THE JAPANESE-CANADIAN ARCHIVES AT UBC


By Tsuneharu Gonnami, Asian Library, UBC

Introduction:

It is a great privilege to attend the HomeComing '92 Conference. I would like to begin by thanking the Conference organizers, namely Professor Victor Ujimoto, Professor Roy Miki, Dr. Tatsuo Kage and Mr. Randy Onomoto for inviting me to this meeting and for giving me an opportunity to talk about the Japanese-Canadian Archives housed at the University of British Columbia (UBC) Library.

Since 1970 the Special Collections Division of the Main Library at UBC has been trying to collect and preserve historical materials relating to Japanese-Canadians. Even before 1970, they had some valuable books and newspapers on Japanese-Canadians, e.g., Kanada doho roten taisan (Encyclopedia of the Development of the Japanese-Canadian Community) by Jinshiro Nakayama which was published in 1921, and the complete back issues of Taikiki Nippo (The Continental Daily News), 1908-1941. However, due to lack of communication between the UBC Library and the Japanese-Canadian Community at that time, the Library's acquisitions of Japanese-Canadian materials were very few. Fortunately, in the early 1970s the UBC Library initiated a big project to collect various materials on the history of ethnic groups in B.C. for the purpose of permanent preservation.

The Japanese-Canadian Archives at UBC started as a part of that project. As the Japanese Librarian for the Asian Library, I was appointed by then UBC Librarian, Mr. Basil Stuart-Stubbs, to serve as the liaison between the Special Collections Division of the UBC Library, and the Japanese-Canadian communities all across Canada. Professor Mitsuru Shindo (formerly of the University of Waterloo, presently at Nihon Woman's University in Tokyo) was a graduate student at UBC in the early 1970s and was doing sociological research on the Japanese-Canadian communities in Canada. In his field studies which included visiting the Japanese-Canadian communities and interviewing their people, he encountered many private documents such as letters, diaries, memoirs, essays, etc. which were written by Japanese immigrants as well as many old books and photographs concerning the history of the early Japanese pioneers in Canada. He was much concerned for the permanent preservation of these valuable materials because some of them were physically deteriorating. Considering the many potential users of these Japanese-Canadian materials who might be Japanese community members, faculty, scholars and students at Universities, and members of the general public, he proposed that these materials be permanently preserved by the UBC Library. I immediately reported this proposal to Mr. Basil Stuart-Stubbs, the University Librarian and to Mrs. Anne Yandle, the Head of the Special Collections Division. This was in the fall of 1970. Both of them accepted Dr. Shinpo's proposal since it coincided with the UBC Library's policy to develop collections of ethnic history. As a result, the Japanese Canadian Archives have been considerably expanded. Dr. Shinpo met many Issei and Nisei in B.C., Alberta, Ontario and Quebec and talked to them about the significance of permanently preserving Japanese-Canadian historical materials and asked them to assist the UBC Library's project. Dr. Shinpo's contribution to the UBC Library was very much appreciated. At the same time the UBC Library started to solicit co-operation from the Japanese-Canadian communities by announcing this project through the local JCCA bulletins all across Canada.

Fortunately the UBC Library received many favourable responses in the form of old materials relating to Japanese-Canadian history and it has acknowledged these generous donations with deep appreciation. In the early 1980s, the Japanese-Canadian History Preservation Committee was formed by Mr. Frank Hanano, a lawyer with a professional librarian's degree, Dr. Tatsuo Kage, T. Gonnami, and other volunteers. It developed into one of the official committees of the Greater Vancouver JCCA in the mid-1980s. The Committee is now chaired by Mr. Frank Kamiya. Since then, the JCCA History Preservation Committee has been quite active in calling for the preservations of old books, journals, and photographs as well as private and public documents relating to the history and culture of Japanese-Canadians. It has expanded its contacts through the Vancouver JCCA Bulletin, the Nikkei Voice, and Vancouver Shinpo etc. The Committee has also produced archival history tapes of interviews of many seniors from the Japanese communities in B.C. And most important in connection with my current topic, it has co-operated with the UBC Library in order to jointly collect Japanese-Canadian historical materials. Presently, the Japanese-Canadian Archives at UBC are ably managed by Mr. George Brandak, Manuscripts Curator in the Special Collections Division of the Main Library.

