Japan, America, and Japanese Americana
The First American Diplomatic Mission to Japan,
Seven Years Before Perry


This extremely rare pair of lithographs is one of the very few printed records of the first official American expedition to Japan, the diplomatic mission of Commodore James Biddle, which attempted to establish formal relations between the United States and Japan in 1846. Although overshadowed by the famous and successful mission of Commodore Matthew Perry seven years later, the Biddle expedition deserves far greater fame. It was, in fact, the first official contact between America and Japan, and certainly a necessary precursor to Perry’s breakthrough of 1853. This graphic representation of the events of the visit, with the extensive textual gloss accompanying each plate, given the dearth of written accounts by the key figures, is the most important published record of the Biddle expedition. The prints depict Biddle’s ships, the Columbus and the Vincennes, in Tokyo Bay during Biddle’s visit of July 20 to 29, 1846.

Commodore James Biddle, a distinguished naval career officer and scion of a noted Philadelphia family, served his country in a diplomatic capacity on various occasions. Because of this, he was a reasonable choice in 1845 to head a mission to exchange ratifications of the first treaty between the United States and China, after which he was to attempt to negotiate a treaty with Japan. Biddle sailed from New York in June 1845, concluding the treaty with China early in 1846 and cruising along the Chinese coast throughout that spring. In early July, he proceeded to the next part of his mission, sailing for Japan on the 7th. Rather than sail for the open port of Nagasaki, he decided to make directly for Yeddo (modern-day Tokyo), arriving there on July 20, mindful of his instructions to “ascertain if the ports of Japan are accessible,” but “not in such a manner as to excite a hostile feeling or a distrust of the Government of the United States.”

Biddle’s ships moved up Tokyo Bay on July 21, 1846, but were stopped by numerous small vessels carrying armed soldiers. His ships remained at anchor about fifteen miles below Tokyo for the duration of their visit. After an initial confrontation in which Japanese officials demanded that the Americans surrender their weapons, peaceful relations were established and numerous Japanese visited the ships, bringing many supplies as gifts. The first of the lithographs depicts the American warships at anchor, surrounded by many smaller Japanese vessels. Biddle continued negotiations to be received on shore, without success. Finally it was arranged that he would present an address to suitable Japanese officials on board a Japanese vessel, and he arrived in full uniform for the occasion. However, upon boarding the boat the Commodore was deliberately knocked over by a common sailor. The Japanese officials professed to be mortified, and Biddle accepted their apology without insisting on harsh punishment for the offender.
Subsequently there was much debate over whether Biddle had helped or hurt the American position by losing face or being magnanimous, depending on one’s point of view, and this dialectic is still pursued by historians today. In any case, much of Commodore Perry’s behavior in Japan seven years later was designed to avoid such an incident.

Feeling that he had carried out his instructions as far as they could be pursued, Biddle accepted from his reluctant hosts both supplies and a tow out to sea to catch the wind. For their part, the Japanese were happy to aid him in departing. A small fleet of rowboats towed the American warships from their anchorage, and this scene is the subject of the second lithograph. After the departure on July 19, Biddle made for Hawaii, where he learned of the outbreak of the Mexican-American War. As a result, instead of heading home, the Commodore took his warships to the west coast of America to support the conquest of California, and spent the next year there. Only in March 1848 did Biddle finally arrive back in Norfolk, Virginia.

Biddle arrived home in Philadelphia in April 1848 and died there on Oct. 1. Since both of these prints bear a dedication from the artist, S.F. Rosser, to Commodore Biddle as if he were alive, it seems certain that they were produced during the six months of peaceful retirement the old sailor enjoyed before his death. Rosser, evidently a Philadelphia lithographic artist, credits his lithographs to be based on “Sketches by John Eastley,” presumably a member of the expedition; of course, these probably arrived in town with Biddle. The printing was executed by the well-known firm of Wagner & McGuigan. An indication that the prints may have been hastily struck is the blank spaces left where the longitude and latitude of Tokyo were to be filled in. A small print run or limited interest must account for the extreme rarity of the prints today. We can locate sets only at the U.S. Naval Academy and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

The Biddle mission to Japan paved the way for the later successful expedition of Perry, and the latter’s famous “Opening of Japan” must be seen in the context of the 1846 expedition. Perry came not as an isolated phenomenon, but part of an escalating American pressure campaign which was begun by Biddle. These prints are the most striking artifact of the true beginning of the Japanese-American relationship.

A truly extraordinary pair of lithographs, utterly unknown to most experts in the field, and of the greatest rarity.

Commodore Perry’s Ships Arriving in Japan


A drawing of the four ships of Commodore Perry’s squadron at anchor in Uraga Bay, made at the time of his first arrival in July 1853. The view shows the ships out in the bay (two paddle steamers and two sailing vessels), each with annotations in Japanese on their size, etc., the shore line in the foreground marked with a coastal observation tower, and a building described as “on-ban-sho,” a “check point.”

The details of the ships must have been taken from a first-hand source, but the depiction of the paddle steamers with two wheels is erroneous (there would have been only one) and the five masts on each is wrong (there were three), but it is possible this was copied from a poorer sketch taken on the spot. The appearance of these large warships alarmed the Japanese who had little concept of ships of this size and power, and who had no weapons to defend against them. As this was a momentous event, sketches such as these of the foreign intruders and their ships would have circulated in Edo (Tokyo), for many months after their arrival. The drawing describes the ships anchored in “East Uraga Bay, mouth of Edō Bay, roughly the same spot that Commodore Biddle anchored seven years before.”

An attractive drawing from a local source, depicting a momentous event in the history of Japanese-American relations. $6000.
Watercolor of Commodore Perry and His Crew in Japan


A contemporary Japanese drawing, from life, of Commodore Perry seated in a Japanese chair (probably in the tent at the negotiations), with depictions of a red-coated marine holding his musket, and a sailor looking through his telescope. A rare watercolor image of Perry and members of his crew, composed as an assemblage to show images of the different Americans that landed on Japanese shores.

$6000.
An impressive survival from Commodore Perry's expedition, a decorative manuscript menu from the banquet that celebrated the agreement of the Treaty of Kanagawa between the United States and Japan in 1854. Although an official and extensive trade agreement between the two countries was not reached until 1858, the Treaty of Kanagawa achieved Perry and the United States government's primary goal of opening Japan to U.S. trade by allowing the use of two ports at Shimoda and Hakodate by American ships, granting a degree of freedom of movement to American sailors while in port, and establishing diplomatic relations via the appointment of an American consul.

The banquet was held in the Treaty House at Yokohama, which had been purpose-built for negotiating the agreement between the two countries. It was a return engagement, following a first event hosted by the Americans on board Perry's flagship, the U.S.S. Powhatan, at which copious amounts of lamb, beef, and whiskey were reportedly served. The menu for the Japanese meal reflected the country's altogether different culinary tastes, offering a long series of soup and seafood courses, including sea bream and a number of other fish. It is unclear which side found the other's food more distasteful, but Perry remarked that the Japanese offerings “Seemed particularly meager in comparison with American fare, and soup, however desirable in its proper place, was found to be but a poor substitute for a round of beef or a haunch of mutton.” For their part, the Japanese were unimpressed by the Americans' loud and uncouth behavior at the event, and were amused by their inability to use chopsticks.

