Through an Extended Lens:

Louisiana, Internment and the Geography of Chance
In war, Truth is the first casualty.

- Aeschylus, Greek Dramatist, 525-456 B.C.
World War II Internment

War Relocation Authority. Salinas Assembly Center, Salinas, California. A young woman of Japanese ancestry identifies her baggage at this assembly center prior to transfer to a War Relocation Authority Center. Photographer: Clem Albers. Date 3/31/42.
A Day That Will Live in Infamy

“December 7, 1941 was a Sunday. My father, as usual, went to swim early in the morning, but this morning he looked up and saw many planes flying overhead.

He didn’t realize that these planes were the Japanese planes. Then it happened, and we didn’t know about the attack until we heard it on the radio.”
“And that evening two FBI agents and a local policeman came to pick up my father and handcuffed him and took him away.

We didn’t see him until the reunion in Crystal City, Texas.”
Camp Livingston, Louisiana

Entrance to Camp Livingston Enemy Alien Internment Camp
Declassified Authority 803028
• Southwestern side of the camp

• Construction cost $1,576,281.00

• “... it is in the interest of the National Defense that this work be not delayed awaiting the negotiation of a formal contract.”
PERMANENT
RECORD
DRAWINGS
ALIEN INTERNMENT CAMP
CAMP LIVINGSTON, LA.
Camp Livingston – 4; Construction Completion Reports, 1917 – 1944; Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, 1789 – 1999, Record Group 77; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD. Declassified Authority 803028.
Kohara Family
Alexandria, Louisiana

Images courtesy of the Bolton Library, LSU, Alexandria.

Images courtesy of the Kohara family.

Kohara Studio Closed by U.S. Here.


Mother Not a Citizen

Sammy said neither his father nor his mother had been naturalized citizens, declaring they always understood there is a law which prevents native Japanese from becoming citizens.

In the family are five children, all born in the United States. The youngest is 13, the oldest 26. Three of them are Methodists, one is a Baptist and the fifth is a Presbyterian. Mrs. Kohara attends the Methodist church, of which her husband was a member.

Sammy said none of the children can speak or understand Japanese. He said he knows maybe a word or two only. His father and mother never taught it to them, he said, and the children had never had any Japanese children to play with.

Kohara Studio Operated by Americans

And They Are Proud of Their American Citizenship

This makes them pretty good American citizens, and if you will just visit the Kohara Studio and talk with them a few minutes you will realize they are as thoroughly American as one whose forefathers landed at Plymouth Rock.

Both the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Treasurer department have made thorough investigations of the Kohara family, and not one shadow of doubt regarding their patriotism was found.
THE KOHARAS OF LOUISIANA

Story of Nisei Family in the South

BY ROKU SUGAHARA

DEE IN THE GULF BAY country of Louisiana, in the heart of the Cajun State, lies the town of Alexandria. Most of the Nisei families of this upper Evangeline country are past, but a little beyond the swampland of the slow-moving Red River, which flows through the town, can be seen these Nisei who are remembered with fondness for their tree groves.

Alexandria is a town of some 30,000 people, one of the largest in this richly productive farm area, and is situated on the Atchafalaya River about 50 miles south of New Orleans. The picturesque Creole hotel overlooks the town square, across which the city gives the old Cajun city hall and the county courts and church the old wooden buildings of the original town.

A few miles from the main shopping center of Alexandria is a small shrine to a Nisei family, the Sugahara family. The family, which owns a small farm 100 miles south of Alexandria, donated the property to the city of Alexandria and now houses a unique collection of historical artifacts and documents related to Nisei history.

During the early years of the Koharas, Alexandria served as a one-stop shop for which many Nisei were ever grateful. There were no hospitals or doctors, and a large number of trainees stayed at the Kochara farm and worked nearby. Some slept on the floor, ate off the manure in the barn, and enjoyed their brief dish in which reminded them of back home.

Mrs. Kohara, who had been the de facto head of the family, was in charge of the farm. She was responsible for the overall management of the farm and was responsible for the care of the children. She was also responsible for the instruction of the children in the Japanese language.

