the California Historical Society explained the contrast:

The publicized photographic record of the day... give no hint of the barbed wire and armed manned towers that imprisoned camp residents or the humiliating living conditions in which they lived. As Saito described in a letter to a friend, ‘Poor ventilation, dirty and grimy, smell of manure from underfloor area, dampness; these are some of the conditions that occur out in our ‘skid row.’

Saito included the title “Architect” in the letter’s return address. He might not be working in a firm, but he retained his professional identity throughout the years when he and other people of Japanese ancestry were denied civil liberties.<sup>23</sup>

De Mars, while upset by the loss of “our young, talented architects, and longtime close friends,” as he put it, nevertheless “made the best of what we felt was a very unfair and unnecessary proposition” by agreeing to work with Garrett Eckbo planning the internment camps. Eckbo remembered it simply as the next available project once the war brought FSA work on migrant housing to an end.

in 1942, when the war was coming on—and the Farm Security program with camps tapered off in about ‘41 because we could see this coming—we had a year where we were sort of doing things, some war housing and stuff, and work down at Manzanar in the relocation center there. Stuff like that.<sup>24</sup>

Architectural historian Lynne Horiuchi has written at length about De Mars’ and Eckbo’s questionable professional ethics in accepting the assignment as well as the ethical implications of the larger planning, design, and construction program that undergirded the architecture of confinement.<sup>25</sup>

While De Mar’s postwar career included positions on the architecture faculty, first at MIT then UC Berkeley, his peers of Japanese descent faced a rougher road back to the profession. Yuasa would have to relocate to Saugatuck, Michigan, in April of 1943 to win release from Topaz. It was far away from his prewar base of patronage in the Bay Area, where family friends, such as the Ichizo Sakano family who had purchased his architectural plans to build their 1939 cabin at Gilroy Yamato Hot Springs, one of Yuasa’s earliest independent commissions after architecture school. Sawahata had to wait until 1945 before relocating to Chicago, then New York, to work as an architect. As Garrett Eckbo recalled,

He was an architect, a good friend of ours, a very smart, talented man. He used to come see our daughters. He loved them. They were just kids when we were living in the city. But he was

caught up in that whole relocation thing and I think it kind of destroyed him. He ended up living in the East. His career fell apart. I never quite knew what happened to him.<sup>26</sup>

Si Saito worked in Madison, Wisconsin, before establishing a postwar architectural practice in Waterloo, Iowa. When he returned to Berkeley, Yuasa established a practice designing buildings and residences throughout Northern California, forming his own firm, Yuasa & Minner Architects and Planners, in 1969, and was eventually elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

Highly capable high school students who dared to dream of attending an Ivy League institution after release from the camps faced an additional complication, as some universities interpreted EO 9066 as prohibiting the admission of students of Japanese descent until the war formally ended, and even then considered it their patriotic duty to hold space for returning veterans (who they wrongly presumed to only include Caucasians). This posed a problem for some who applied to college from camp with the intention of attending school during the 1945-46 academic year.

Born in 1927 in Fresno, California, **Kinjo Imada** (1927-2005) completed high school at Gila River, when he and his family were interned during WWII. Scoring well on the college entrance exams, his aspirations to pursue an undergraduate education in architecture included the Ivies, with Yale as his clear preference. The documentary record of Imada’s efforts to secure college admission captures the discrimination faced by college-aged students of Japanese descent in the transition to the postwar era, as his 1945 application to become a member of Yale’s 1949 graduating class met with blanket rejection.

A sympathetic dean and an acquaintance each tried to open up access to Yale, or find a way for Imada to transfer in after studying elsewhere for a couple of years, but it was clear nothing would change until the war ended. Fortunately, the frustrating conversation came to a close when Harvard offered Imada admission. He became the fifth person of Japanese descent to gain admission to Harvard’s architecture program.

After completing his first year at Harvard, Imada would stop out for two years of military service as a clerk in General MacArthur’s office in occupied Japan. With

GI benefits in hand, he returned to Harvard to complete architectural studies, ultimately earning an M. Arch. in 1955. The San Francisco-based architectural practice Imada ultimately developed as a partner in the firm of Oakland & Imada, beginning in 1977, focused on residential design and hospital work for Kaiser Permanente.