Despite the reservations of each side, the banquet served as a capstone to one of the most critical moments in the development of Japanese-American relations. This possibly unique piece of ephemera is a wonderful document of that entertaining, cross-cultural episode and the culmination of the Perry expedition.

$4000.
Magnificent and very rare example of Heine’s elephant folio-sized lithographic record of six lithographs illustrating the opening of Japan under Commodore Matthew Perry. In scale, scope, and quality of execution, this is arguably the finest lithographic work ever produced in the United States, and is among the rarest of all American color plate books.

William Heine was the official artist on Commodore Matthew C. Perry’s expedition to Japan in 1853-54. On returning to the United States, he produced several series of prints commemorating the trip, the first, the greatest and the rarest of which is the present group consisting of a titlepage and six plates. These were overseen by the expedition’s daguerreotypist, Eliphalet Brown, who was also an excellent artist and lithographer – he designed and drew the spectacular titlepage. The total number of sets of printed is not known, but, it is recorded that Brown gave 100 sets to Commodore Perry for distribution to members of the expedition. The number of sets sold to the public has not been established but was undoubtedly small. One of the reasons for the rarity of the complete set is that the plates were printed over two years by three publishers. Individual prints are occasionally encountered, particularly the four printed in 1855 by Sarony of New York, but the two other plates are much scarcer and were accomplished by different lithographers, Boell & Lewis and Boell & Michelin.

A secondary reason for the rarity of this set is the initial cost. It was significantly more expensive than Heine’s Graphic Scenes of the Japan Expedition (a much smaller folio published in the same year as the final plate): the popularity of this smaller set ensured that only very few of the magnificent larger sets were ever sold. The set consists of the following prints:

1) “Passing the Rubicon. Lieut. S. Bent in the ‘Mississippi’s' First Cutter Forcing his way through a Fleet of Japanese Boats while Surveying the Bay of Yedo, Japan, July 11th, 1853....” Printed by Sarony & Co, dated 1855.
2) “First Landing of Americans in Japan. Under Commodore M.C. Perry at Gore-Hama July 14th, 1853....” Printed by Sarony & Co, dated 1855. This print is the most dramatic of the series, showing the first landing of Perry on Japanese soil. Through a flotilla of American landing barges, with the ships’ complement of Marines drawn up on the beach, Perry proceeds to meet a Japanese delegation, while Japanese troops ring in the Americans. In the foreground are two Japanese official launches, and two Japanese officials stand in the right foreground. Perry’s steamboats can be seen lying under steam in the left corner.

3) “Landing of Commodore Perry, Officers & Men of the Squadron, to Meet the Imperial Commissioners at Yoku-Hama, Japan, March 8th, 1854....” Printed by Sarony & Co, dated 1855.

4) “Landing of Commodore Perry, Officers & Men of the Squadron, to Meet the Imperial Commissioners at Simoda, Japan, June 8, 1854....” Printed by Sarony & Co, dated 1855.

5) “Return of Commodore Perry, Officers & Men of the Squadron from an Official Visit to the Prince Regent at Shui, Capitol of Lew Chew, June 6th 1853....” Printed by Boell & Lewis, dated 1855.


This set of the Heine prints belonged to Major Robert Smith John Rodgers, son of Commodore John Rodgers of War of 1812 fame, and hung in his fine mansion on a hilltop outside of Havre de Grace, Maryland.

Japanese Treaties with the United States and European Powers

6. [Japan]: [NICHIBEI SHUKO TSUSHO JOYAKU. TREATIES OF AMITY AND COMMERCE]. [Japan. ca. 1858]. Five volumes. [58]; [58]; [54]; [58]; [58]pp. Original stiff textured tan wrappers, stitched as issued, each with printed paper title label. Some minor shelf wear and dust soiling. Very good.

An attractive set of the “Ansei Five-Power Treaties,” the formal diplomatic engagements between Japan and the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, and the Netherlands, ending Japan’s 250 years of seclusion and opening its ports to worldwide commercial trade (so named for their signing in the fifth year of the Ansei era). The first treaty, also known as the Harris Treaty, was signed by the U.S. on the deck of the USS “Powhatan” in Edo (now Tokyo) Bay on July 29, 1858. It opened the ports of Shimoda, Hakodate, Kanagawa, and Nagasaki to foreign trade effective July 4, 1859, and then Niigata and Hyogo on January 1, 1860 and January 1, 1863, respectively. In addition to extensive trade and consular provisions, the treaty also established the rights of U.S. citizens to reside permanently, lease property, purchase real estate, and construct residences and warehouses; established a system of extraterritoriality whereby U.S. residents were subject only to the laws of their own consular courts and not the Japanese legal system; and established freedom of religious expression and the right to construct churches to serve the needs of U.S. residents within the confines of designated foreign settlements. The treaty followed the Convention of Kanagawa, signed under threat of force in 1854 after Commodore Matthew Perry’s aggressive visits to the Shogunate in 1853 and 1854. The Convention had granted coaling rights for U.S. ships and allowed for an American consul in Shimoda, but Perry left the more important trading negotiations to Townsend Harris, New York businessman and eventually the first U.S. Consul General to Japan.

Each of the five volumes details the negotiations between Japan and a specific foreign power. These other accords are similar and duly inspired by the U.S. treaty; each nation forced Japan to grant the same “favored nation” provisions they had granted to the U.S. The Dutch already had several treaties with Japan; they were the only Western power to retain trade relations with Japan after the final expulsion of Europeans in 1638, and had been advising and supplying the Japanese navy since 1853. However, once the U.S. had sealed its “Treaty of Amity,” the Dutch quickly revised theirs to match on August 18, 1858; Russia followed on August 19; Lord Elgin signed for Britain on August 26; and Jean-Baptiste Louis Gros (commander of the French expedition in China) signed for France on October 9, 1858. Subsequent Japanese and Chinese scholars refer to these treaties and subsequent agreements as the “unequal treaties,” as none of the provisions were ever reciprocated.

This set is uncommon. We found only one record for another (incomplete) set at auction. This is the first time we have handled this title. $4500.
The American Fascination with Japan, as Depicted in Lovely Color Plates


This elaborate publication displays the general fascination with Japanese things in the West at the end of the 19th century. A notable and quite beautiful American color plate production, displaying an array of color printing formats, including chromolithographs and hand-coloring.

BENNETT, p.18. McGrath, p.171.

$1250.
Rare and Well-Preserved Early Japanese-American Yearbook


An unusually well preserved copy of an early Japanese-American yearbook. The Nichibei Shinbun (Japanese American News) began in 1899 with the merger of two smaller local San Francisco newspapers, becoming “one of the most important Japanese vernaculars in California, if not the entire western United States” in the early 20th century (Densho). This edition of the paper's yearbook, printed entirely in Japanese except for some business names in the advertisements section, includes ads for Japanese and Japanese-owned businesses, a lengthy summary and update on Japanese-American diplomatic and economic relations (illustrated with portraits of the major players), and extensive statistics on Japanese immigrants and their property for every town in California, along with some selected statistics for Colorado, New Mexico, and other nearby areas. Also included are sixteen pages of plates, with photographic illustrations of the Emperor and his family, President-elect Wilson and his wife, in-progress images of the Panama Canal, several images of the future site of and map of the plans for the upcoming Panama-Pacific International Exposition, and several graphs displaying statistics for Japanese immigration to and emigration from the U.S. for the year. The two folding maps are of the entire United States and a magnified view of California. “Particularly valuable as a historical source” – Ishioka.