Mrs. Kohara was a strong and capable woman who was able to manage the farm and the children. She was a role model for the Nisei community and was respected by all. She was also a source of inspiration for the children and was able to instill in them a sense of responsibility and hard work.

The Kohara family, like many other Nisei families, had to rely on their own resources and skills to survive. They were able to make a living from the land and were able to support their families.

In conclusion, the Koharas of Alexandria were a testament to the resilience and strength of the Nisei community. They were able to overcome the challenges they faced and were able to survive and thrive in a foreign land.
Miyamoto Family in Hawaii

Haleiwa Jōdo Mission

Established 1912, present temple (Shikei-ji) built 1975

66-279 Haleiwa Rd. • Haleiwa, HI 96712 • ☑: 637-4382
Persons of German, Italian, & Japanese Ancestry -- Males

Arrests Dec 7, ‘41

Justice Department Detention Stations & Camps 1941 - 43

Hearings

Release

YES

NO

Yes, Germans & Italians

Yes, Japanese

EO 9066

WCAA / WRA

Yes, Japanese

Q (By Recorder) To whom do you owe your allegiance?
A I am a Japanese, and I cannot possibly forget Japan, of course, but in America, Hawaii, and my children are all here, my feelings are for America, but I cannot forget Japan.

Q In case of Japanese invasion, would you assist in fighting them away from our shores?
A I am living in America, and my children are here, and I would certainly help America, but it is very painful for me to think that we would have to work against the Japanese here.

Q Would you or would you not help fight them from our shores, yes, or no?
A I am a Buddhist, and as such, we want peace. In that case I would help America.
JOHN H. MIDKIFF, was called as a witness and being duly sworn, testified as follows:

RECRER: You have been called as a witness in behalf of Miyamoto.
A Yes.

Q: (By Recorder) State your name and address and business?
A: John H. Midkiff, I am at Waialua, the manager of the Waialua Agricultural Company.

Q: (By Board) And what is your postoffice address?
A: That is my postoffice address.

Q: How long have you known this gentleman? (Indicating the internee)
A: I have been at Waialua about 18 years, and I have known him ever since he has been there.

Q: Are you familiar with his activities as a teacher and a priest out there?
A: I am.

Q: Have you any reason to believe that he has ever done anything that would bring into question his loyalty to the United States?
A: I have never run into anything that would make me, personally, question his loyalty. If it is permissible, Judge, for me to do so, I would like to amplify my statement.

Q: Yes, just tell us what you know, at this time, that is, the better way.
A: A good many months ago I thought that things were going to pot, between America and Japan, and after talking to Mr. Shivers, of the F.B.I., he suggested that I hold meetings with a number of the Japanese people out there and put the cards on the table, and Reverend Miyamoto was one of the men, one of the leaders in the Japanese community, that I called in, and we pointed out the things...
Q. All right.
A. This is what Reverend Miyamoto said:

"We, the first generation, are very envious of you young men. (This is to the draftees who were going away) Although we have lived here and tried to assimilate the American ways, and enjoyed every protection of your country, we cannot become American citizens. We deplore this fact very much.

You young Americans, by your birth right are Americans, and it is your solemn duty to preserve, protect and defend your country, the United States of America, against any encroachment, and it is your right to do this. Needless to say, in the performance of your duties it may be necessary to make a great sacrifice; maybe necessary to lay down your lives to accomplish this.

It is our sincerest desire that you do this unhesitatingly and willingly. It is your sacred duty to take and protect these United States whose principles and ideals are embodied in the Constitution of the United States of America, as represented by your flag, with the stars and stripes."

Q. As far as you know, you have every reason to believe that that is his composition?
A. As far as I know, that shows his attitude. I have asked a number of other people just what it was, especially, since they have been called in there, and I found no one in the Waialua Community that has any reason to feel that it should not represent and did not represent his ideals.