Early release from camps for work in areas outside the Military Exclusion Zone or to attend school at one of several universities that accepted architecture students of Japanese ancestry provided a select few with opportunities to continue to make career progress during the war. The examples of George Matsumoto and some of his peers who studied architecture at Washington University during World War II, as well as the extraordinary career of George Nakashima, demonstrate how important it was to find a way out of internment camps and into an environment more supportive of professional development as soon as possible.

George Matsumoto's father carved out a career as a produce broker, connecting Japanese immigrant farmers with Eastern markets. The timing of Matsumoto's college entry to UC Berkeley during the year of U.S. entry into the Second World War left him having to run the gauntlet between internment and the draft. One solution was to try to continue his education outside the Military Defense Zone. Submitting applications to every conceivable architecture program, George and other similarly situated Nisei found Washington University, in Saint Louis, to be the most welcoming institution. Indeed, Matsumoto attended Washington University with a robust cohort of future Nisei architects. Bay Area artist Chiura Obata moved his family to Saint Louis upon leaving the internment camps at Topaz, where his son, Gyo Obata, was studying architecture at Washington University.

Graduating from Washington University in 1943, Matsumoto still worried about the draft, so he went on to graduate study at Cranbrook Academy in Michigan, receiving an M.A. in 1945. The dearth of building projects in the immediate postwar years, even at the firms where he first secured employment, such as Saarinen & Swanson (1945-46) and Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (1948), made entering architectural competitions a promising alternative strategy for establishing a professional reputation. Lightning struck when he took first prize in a competition to develop Chicago's city plan, which built on recent work he had done for Detroit.

Before long that brought an invitation to lecture, then teach, at the University of Oklahoma. When the dean who hired him moved to North Carolina State University to start a School of Architecture, he invited Matsumoto to join him on the faculty. This made him one of the earliest Nisei to secure a position teaching architecture.

From 1948 through the 1950s, while he taught at NCSU, Matsumoto completed dozens of award-winning residential projects in places like Raleigh, Chapel Hill, and beyond. His ability to create custom-designed houses on a tight budget was one of the factors in his success. But he also believed Japanophilic tendencies in American design culture may have worked in his favor.

By the time he returned to the East Bay to teach at UC in 1961 and restarted a practice as the 1960s unfolded, he was recognized as having left a lasting imprint on North Carolina's residential landscape. For his professional accomplishments, he was elected to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects.

Born in San Francisco, **Gyo Obata** (1923-) escaped internment by gaining admission to Washington University in Saint Louis beginning in 1941. After graduating, he received an advanced degree in architecture from Cranbrook, studying with Eero Saarinen; worked for Skidmore, Owings and Merrill; and then Minoru Yamasaki before establishing the Saint Louis firm of Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum in 1955. He is a principal in what grew to be one of the largest architectural firms in America, and is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including admission to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects.

Careful planning allowed Matsumoto to spend little more than a month interned at Poston before restarting college at Washington University, but it took **Robert Hanamura** (1929-) more than a year before he was forcibly removed from UC Berkeley to Tanforan and Topaz, before attending college at Wayne State University and finally Miami University in Ohio.

But the draft presented another interruption in his undergraduate education; he was sent to Tokyo in the immediate postwar period to serve as an intelligence agent, an experience that deepened his appreciation of Japanese architectural and landscape traditions. Upon his return to the U.S., he completed a B.A. in Architecture at Miami.

The combined effects of the Great Depression fol-

lowed by internment completely derailed some promising architectural careers. Seattle-born Nisei **Norio Wakamatsu** (1913-2008) was a case in point. After graduating from Seattle's Queen Anne High School in 1931, he earned a University of Washington degree in architecture. Graduating in the midst of the Great Depression, Wakamatsu was one among many architectural graduates who found it difficult to find steady employment in their chosen field, thus he bagged groceries in his father's store and sometimes sporadically worked as a draftsman until forcibly removed to Minidoka. His primary occupation upon internment was listed as Shipping and Receiving Clerk, but his hopes were reflected in identifying his potential occupation as a Draftsman. But this would not come to pass.

