

# JAPANESE AMERICANS IN CLOVIS



Japanese started immigrating to Clovis in the early 1900's. Most of the Issei, immigrants from Japan, were male farmworkers. Some leased or rented land, while others became share croppers. Yoshitaki Takahashi and a few other Issei bought land before the Alien Land Law of 1913 which prohibited Asian immigrants from owning land.



Yoshitaki and his sons Yoshiko and Ted established the family farm tradition for Japanese Americans in Clovis.



The Issei realized the importance of education, so schools were the key to improving the lives of Japanese Americans. Garfield Elementary School had a profound impact on the education and socialization of the young Nisei, second generation Japanese Americans, and their friends.

During the Depression the Issei pooled their money and purchased land on Villa Avenue just north of Sierra Avenue. Soon after, they moved a wooden building onto their property and named it the Clovis Community Church. "The Hall" was used for meetings, holiday gatherings and language school. It later became the Clovis Buddhist Church. Today, the northern portion of the property is home to the United Japanese Christian Church.



Clovis Nisei baseball teams were organized in the 1920's and continued through the war until the 1950's. Clovis High School provided the Nisei with a secondary education and an opportunity to play a variety of sports. Jack Ikuta won the first Sessano All American Blanket followed by Nick Juichi Nishi in 1937. Thirty years later, Uncle Nick's nephew Eugene "Gano" Shimizu received the Blanket for football.

## A Message to Our Neighbors and Friends on the Day of Evacuation

A 1942 message from Japanese-Americans in Clovis to their neighbors and friends. The message asks for understanding and support during the evacuation process. It mentions the evacuation camps and the impact on the community.



Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1942, the United States government forced Japanese Americans from their homes on the West Coast to ten internment camps across the country. The Clovis Japanese American citizens and their parents were relocated to Poston, Arizona and Jerome, Arkansas. A long history of racism and economic greed preceded their removal. But many Clovis citizens and the Committee for Fair Play stood against this violation of the United States Constitution. Despite the internment and wartime prejudice, more than 33,000 Nisei volunteered or were drafted to serve in the United States Army. The segregated 442nd Central Postal Directory Battalion went on to become the most decorated army unit in the history of the United States.



The Military Intelligence Service used their understanding of Japanese language and culture to translate captured documents, monitor enemy transmissions, and interrogate prisoners of war. They made a vital contribution to the Allied victory in the Pacific War and the peaceful occupation of Japan. Soldiers on leave often visited their parents and families in the camps in Arizona, or Arkansas, many miles away from their homes in Clovis.

After World War II ended, all of the Japanese American families moved back to Clovis. By the mid 1950's, many returned to farming in and around Clovis. South of Herndon were the family farms of the Kubota, Miyake, Takahashi, Saiki and Hayamoto families. The Yamamoto, Ikada, Shimizu, Nishi, Yaj and Miyamoto families made their homes and farms to the north of town.



The Clovis Day Parades and the Rodeo have been a significant part of Clovis. Veterans have always been an important part of the festivities. Fumio "Ike" Ikada was proud to march with his fellow veterans during the parade. The Clovis Community Church won a variety of parade categories with floats, covered wagons, and horse drawn surreys. The community met at Yoshiko Takahashi's shed the Friday night before the parade to collect, cut, and decorate the entries with flowers. Participation in the parade helped a return to normalcy after WWII.

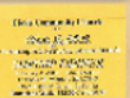


The Clovis Judo Club was founded in 1966. With the support of the Clovis Veterans Memorial District and city officials, a Japanese martial art was introduced to Clovis. Young and old were trained by Sensei Toshitaka Yamauchi, the highest ranking judoka outside of Japan. He settled in Clovis because he liked the people and the fishing. He fostered the "Japanese Warrior Spirit" and promoted pride and fellowship in an AF-American community.

Clovis JAACL Scholarship Recipients	
1962	Yoshiko Takahashi
1963	Yoshiko Takahashi
1964	Yoshiko Takahashi
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2017	Yoshiko Takahashi
2018	Yoshiko Takahashi
2019	Yoshiko Takahashi
2020	Yoshiko Takahashi
2021	Yoshiko Takahashi
2022	Yoshiko Takahashi



The Japanese American members of the Dry Creek PTA started frying shrimp at the school carnival in 1962. This fund-raising activity evolved into the annual Japanese American Citizens League shrimp dinner held at the Clovis Veterans Memorial Building on the first weekend of February. Beginning with one scholarship, the Clovis JAACL now awards scholarships to each of the high schools in the Clovis Unified School District and donates to numerous other community organizations.



After 50 years, the last shrimp dinner was dedicated to Fumio "Ike" Ikada in 2012. The theme of the night was "Live Like Ike". For Ike, living meant embracing the joys and responsibilities of being a citizen. He rolled up his sleeves to help family, friends and serve his country and his hometown. He gave his time and energy to his church, the American Legion, Cougar football, the Clovis Judo Club and just about everyone who asked for his help. Ike loved giving and living in Clovis.



The story of the Japanese Americans in Clovis is the universal story of immigration to America. This journey honors the joys, sorrows, and accomplishments of the immigrant Issei and the American born Nisei. Their sacrifices paved the way for the Sansei, third generation Japanese Americans, and for future generations to live the Clovis Way of Life.

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