

## Three Readings about Shogo Myaida from the Web

### 1. A Trunk Full of Stories: The Shogo Myaida Collection, by [Japanese American National Museum](https://discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2015/1/19/shogo-myaida-collection/), 19 Jan 2015 <https://discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2015/1/19/shogo-myaida-collection/>

In 1990, two years before the Japanese American National Museum opened to the public, curator Brian Niiya looked through a shabby old trunk in Albertson, New York. An elderly Japanese American gentleman and his wife had recently died. Neighbor and family friend Gloria Massimo had preserved the trunk full of letters, papers, class notes, printed materials about landscaping, and thousands of photographs. Urged by Museum charter member Lily Kiyasu, who had met and interviewed Shogo Myaida and his wife Grace, Ms. Massimo contacted the Museum's collection department and eventually donated the trunk full of history to us.



Collection manager Grace Murakami and archivist and National Resource Center manager Debbie Henderson, tell how this large collection became accessible to researchers and scholars. Student intern Gary Colminar spent the summer of 1997 sorting through, inventorying, and cataloguing every item in the collection. A fascinating story emerged.

Shogo Maeda was already a well educated landscape architect and world traveler by the time he landed in New York in 1922. He was 25 years old, the son of a wealthy Japanese family—his father was a member of Parliament—and for the first time in his life was faced with making a living. He decided to stay in the United States since he was absorbed by the new architecture he saw all around him. At first he lived in a Japanese church rooming house with 15 or 20 other Japanese, whom he “didn’t like at all,” he remembered in a 1988 oral history interview. He considered himself to be very different from the others, who were sons of Japanese farmers and worked as domestic servants. “I got out as soon as I could get out,” he remembered, and indeed, for the rest of his life he seldom associated with other Japanese or Japanese Americans. He corresponded only occasionally with his family and never again visited Japan.

Myaida (who changed the spelling of his name so that Americans would be more likely to pronounce it correctly) considered that American culture had changed him to the point that he would not be accepted in Japan—“Japanese people were afraid of me because I come straight out...anything I wanted to say,” he recalled. “Japanese is different, hesitating and bowing and even talk doesn’t come...straight out.”

His mother, a writer and poet, also urged him to stay in the United States. He remembered her telling him that, as long as he was interested in what he was doing, he should stay to learn from American young people “to work and make living themselves, not like Japanese kids (who) just live on family wealth.”

Myaida began his career working in an architectural firm in New York and soon began to build a network of influential people who were able to help him to find bigger and better jobs. A friend at the New York Botanical Garden helped him to get a job rehabilitating the grounds of a girls college in Georgia. Later, he went to Florida and

worked for several well known architects in Palm Beach, where he first met Marjorie Merriweather Post, the cereal heiress, whose magnificent homes in Palm Beach and Washington D.C. were legendary. Myaida went back to Long Island in 1926 where he worked for a large landscape contractor, creating and improving many private gardens.



Collection of  
Shogo Myaida.  
Courtesy of Gloria  
Massimo,  
Japanese  
American  
National Museum  
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During the Great Depression he scraped by, gardening and, in the winter, selling manure for mulch and sharing rent and food with fellow workers. "For many days," he remembered, "we had rice and a big iron pot full of split pea soup on a big old coal stove in the kitchen."

In 1938, recovered from the depression years, he supervised the landscape design for the New York World's Fair Japanese Garden and was in charge of its maintenance during the run of the fair. He married his young American secretary and bookkeeper in 1941, "and shortly after Japanese started to fight with America. We had quite a time. The FBI came over and check all my house and everything I had and they said that as long as I stayed in Albertson (New York) I do not need to go to Ellis Island." He found jobs working in greenhouses during the war, and "then when the war was over, and get freer so I started designing gardens all around again."

In 1952, Myaida read in a newspaper that Japanese-born people could become American citizens, and he applied for and received American citizenship. Shortly afterward Mrs. Post's landscape architect contacted him about doing a Japanese garden at Hillwood, Mrs. Post's 25 acre estate in Washington D.C. Myaida modestly remembered that the garden was "quite good," and then added, "supposed to be one of the best on the East Coast." Today the estate is a museum and garden, open to the public, and Myaida's beautiful garden is in the process of restoration.

Myaida retired in 1972, and in 1988 described his "happy, harmonious marriage with an American girl" as one of his life's achievements. "We went through hardships, but we had happy days all through the last 47 years." Grace Myaida died in March, 1989. Shogo Joseph Myaida followed her a few months later in May, 1989.