Interviewed by a local paper at the time of federal redress to the 80,000 survivors of internment, Wakamatsu expressed still-raw feelings about his wartime experience as hopes for inclusion in American society were dashed, compounding childhood experiences of racial discrimination. In concrete terms, forced incarceration meant that Wakamatsu's father was pressed to sell the grocery store at a steep loss; his wife had to part with her best furniture for a pittance; his family faced extraordinary difficulty caring for a severely disabled child under forced incarceration; and his own career ambitions were crushed.

'I was so bitter that I burned my high school annuals and my architectural drawings,' said Wakamatsu, who has lived in Spokane since 1943. 'We thought if they could get enough ships, they'd ship us to Japan.'<sup>27</sup>

He would never have the opportunity to translate his professional education into a career in architecture.

Still others would create new channels for their creative talents in the postwar period. Principally recognized as a master woodworker and innovative furniture maker, who helped to usher in the Crafts Revival in the United States, **George Katsutoshi Nakashima's** (1905-1990) educational background was in architecture, earning degrees at the University of Washington (1929) and MIT (1931). Employment in New York with the Long Island Park Commission was terminated due to Depression-era exigencies, so Nakashima embarked on an ambitious itinerary of world travel, including time in Paris and a stint working for architect Antonin Raymond in Japan, who originally had worked with Frank Lloyd Wright on the Imperial Hotel but stayed on to establish his own Tokyo-based practice. This experience cemented Nakashima's embrace of Modernism and deepened his knowledge of Japanese design traditions.

Forcibly relocated to Minidoka, Nakashima presented his previous, current, or potential occupa-



The Japanese garden at Kykuit featured bamboo gates, Japanese-styled walls, and an artificial brook, and was designed and planted by a gardener named Takahashi, who had allegedly worked in the Japanese Emperor's gardens in Tokyo. Photo by HABS, courtesy of the Library of Congress.

tions rather expansively as architect, artist, sculptor, teacher of art, or skilled carpenter. He used those skills to improve the physical condition of the camp. In December 1942, WRA photographer Francis Steward captured a series of images of Nakashima at his assigned job constructing and decorating a model apartment to illustrate the kinds of improvements that could be made with scrap materials.<sup>28</sup>

Nakashima refined his woodworking skills with the help of Issei carpenter **Gentaro Kenneth “Kenny” Hikogawa** (1902-1963), also incarcerated at Minidoka, who taught Nakashima how to use and take care of Japanese hand tools that were to become essential in Nakashima’s postwar production. In later years, Nakashima’s knowledge of Japanese wood joinery, which he owed to Hikogawa, surprised Japanese artisans who assumed that no Americans would know about it.<sup>29</sup>

Antonin and Noemi Raymond sponsored Nakashima’s early release from Minidoka, inviting him to occupy their farm and architectural studio in New Hope, Pennsylvania, at a time when their practice was shifting to New York City. Nakashima’s full talents were realized there. His skills as an architect are reflected in the extensive home and woodworking complex he established on the property’s 21 acres. Beyond that complex and the world-famous furniture he created, Nakashima also designed churches in the U.S. and abroad.

Depending upon the timing of graduation with respect to the Great Depression, access to work in an architect’s office during the apprenticeship phases, and an individual’s status in relation to wartime internment, careers in architecture and landscape design that began in the late 1930s either thrived or withered on the vine. The key to postgraduate success was gaining experience as a draftsman then moving up to being a designer on the way to securing a license to practice architecture.

### **JAPANESE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD**

During the postwar period, students of Japanese ancestry enrolled in degree programs in the environmental design professions in increasing numbers, gaining a toe-

hold for the first time in landscape architecture as design professionals. The first Nikkei recipient of the Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture at University of California, Nisei **Saichiro Kawakita** (1917-2008), graduated just before the war in 1941.