OCLC records no copies outside of Japan, with this issue catalogued individually at the National Diet Library and runs including it only at Bukkyo University and the International Research Center for Japanese Studies. A rare and valuable source on Japanese communities in California prior to the First World War.

Early Directory of Japanese Americans


A rare Japanese-American directory published at the end of World War I. The text lists addresses for businesses and residents in the San Francisco Bay Area and about 350 other California cities, as well as contact information for Japanese Americans in Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, New York, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Ohio, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Montana, and Mexico. The name of each person or business is printed in Japanese characters, with the address and telephone number in English.

As with the great majority of directories, the listings are interspersed with advertisements for local businesses, mostly for San Francisco in this case. Examples of such San Francisco businesses advertising here include The Fook Company House of Clothing on the rear wrapper, K. Inukai Company on the inside front wrapper, and the Nippon Dry Goods Company on the inside rear wrapper. Full-page advertisements within the text feature The Kisen Co. Silk House, Fred F. Morikawa General Insurance, the Hotel Ogawa, the Sumitomo Bank Limited, Uoki Fish Market, and the Sun Trading Company, all of San Francisco. Businesses from other locations also advertise in the directory, such as the Hotel New York in Los Angeles; North American Tuna Canning Co. on Terminal Island; Kawikawa Brothers in Fresno; physician Tomooki Ota of Alameda; the Fuji Hotel in Seattle; Ogden Art Studio in Utah; and scores of others.

The Japanese American Directory was published from 1904 to 1941, ceasing after the American entry into World War II. Any issue of this directory is most uncommon, with only a smattering of copies of any year in OCLC, and no specific mention of any institution holding the 1918 edition. The Japanese American National Museum only holds copies of the 1940 and 1941 editions.

ICHIOKA, A BURIED PAST 751. JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM PRE-WORLD WAR II PERIOD ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY 27. OCLC 45119923. $1750.

An eloquent and passionate, though quite measured, pair of pamphlets arguing against the proposed California Alien Land Law of 1920. The earlier Alien Land Law of 1913 was born of the growing anti-Japanese sentiment of the era. Passed by an overwhelming majority (despite protests from the Japanese consulate) it prohibited any aliens ineligible for citizenship from owning or leasing farmland long-term. In actuality, the 1913 Act was not particularly effective. Many Japanese immigrants were able to get around its stipulations by gifting their lands to their American-born children, and despite the government’s efforts Japanese farmers were responsible for seventy-five percent of Los Angeles’ vegetable consumption in 1915. The state attempted to remedy the situation with the Alien Land Law of 1920, which imposed much stricter measures and closed the loopholes of the first law, with an absolute prohibition on land ownership by Japanese citizens for any duration and protections against first-generation immigrants transferring titles to their children. The 1920 law was more successful in its aims, and the total acres farmed by Japanese Americans declined by forty percent between 1920 and 1930.

An Appeal to Justice was written prior to the public vote on the second law by George Shima, “the Potato King” responsible for eighty-five percent of California’s potato crop and first president of the Japanese Association of America. Shima was born in Fukuoka before coming to San Francisco in his mid-twenties, where he worked his way up from a day laborer to the head of his potato-growing empire and struggled to better race relations for the Japanese population in California. In this pamphlet, he argues not for free and unregulated immigration from Japan, but rather that the “Gentleman’s Agreement” of 1907 was adequate and any amendments should be made through open conversation between the two national governments. Primarily, however, the pamphlet is an appeal to morality: “Obviously these extreme proposals involve the question of constitutionality. Strong arguments can be advanced against them upon the ground that they are unconstitutional. To us, however, the prime consideration is not a legal one, but one of justice and equity.”

“We know that the constitution of the United States guarantees to all ‘persons’ under the American flag the equal protection of laws. We have believed, as we still believe, that this is a promise of protection for the homes and fortunes of all who come here under the law and under the treaty to help develop your great resources...In the face of all this, it is hard for us to believe that the present agitation against us has the sanction of Americanism.” Shima ends his Appeal to
Justice by inviting readers to visit the Japanese Association of America’s offices to request a pamphlet with more details.

Facts in the Case is the pamphlet with more details to which Shima refers, and begins: “When Mr. George Shima, president of our Association, published an appeal to the people of California, he was deluged with letters asking him to furnish more data bearing on the question.” Facts in the Case presents data about the Japanese population of California and rebuts alarmist counter-arguments, providing valuable insight into the commonly held fears of the time. Among other concerns, he stresses that there would be “No Japanese Control of Farm Produce” due to the existence of growers’ associations, addressing a public concern that Japanese farmers could somehow monopolize produce and price gouge their (white) customers, and outlines why there would be “No Hawaiianization of California,” due to the very different histories of those two places.

The pamphlet ends on a hopeful note: “We do not doubt that the people of California will think twice before they decide to vote upon such an important measure as has been presented to them, involving the grave question of the national honor and justice in the defense of which their fathers did not hesitate to sacrifice even their own blood.”

Unfortunately, these hopes were unfounded. When the people of California voted on the new law, it passed with a thundering majority of 668,438 to 222,086.

A pair of scarce, revealing pamphlets, in remarkably nice condition, speaking out against the powerful anti-Japanese sentiment growing in the early 20th century, especially after the First World War. OCLC locates An Appeal to Justice at thirteen institutions, and Facts in the Case at just nine. $1500.
Analytical and Spirited Defense of Japanese Immigration


A detailed and thorough defense of Japanese immigration in the early 20th century. In response to growing anti-Japanese sentiment among California politicians, in 1921 Congress held hearings interviewing pro- and anti-Japanese witnesses, as well as a significant number of Issei Japanese Americans (i.e. first generation Japanese immigrants to the United States). In this booklet Sidney L. Gulick, an American missionary who taught English, Science, and Religion in Japan for decades and was a Professor of Theology and lecturer at the Kyoto Imperial University, presents verbatim highlights from all three groups of interviewees (including a very brief pro-Japanese statement by Antiquarian Bookseller P.J. Healy of San Francisco) relatively impartially before critically analyzing the hearings with a view to improving Japanese-American relations.

