



# TOPAZ TIMES

## THE CITY

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Ann Tamaki Dion



Barbara Hedani-Morishita



Chris Hirano



Dean Hirabayashi



Dick Hirayama



Kay Yatabe



Roger Roper



Joy Iwasa and her grandmother Yae Wada.

Not pictured: Dianne Fukami and Kenzie Hirai

## Board Welcomes New Directors

The Topaz Museum Board is proud to welcome eight new board members and two ex-officio members; eight are Topaz descendants. The new directors are Ann Tamaki Dion, Dianne Fukami, Barbara Hedani-Morishita, Dean Hirabayashi, Kenzie Hirai (ex-officio), Chris Hirano, Dick Hirayama, Joy Iwasa, Kay Yatabe (ex-officio), and Roger Roper.

The new cohort joins existing Topaz Museum Board members: Scott Bassett, Jane Beckwith, Kiley Chase, Lorelei Draper, Hoggan Nelson, Hisashi Sugaya, and Patricia Wakida.

Board President Patricia Wakida said, "We are excited to welcome a dynamic group of new directors to the Topaz Museum Board to take the Museum to the next level of growth

and sustainability and continue our nationally recognized work of protecting and preserving Topaz, its artifacts, and stories of the unjust mass incarceration of over 125,000 Japanese Americans during WWII."

For biographies of the new members, please visit the Topaz Museum website at [www.topazmuseum.org](http://www.topazmuseum.org).



# Wakasa 80th Memorial Weekend

Nearly 200 people gathered in Salt Lake City and Delta to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the tragic killing of James Hatsuaki Wakasa, shot to death by a military sentry while incarcerated at Topaz.

The weekend events, coordinated jointly by the Topaz Museum Board and the Wakasa Memorial Committee, began Friday evening at the Salt Lake Buddhist Temple, featuring a report on the Wakasa Monument and a presentation by Nancy Ukai, who shared her recent journey to Japan to find out more about Mr. Wakasa before he immigrated to the U.S.

On Saturday, in a moving

and powerful ceremony, the group gathered at the Topaz site where he was killed. There were blessings



People met on Block 36 of the Topaz site and walked to the ceremony held where James Hatsuaki Wakasa died.

from representatives from the Native American Paiute community, Japanese American clergy, and paper flower

offerings for Mr. Wakasa. The weekend event concluded with a ceremony at the Topaz Museum, where participants offered origami cranes during a procession past the Wakasa Monument while listening to the names of all the people who had died during their incarceration at Topaz.

NHK World produced an in-depth story about the memorial service and Mr. Wakasa's impact today, which can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2o04e-NcBs>

## We will carry the memory of the day we visited

by Ellen Kitagawa Shapiro

My husband, daughter, and I spent a hot July day experiencing the Topaz Museum and Historic Camp Site, guided by Jane Beckwith, its founder. Her hometown became one destination in the government sanctioned WWII forceful relocation of 125,300 Japanese Americans.

My parents and their families were among those imprisoned. Within the Museum's sensitively curated exhib-

its and descriptive history, we found a picture of my dad, Arthur Saburo Kitagaki, dated 5/5/43, when he was allowed to enlist in the US Army. We walked into a 20' x 20' recreated barracks meant for four and experienced the individuals' poignant attempts to personalize and claim their limited space. Behind the Museum, we went into the "recreation hall" where the imprisoned undoubtedly sought to escape their situation.

The nearby barren Historic Camp

Site shocked us as we envisioned the thousands of lives subject to indignities of mass incarceration, compliantly existing in housing grossly inadequate for the extremes of temperature and dust storms of their desert location. Remnants of everyday life, implements and nails littering the parched dirt, gave stark voice to the reality of

a wrongly imprisonment on an innocent population of 11,000 who were forced to live in an area comprising one square mile.

We will carry the memory of the day we visited, 7/1/23, forever.



Medals earned by Arthur Saburo Kitagaki while fighting in Europe.



Ellen Kitagawa Shapiro's father fought in the "442" in Europe. She donated his medals to the Museum along with photos and newspaper articles.



# New art installed at Topaz Museum

The collection of artworks donated to the Topaz Museum continues to grow. Very few of the pieces have ever been displayed in public. Several new pieces by Matsusaburo Hibi hang in the gallery along with newly acquired art by Chiura

Obata, thanks to the Obata family.

Miné Okubo's collection includes about 40 pieces donated from various people. Her works will complement the exhibit coming to the UMFA in 2024.

When artwork is donated, it is

taken to a conservator for cleaning and reframing so the pieces are in the best possible condition.

Visitors who come to the art gallery are surprised by the variety and the intensity of the pieces on display.



This special painting, never seen before in public, was donated by Ellie, Tom and Christopher Mishima in honor of the Theodore Iida family.