*\*Much of information in this article, and all of the direct quotes, are from the transcript of an interview conducted with Shogo Myaida on July 10, 1988 by Dorothy Rony, New York Chinatown History Project; Lorie Kitazano, Queens college, Asian History Studies; and Lily Y. Kiyasu, Garden City, New York.*

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## II. THE GARDEN

A splendid example of Japanese gardening technique is the garden surrounding the Japanese Pavilion. Designed by Dr. Tsuyoshi Tamura and Mr. Nagao Sakurai, two of Japan's foremost gardening authorities, the garden represents a classical type of landscaping popular in Nipponese court circles during and after the Tenth Century.

Small hills, a waterfall, a stream, a pond and a flat open space constitute the characteristic features of a garden of this type. Rocks and trees are sparingly used and sketch, with epigrammatic economy, the miniature of a countryside.

The garden, framing the red, white and gold splendor of the shrine-like pavilion, is an interpretive representation of the mountains, forests, lowlands and streams in the vicinity of the Grand Shrine of Ise. Within the space of a few hundred feet, the visitor can follow the entire course of a river, tracing it from its mountain source, through swamp lands and flood areas, and finally to its end in a nobleman's lake garden.

The mountain region, as represented by a grouping of red and green boulders, is constructed from stones shipped to the World's Fair from Mount Chichibu, scene of sacred pilgrimages in Japan. Oddly colored and characteristic of the Japanese countryside, the stones lend a necessary touch of

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Brochure for New York's World Fair 1939 is among the treasures in the trunk. Shogo Myaida supervised the design of the Japanese Garden. Collection of Shogo Myaida. Courtesy of Gloria Massimo, Japanese American National Museum [97.77.12A]

## 2. Biographical Information and Scope of the Collection from the Shogo Myaida Papers at the Japanese American National Museum

[https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt9n39s11w/entire\\_text/](https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt9n39s11w/entire_text/)

### Biographical Note

Between 1885 and 1924, approximately 200,000 Japanese traveled to Hawaii and 180,000 to the United States mainland. They were predominantly young men, were well educated (with an average of eight years of schooling), and had a high literacy rate. Mostly coming from the farming class, many of this generation of Japanese immigrants, known as the "First Wave" came to the United States with more financial resources than European immigrants. (Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore* (New York: Penguin, 1989), pp.45-46.) It is in this first group of Japanese immigrants that Shogo Joseph Myaida belongs. However, while many of the first Japanese immigrants came from the agricultural fields of Japan, Myaida's background differs from many of the Japanese of the "First Wave".

Born on June 25, 1897 in Takamatsu, Japan, Shogo Joseph Myaida (originally spelled Maeda; he adopted a spelling change to accommodate the pronunciation difficulties of many Americans) and his family belonged to the Japanese aristocracy. Myaida's father, who died early in his life, was a member of the Japanese parliament. His mother was a poet and a writer who also wrote speeches for her husband. At the age of fifteen, Myaida was the only one among his brothers and sisters to be baptized in the Christian tradition. Hence, he received the Christian name Joseph. In 1922, after taking part in a class tour of Europe, Myaida immigrated to the United States where he pursued a career in landscape design and architecture.

Because of his family's aristocratic background, Myaida met numerous affluent and influential individuals who provided him with employment and opportunities to work on major projects and estates. In 1941, Myaida married his personal secretary, Grace. During World War II instead of being forcibly removed to Ellis Island, Myaida was forced to remain in Albertson, New York. In Albertson, Myaida worked in many places, including a nursery called The Garden Clinic where he gave lectures on flower arranging. In March 1954, Myaida received United States citizenship. Shogo Myaida retired in 1972 and lived with his wife in Hendersonville, North Carolina. Grace died on March 26, 1989 and two months later Shogo Myaida passed away.

### Chronology of Education and Professional Experience:

- 1914-1918 Attended Horticulture College at Imperial University in Tokyo, Japan
- 1918 Graduated from Horticulture College
- 1916-1920 Attended Tokyo College of Fine Arts, Department of Agriculture
- 1920 Graduated from Tokyo College of Fine Arts
- 1918-1920 Appointed Assistant Instructor and Librarian at Tokyo College of Fine Arts, Department of Education
- 1922 Joined a summer study group organized by Professor Philip H. Elwood of Ohio State College. The group visited historic gardens located in England, France, and Italy.
- 1923 Brooklyn Botanical Garden, Brooklyn, New York -- Designed and supervised the improvement of the Japanese garden
- 1923-1924 Brenau College, Gainesville, Georgia -- Designed and supervised the improvement of the campus and developed a Japanese-style summer camp, Camp Takeda
- 1925-1928 Addison Meisner, Architect, Palm Beach, Florida -- Architectural designing and drafting for the Everglades Country Club, Singer Building, and the Boca Raton Country Club
- 1925-1928 Marion Wyeth, Architect, Palm Beach, Florida -- Architectural designing and drafting for the J.P. Donahue residence
- 1925-1928 Oliver J. Vinour and William Gonjost, Architects, Palm Beach, Florida -- Architectural drawing and drafting for the Palm Beach Hotel and municipal buildings