Gulick also takes the opportunity to continue an apparently ongoing argument with Valentine S. McClatchy, publisher of the Sacramento Bee and a major anti-immigration lobbyist and agitator, who Gulick accuses of faking and otherwise using misleading figures to exaggerate the extent of Japanese immigration in California. The author also decries the “repeated evidence of gross carelessness of statement, garbled statistics and even of apparently carefully planned mis-statements made by some of the principal anti-Japanese witnesses,” primary among them being Senators and politicians. Unfortunately, despite Gulick’s impassioned and analytical dissection of anti-Japanese agitators, Congress effectively banned all Japanese immigration two years later with the 1924 Immigration Act, which drastically cooled relations between Japan and America and “created hostile foes... across the Pacific” rather than “winning them to friendship.” A thorough analysis of the state of the debate on Japanese immigration in the interwar period, with plenty of first-hand testimony. $750.
The Japanese American Community in Salinas Poses Before Its New Buddhist Church

An early and substantial panoramic photograph depicting hundreds of Japanese Americans celebrating the completion of the Salinas Buddhist Church assembly hall and the installation of the Buddha on November 27-28, 1926. The Salinas Buddhist Church was founded on California Street in 1925 by Issei and Nisei worshippers and the construction was completed on the day this photograph was taken. The opening of the temple was preceded by the Ochigo parade and this image likely pictures the participants in that parade, as many of the children are wearing stylized costumes. The original altar shrine is visible at the center of the image. Several rows of men, women, and children are posed in front of the church, with seven Buddhist priests seated in front of a portable shrine. The adults are dressed in a mixture of traditional and western clothing, and many of them were undoubtedly employed in the numerous canning companies that thrived in Salinas and Monterey in the early 20th century. Many of the men, women, and children in the present photograph were likely among those interned fifteen years later at the camp at Poston, which is where most Japanese Americans from Salinas were sent during World War II. An American flag flies proudly behind the subjects in this photograph.

This panoramic photo was taken by the Green Studio, whose blind-embossed stamp is visible at the extreme lower right. The only other example of this image we could locate resides at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles (Object number 99.201.5).

$2250.
The First Stylebook for Japan’s Longest-Running English Newspaper


The Japan Advertiser, founded in 1897, was one of the leading English-language newspapers in Japan in the early 20th century. The paper reported on local events as well as U.S. and British news, eventually merging with its major competitor, The Japan Times, which continues as Japan’s longest-running English-language newspaper and as a publisher of Japanese-language textbooks used worldwide. This is the paper’s first printed style guide, considered particularly important as “In addition to the usual responsibilities of the press, The Japan Advertiser has a triple obligation: the fair interpretation of the East to the West and the West to the East, and the maintenance of a high standard of grammatical excellence for the benefit of those who use the paper as a text book for the study of English.”

Along with the expected rules on spelling, punctuation, and grammar following American style (and pursuant to the times, for example with particular rules on the use of Bolshevist and Bolsheviki), this guide presents a surprising amount of cultural and political information to its users. In the process of learning the proper style, writers for the Advertiser are apprised of Japan’s geography, administration including annexed Korea and Manchuria, government and political landscape including descriptions of its labor parties and a complete list of the current royal family, major religions, and more. The compiler of this stylebook, Hugh J. Schuck, was an American World War I veteran and aide to Herbert Hoover before moving to Japan, later returning home to become cable editor of the New York Daily News.

Not in OCLC. A rare and fascinating look into news reporting for a foreign audience and the Japanese geopolitical situation as it was understood in 1926. $650.
Rare Guide for Japanese Tourists in Hawaii Pre-WWII


A brightly printed and well-preserved piece of Hawaii ephemera for visitors from Japan. This brochure, put together by the Aala Automobile Union sometime around 1930, was given to visitors arriving by ship, and features a street map of Honolulu and brief descriptions of attractions accompanied by a photographic illustration in each panel, printed entirely in Japanese. Among the attractions are the Moanalua Gardens, Diamond Head, Nuuanu Pali, the Bishop Museum of Natural History, and a bronze statue of Kamehameha I. The reverse of the city map includes a small map of the island of Oahu accompanied by some details about the geography and population and advertises tours of the booklet’s other content operated by Aala. A very rare and interesting look at Japanese tourism in Hawaii prior to World War II. OCLC records a single copy at the International Resource Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyoto. $875.

Clicking on any item – text or image – will take you to our website for easy ordering and to view any additional images.
Hawaiian Buddhist School Students  
Just a Few Years Before Internment


A wonderful pair of images capturing the 1939 graduating classes, teachers, and staff of the Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin in Hilo, Hawaii. One image shows the female graduates of the high school; the second shows the middle school graduates. Each is captioned near the bottom in Japanese and both are dated “June 4, 1939” in ink at lower left. The mission also housed a branch of the Hawaiian Young Buddhists Association, evidenced by the sign hanging over the entrance to the building, and the students pictured here were likely members of HYBA, as well. The Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin still stands and still serves the Buddhist community in Hilo. It is the oldest Buddhist temple in Hawaii, still houses a Young Buddhists Association, and services over 500 families in the Hilo area.

$600.
Providing Seeds to Japanese-American Farmers in California


A rare Japanese-language seed catalogue for farmers in San Benito County shortly before World War II, issued by the Hollister Seed Company. This catalogue, filled with photographic illustrations of the crops for sale, is printed primarily in Japanese with most names printed also in English. A wide variety of seeds are listed and their produce illustrated, including lettuce, cauliflower, beans, beets, cucumbers, broccoli, carrots, corn, several types of melons, peppers, tomatoes, and more. The original Japanese-language order form is still present in this copy, along with a small pre-addressed envelope. The rear wrapper also has a simple printed map in English providing directions from downtown Hollister to the Hollister Seed Company’s store. The Hollister Seed Company, located in the town of the same name, was owned by Japanese American Edwin Takahashi Matsuura [or Matsura], a member of the Japanese American Citizens League. After Pearl Harbor, Matsuura was one of the first Japanese Americans in California to be arrested, when he was taken in by the FBI before being released without explanation four days later. Not long afterwards, Matsuura and most of the Japanese-American population of San Benito County would be transported to the War Relocation Authority’s Salinas internment camp.

Although the business was Japanese-owned, most of Matsuura’s catalogues were printed in English rather than Japanese. The English language equivalents are rare to begin with – we find no record of either edition of this 1939 catalogue, nor of any Japanese-language Hollister catalogue for any year. $3000.
Identification Card for a Young Girl Held at Topaz

17. [Japanese Internment]: [RESIDENT IDENTIFICATION CARD FOR A SIX-YEAR-OLD GIRL, BARBARA YAMADA, HELD IN THE TOPAZ INTERNMENT CAMP]. [Topaz, Ut. ca. 1942]. Printed card, 2½ x 4 inches, with personalized information typed in and “signed” by a rubber stamp. Lightly soiled. Near fine.

War Relocation Authority (WRA) identification card for a six-year-old girl named Barbara Yamada at the “Central Utah Project,” more commonly known as the Topaz internment camp. Topaz was one of the WRA’s smaller camps, and nearly ninety percent of its population was drawn from the San Francisco Bay area. This card, number 9249, was issued to Barbara Yamada, whose family is identified by the number 38710, and her identification number given as “3635-C.”

The format of inmate identification cards was not uniform, and different camps produced slightly different versions. The rear of this card has a space for a date and address (“block, building and apartment”), but is left blank here. Charles F. Ernst, the director of Topaz whose rubber stamp signature is on this card, was an employee of the D.C. American Public Welfare Association before being hired by the WRA. He did more than some directors to foster self-government at Topaz and meet the demands of his inmates when possible, although he was faced with particular challenges in the form of organized resistance to the infamous “Loyalty Questionnaire” and a crisis with the murder of an inmate, James Wakasa, by a camp guard. A sobering physical reminder of the American children who were forcefully relocated during World War II.