Kawakita was followed in 1942 by **Donald Shunji Akamatsu** (1920-1949), a student of landscape design whose father worked as a gardener; **Michinori Richard Inouye** (1919-1978), who studied plant pathology at Berkeley but ended up in the health professions; and **Motoyuki Takahashi** (1919-20<sup>13</sup>). They all missed graduation ceremonies with the Class of 1942 due to internment. Takahashi would later participate in a 2009 event sponsored by the California Nisei College Diploma Project that belatedly honored UC students with a formal graduation ceremony. As internment disrupted accrued momentum, the class that included Akamatsu, Inouye and Takahashi would be the last Japanese Americans to complete degrees in University of California’s landscape architecture program until the 1947 graduation of **Masaharu Kimura** (1921-1992). It would be 1949 before Japanese Americans graduated in any numbers, producing a substantial gap in the number of landscape architects of Japanese ancestry compared to architecture.

The Nisei generation’s delayed entry into landscape architecture until the postwar period had several consequences: coeducation brought women into the field alongside men; relocation widened the geographic distribution of Japanese Americans into the Midwest and East; and integration opened a wider range of educational options.

Born in San Jose, California, in 1922, the oldest of six children, **Mai Haru Kitazawa Arbegast** (1922-2012) was exposed early on to horticulture due to her father and uncle’s seed production and nursery business, Kitazawa Seed Company. Her uncle was the first of two brothers to immigrate to the U.S. in 1904, starting out as a hired hand to a gardener in Santa Clara. Her father, **Gijiu Kitazawa** (1889-1963), learned the seed business as an apprentice in Japan, immigrating to the U.S. in 1912.

The company sold seed packets, including vegetables for typical Japanese diets, to individuals and filled bulk orders. As a child, Mai was immersed in the family business, spending much of her time, in her words, “in boots stomping on particular tomatoes and collecting the seeds for further crosses.”<sup>30</sup>



The Western Addition neighborhood of San Francisco is the center of Japantown. Before World War II it housed one of the largest enclaves of Japanese outside Japan. Although it took on a Ginza-like appearance, it was resettled by other ethnic groups after the evacuation and has become gentrified since the 1990s. Photo by Carol Highsmith; courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Mai initially attended San Jose State College, but the family's internment at Heart Mountain interrupted her education. Release from camp in February of 1943 provided an opportunity to complete undergraduate studies at Oberlin College, graduating in 1945, while the rest of her immediate family spent the remaining war years working in Detroit. Oberlin's open doors represented a sharp contrast with many state and public institutions that barred Japanese American students from entry during the war. University President Ernest G. Wilkins actively recruited students, but its reputation as a welcoming place was made on the news that circulated widely among incarcerated Nisei that Oberlin had a Nisei student council president, Kenji Okuda.

After the war, the Kitazawas returned to California to rebuild their seed and nursery businesses, with Gijiu reaching a national market through mail-order operations. Buemon and his wife Kiyoko were captured by WRA photographer Hikaru Iwasaki upon their return to San Jose in 1945 beginning the difficult work of restoring a nursery they had been forced to leave four years earlier. Mai pursued an advanced degree in ornamental horticulture at Cornell University in the immediate postwar years. When she returned to the Bay area, Mai undertook a second Master's degree directly in landscape architecture at UC Berkeley. After graduation she taught there for

<sup>13</sup> years in the areas of plant materials, horticulture, and planting design while maintaining a part-time practice. She wrote a guide to landscape architecture of the Bay area in the 1960s, as well as an index to Berkeley's campus trees.

In 1967, she ended teaching and ramped up to a full-time professional practice that would engage her in a wide array of landscape projects over next 35 years.

Her career accomplishments were recognized with a Lifetime Achievement Award from UC Berkeley's Department of Landscape Architecture, and she was honored with the Horticulturalist of the Year Award from AAGHA. In all of these ways, her entry into professional practice in landscape architecture speaks to the influence of Issei occupations on the Nisei's choice of professions, the impact of relocation on educational opportunities, and Nisei entry into landscape architecture in the postwar period.

