

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Records Japan Mission Papers

Finding Aid

Prepared by Nancy C. Barthelemy
Provincial Archivist
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
30 Jeffrey's Road
Ipswich, MA 01930

Collection Summary

Title: Japan Mission Papers

Accession Numbers: 2013.60

Dates: 1922 to 2000

Bulk Dates: 1924 to 1970

Location: Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur East West Province Archives.

Physical Description: 9 boxes, 45 volumes, 878 photographs and 8 artifacts; 7 linear feet.

Abstract: The Japan Mission Papers contain the records for the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur's Mission to Japan, which began in 1924. The Mission was under the Massachusetts Province from 1924 until 1975, when Japan became its own province within the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

Search Terms:

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur - History

Religious life - History

Women's Religious Orders - History

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur - Missions - Japan

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur - History - Japan

Provenance: The records were created and collected by the Massachusetts Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

Processing: Processing and arrangement begun and completed in 2013.

Accruals: In 2015, the scrapbook created by Sr. Ellen Mary Hickey (1918-1990) during her 28 years in Japan was added. In 2016, papers accumulated by the Connecticut Province were added to the collection.

Conservation Work: Staples removed, some papers unfolded.

Restrictions: The collection is available for research only in the East West Province Archives in Ipswich, MA.

Scope and Content Note:

On September 16, 1922, Archbishop Doering of the Diocese of Hiroshima, Japan wrote to Sister Frances of the Sacred Heart, the Superior of the Eastern Province of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, asking if she could send some sisters to take charge of the Okayama Girls School. The school had been run by the Sisters of the Infant Jesus, but their dwindling numbers forced them to withdraw from the school. The Sisters of Notre Dame soon agreed to send six sisters to Japan. During the preparations for this new mission, an earthquake measuring 9.0 hit the country on September 1, 1923. The earthquake triggered a 40 foot tsunami and fires which resulted in the deaths of over 140,000 people. Undaunted, the sisters pressed forward to begin the work in Japan. On July 22, 1924, six Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur departed from San Francisco for Japan on board the S. S. President Wilson. These were Sister Marie Claire, the Superior, and Sisters Aimee Julie, Francis Helena, Mary Lucilla, Agnes St. John and Marie Raymond. They arrived in Japan on August 7, 1924. In truth, they couldn't have begun their mission at a worse time. In addition to the damaged school and having almost no knowledge of the Japanese language, the sisters also faced a growing anti-American sentiment within the country. This was the result of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924 which prevented Asians from becoming U.S. citizen. The Sisters focused on the task at hand and began the work of education. They maintained contact with the Massachusetts province through continual correspondence.

As war drew closer in the late 1930s, the sisters continued their work in Okayama. By 1940, the Okayama convent also had six Japanese Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Two days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the police arrived at the Okayama convent. The eighteen sisters were kept under arrest at the convent until March when all but the six Japanese sisters were transferred to an internment and later a concentration camp. In September of 1943, through interventions from Switzerland, eleven of the sisters were freed and sent home on the MS Gripsholm. Because Sister Mary Lucilla was an Irish national and not American, she was held captive until the end of the war.

In 1946, the Sisters of Notre Dame returned to Japan to continue their ministry. Among their work since then, they have reorganized the high school, opened a novitiate in Okayama, a four year college and a new junior college.

The collection contains the 1922 invitations to the Sisters of Notre de Namur to assume control of the Okayama Girls School, original and copies of correspondence sent by the original six sisters to the Massachusetts province which acted as a sort of diary of events among the sisters in Japan, papers documenting any work on the school or convent, as well as any sale of property. The correspondence also includes letters and copies of letters during WWII, during the internment of the twelve Sisters of Notre Dame. Some were written by the Sisters, others from authorities in both the U.S. and Switzerland in attempts to obtain the release of the sisters. Sister Mary Lucilla, an Sister of Notre Dame with Irish citizenship, was not among the sisters released in 1943. Letters documenting

the work to free her are also filed with these papers, including one 1945 letter from Irish Archbishop Robinson.

Also included with the papers are any plans for new school buildings, school papers, rules for students and teachers, newsletters from the Japanese province and convent register of sisters in Japan. Papers and written presentations regarding the history of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Japan, the incarceration of the sisters during WWII, and papers written by Sister Takao Frances Takagi are also part of the collection. Books describing Japanese culture and life as well as any papers and documents used in teaching in Japan are also filed here. The collection contains three scrapbooks, one from 1936, one created in 1976 and one added in 2015 from Sr. Ellen Mary Hickey. There is also one 1969 yearbook from the Seishin High School and documents from the anniversaries of the schools. Books printed in Japan and collected by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur during their years there are also included with the collection.

The collection also contains 878 photographs taken from 1924 until 1980. The early photographs were taken of the first sisters in Japan and of the early school building. Included with the photographs is the staged picture of the priests, ministers and sisters taken at the Miyoshi Internment Camp in 1943. Most of the remainder of the photographs document school events.