$500.
“Go for Broke” Panorama that Belonged to a Nisei Soldier


A striking group portrait featuring over 100 Japanese-American members of a service company in the famed 442nd Infantry Regimental Combat Team during their training in Mississippi during World War II, with the ownership signature of Private Kay Kusumi. The soldiers stand proudly, many of them smiling, with a flagman at left holding the unit’s guidon. A row of commissioned officers, none of them of Japanese descent, stand in the middle of the front line. This image was taken just four months after the activation of the 442nd on February 1, 1943.

This copy of the unit’s portrait likely belonged to one of the Japanese-American soldiers. The bottom left corner reads, in pencil, “Pvt. Kay Kusumi Lil’ Amache.” This is the only annotation of any kind on either side of the photograph, and was presumably written by Kusumi himself. According to an article by Kusumi’s grandson published on the website, Discover Nikkei:

“My grandfather, Kay Kei Kusumi was born on April 28, 1924, in Auburn, Washington to Mr. Fukunosuke and Mrs. Hide Kusumi. As a child of Issei parents he was taught many of the traditional Japanese traditions. However, as an American born individual, he had many different views and opinions. Eventually he along with his family moved to Los Angeles together to begin a career in gardening. On May 7, 1943, Kay was inducted at Fort Logan, Colorado. He was then transferred to Camp Shelby, Mississippi where he began his basic military training. Afterwards, he was placed into the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Service Company.”

The 442nd Infantry Regiment was composed almost entirely of second-generation American soldiers of Japanese ancestry (Nisei). They trained at Camp Shelby near Hattiesburg, Mississippi, not far from places like Rohwer and Jerome, Arkansas, where Japanese Americans were interned during World War II. While many of their families were imprisoned in camps within the United States, the 442nd fought with outsized courage and uncommon distinction in Italy, Germany, and southern France, living up to their motto to “Go for broke.” Over 800 Japanese Americans would be killed or declared missing in action during their brief stint in the war, an unusually high percentage relative to their force numbers. But they would also earn unusually high combat rewards, including seven Distinguished Unit citations, one of them awarded by President Truman himself, who remarked on July 15, 1946, “You’ve fought not only the enemy...you fought prejudice and won.” Japanese-American service members also earned twenty Medals of Honor, 4,000 Purple Hearts, twenty-nine Distinguished Service Crosses, 588 Silver Stars, and more than 4,000 Bronze Stars for World War II alone. Since the Second World War, the 442nd has become the most highly decorated military unit in the history of the United States Armed Forces, with twenty-one Medal of Honor recipients and 9,486 Purple Hearts.

Editorial Cartoons from a Japanese Internment Camp


A small mimeographed booklet of jokes and cartoons commemorating the end of the first year of the Rohwer internment camp’s newsletter, the Rohwer Outpost. First appearing in the second issue of the paper, George Akimoto’s editorial cartoon character “Lil Dan’l” was a caricature of Daniel Boon who shared the Californian inmates’ troubles and triumphs in adjusting to camp life in Arkansas. “Of what Lil Dan’l and we evacuees have experienced, much can be said and written,” explains the foreword, “our disappointments, our happy moments, our apprehensions – but it has always been a characteristic of Lil Dan’l to show us the humor and ironies in the trivial and yet vital things that have happened to us.”

Through a series of cartoons, Lil Dan’l summarizes the experience of the first year of forced relocation at Rohwer, including the local wildlife, the cold showers (a blessing in the hot Arkansas summers but less so in the cold winters), community activities such as sports and talent shows, holiday celebrations, and more. While mostly innocuous, a few comics lean slightly more critical, specifically in relation to the drafting of Japanese Americans for military service and forced segregation of “disloyal” inmates. While no camp newsletter could be truly considered free press, contributors to the Rohwer Outpost maintained that it was largely uncensored and saw little oversight from the relatively liberal administration of the camp, allowing for more editorial comments and opinion than many other relocation center publications. The creator of Lil Dan’l, George Akimoto (1922-2010), was initially incarcerated at Stockton before being moved to Rohwer. After the war, he continued on to a successful career in movie and commercial art. The Rohwer internment camp, located in southeastern Arkansas near the Mississippi River, was the easternmost internment camp used during World War II, and held more than 8,000 Japanese Americans during its use. An interesting and poignant look at how the people of one internment camp used humor to adjust to the horrible circumstances forced upon them. $3000.

An intriguing and informative collection of letters, written during World War II, from an Anglo-American from Hawaii, to friends of Japanese descent in Honolulu. These letters, from Dan Langford to Ernest Hirakawa and to Ernest’s daughter, Harriet, provide insight into the views and experiences of a White American with a significant connection to Hawaii and to people who were interned during the war. In these letters, Langford relates his own experiences working at internment camps in Arkansas and Arizona, and expresses his concern for the Hirakawa family in Hawaii and their friends interned on the mainland.

Dan Langford was born in 1882 and lived a substantial time in Honolulu; as is evidenced by these letters he was familiar with both the Japanese and Hawaiian languages. Langford was a pest control expert for the Hawaii Sugar Planters Association before being hired by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) to become Chief Sanitation Officer for one of their internment camps. These letters were written between June 1943 and October 1944, about half of them on WRA stationery. In the earliest letter, written from Washington, D.C., Langford has yet to be assigned to a specific camp and writes to his friend Ernest Hirakawa of Honolulu with concern: “War is an awful thing and the innocent must suffer along with the guilty and I was very much afraid that you were, at least out of employment, and probably in a concentration camp, as so many Japanese are in this part of the world. Hawaii, it seems, has been much more sensible and has not caused as much suffering.”

The remainder of the letters are addressed to Hirakawa’s daughter, Harriet. By the time of his September 1943 letter, Langford has been stationed at the Jerome Relocation Center in Arkansas, which had by far the largest concentrated population of inmates from Hawaii. He notes delays in mail because of the censors, and reassures his concern about the treatment of Japanese people in Hawaii: “My folks have written nothing of what happened on Dec. 7 and yours is the first first-hand story I have read. One thing that made me very happy about that awful day was a report that not a single Japanese or person of Japanese ancestry was convicted of a treasonable act in connection with it. I hope that this information is correct, and sincerely believe it is. It is quite likely that they will soon do away with the dengue fever mosquitos there. We have them here; it is the same species that carries yellow fever, together with the Malaria mosquito, which you do not have. We have the Malaria mosquito under control but as there is as yet no dengue fever here, the other species is only a nuisance and does no harm in the way of carrying disease, at least as far as we know.

The finest present that you can possibly send to me from Hawaii is the news that you are all well and that you are being treated well. I have been anxious about that ever since my arrival in the U.S. Mr. Furuda wrote that your father is still at the P.O. and that was about the most welcome present I have had in many a day. I shall not send this by air mail as there is nothing in it that is worth the extra postage, please write again when you have time and I sincerely hope that you can report that all is well over there.

My very best wishes to you all.

Sincerely,

Dan Langford
I very much doubt if the old Honolulu will ever come back. The change was very noticeable when I was last there, so it is difficult for me to imagine what it is now. I am hoping that when the war is over that it will be possible for Chiyo San to have a visit there but have no desire to make it my home.”