The historical demography of Issei settlement and family formation meant that many Nisei were college age by the time of internment. As a result, some began college on the west coast but ended up completing it in or near the cities where they relocated. **Bob Hideo Sasaki** (1919-2000), one of the most distinguished and influential landscape architects of the 20th century, experienced this disruption. The third of four sons, Hideo had

not yet completed his undergraduate education at UC Berkeley at the point of internment. He left camp early on work release to do agricultural labor and completed his undergraduate education at the University of Illinois in 1946.

Following graduation, Sasaki pursued advanced studies in architecture at Harvard, receiving a Master of Landscape Architecture in 1948. His career combined an academic position at Harvard Graduate School of Design, which influenced an entire generation of landscape architects, with a robust professional practice as principal in Sasaki Associates, founded in 1953. Growing to be the largest landscape architectural firm in the world, it adopted an interdisciplinary approach to planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design, working on many corporate and university campuses, public spaces, parks, and more. Sasaki was the recipient of numerous awards, including the American Society of Landscape Architects Medal in 1971.

### JAPANTOWNS IN POST-WAR AMERICA

The war took its toll on as many as 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry in the United States and tore the fabric of the world they had made. The role of the Alien Property Custodian in seizing title to the real property people of Japanese ancestry accrued in America cannot be overstated. The scope of their confiscations covered virtually every category that comprised the physical fabric of prewar Japanese America: homes, businesses, organizational headquarters, churches, and more. Their scope extended to intellectual property such as patents, licenses, and trademarks. Business records were included in their takings, as well as photographs, sound recordings, motion pictures, stocks, bonds, and other financial instruments.

The architectural legacy of prewar Japanese America was deeply damaged by the massive dislocation of its stewards, dispossession in myriad forms, deferred maintenance and deterioration, vandalism, and outright arson from the time that EO 9066 was issued until it became permissible to return to the Military Exclusion Zone. Some of the most critical community buildings were temporarily converted to hostels to manage the intense housing shortage that greeted returning Japanese Americans. Some who returned chose to fight in the courts to reclaim property that had been seized or taken

over during the war.

Many didn't return to their prewar homes and communities, instead making new lives in the places where they had temporarily resettled to avoid internment, or to which they were released for work or study before the end of the war. All of these factors contributed to a decline in the vitality and population of Nihonmachi that had been vibrant before the war. This decline also was fueled by the acceleration of suburban growth in the 1950s and 1960s, raising new questions about what role



The Peace Pagoda stands 100-feet-high at the entrance to San Francisco's Japantown. Designed by Japanese architect Yoshiro Taniguchi, it was presented to the city by its sister city Osaka on March 28, 1968. Photo by Carol Highsmith; courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Japantowns would play in the lives of Japanese Americans going forward.

Compounding all of the forces threatening the future of Japantowns were postwar redevelopment schemes that had a disproportionate impact on ethnic communities of color in neighborhoods near city centers. San Francisco's Japantown began to be a target of "slum clearance" as early as 1942; but the pace of redevelopment substantially accelerated in the 1950s as the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency acquired properties through eminent domain, demolished large swaths of the residential and commercial fabric, and displaced a mix of returning Japanese Americans and an influx of African American migrants who had come to the west coast seeking industrial employment during WWII.

After the National Defense and Highways Act was signed in 1956, interstate highway construction also had a disproportionate impact on blue collar and minority residents of cities, as freeways too often were routed through the heart of African American and Asian American communities.

It was in this context that community-based groups formed with the goal of having a voice in planning for the future of Japantowns. Their members essentially functioned as activists and citizen-planners who ensured Japanese American stewardship of community interests in cities such as San Francisco and Los Angeles. The complex political landscape of campaigns to convert city plans into beneficial outcomes for Los Angeles' Japanese American community involved the Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization, the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Corporation, Little Tokyo Community Development Advisory Committee, the Affirmative Action Task Force, the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, and Little Tokyo Service Center, among others.

Concerned about the condition of Japantowns and troubled by how redevelopment plans were unfolding, some architects and planners of Japanese descent were active participants in these community-based efforts, directing their talents and energy into revitalization efforts. Wayne Osaki's efforts in San Francisco are illustrative. The family was incarcerated at Tule Lake during World War II. Wayne had finished three years of high school at the time of internment.