Dan Harada was 19 when he painted the military compound at Topaz. In July 1943, he was taken to the WRA Isolation Center in Leupp, Arizona, and then to Tule Lake for speaking out about the Loyalty Questionnaire.

## 'Pictures of Belonging' at Utah Museum of Fine Arts

*Miki Hayakawa, Hisako Hibi, and Miné Okubo*

Next spring, a major exhibit of Issei artists Miki Hayakawa, Hisako Hibi, and Nisei artist Miné Okubo, will open at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts in Salt Lake City.

Curated by Dr. ShiPu Wang of the University of California, Merced, and commissioner of the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, "Pictures of Belonging" reveals a broader look at the American experience by presenting artwork and life stories



The Topaz Museum's art collection includes 40 paintings or sketches by Miné Okubo. This is one of a series of salmon-colored panels done by Okubo of Topaz.

of three trailblazing Japanese American women of the pre-World War II generation.

Both Hibi and Okubo were incarcerated at Topaz during WWII, along with Hayakawa's parents. The exhibit will travel extensively from 2024 to 2027.

Friends of Topaz Museum are planning a two-day pilgrimage on May 2-4, 2024 when visitors can see the exhibit, followed by a day trip to Topaz. More details to come soon.

### Exhibition dates and places:

February 24 through June 30, 2024

Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City

November 15, 2024 through August 17, 2025

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

October 2, 2025 through January 4, 2026

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia

February 5 through April 19, 2026

Monterey Museum of Art, California

July 4, 2026 through January 3, 2027

Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles



# Annie Onishi's visit to see her grandfather's hot plate

by Annie Onishi

I had no idea my parents had a treasure trove of priceless historical artifacts in their basement. I am so glad my dad, H. Russell Onishi, reached out to the Topaz Museum to find a home for the hot plate my grandfather, Masato Onishi, made while he was imprisoned. I think the hot plate symbolizes so much - how much was taken away from them, like the simple pleasure of cooking a meal



for their family; but it also symbolizes how resilient, strong, and clever they were.

I hope our hot plate can help the Topaz Museum continue to preserve and share these stories for future generations. Japanese internment was a dark, dark period in our country's history. But the things they created, cherished, and saved are how we can tell the whole story. Someday I'll bring

my daughter, Louise, back to Delta and to that giant patch of sand in the middle of the Utah desert, so she can see where she comes from. I hope she finds as much meaning in that hot plate as I do.

I support the Topaz Museum



Russell Onishi was born in Topaz. He donated a two-burner hot plate that his father made in Topaz. His dad said they were so popular that he started a cottage industry while in camp. No one knows how he folded the metal. He probably ordered the components from mail order catalogs.

to honor the legacy of my dad, my grandparents, and all of the other Japanese American patriots who survived internment, and for those who did not.



Tsuki Judy Takaha Peterson (left in center) lived with her family in Half Moon Bay prior to the war. Judy has supported the museum from its beginning, and with other siblings has donated artifacts and photos of several brothers who signed up for the military. She brought her family to Delta in June. Tsuki (right) and her family traveled to the site and visited Block 30 where the large family had three rooms.

Steven Doi has been a good friend of the Topaz Museum, and in July he came with Lynne Oshita Doi and Juddy Doi to donate several artifacts. Pieces of wood (far right) shaped and polished at Topaz are now on display in the lobby. Lynne donated her mother's koto, another family member's shakuhachi, and a shamisen.



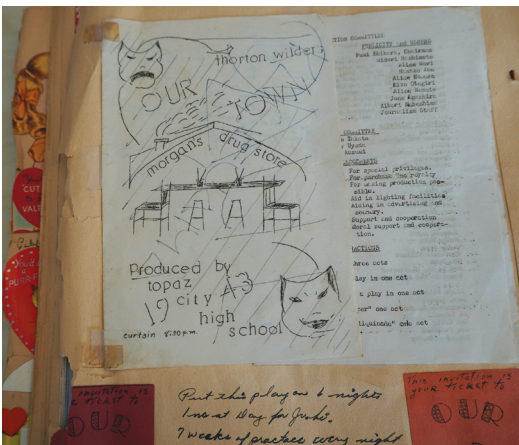




Lynne Oshita Doi points to her mother's inscription on the Capital Campaign wall. Grace Oshita was about 17 when she was in Topaz. She was a founding member of the Topaz Museum board.



The Laudie family brought 20 people to the Museum in July, typical of the visitors we receive all year.



Ruth Naruo was just 16 when she was in Topaz. Her daughter, Beverly Saito, donated her scrapbook. One of the treasures was the program for the production of "Our Town" put on by Topaz High School students. Ruth was the student director for the play.