Organization and Container List

Box 1

Folder 1	Correspondence, 1922-1923.
Folder 2	Correspondence, 1924, January-August 6.
Folder 3	Correspondence, 1924, August-September.
Folder 4	Correspondence, 1924, October-December.
Folder 5	Correspondence, 1925-1926.
Folder 6	Correspondence, 1927-1928.
Folder 7	Correspondence, 1929-1931.
Folder 8	Correspondence, 1932.
Folder 9	Correspondence, 1933.
Folder 10	Correspondence, 1934.
Folder 11	Correspondence, 1935.
Folder 12	Correspondence, 1936.
Folder 13	Correspondence, 1937.
Folder 14	Correspondence, 1938.
Folder 15	Correspondence, 1939.
Folder 16	Correspondence, 1940.
Folder 17	Correspondence, 1941.
Folder 18	Correspondence, 1942.

- Folder 19** Correspondence, 1943-1945.
Folder 20 Correspondence, 1946-1949.
Folder 21 Correspondence, 1950.

Box 2

- Folder 1** Correspondence, 1952-1956.
Folder 2 Correspondence, 1957-1960.
Folder 3 Correspondence, 1961-1962.
Folder 4 Correspondence, 1963-1965.
Folder 5 Correspondence, 1969-1992, 2000, n.d.
Folder 6 Songs, 1924.
Folder 7 School Papers, 1924-1985.
Folder 8 Seishin School Papers, c. 1950-1961.
Folder 9 Notre Dame Seishin Newsletters, 1963-1966, 1979.
Folder 10 Notre Dame Japan Province and Seishin Newsletters, 1958-1985.
Folder 11 Chapter Papers, 1960-1985.
Folder 12 Chapter Newsletters, 1976-1984.
Folder 13 Personnel Papers, 1924-1993.
Folder 14 Newspaper Clippings, 1943-1985.
Folder 15 Newspaper Clippings, 1978.
Folder 16 From Sumire to New York, 1942.
Folder 17 Articles and Reports, 1946.
Folder 18 Seishin School Blueprints, 1960. [Oversized Folder]

Box 3

- Folder 1** Articles: *The Japanese Foundation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur During World War II and Beyond*; *Rome and Inculturation: The Japanese Catholic Church In the Years Before World War II and Beyond* by Takao Frances Takagi, SND, Ph.D. c. 1990.
Folder 2 Articles: *Our First Japanese Postulant, Aoki Aiko (Sr. Maria Teresa)* by Aoki Aiko, 1940; *Notre Dame Origins: Asia, 1924* by Sr. Mary Angelina (Kecko Suzuki), 1983.
Folder 3 Articles: *The Far East and Brazil (incomplete)*; *The Challenge of World War II--Issues of Inculturation (incomplete)*, 1960.
Folder 4 Articles: *Sr. Claire Bernadine's Reflections of her time in Japan 1942*, 1986.
Folder 5 Articles: *The Educational System in Japan, 1926*; *Catholic Education and Catholic Schools in Japan*, 1963.
Folder 6 Articles: *On the Idea of God in the Tenrikyo Doctrine* by Shozen Nakayama, 1954; *What is Tenrikyo*, 1965
Folder 7 Articles: *Gion Corner: Tea Ceremony*; *The Way of Tea* by the Ueda School, c. 1950.

- Folder 8** Articles: *The History of the 36 Martyrs*, 1977.
- Folder 9** Articles: *The Missionary in Present Day Japan* by Sr. Margaret Frances Loftus, 1973; *The Outline of Atomic Bomb Damage in Hiroshima*, 1978.
- Folder 10** School Papers, 1957.
- Folder 11** School Papers, 1967, 1994.
- Folder 12** College Papers, 1966.
- Folder 13** College Articles, 1965.
- Folder 14** Presentations and Talks, 1917, n.d.
- Folder 15** Miscellaneous, 1934-2009.

Japan Mission Shelves

- Correspondence, 1924-1944. 2 bound volumes.
- Scrapbook, 1936.
- Sr. Catherine Aiken Scrapbook, c. 1976.
- Sr. Ellen Mary Hickey Scrapbook, 1952-1980
- Seishin High School Yearbook, 1969.
- Japan in a Nutshell: Religion, Culture, Popular Practices
by Atsuharu Sakai, 1949.
- We Japanese: Being Descriptions of Many of the Customs,
Manners, Ceremonies, Festivals, Arts and Crafts of the Japanese
Besides Numerous Other Subjects, 1950.
- Twentieth Anniversary of the Notre Dame Seishin University, 1969.
- Fifty Years of the Sisters of Notre Dame in Japan, 1974.
- Twentieth Anniversary of Notre Dame Seishin Junior College, 1981.
- Kiseki [Tracings]: Thirty-Eight Year History of the Notre Dame
Seishin Junior and Senior High Schools in Hiroshima, Japan (1950-
1988), 1988.
- Anthology of Classical Waka, 1988.
- New Testament [Phonetic Japanese edition], 1958.
- Bible: Old and New Testaments. [Japanese edition]. 1992.
- Gideon Bible: New Testament. [English and Japanese edition], 1987.
- The Kindergarten of Okayama, 20th Anniversary, 1985.
- Notre Dame Schools, Japan. Brochures, 1964-2003. [34 copies]
50th Anniversary, Notre Dame Junior and Senior High School,
1999.
- 80th Anniversary of Notre Dame in Japan, 2004.
- Notre Dame Seishin University Yearbook, 1963.
- Notre Dame Seishin University, c. 1965. [Japanese edition]
- Awakening: The Adventure for Peace by Nobuyuki Yuasa, 1985.
- Catechism, 1960. [Phonetic Japanese]

- Photograph Boxes** 878 photographs, 1924-c. 1980.
- Japan Mission Shelf**