- 1925-1928 Sheffield Arnold, Landscape Architect, Palm Beach, Florida and New York, New York -- Landscape design for the National Hotel, Cuba and the Edward Stotesbury Estate, Palm Beach, Florida
- 1929-1930 Lewis and Valentine Landscape Construction Company, Palm Beach, Florida; Long Island, New York; Connecticut; Pennsylvania; and New Jersey -- Landscape designing and supervision of Palm Beach, New Jersey, and Long Island estates
- 1931-1958 Private professional practice of landscape architecture
- 1938-1939 Commissioned by the Japanese government to supervise construction of the Japanese garden for the New York World's Fair
- 1949-1950 Andrew Fritz, Architect, Rockville Center, New York -- Architectural designing, drafting and landscape designing for apartment buildings, residences, schools
- 1951-1953 Levitt and Sons, Architects, Long Island, New York and Pennsylvania -- Planning Department for new Levittown, Pennsylvania
- 1954-1958 Julius Fishkind, Architect, Benjamin Levinson, Architect, Samuel Paul, Architect, Jamaica, New York -- Architectural designing, drafting and landscape designing for apartment buildings, residences, schools and shopping centers
- 1956-1958 Mary Briggs Burke, Centre Island, Long Island, New York -- Designed bog-land Japanese garden
- 1957 Hillwood Gardens, Washington, D.C. Estate of Marjorie Merriweather Post -- Designed a traditional Japanese garden with waterfalls, pools, bridges and garden gates
- 1972 Retired

### **Scope of Collection**

This collection provides an insight into the personal and professional life of Shogo Myaida as a "First Wave" Japanese immigrant. Given the contemporary dominant ethos toward Japanese and ethnic groups, Myaida's experiences in the United States as a result of his family's privileged status in Japan provide some contrast to the life experiences of many Japanese immigrants who suffered harsh social and economic conditions in the United States. However, despite his elevated social and economic background, Myaida still suffered from discriminatory United States policies, as evident in his confinement to Albertson, New York during World War II. The Shogo Myaida Collection provides a valuable insight into a segment of Japanese immigrant history in the United States.

### 3. Biographical Information from the Archives of Landscape Architect Shogo Myaida at Long Island University

[https://liu.cwp.libguides.com/archives\\_and\\_special\\_collections/shogo\\_myaida](https://liu.cwp.libguides.com/archives_and_special_collections/shogo_myaida)

Shogo J. Myaida was born into an aristocratic family in Japan at the close of the 19th century. By the age of twenty-two, he had a diverse education in architecture, horticulture, forestry, engineering and art. Myaida helped the Imperial University in Tokyo establish one of Japan's first Landscape Studies program. He also had the opportunity to travel and to tour European gardens where he learned other landscape and horticultural traditions.

During the mid-1920's, Mr. Myaida settled in America and began to design gardens. He used both Asian and European design styles for his gardens during the 1920's and 1930's, including two Japanese style gardens for the Nippon Pavilion at the World's Fair in Flushing Meadows, New York in 1939. However, with hostility increasing between the United States and Japan during the 1940's, and the aftermath of the Second World War, Shogo Myaida encountered both professional and personal discrimination due to his Japanese heritage. Finally, in the late 1950's, Mr. Myaida was able to re-establish his clientele as Japanese art and gardens were once again gaining popularity.

During his career, Mr. Myaida was able to successfully blend elements of American and Asian gardening traditions with an understanding of the differences between the two cultures. He accepted that a traditional Japanese garden in America would cease to be authentic after several years of American maintenance. Therefore, he sought to create a Japanese-American inspired garden that suited the personality of the individual for whom he created the garden.

Shogo Myaida and his wife Grace were longtime residents of Albertson, NY. He retired from his professional landscape practice in 1972 and lived with his wife in North Carolina. He passed away on May 13, 1989. In addition to the priceless Shogo Myaida archives and original artworks found in Archives and Special Collections at LIU Post, many of his personal and professional papers, including photographs and landscape design sketches, are archived with the *Japanese American National Museum* in Los Angeles.

The former Washington, D.C. home of philanthropist Marjorie Merriweather Post, heiress of the Post cereal fortune, is now a museum. According to the Hillwood Museum's web site, Myaida's garden at Hillwood is one of the last remaining examples of gardens influenced by the reintroduction of the Japanese culture to America during the 1950s. Shogo J. Myaida was a garden designer who became a naturalized U.S. citizen in the 1920s during the first wave of Japanese cultural influence in North America. Myaida was known for a style of garden design that married the best of American pragmatism and Japanese aesthetics.

Myaida's goal was not to mimic a garden in Japan, but rather to create a 'Japanese-influenced' garden that also fulfilled the requirements requested by the owner. Myaida carefully blends Japanese-American influences in the layout of the Hillwood garden.