Q. In the event that this man should be released and paroled, Mr. Midkiff, would you accept the responsibility; would you be responsible for him?
A. I would be glad to be responsible for him, if he would report to me.
The Findings

FINDINGS:

The Board, having carefully considered the evidence before it, finds:

1. That BUNTETSU MIYAMOTO is an alien, born in Japan; resident in Hawaii since 1915.

2. The internee states that he is loyal to the United States, and reliable statements and testimony showed nothing to the contrary.

3. The internee has acted as a consular agent, stating that his activities consisted of reporting vital statistics.

4. No information was presented connecting this internee with subversive activities.

5. Reliable testimony indicated that the internee had advocated loyalty and service to the United States, on the part of Americans born of Japanese ancestry.

6. The internee has taken no steps towards the expatriation of his own children, leaving that entirely to their own initiative.
Recommendations

In view of the above findings, the majority of the Board recommends:

That BUNTETSU MIYAMOTO be released on parole to Mr. John H. Midkiff of Waialua.

Lt. Fred A. Thompson dissents, and thinks the internee should be held for the duration of the war.

The Board adjourned at 11:50 a.m. o'clock on 14th January, 1942.

[Signatures]

(PRESIDENT)

(RECORDE)

ISN-HJ- 131 -CI
IN THE FOREGOING CASE OF:

BUNTETSU MIYAMOTO

We, the undersigned representatives of our respective Intelligence Bureaus, do not concur in the recommendations of the Board and recommend that, the Internee be interned.

Contact Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence, Hawaiian Department.

District Intelligence Office, 14th Naval District.

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Buntetsu Miyamoto, Federal Bureau of Investigation File; Classification 65 (Espionage): Headquarters Case Files; Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Record Group 65, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

It was reported that the soldiers removed cases of beer from the kitchen of Subject to the basement of the home, where the beverage was consumed.

It was also reported that Subject’s wife does not speak English and that the family is in desperate circumstances.
Life inside Camp Livingston

• Arrested on December 7, 1941.

• Of the 5,000 Japanese residing in Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming, Father Kano was the only one to be interned.

• He was placed in several camps and spent time at Camp Livingston, Louisiana.

Diary
Aug. 1, 1942 - Apr. 12 '43

Name: Rev. H. Kaneko
Address: Camp Livingston, La.

JUNIOR NUMBER
NOTE BOOK
5929
Aug. 1, 1942.

(1942) Camp Livingston, La.
August 1 (Saturday) 1942
Rv. 5:15 a.m. Church service. Chosen meeting at 6:15 a.m. Hired by Mr. A. Kin. Victor K. left camp for business. Letter writing.

(1942) Camp Livingston, La.
August 2 (Sunday) 1942
Rv. 5:15 a.m. Chosen meeting. Morning prayer and sermon by Chaplain. Appointed to camp at 8 a.m. Evening prayer and sermon at 7:15 p.m. at camp. Where I was made a guest preacher on the subject: 'Chosen Shimmer'.
Baggage hanging over our shoulders

We trudge toward summer clouds

In this camp among the pine trees

We finally settle down

Machine guns atop the guard tower

Sounds from a radio drift down

Young prisoners make music

Without musical instruments

In the pine forest, fireflies everywhere

An evening sky in a foreign land

Under the blazing sun

The camp sleeps
V-P-HIST-03390-35: Guerre, 1939-1945, Louisiane, Livingston. Pavillons du camp d'internés civils japonais
ICRC archives (ARR)
Sciage de bois. ICRC archives (ARR).
Défrichage. ICRC archives (ARR).
Défrichage. ICRC archives (ARR).
V-P-HIST-03415-10, Guerre 1939-1945, Louisiane, Camp d'internés civils japonais.
Pavillon du camp d'internés civils japonais, ICRC archives (ARL).
Camp d'internés civils japonais. ICRC archives (ARR).
Gaman
(我慢)

Panneaux au musée. ICRC archives (ARR).

