

Service Learning Project

For my service project I worked at the Japanese Cultural Center. I worked on the Dr. Riuchi Ipponsugi Collection. Dr. Ipponsugi was a dentist in Honolulu, he was sent to the Japanese internment camps during World War II. His documents begin from his early life and go through to the post-war years. I was processing a couple of folders of random documents and photographs that had been misplaced and left out of the initial processing of the collection. Looking at these folders initially I thought I would finish in 4 or 5 hours, maybe requiring two visits. It ended up being four visits all together and over 12 hours. I learned a lot there and really started to get a sense for the important work that archivists can do. I was glad that I could help finish the processing of this collection so that it may be available to researchers.

Jane Kurahara is the librarian I worked with there. I learned some things from her about arrangement of collections. She described to me the system for the boxes. First writing AR for the archival collection and its number, in this case it was AR 20. Next comes Box- with its number and then Folder- with its number. The finding aid was very detailed and things could be easily located for the most part. I learned a little about processing photographs. We had some that were quite difficult as they had no information on them of any kind, no dates and no text. Some of the photographs had some Japanese on them, in which case they were put in a separate folder for the translator to look at later. And then for others they had some details on them, sometimes there was writing that named the event of the photograph and sometimes only a date. In those cases I could go through the finding aid looking for a place for them.

The collection contained five boxes total, 2 linear feet. Much of what I processed went into Box 2, which holds the internment documents. Most of these items are government documents relating to Dr. Ipponsugi's detainment and transfer to mainland internment camps as well as his return to Hawai'i. The documents show a cold, inhuman bureaucracy working for the internment. These documents refer to Dr. Ipponsugi as the 'enemy alien'. They make him sign loyalty oaths and yet still deny his release. Later they asked him if he would accept a release

in which he would stay on the mainland, knowing that his family was in Hawai'i. He declined. Years later, back home in Hawai'i, he struggles to gain citizenship, which he does finally in the 1950s. He saved the documents he had and later began collecting more. In the 1970s he received many documents relating to his internment through the National Archives.

I read the article, "No longer a silent victim of history: repurposing the documents of Japanese-American internment" by Emiko Hastings. This article looks at how internment documents have been used to verify the injustice and refute the claim that interment was a military necessity. "In the end, the documents that enacted internment of Japanese-Americans also made it possible for redress to be achieved."¹

¹ Emiko Hastings, "No longer a silent victim of history: repurposing the documents of Japanese-American internment," *Archival Science* 11, no. 1-2 (March 2011): 25-46.