The Collection

The holdings statistics of the Japanese-Canadian Archives at UBC as of 1992 are as follows:

1. Unpublished Documents: 43 linear feet
   (mainly in Japanese)
   260 volumes
   (both in English and Japanese)

2. Printed Books:
   8 newspapers and 3 journals
   (mainly in Japanese)

3. Periodicals:
   860 still photos in
   black and white

4. Photographs:
   2 8-mm films in black
   and white

5. Films:
   150 discs (mainly in Japanese)

Continued on Page 23
Japanese-Canadian Archives continued

7. Phonotapes: 155 cassette tapes and 10 open reels (mainly in Japanese)

The Japanese-Canadian Archives are made up of both Japanese and English materials, but Japanese materials are predominant. Therefore, in the following I would like to describe some prominent Japanese materials from each of the aforementioned categories.

Unpublished Documents

According to An Inventory of the Papers and Records in the Japanese Canadian Collection in the Library of the University of British Columbia (1975), which was compiled by the Special Collections Division, the Main Library, UBC, there are 65 individual names and 5 corporate names listed. Unpublished materials written by individual persons include diaries, autobiographies, memoirs, and memoiranda. Some representative Japanese-Canadians who wrote valuable private documents, all unpublished, are Sannosuke (En'nyu) diary, Ito Imada (autobiography), Kiyozo Kazuta (autobiography, Konosuke Nishikihama (memoir), Tokikazu Tanaka (memorandum), etc. At one time each of these persons was very active in their own area of the Japanese Canadian community. There are two voluminous sets of documents in the above Inventory List. One set is a collection of diaries written by the late Rev. Kosaburo Shimizu of the Japanese-Canadian United Church, covering over 50 years from 1909 to 1961. These diaries were written in Japanese from 1909 to 1941, after which they were written in English. Rev. Shimizu devoted much of his efforts, based upon the Christian spirit, to bridging the growing rifts between Issei and Nisei and between the Japanese and other Canadians. The other set of documents is the records and memoirs written over a 60 years period beginning in 1906 by the late Mr. Yasutaro Yamaga, who before World War II led the Japanese Farmers' Association in Haney, B.C., located in the Fraser Valley. After the war he moved to Beamsville, Ontario, and there established the first Japanese-Canadian senior citizens' home in Canada, called Nipponia Home.

Monographs

Among the many Japanese books which deal with Japanese immigrants in Canada, the following books are indispensable to anyone interested in the history of Japanese-Canadians: Kanada doho hatten shi (A History of the Development of the Japanese-Canadian Community) published by Tairiku Nippo Sha (The Continental Daily News Co. Ltd.) in three volumes between 1909 and 1924. Any researcher who is looking for information on the social and economic conditions of the Japanese Community in Canada in the early period of Japanese immigration should not avoid these valuable history books. In 1921 a prominent Japanese journalist, Jinshiro Nakayama, wrote and privately published two volumes (each over 1,000 pages) called Kanada no hoko (The Treasury of Canada) and Kanada doho hatten taisan (Encyclopedia of the Development of the Japanese-Canadian Community). These are excellent resource books which describe the life styles and professions of early Japanese settlers in B.C. Kanada doho hatten taisan contains two hundred short biographies illustrated with portrait photographs of Japanese immigrants who became successful in their professions. As for other books written in the post-war period, Prof. Mitsuru Shinpo's books should not be overlooked by anyone who wishes to carry out analytical research on the Japanese-Canadian community. They are Ishi o mite owarmu goto ku (As Being Cast Out with Stones) (1975) and Kanada Nihonjin imin monogatari (The Story of Japanese Immigrants in Canada). Dr. Shinpo wrote them from a sociological point of view by researching the process of acculturation of Japanese immigrants into Canadian society and the success of these Japanese-Canadians in later days. The books also deal with the issues of racial prejudice and discrimination. There are many other good books worth mentioning here as well. For example, the following books vividly depict the struggles and the successes of three professional men: Hene nokai shi (A History of the Haney Japanese Farmers' Association) written by Yasutaro Yamaga in 1962 gives a chronological history of the Japanese-Canadian agricultural community in Haney, B.C. Kuroshio no hate ni (At the End of the Black Current) by Rintaro Hayashi (1971) focuses on the history of the Steveston fishing village which was dominated by Japanese fishermen before 1941. Kodomo to tomoni gojunen (Teaching Japanese-Canadian Children for 50 years) by Mr. Tautae and Mrs. Hamako Sato, which was published in 1969 is a combined autobiography of Japanese teachers based on their teaching experiences in the Vancouver Japanese Language School. Both of Satos devoted their entire lives over fifty years to the teaching of the second-generation (Nisei) Japanese-Canadians.