Osaki attended City College after returning to San Francisco in 1946, served in the U.S. Marine Corps

Reserves, and in 1948 enrolled at UC Berkeley in architecture. Based in San Francisco, his career in architecture, beginning in 1951, focused on stores, apartments, and schools, as well as churches, his true passion.

In an era when Urban Renewal too often meant urban "removal," he took up the cause of revitalizing San Francisco's Japantown. After the war, San Francisco's Japantown became the target of large-scale urban renewal and redevelopment efforts, with clearance accomplished through the exercise of eminent domain.

By 1960, about half of the core of Japantown had been razed, displacing at least 1,500 residents and more than 60 small Japanese American businesses. At least 38 property parcels passed from Japanese ownership to the Redevelopment Agency in this period.<sup>31</sup>

Wayne Osaki's contributions in the postwar period included activism as program chairman of the Western Addition Community Organization, which fought the Redevelopment Agency's negative impact on Japantown homes and businesses in the 1970s. His career reflects a dedication to restoring the vitality of San Francisco's Japanese American community—both through professional and voluntary activities—in the postwar decades.

Osaki was not the only professional who would have the opportunity to direct his skills toward reinvigorating Japantowns in the postwar period. For some, training in architecture was the stepping-stone to a career that combined urban design and planning. **Rai Yukio Okamoto** (1927-1993), was the Philadelphia-born child of Frank Okamoto, a 1913 immigrant from Japan who was an architect/engineer, and Claudine Marshall, a teacher who came from New York. Rai earned initial college degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and MIT in architecture before going on to earn a Masters in city planning from Yale in 1954. Returning to San Francisco to establish his own firm, by 1963 the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency hired him to develop a master plan for Japantown. A prominent example of his design work is Buchanan Mall, completed in 1976.

Osaki and Okamoto's efforts in San Francisco were paralleled in Southern California by architect **Hayahiko Takase** (1930-). Takase's career, after earning a Bachelor's of Architecture from Tokyo University in 1953

then the Master's of Architecture from Harvard in 1956, recapitulated some of the forces that led architects of Japanese descent to engage in projects connected with their ethnicity and designed in ways that fused Japanese design traditions with a Modernist sensibility.

Active in efforts to revitalize Little Tokyo, Takase served on the Mayor's Community Development Advisory Committee at the end of the 1960s and became the designer of some of the neighborhood's most important contemporary buildings, including the Sho Tokyo Theater (1966), Kajima Building (1967), the Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple (1976), Little Tokyo Plaza, the New Otani Hotel and Garden (1978), and Miyako Hotel (1986).

The postwar Sister Cities movement brought together, in joint endeavors, places such as Glendale, California, and Higashi-Osaka, Japan, funding Takase's commission to design Shoseian, the Whispering Pine Tea House, on the grounds of the Brand Library (1974) in Glendale, which is recognized on the city's Register of Historic Resources. Takase currently is the designer of the long awaited Budokan of Los Angeles, a multigenerational sports and recreation center in Little Tokyo. His fusion of Japanese sensibility with a Modernist aesthetic can be seen in designs for numerous residences in the Los Angeles area. His work was the subject of a 2010 retrospective at the Doizaki Gallery of the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Los Angeles, which included walking tours led by the architect and Little Tokyo Historical Society.<sup>32</sup>

Elements of the built environment and cultural landscape provide rich resources for documenting the experiences and perspectives of Japanese Americans. Those who left their imprint on the American land—including but not limited to design professionals—struggled with many competing forces: the desire to maintain Japanese design and building traditions, while pursuing architectural fashions from the Beaux Arts to Modernism; the attempt to capitalize professionally on the vogue for all things Japanese, while simultaneously demonstrating a capacity to assimilate into American culture; among other tensions. Unlike European capitals, where a fascination with Japanese culture could be accepted at face value, Japanese immigrants in the U.S. and their American-born children encountered virulent racism, particularly in the Western region. The architecture of

Japanese America, which was shaped by these tensions, has much to teach us about our continuing struggle as a nation to realize the promise of freedom and equality.