Le directeur du musée montrant une canne sculptée. ICRC archives (ARR).
Camp Rosters

Livingston – Hawaii Resid.
Visitors to Camp Livingston
“But this officer of the day, when he saw us in uniform, his jaws dropped, and he told the two guards, "You get out of the quonset hut, leave these people alone." And so we had freedom of visitation for about an hour and a half in [Louisiana]. And my dad was taking it very nicely. All the Japanese isseis, I think, were being treated really nice because by physical appearance, there was no way they could run away. So they would give you a lot of freedom. And they had a lot of outings that they would go out to, one, two guards instead of being, you know, looked over by four or five guards, or forty or fifty people could go out with one guard or two guards. And I think the Japanese people there, actually, they don't complain. And so, I think the American security was more lenient to them...”
“Fountain-of-Joy Grandpa”
CONFIDENTIAL

MID 201
NICHOLSON, Herbert (H.V.)

WASHINGTON M.D.

WAR DEPARTMENT

Subject: NICHOLSON, Herbert (H.V.)

1564 Las Kumas Street
Pasadena, California

Summary of Information:

According to an article appearing in the Rafu Shoko, Los Angeles bi-lingual Japanese daily on 22 January 1943, the Rev. and Mrs. Herbert (H.V.) Nicholson are particularly prominent members of a committee in charge of "aid to distressed residents Japanese families".

The above committee is one of a number of committees of the American Friends Service Committee which is affiliated with the American Quaker Group. Although there is no indication of subversive intent on the part of this committee, which has been under investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, it appears that its inter-racial and international connections leave it liable to manipulation by anti-American elements.

In its Sunday edition of 28 March 1943, the Des Moines Register-Tribune, on the "People's Open Forum" page devoted about two and a half columns of space to several articles favoring more equitable treatment of loyal Japanese. A letter to the editor occupying a large share of this space was written by H. V. Nicholson, 1564 Las Kumas Street, Pasadena, California. "Letters to the Editor" were under the main caption: "Misei Ideas Declared as High as any Person's--One Contributor Thinks Democratic and Christian America Should Set Example for the World. A photograph allegedly showing the evacuation from the West Coast was printed on the page with this caption: "...this wholesale evacuation from the West Coast was primarily caused by certain high pressure economic and political groups using false propaganda about sabotage in Hawaii to influence the primitive minds of the American people. These false stories have been officially denied but the damage has been done," a quotation from the Nicholson letter.

Evaluation:

Previous Distribution:

99

Distribution:

Assistant Secretary of War

CONFIDENTIAL

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...“Oh, you can’t! These are dangerous men!”

I said, “Now, just wait a minute, Colonel. There’s not a single dangerous man there. They’re all loyal Americans. They would be citizens if they were allowed to be. The FBI picked the cream of the Japanese American community to arrest, and they’re wonderful people. Have you noticed – haven’t they organized already? Don’t they have a mayor? Don’t they have a city council?”...

...Before we got through, he shook my hand and said, “Nicholson, I’m so glad you came. I realize these are decent people. They’re not dangerous, you’re right.”
Reactions to Internment
...it’s not easy to raise good Americans behind barbed wire.

- Dillon S. Meyer, Director of WRA
“As Abraham Lincoln said that all men are created equal, well, so I say do not discriminate or criticize others because of their race or color of their skin.”
Special thanks to the American Library Association for its funding of this project through the ALA Carnegie Whitney Grant and the NewsBank/Readex/GODORT/ALA Catharine J. Reynolds Research Grant.
Additional thanks to the Kohara, Miyamoto, and Kano families for their willingness to share their memories, stories, and lives with us for this project.

Without them, it wouldn’t have been possible.
www.extendedlens.org
Citations

Slide 3: War Relocation Authority. Salinas Assembly Center, Salinas, California. A young woman of Japanese ancestry identifies her baggage at this assembly center prior to transfer to a War Relocation Authority Center. Photographer: Clem Albers. Date 3/31/42.