Langford’s descriptions of the Jerome internment camp are in fact rather positive, despite regular references to the “unhappy” or “unfortunate” circumstances of the people detained there. While he likely knew or expected his letters to be reviewed before delivery, much of his affection for his temporary home seems genuine: “As you can imagine [sic], I am at home here among [the large Hawaiian population] and have many friends. Naturally, they are not very happy but I do all that is possible to make things easy for them.” He reiterates the sentiment in his next letter: “I am glad now that it turned out [that I could not join the army]. This work is more to my liking and I feel sure that I can do much to make life more pleasant for the people here.” By the time Jerome was closing, Langford is actually sad to leave: “Here we are all, haoles and Nihon Jin, just like one big family and I feel that every one in the Project is my friend. By the middle of July we shall be scattered all over the U.S. and many of them I shall never meet again.” There is still a darkness under the surface, however; Langford strongly discourages Harriet from visiting the United States, telling her, “I hope some day to be able to tell you the whole story,” as “you do not realise how fortunate you are at present to have a home and live a reasonably normal life.” Langford also notes that, as a pest control expert, the Jerome and Rohwer camps – located near the Mississippi River Delta – posed special challenges in his work. After Jerome closed, Langford was transferred to the camp at Gila River, from which he sends his last two letters to Harriet, including an illustrated postcard of the Arizona desert. The final letter is dated October 1, 1944 from Rivers, Arizona, the site of another internment camp where Langford worked. He briefly describes the 7,000 acre farm that helped feed the interned Japanese Americans and the support staff, mentions that he misses his friends at the Jerome camp, and invites Harriet to let him know if she has any friends interned at Rivers that he can contact for her.

The Jerome Relocation Center was one of two WRA concentration camps located within a few miles of each other (the other being Rohwer), one of only two situated in the Jim Crow South, and was both the last camp to open and the first to close. Due to its late opening in 1942, conditions at Jerome were apparently quite poor to begin with, although most of the unrest had settled by the time Langford arrived in late 1943. Likely due to its high Hawaiian population, Jerome also had the highest percentage of inmates who replied “No” to Question 28 on the infamous “Loyalty Questionnaire”, which asked if Japanese Americans would be willing to renounce their citizenship to Japan. As a result, Jerome also had the highest percentage of people sent to Tule Lake, the overcrowded and more highly militarized concentration camp for detainees thought to be “disloyal.”

A fascinating collection of letters from a Hawaiian WRA employee revealing much about life in the camps, as well as a great concern for the well-being of people of Japanese ancestry throughout the country. $3750.
Religious Activities at Tule Lake Internment Camp


An original mimeographed program for a service held by the Young Buddhists’ Association (YBA) at the infamous Tule Lake Segregation Center. The booklet includes an illustrated cover with the date and time of the service (8pm) along with a program of events, the lyrics to the YBA theme song, and several poems. Also included are a list of the Board of Directors and its Representatives, organized by Ward, and a folded folio sheet printed in English and Japanese which contains a prayer and tells the story of Shinran Shonin, founder of Jōdo Buddhism.

Due to the camp’s size and its administration’s mishandling of the so-called “Loyalty Questionnaire,” Tule Lake was selected to become a “Segregation Center” in addition to an internment camp in 1943. Inmates considered “disloyal” were sent from other camps across the country to Tule Lake, which became an overcrowded, highly-monitored detention facility that afforded its residents precious little in the way of autonomy or self-government. Strikes and protests broke out as conditions worsened, and the administration responded with military force and the imposition of martial law, resulting in an almost complete interruption of normal daily activities. “In this distorted prison environment, imagining a future in America seemed pointless, and young men and women devoted themselves to preparing for a new life in Japan, attending Japanese language schools and learning about Japanese history and culture. Faced with emasculating criticisms of cowardice for refusal to serve in the army of the nation that imprisoned them, young men were swept up in a growing counter-narrative of pro-Japan zeal, a radical response to being labeled as disloyal and lacking courage” (Densho). It was in this pro-Japan environment that, once martial law was lifted in January of 1944, the Tule Lake YBA resumed meetings. Tule Lake was the last War Relocation Authority concentration camp to cease operations, closing in March of 1946. A rare and interesting and piece of ephemera from America’s most infamous concentration camp.

Scarce Internment Camp Directory


An extremely rare mimeographed directory of the Heart Mountain internment camp in Wyoming, printed in Japanese and English. After a list of employees of the Heart Mountain Police Station and other organizations, the majority of this directory is made up of the names of over three thousand inmates at the camp, listed alphabetically and printed in both English and Japanese, along with their address in the facility, their home city or state, and the area of Japan they are originally from. There are also advertisements at the front and rear, including an ad for the Heart Mountain Sentinel mimeographed newsletter and for businesses in Wyoming, Colorado, and even Chicago. The Heart Mountain camp was one of the larger War Relocation Authority camps, detaining nearly 11,000 Japanese Americans at its peak, and was characterized by unusually frequent resistance, beginning with strikes and violent outbursts and culminating in a concerted draft resistance operation demanding restoration of full rights for second generation Japanese Americans.

This directory is quite scarce – we locate another copy only at Washington State University. An important source of information on the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War.

$4000.
Reporting the End of the Exclusion Orders


Special edition of the Topaz, Utah internment camp’s newspaper, the Topaz Times, circulated upon the news that the War Relocation Authority would finally be closing its camps. Topaz’s population was unique in that it was made up almost entirely of residents from San Francisco and the Bay Area (4500 of 5481 total residents; another 900 were from Sacramento), and its newspaper often printed articles about San Francisco local news and politics. This particular special issue was occasioned by the reopening of the West Coast to Japanese Americans, and contains details about relocating back to California as well as a statement by Governor Earl Warren. The rest of the articles in this issue discuss the revocation of the exclusion order and the logistics of evacuating the camp. A well-preserved piece documenting the moment many incarcerated Japanese-Americans learned they could finally return home. $600.

A scarce yearbook from the final school year at the Manzanar concentration camp in California. This yearbook was produced right around the time of V-E Day and the end of fighting in Europe, but before atomic bombings and the Japanese surrender. After an introduction which focuses on reintegration and the students’ future, the yearbook features photographs of students performing a play, gathering for club activities, and practicing sports, the outdoor photos of which reveal the barracks and barbed-wire fences that were a part of daily life for the young Japanese Americans imprisoned at Manzanar and other camps around the country. As with all such internment camp yearbooks, it is striking to see how much these imprisoned youngsters tried to carry on the activities of teenage life under extraordinary circumstances.

A note at the back of the book reveals much of the photo work in this yearbook was done by Toyo Miyatake, an award-winning photographer and collaborator of Ansel Adams. When Miyatake was forced to relocate to Manzanar after the exclusion order, he smuggled a camera lens into the camp in order to document life inside, using connections on the outside to sneak in film. He was eventually allowed to photograph openly and became the official photographer of the concentration camp, working with Ansel Adams on a work called Two Views of Manzanar. He is the subject of a documentary titled “Infinite Shades of Gray,” released in 2001. A manuscript dedication inside the front wrapper of this copy reads “To Oko from Barbara 5/17/45.”