Periodicals

UBC Special Collections contain eight Japanese-Canadian newspapers and 3 journals, of which 5 newspapers and 2 journals are current subscriptions. The current newspapers are: The Canada Times, New Canadian, Vancouver Shino, Kanada West, Nikkei Voice and the current journals are: The Greater Vancouver JCCA Bulletin and Tenbo (Outlook) published by the Manitoba JCCA, UBC is the only public institution which houses Japanese-Canadian newspapers published during the pre-war period. So it is worth describing here their names and the holdings at the UBC Special Collections.

They are:

Tairiku Nippo (1908-1941)  
Nikkan Minshu (May - Dec. 1941)  
Kanada Shim bun (Sept. - Dec. 1941)  
New Canadian (1939 - Present)

The UBC Library has the complete issues of Tairiku Nippo (The Continental Daily News), which was established in 1908 by Mr. Yasushi Yamazaki, who was one of the community leaders of Japan Town in Vancouver in the early 1900s. Through his efforts, Tairiku Nippo developed into a leading newspaper among Japanese media sources so that almost every Japanese immigrant relied on it to get information on the social, economic, and political issues in Canada at that time. In particular, those who had just arrived in Canada as new immigrants definitely needed Tairiku Nippo and other Japanese newspapers because they were the only news sources available in their mother language with which they could look for job opportuni-

Continued on Page 24
ties and find out what was happening in their new country. The UBC Library produced a microfilm edition of Tairiku Nippo in 1988 for the purpose of permanent preservation because the physical condition of the collection had badly deteriorated. Tairiku Nippo (The Continental Daily News) 1908 - 1941 on microfilm consists of 68 reels and is now available at a cost of approximately C$3,000 per set. If anyone is interested in obtaining this microfilm set, please write to: Mrs. Suzanne Dodson, Preservation Librarian, UBC Library (for her exact address, please refer to IV: Contact persons). This microfilm edition was made with the help of a generous cash donation from the late Mr. Naomichi Nishimura, former Director of the Hikone Public Library. As is well-known by Japanese-Canadians, Hikone City sent many immigrants to Canada during the pre-war years. Post-war Japanese-Canadians newspapers which succeeded Tairiku Nippo have been Tairiku Jiho (The Continental Times) published between 1949 and 1982 by the late Mr. Yoriki Iwasaki and Kanada Taimusu (The Canada Times) edited and published since 1982 by Mr. Harry Tabata. Both newspapers were produced in Toronto. The UBC Main Library has a complete set of back numbers of both.

Photographs

The Special Collections Division of the UBC Library has compiled a list of Japanese-Canadian Photographs in its collection. The list is titled Japanese-Canadian Photograph Collection - An Inventory of the Collection in the Library of the University of British Columbia (1976). It lists a number of rare old photographs donated by many people from Japanese communities in Canada. Pictures depicting annual and daily social events of the Japanese community include ones of the New Year’s festivals, summer festivals, weddings, and funerals. Besides these, there are many other photographs which focus on Powell Street, the main street of Japan Town; public buildings of the Buddhist Church, Japanese-Canadian Christian Church, and Japanese Language School; and working scenes of fishing, farming and logging, etc. There are photographs of the Japanese-Canadian regiment during the first World War and of evacuation camps during the second World War. The photo collection also includes rare pictures of imperial family members such as Prince Fushimi who visited Victoria in 1907 and Prince Chichibu who came to visit Vancouver in 1937. In the post-war period, the present Emperor Akihito, when he was Crown Prince, also visited Vancouver on his way to Queen Elizabeth’s coronation in 1953. Photos taken at the welcoming ceremonies for His Imperial Highness in Victoria and Vancouver have been well preserved by UBC. There are many interesting pictures, e.g. of the Nippon Maru, a beautiful mercantile training ship with tall masts and sails and her cadet officers together with many local JCCA members on the occasion of a big welcoming party in the early 1960s given by the Vancouver JCCA.