Slide 4, 5: Oral History Interview with Clifford Miyamoto. Courtesy of Clifford Miyamoto

Slide 6: Courtesy Notice to Aliens of Enemy Nationalities, February 9, 1942, National Archives Catalog.
Buntetsu Miyamoto, Federal Bureau of Investigation File; Classification 65 (Espionage): Headquarters Case Files; Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Record Group 65, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Slide 7, 8, 10, 11, 12: Camp Livingston – 4; Construction Completion Reports, 1917 – 1944; Construction Completion Reports, 1917 – 1944; Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, 1789-1999, Record Group 77; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Images courtesy of the Kohara family.

Slide 14: War Relocation Authority. No. 141-730. Alexandria, Louisiana. Sam Kohara, age 30, is the oldest son of Mrs. M. Kohara. The Kohara family moved to Alexandria, Louisiana many years ago. Mr. Kohara farmed for a short time and then opened a photographic studio in that city. The family consists of three sons and two daughters. Two of the sons are in the army. Sam, the oldest, gives part of his time to the studio and the rest to a farm which he recently purchased. The Kohara farm house has all the modern conveniences including city water, electricity, telephone, and gas. Sam has a new Farmall tractor and says that he has had no serious difficulty securing farm machinery. Photographer: Hikaru Iwasaki.

War Relocation Authority. No. 141-733. Alexandria, Louisiana. Mrs. M. Kohara and one of her Caucasian employees in the Kohara Studio. Mrs. Kohara manages the studio and has ten employees. She had an evacuee employee until quite recently when he was called by the army. Mrs. Kohara, in addition to the studio, owns a large substantial home in the city of Alexandria. Of the five Kohara children, four of them have attended Louisiana State University. A daughter, Dr. Kay Kohara, is a resident physician at Charity Hospital in New Orleans. The second daughter is still in high school. Sam, the oldest son, divides his time between the farm, which is about three miles from Alexandria, and the studio. Photographer: Hikaru Iwasaki.

Oral History Interview with Marion Kohara Couvillon. Courtesy of Kohara family.
Slide 15:
Oral History Interview with Marion Kohara Couvillon. Courtesy of Kohara family.

Oral History Interview with Marion Kohara Couvillon. Courtesy of Kohara family.

Slide 18:
Basic Personnel Record: Miyamoto, Buntetsu; Internee Case Files, 12/15/1941 – 1945; Records of the U.S. Army Forces in the Middle Pacific (World War II), 1940-1950, Record Group 494; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Record of the Hearings of a Board of Officers and Civilians Convened Pursuant to Paragraph 33, Special Orders No. 320, Headquarters, Hawaiian Department, Dated at Fort Shafter, T.H., 19 December 1941. In the Case of Buntetsu Miyamoto, ISN-HJ-131-C1; Hawaii, Civilian Internees: Miyamoto, Buntetsu; Subject Files, 1942 – 1946; Records of the Office of the Provost Marshal General, 1920 – 1975, Record Group 389; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.


Slide 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26: Record of the Hearings of a Board of Officers and Civilians Convened Pursuant to Paragraph 33, Special Orders No. 320, Headquarters, Hawaiian Department, Dated at Fort Shafter, T.H., 19 December 1941. In the Case of Buntetsu Miyamoto, ISN-HJ-131-C1; Hawaii, Civilian Internees: Miyamoto, Buntetsu; Subject Files, 1942 – 1946; Records of the Office of the Provost Marshal General, 1920 – 1975, Record Group 389; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.


Slide 28: Buntetsu Miyamoto, Federal Bureau of Investigation File; Classification 65 (Espionage): Headquarters Case Files; Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Record Group 65, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Slide 29: Basic Personnel Record: Miyamoto, Buntetsu; Internee Case Files, 12/15/1941 – 1945; Records of the U.S. Army Forces in the Middle Pacific (World War II), 1940-1950, Record Group 494; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.


Slide 31: Journal Images Courtesy of the Kano Family.

Slide 46:


Slide 56: Oral History Interview with Clifford Miyamoto. Courtesy of Clifford Miyamoto