OCLC records copies of this yearbook only at Yale, Northwestern, the University of Southern California, and the Hoover Institution Library. A scarce and revealing yearbook featuring the photographic work of an award-winning Japanese photographer.

OCLC 32886190.

$2500.
Eyewitness Account of Tokyo Immediately After Surrender


A letter written by Lieutenant J.W. Neighbourn, a U.S. Navy officer on the U.S.S. Ticonderoga to a Betty Keely in Washington, D.C. The Ticonderoga sailed in to Tokyo Bay on September 6th, only four days after the official surrender of Japan on board the U.S.S. Missouri. Neighbourn was one of the very first Americans allowed on shore in Japan after the war. He made several visits to Tokyo, disembarking in Yokohama and taking an electric train, “like those used by the N.Y. railroad in the subways or by the Chicago ‘El,’” to the capital. He describes his first impressions of the landscape and the city, remarking on the destruction he saw there. He calls the surrounding area “about 90% leveled or bombed out” along with three quarters of the city proper, although he notes that “some of the large modern buildings proved to be fairly bomb-proof and fire-proof.” He also describes the few Japanese people he sees, particularly noting their tabi shoes (with a separated toe “similar to the way a mitten has”) and geta sandals, which he illustrates with a small sketch. He was largely well received by locals, but mentions that “some of the men — in their late teens and about my age — had the look of hate in their eyes.” He also had the opportunity to take an aerial tour of the area, during which he was particularly struck by the untouched Emperor’s palace in the middle of the destroyed city. “I hope the principles of the San Francisco conference can be carried out to such an extent that the world can be kept from such wars as this,” he declares in response.

The letter’s original envelope is also present, made custom for the U.S.S. Ticonderoga. It features a printed illustration of the ship in the middle of Tokyo Bay with the caption “The ‘BIG T’ was there!” An intriguing look into the impressions of an American military man in Tokyo in the days immediately following World War II.

$375.
In the aftermath of World War II, the Allied powers recognized the importance of stabilizing the Japanese economy as part of a larger effort to prevent Japan's remilitarization and stave off the spread of communism. With the assistance of foreign aid, the Japanese government invested heavily in strengthening its industrial and manufacturing capacity. Economic development efforts in the coal-producing region of Fukushima Prefecture centered on the construction of chemical factories and related infrastructure. The Japan Hydrogen Industry Company (also known as Nihon Suiso Company), which had been founded in the port city of Onahama in 1937, became the core of the industrialization effort in the region after the war. This album, produced in 1947, was likely used in an effort to attract American investment.

The company was involved in the gasification of pulverized coal, producing – depending on the exact process – coal gas, water gas, or syngas, all combustible gases used for municipal lighting and heating prior to the large-scale production of natural gas. It also produced ammonium sulfate and methanol. The album shows the plant’s coke room; gas generators, compressors, and storage tanks; carbon monoxide converters; pumps for moving chemicals in solution; centrifuges; acid cooling process; ammonium sulphate storage room; and several parts of the methyl alcohol plant (boiler, turbo generators, distiller, machine shop, storage drums). There is also a view of the entire seaside factory and one of the company’s business offices. Over the next few decades, Fukushima Prefecture underwent significant industrial development and became Japan’s largest energy-supplying region. Whether this album made a specific contribution to that growth by garnering investment, we do not know, but it is an interesting artifact of the early stages of the recovery that would become known as the Japanese Economic Miracle. $1250.
Early, Illustrated Memoir of Japanese Internment


The autobiographical account of a first-generation Japanese immigrant (Issei)'s concentration camp experiences at Fort Missoula in Montana and Amache in Colorado. Sasaki was born in Fukushima Prefecture and studied at Waseda University before coming to America in 1905. Living in Montana, he was employed as a poet and journalist (under the name Sasabune Sasaki), also writing a series of poems and essays about his life in America, published in 1937. Along with the text of the book (printed entirely in Japanese) are nearly fifty pages of captioned illustrations. Many are photographic illustrations of particular internees or groups (including a few of INS identification cards) along with their names, addresses, profession prior to incarceration, and where they were held, while others are cartoon illustrations of different aspects of camp life including the mess hall, daily routines, and interactions with camp guards.

The Missoula concentration camp, where Sasaki spent the majority of his internment, was unusual in that it detained both Japanese Americans and Italian seamen who were seized at American-controlled ports. Despite early conflict, interaction between the groups was minimal and Missoula was considered even by its inmates as one of the most well-run and comfortable camps, featuring a golf course and friendly competitions between the Japanese and Italian detainees. A particular pastime of the inmates at Missoula was the collection and carving of pebbles, some of which are pictured in the photographic illustrations in this book; one internee at the camp wrote that “So avid is this stone picking that it is said anyone not involved in this hobby is not human.” OCLC records this work in only nine institutions worldwide. A rare firsthand description of daily life in the camps, accompanied by enlightening illustrations.

Illustrated Summary of Japan’s Postwar Schools at the End of the American Occupation


A promotional booklet produced for Western audiences by the Japanese Ministry of Education (Monbushou) just a few years after the end of World War II. In fact, the preface is dated September, 1951, the same month as the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, which created the framework for the restoration of Japanese self-sovereignty. Accompanied by numerous statistical infographics and drawn or photographic illustrations, this booklet presents some basic facts about Japan’s climate and population, briefly outlines the history of education in Japan including post-war educational reform, and describes the challenges facing schools due to increased population, lack of resources and materials, and destruction caused by the war. Despite the authors’ humble postscript which asserts that “it must be admitted, regret to say, that this document leaves much to be desired,” it nonetheless provides a wealth of information on the state of Japanese schools in the early 1950s, particularly through its illustrations of classrooms, school buildings, and floorplans and classrooms from various regions of the country.

Rare: OCLC records only three copies – at the British Architectural Library at the Royal Institute, the IZUM in Slovenia, and the University of Akron.

OCLC 598963.
Young Japanese-Buddhists of California’s Central Valley


A handsome group photograph memorializing the attendees of the 1952 annual conference of the Northern California Young Buddhist League. The photograph depicts over 200 finely-dressed Japanese-American men and women, and even a few Anglo Americans, organized by region, which are indicated by printed signs. The delegates to the conference came from Lodi, Placer, Marysville, Sacramento, Delta, Stockton, and Florin. A sign hanging on a building behind the delegates reads “Greetings Busseis,” a general term for Buddhist youth.

Interestingly, 1952 was the year that several chapters of Young Buddhists and other Japanese American mutual aid societies and support groups successfully implemented several changes to Japanese immigration policies brought about by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (the McCarran-Walter Act). While this law still provided for some discriminatory policies, it also allowed a new path to citizenship for most Asian Americans. Groups such as the Northern California Young Buddhist League helped many Japanese-American Issei attain citizenship, previously forbidden by U.S. immigration law.

