



Richmond Museum of History, Seaver Gallery. September, 2010.



Exhibition
“One Small Story
from
Richmond’s Hidden History:
Japanese American Nurseries”

(from Museum, Sakai, Oishi and Maida Archives)



Richmond Museum of History

Museum hours: Wednesday thru Sunday, 1-4 p.m.
Monday and Tuesday, closed

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September 12 - October 24, 2010

Richmond Museum of History, Seaver Gallery.

All events supported by a grant from the Clarabelle Hamilton Fund,
Members and Friends of the Museum.

This exhibit, One Small Story, is a visual presentation of Richmond's story of the cut flower industry owned and operated by Japanese American families for over 100 years. As early as 1906



Early photo of Richmond greenhouses, pre-war.
RMH Collection. Courtesy of Oishi family.

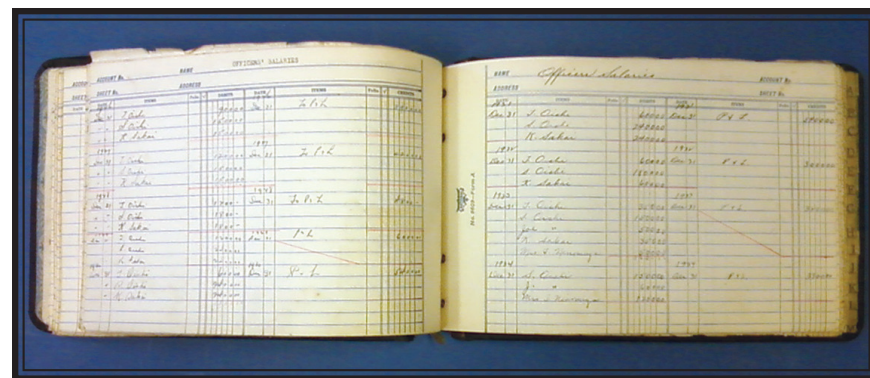
Issei (first generation) Japanese established nurseries close to Richmond's tracks and the Bay, planting and tending a variety of flowers including roses and carnations. With the passage of the 1913 Alien Land Law, Asians were no longer able to secure property, preventing many families from establishing independent flower nurseries. Cooperative arrangements along the Japanese American flower growers supported the establishment of additional nurseries.

Some of the nurseries were recognized for their exceptional work and several growers assumed leadership roles in the world of cut flower professionals.

Macdonald Ave. & 6th St., Richmond.
Aerial view east, ca. 1913.
RMH Collection.



With the 1942 Internment order, all of the Japanese American families of Richmond had to leave their businesses and homes. Some were fortunate in providing for the continuation of their flower nurseries for the duration of the war and returned to the greenhouses and plants they had left behind at war's end, but many never resumed their work in the industry. One hundred years after the founding of the first nursery, the gardens ceased operation and the site of many nurseries has since been marked for redevelopment. Glass and wooden structures that had been constructed in the early days of the cut flower business, most in disrepair, remain today as unoccupied reminders of a viable community of Japanese American growers.



Book of Accounting.
Used from 1922-1940, this book contains a list of the Sakai-Oishi Nurseries' sales and expenses. It includes the cost of labor, fertilizer, insecticide, fuel oil, insurance, taxes, rent, and electric power. The book also includes the company's account balance and annual surpluses.
RMH Collection.

This exhibit is a unique presentation of objects neither comprehensive in historical scope nor inclusive with respect to all the families engaged in the flower business, but they do inform the viewer about three important families: Sakai, Oishi, and Maida. These objects, now the property of the Richmond Museum of History, have never been displayed or seen before in a public forum. They offer compelling insights into the lives of these families and their businesses. They tell of their personal endurance during a time of stress, and of the rich diversity this population afforded our cultural heritage and economic strength in Richmond's growing economy.