## Endnotes

1 Donna Graves is thanked for editing and assistance with this essay.

2 Dallas Finn, *Meiji Revisited: The Sites of Victorian Japan* (Trumble, Connecticut: Weatherhill, 1995).

3 Kevin Nute, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1993), examines the evidence surrounding the architect's repeated claims that exposure to Japanese architecture only confirmed his original design ideas, but did not influence them.

4 See Cherie Wendelken, "The Tectonics of Japanese Style: Architect and Carpenter in the late Meiji Period," in *Art Journal* 55:3 (Autumn 1996): 28-37.

5 Japanese exhibits at international exhibitions are well covered in the scholarly literature. See, for example: Ellen P. Conant, "Japan 'Abroad' at the Chicago Exposition, 1893," in *Challenging Past and Present: The Metamorphosis of Nineteenth Century Japanese Art*, edited by Ellen P. Conant (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 254-280; Kendall H. Brown, "Fair Japan: Japanese Gardens at American World's Fairs, 1876-1940" in *Sitelines* 4:1 (Fall, 2008):13-17; and Hsuan Tsen, "Spectacles of Authenticity: The Emergence of Transnational Entertainments in Japan and America, 1880-1906" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 2011).

6 The National Register Nomination for the Yamashiro Historic District notes: "In 1924 Adolph Bernheimer leased property in Pacific Palisades, and constructed a second estate with a Japanese garden to house his art collection. See Brian Curran and Christine Lazzareto for Historic Resources Group, "National Register Inventory-Nomination Form: Yamashiro Historic District" (April 20, 2012).

7 Kazuo Ito, *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America*, translated by Shinichiro Nakamura and Jean S. Gerard (Seattle: Japanese Community Service, 1973).

8 "Domoto Nursery Largest in the State," *San Francisco Call* 11:73 (February 11, 1912): 22.

9 Though the concentration of Shinto shrines in Hawai'i is remarkable and some examples survive to the present day, it is worth noting that even the well-developed urban metropolis of Los Angeles had more than a dozen Shinto groups as late as 1940, part of the rich tapestry of religious life in the Japanese American community that included 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists, Catholics, Free Methodists, Church of Christ, Presbyterian, Baptist and Buddhist congregations. Rafu Shimpo [*Japanese Daily News*] Year Book and Directory (1940-41).

10 "Aloha, Reverend Torako Arine," *Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha Hawaii Dazaifu Tenmangu* 4:7 (July 2014). <<http://www.e-shrine.org/images/ShrineJULY2014.pdf>>

11 George Arine, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form: Maui Jinsha Mission" (1978).

12 "Harry Nishiura, 90, Businessman," *San Jose Mercury News* (June 3, 1997).

13 *The Welcome Society, The Fifth National Industrial Exhibition of 1903 and a Short Guide-Book of Japan* (Tokyo: The Welcome Society, 1902).

14 Frank Maggi with Leslie Masunaga, "Report on Historical Status: Hirasaki – Sakai Ranch," (Revised August 14, 2008).

15 Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), especially 185-187.

16 Edward M. Burke, "National Register Inventory-Nomination Form: Nippon Kan Hall" (1977).

17 Brian Nagata, "The History of the Buddhist Church of Oakland," The Buddhist Church of Oakland. <<http://www.buddhistchurchofoakland.org/BCOhistory.htm>>

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20 "Entire City Put on War Footing," *New York Times* (December 8, 1941). 1, 3.

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26 Garrett Eckbo: "Landscape Architecture: The Profession in California, 1935-1940," 46.

27 Diana Sawson, "Payments Evoke Pride, Pain among Japanese Americans," *Spokesman-Review* (October 28, 1990): A1 and A12

28 "Constructing and decorating model apartment to show possibilities using scrap materials. George Nakashima, architect." Frances Steward, photographer (12/9/42) War Relocation Authority Photographs of Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement, 1942-1945. Banc Pic 1967.014-PIC. (Berkeley: Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley).

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31 Japantown's history is presented online at "Discover San Francisco Japantown." <<http://sfjapantown.org>>

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