A rare image, with no copies reported in OCLC. $1250.
High-Ranking Officer’s Inspection Tour
of U.S. Military Installations Across Japan

30. [United States Military]: [Japan]: [MANUSCRIPT TRAVEL DIARY
AND LEDGER OF A HIGH-RANKING UNITED STATES MILITARY
OFFICER’S COMPLETE INSPECTION TOUR OF MILITARY BASES
IN JAPAN IN THE SUMMER OF 1957]. [Various places, including Tokyo
and several army and navy bases in Japan], May 27 – August 7, 1957. [74]pp.,
manuscript on lined paper, approximately 4750 total words. Original patterned
brown paper boards, front board gilt. Light wear along spine and edges. Very
clean internally. Near fine.

An intriguing and highly detailed account of an anonymous, but apparently high-
ranking, officer’s two-month inspection tour of the entire United States military
presence in Japan, from late May to early August of 1957. This manuscript
journal provides much information on American Army, Navy, and Air Force
bases in Japan during the Cold War, and the extensive inspections conducted to
maintain high levels of readiness as tensions increased between the United States
and various nations in Asia.

Our unnamed officer travels in style from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco and
then on to Hawaii and Tokyo, providing highly detailed specifics of his itinerary
along the way including flight numbers, times, terminals, models of planes, and
costs of everything purchased from cab fare to airport snacks. After his arrival
in Tokyo, he and his team travel to most if not all of the American military bases
in the country (Navy, Army, and Air Force) and carry out an intensive analysis
“to check out procedures, organization, and techniques.” At each installation,
the team bunks in commissioned officer’s and VIP quarters and are wined and
dined by the top officials – even when they would rather just go to sleep after a
long day of travel. In addition to the details of his inspections, the diary writer
records more mundane details about his sightseeing trips, shopping excursions,
meals, and general observations on- and off-base. Though unidentified, the diarist
was likely assigned to duty at the Pentagon.

Our diary writer, though generally circumspect, provides some tantalizing glimpses
into his mission and its proceedings. Occasionally he will take a short aside to
discuss the history or modern goings-on of a particular base, for example the
Gifu Air Force Base where “a Jap plane factory is turning out T33s for the Jap
AF (and overhauling some of ours),” or the Naval Communications Facility in
“Kamasaya” [i.e. Kamiseya], “a complex outfit which transmits fleet broadcasts
and all kinds of messages. Also it supports a huge cloak and dagger operation
run by CIA.” Much of the content is quite detailed, such as an entry where he
records: “At 1100 George Nagy, Rutt, and I took off by car for NAF Atsugi....We
met Capt. Johnson, the C.O. and then we were invited to lunch by Rear Admiral
Ward, ComFair WestPac, at his flag quarters. In the afternoon we split up. Rutt
covered Public Works. Nagy, with the Admiral’s Chief of Staff, a Capt. Boyle,
covered aircraft maintenance activities. I had Capt. Johnson go over his station
organization and then give a cook’s tour of the base.” The military installations
he visits include Fuchu (Far East Air Force headquarters); Johnson Air Force Base near Tokyo; Komaki Air Force Base near Nagoya; Iwakuni Naval Air Station; Itazuke Air Force Base; the U.S. Army Quartermaster Depot at Kokura; Camp Otsu; U.S. Army Quartermaster Depot at Kobe; Chitose Air Base; Misawa Air Force Base; Tachikawa Air Base, and others.

Other notes are interesting but vague: “In the evening we had a lengthy conference among ourselves. Recent T.S. messages from JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff] seem to greatly affect our work here and we wanted to reorient our thinking toward the feasibility and practicality of various proposals.” This possibly relates to the restructuring of FECOM (Far East Command) into USFJ (United States Forces Japan) which took place in July, 1957. Aside from these snippets, the officer discusses the personal conflicts that break out within the team, such as when their boss (one George Nagy) delays the team’s return trip by three days after their reservations had already been made, “the team was almost in open rebellion and tempers were short.” After a quick reconciliation, the next day “All hell broke loose again” as the new plans fell apart, and the team and Nagy were not on speaking terms for the rest of the trip. We also get a few brief snippets of a protest demonstration put on by a group of Japanese citizens at Tachikawa Airfield, which was proposing to seize nearby privately-owned lands to expand its runway. This protest was known as the “Sunagawa Struggle,” and marked a high point in Japanese opposition to U.S. military installations during the Cold War; the widely televised and recorded demonstrations succeeded in derailing the runway expansion plans, and are credited among the reasons for the massive forty percent reduction in U.S. military force in Japan in 1957, which is mentioned by our author and was likely a main component of the top secret letters and briefings that dramatically altered his team’s project.

Some of the officer’s more interesting anecdotes relate to his (rather cantankerous) impressions of Japan. He seems to always find something to complain about: the weather is too hot, too cold, too hazy, or too humid; the train cars are far too small, though timely: “The bunks [on our sleeper car] would be very comfortable – for a midget, or a Japanese, I guess. However the Japanese railroads, like the Germans, are very punctual and adhere religiously to the schedule.” In his estimation, the company also leaves something to be desired: “The stores and buildings [in Tokyo] seem to try to outdo Times Square in garishness and elaborate animated neon signs. The Jap people are not particularly handsome and most are downright ugly. They are all rushing around seeming to be very busy but not quite accomplishing what we do.” He does at least begrudgingly admit that “The rural sections of Japan look very pretty from the air (where you can’t smell it).” His travels take him from the tropical south all the way to the northernmost tip of Hokkaido, “our closest major airbase to the Reds and a bleak looking outpost. Our VIP quarters are in little individual shacks. The weather seems to be 35 [degrees] colder here than at Komaki where we took off and our Aloha shirts are definitely out of place. It’s like going from North Carolina to Vermont and just as far in miles too.” That said, he is as likely to stay on base for his leisure as to go out, and finds the American entertainment equally disappointing: “In the evening we went to the movie in the basement of the Sanno [base] and saw ‘The Incredible Shrinking Man.’ Phooey.”

While the author is never named, we can glean a good amount of information about him, including the names of several of his team members and the first names of family members. He is also revealed to be a devout Catholic: he attends mass every Sunday and records the location and feast day, if applicable, notes that “the Japs don’t observe Sunday very much,” and also runs into an old classmate from Fordham University, where they were in the Glee Club together “26 years ago.”

Following the diary are a few pages containing a full ledger of his personal and gift purchases (with prices in dollars and yen, locations purchased, and intended recipients), and four pages of “Hints” for a business trip written in a different hand, possibly the owner’s wife based on the content. These hints (with occasional annotations by the author) include recommendations for stores and restaurants, general travel tips (“keep your passport with you always”), gift suggestions, and reveal other timely sentiments (“Goods from Hong Kong are NOT made in Communist China”).

A thoroughly detailed and interesting account of a United States military official’s tour of bases in Japan in the 1950s, penned by an unnamed but clearly important officer. $1750.
PLEASE NOTE: In compliance with the sales tax requirements of the following jurisdictions, as of October 1, 2021, William Reese Company will collect and remit appropriate sales taxes on purchases originating in Connecticut, California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, and the District of Columbia. Exceptions will include tax-exempt institutions, parties who have provided copies of their current and appropriate State Sales & Use Tax Permits for resale, and sales through third parties for which the relevant taxes have already been collected on the basis of Market Facilitator Tax requirements. The latter includes online sales via such platforms as Biblio, ABE, and the ABAA websites.