Films

There are two reels of 8-mm films in black and white. One was taken in 1937, depicting many Japanese fishing boats in English Bay welcoming Prince Chichibu’s visit to Vancouver. The other was produced by Kitazô Omachi around 1937/38, showing the Festival of Japan Town and many decorated shops along Powell Street. This film is valuable in helping us appreciate Japanese community life before World War II.

Phonodiscs

The Japanese Section of Radio Canada International of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) used to produce LP phonodiscs under the title of Kanada no wadai (Current Canadian topics) from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. Mr. Akira Shigematsu (CBC and formerly BBC Japanese announcer) interviewed many Japanese staying in Canada, Japanese-Canadians, and other Canadian people who had experienced living in Japan. He asked them to talk about various topics related to Canada from daily life, business, culture, and sports to Japanese studies at universities and colleges, etc. UBC Special Collection has a complete set of this Japanese interview series on about 150 discs.

Phonotapes

The Vancouver JCCA History Preservation Committee has as its top priority a project to interview senior Issei and Nisei to produce an oral history of Japanese-Canadians. The people interviewed talked about their old memories of Japan Town in Vancouver, their early experiences in various professions such as farming, fishing and lumbering, the mass relocation during the last war, and establishment of new lives after World War II, etc. In 1985, 142 such cassette tapes of 91 interviewees were successfully produced and donated to the UBC Special Collections for permanent preservation. JCCA hopes that this live history collection of Japanese-Canadians’ recollection will be widely used in the future not only by UBC academic people but also by the general public in both Canada and Japan.

Conclusion

As I have reported, there are a great variety of Japanese-Canadian historical materials which were written by many individuals interested in documenting their own early experiences in their new country. The scope of the Japanese-Canadian collection encompasses a wide range of subjects from fishing, farming and business operations to religious activities, personal reminiscences, and various organizational records. Here we can see an amazing record of the cultural characteristics of Japanese-Canadians, it is our privilege as well as responsibility to preserve this valuable cultural heritage for future generations and try to utilize it for further development of the Japanese-Canadian community as well as Canadian multi-cultural society. In order to expand the collection, the JCCA History Preservation Committee (now known as the JCCA Japanese Canadian Archives) has a project under way to translate Japanese language materials into English so that a wide range of Canadians can make use of them. Finally, I would like to say that it would not have been possible to build up the present Japanese-Canadian Archives at UBC, which are the best of their kind anywhere, without the generous assistance received from many Issei, Nisei, and Sansei as well as from Shin-Issei, new immigrants in post-war days. The majority of these Japanese-Canadians are now residing in B.C., Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. In taking this oppor-

Continued on Page 25
tunity to meet many of you from the Japanese-Canadian communities all across Canada, on behalf of the Vancouver JCCA History Preservation Committee as well as the UBC Library. I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your kind support and co-operation which has enabled us to carry out this significant work of history preservation.

Contact persons:
George Brandak, Manuscripts Curator, Special Collections Division, Main Library, UBC
1956 Main Mall, Vancouver, B.C. Canada, V6T 1Z1
Phone: (604) 822-2232 Fax (604) 822-9587
Mrs. Suzanne Dodson, Preservation Librarian, Main Library, UBC
1956 Main Mall, Vancouver, B.C. Canada, V6T 1Z1
Phone: (604) 822-3858 Fax (604) 822-3335
Tsuneharu Gonnami, Japanese Librarian, Asian Library, Asian Centre, UBC
1871 West Mall, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z2
Phone: (604) 822-2023 Fax (604) 822-5207
Frank Kamiya, Chairman, JC Museum & Archives, Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizens Association, 511 East Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V5T 1X4
Phone: (604) 874-8187 Fax (604) 874-8164

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