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## NEWS RELEASE

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### Oregon Historical Society Awarded IMLS Grant Funding to Process Yasui Brothers Records

**Portland, OR — May 5, 2022** — The Oregon Historical Society (OHS) has been awarded a LSTA Competitive Grant to process and make publicly accessible the Yasui Brothers records, a large manuscript collection preserved in OHS's research library. This project was made possible in part by the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) through the Library Services and Technology Act, administered by the State Library of Oregon.

Dating primarily from 1905–1942, the collection consists of over 180 linear feet of business and personal materials, over half of which is written in a pre-WWII Japanese language script that is difficult to translate. Homer Yasui donated these records to OHS in 1991, yet due to its size and the language barriers present in the collection, it has never been fully processed.

The records document the experiences and contributions of businessman and noted community leader Masuo Yasui, Homer Yasui's father, and his family of first- and second-generation Japanese immigrants who lived in Hood River, Oregon, during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Masuo Yasui operated the Yasui Brothers' Store with his brother, Renichi Fujimoto, for more than thirty years before they were forced to close it permanently following President Franklin D. Roosevelt's signing of Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, which allowed the U.S. Army to forcibly remove all Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans from the West Coast and incarcerate them in camps. In Oregon, 3,714 people of Japanese descent were rounded up and sent to the Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming, the Minidoka Relocation Center in Idaho, and the Tule Lake War Relocation Center in northern California.

The Yasui Brothers records document the brothers' business activities and extensive support of their local community and offer a glimpse of what was destroyed by Japanese incarceration during World War II. The Yasui family story has been explored extensively in books and documentary films, particularly the story of one of Masuo's sons, Minoru Yasui, a prominent Oregon civil rights attorney and activist, who was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015 posthumously for challenging the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. He is the first Oregonian to receive the Medal,

and in 2016, March 28 was named Minoru Yasui Day in Oregon in recognition for his leadership in civil and human rights.

“OHS is grateful to the State Library of Oregon, the IMLS, and its grant partner organizations for supporting its efforts to highlight Japanese American history through these primary source documents,” said OHS Collections Management Librarian Dana Miller. “The availability of such a large collection of records of a Japanese business and its founding family will bring much needed representation of Japanese and Japanese Americans into Oregon’s historical record.”

Grant funds will support extensible processing of this collection, which includes the hiring of a professional archivist for the duration of the project (July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023) and the engagement of contract translators to appropriately arrange and describe the bulk of the several thousand records in this collection, perform selective digitization and translation of pre-WWII Japanese language text, and rehouse documents for preservation. This work will make the collection discoverable to anyone with internet access and will help researchers better understand its contents and place in the broader history of the Japanese American community of Oregon. Researchers can also access a collection of objects that Homer Yasui donated to OHS’s museum collection, which have been cataloged and can be [viewed online through the OHS Museum Collection Portal](#).

OHS is grateful for its partnership with the [Japanese American Museum of Oregon](#) (JAMO) who has helped OHS foster important connections with the Japanese American community and locate expert translation consultants to interpret the collection. OHS is also partnering with JAMO and the [History Museum of Hood River County](#) (HMHRC) to co-host a public program on the historical context behind the collection, which is scheduled to take place in Hood River, Oregon, in spring 2023.

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## About the Oregon Historical Society

For more than a century, the Oregon Historical Society has served as the state’s collective memory, preserving a vast collection of artifacts, photographs, maps, manuscript materials, books, films, and oral histories. Our research library, museum, digital platforms & website ([www.ohs.org](http://www.ohs.org)), educational programming, and historical journal make Oregon’s history open and accessible to all. We exist because history is powerful, and because a history as deep and rich as Oregon’s cannot be contained within a single story or point of view.