

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

April 15, 2023

**EXHIBITION OPENING: “Overflowing with Hope: The Hidden History
Japanese Americans in Alameda” -**

Wednesday, May 17 at 4 PM, Alameda Free Library



Overflowing
with **Hope**
The
Hidden
HISTORY of the
Japanese
in
Alameda

ALAMEDA
**Japanese
American**
HISTORY PROJECT

Wednesday, May 17 • 4pm
Inaugural event and reception
at the Alameda Free Library •
Doors open at 3pm

alamedaJAhistory.wordpress.com

photo: “Patriotism on Roller Skates” by Takuritsu Morita

(ALAMEDA, CA) At the turn of the century when Japanese immigrants arrived at the island community of Alameda, California, they built a thriving Japantown along lower Park Street, bustling with bath houses, a sewing school, bicycle shops, a photo studio, and centers of worship, both Methodist and Buddhist. These immigrants worked as gardeners and houseboys, dry cleaners and cooks. Their children, born in the 1910-30s, were Americans, overflowing with hope for the future. Japanese Americans of this era wore

their patriotism proudly – whether on roller skates or baseball diamonds. But in 1941, when war broke out between the United States and Japan, the trajectory of this community changed overnight. By May 1942, everyone of Japanese descent was evacuated from Alameda and its Japantown vanished. Now, eighty years later, a new exhibit, **“Overflowing with Hope: The Hidden History Japanese Americans in Alameda,”** documents the wartime removal of one marginalized community, through images, testimonies, artifacts and long hidden stories. The exhibit opens at the Alameda Free Library with a **program and reception on May 17, 2023 at 4 PM in the Stafford Community Meeting Room, 1550 Oak Street, Alameda.** Doors will open at 3 PM for viewing. The exhibit continues through July 15, 2023. Free tickets are [available here](#) and at the door.



CAPTION: A Japanese American player for the Alameda Taiiku Kai reaches for the base in this posed photograph taken at their field adjacent to McKinley Park, Alameda, CA, circa 1916-1920.

The exhibit at the Alameda Free Library is just one part of a three-year initiative, the [Alameda Japanese American History Project](#), funded by the National Parks Service’s [Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant program](#) to research, document, preserve, and conduct oral histories with the Japanese Americans of Alameda who lived through the era of evacuation, incarceration and post-war return. On February 2, 1942, Alameda,

with its Naval Air Station, was classified as a Zone A Restricted Area— and all “Axis Aliens” were forcibly removed from Alameda within just three weeks. Thus, the *Issei* non-US citizens of Alameda became the first Californians removed from their homes under Executive Order 9066. “By examining the churches, the sports teams, and the pioneering businesses of one island community, we hope to shine a light on the long-term impact of the incarceration of Japanese Americans across religious, social and generational divides,” explained Jane Chisaki, Director of the Alameda Free Library. “You can’t understand Alameda’s history without knowing the story of this marginalized community.”

“Today, the Alamedans who experienced the incarceration are almost gone. Five of the people we interviewed passed away during our research,” said Jo Takata, long-time historian of the Alameda Japanese American community. “Their home movies, documents, and photos were at great risk of being lost forever. This project will ensure they are preserved for future generations.”

The photos, videos, audio, and texts from this project will be archived in the [Densho Digital Repository](#) and the [Internet Archive](#). Research from this project will result in new articles in the [Densho Encyclopedia](#). We invite learners of all ages to experience these primary source documents and first-person testimonies never before available to the public or online.



Self-portrait by professional photographer Mataichi Ozeki, standing in front of the flags of his new home and birthplace, circa 1907-1910.

The [Alameda Japanese American History Project](#) is a partnership between the [Alameda Free Library](#), [Buena Vista United Methodist Church](#), the [Buddhist Temple of Alameda, Densho](#), the [Internet Archive](#), and [Rhythmix Cultural Works](#). For more information, please contact **Brad Shirakawa, Project Director, at bshirakawa@hotmail.com.**

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PHOTOS & ARTWORK AVAILABLE TO THE PRESS [HERE](#):

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