In 2015, Wendy Maruyama's art installation consisted of ten Tag Projects that represented all the people who were forced into ten camps. She recently gave the Topaz Museum the Topaz portion of her installation. The Museum had a vitrine built to house the impressive piece, and it is hanging in the art gallery. We are very grateful to the artist, Wendy Maruyama's generosity.

Ruth Koide Ichinaga and her son, Steve, and other family members visited the Museum in June. The Koide family lived on Block 28-11-E. Unfortunately, the history on that block was destroyed when someone put a house on the mess hall foundation in 1993.



Sara Watkins in the center of the photo is a graduate student at Utah State University. She has received a grant for an installation she is doing about Topaz for the USU Library. She was accompanied to the Museum by Molly Cannon on the left, ED of the Museum of Anthropology, and Sue Grayzel on the right, a professor of history. The Museum will also be working with USU to digitize a collection of letters that were donated several years ago.



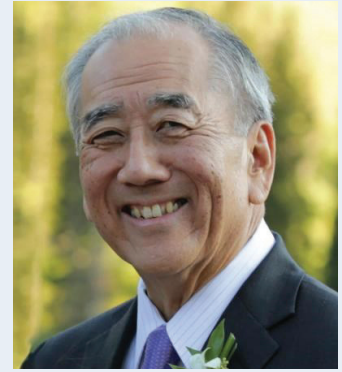
Rod Tatsuno and his family have donated several artifacts to the Museum. His father, Dave Tatsuno, had a movie camera at Topaz, which has been on display at the Museum. Recently Rod and his wife, Monique, drove through Delta and left his grandfather's sheepskin coat to display.



## In remembrance of Rick Okabe

The Topaz Museum lost one of its champions in April. From the beginning of the Topaz Museum Board, Rick Okabe supported the work to build a museum and preserve the Topaz site. We are grateful for his devotion, his friendship, and his guidance. We will miss him deeply. A leader in the Japanese Ameri-

can community, Rick sought to educate and preserve the Japanese American experience. He worked tirelessly for over 25 years to help bring about the Topaz Museum in Delta, UT, a museum dedicated to preserving and educating the public about the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.



## Delta Chamber Names Scott Bassett Area Giant

Scott Bassett, Topaz Museum Board Secretary and Docent and Education Director, was selected as the 2023 Area Giant from the Delta City Chamber of Commerce for his continued contributions to the community, the educational system of Millard County, and leadership at the Topaz Museum.



Scott Bassett and his family accepts the Area Giant Award.

## Friends of the Topaz Museum 2023 public programs

After receiving a grant from the AJA Community Foundation, the Friends of the Topaz Museum launched their first program in May, with a discussion about Manzanar photographers in conjunction with Elizabeth Partridge and Lauren Tamaki's new picture book, *Seen and Unseen: What Dorothea Lange, Toyo Miyatake, and Ansel Adams' Photographs Reveal* about the Japanese American Incarceration.

The grant has supported a series of public programs curated by the FOTM at the J-Sei community center located in Emeryville, CA.

Two more programs will be held through October 2023. Check the FOTM website at [friendsoftopaz.org/](http://friendsoftopaz.org/) events for details.

All programs are both in-person and online and are free and open to the public but require registration.

So far five programs have been held including the Elizabeth Partridge program. *Stitching Paper: Quilting Japan and America*, an art exhibit; *Threads of Camp: Sewn from Japan to the United States*; and *Sashiko and Senninbari – Knot Doodles* workshops were presented by Lucy Arai.

Duncan Ryūken Williams presented a lecture on his project *Irei: National Monument for the WWII Japanese American Incarceration*.

Upcoming programs include a lecture on September 9 about *Haruko Obata: A Life of Flowers* by Kimi Hill, Obata's granddaughter.



Patricia Wakida, president of the Topaz Museum Board; Duncan Ryūken Williams, presenter; and Jane Yamashiro at the Friends of Topaz Museum program.

The final program in this series will be a presentation by Dr. ShiPu Wang, *Miné Okubo's Eyes: A Life in Color* on October 21.



# City of Hayward, California, Dedicates Japanese American Public Art Memorial

Honorees whose names appear on the sculpture or were born in camp and who were present at the event were Jane Yanagi Diamond, Mae Yanagi Ferral, Frank Koji Hashimoto, Satoshi Hibi, Aileen Yamashita Hisaoka, Kayoko Mochida Ikuma, Takeo Kato, Sumi Haramaki Lampert, Ibuki Hibi Lee, Toru Mochida, and Fred M. Shinoda, who acknowledged his fellow honorees by reading their names and asking them to wave or identify themselves. The sculpture can be visited year-round in the Hayward Heritage Plaza Park.

## Topaz Museum Docents Margo Holman and Patricia Schena

Patricia Schena was introduced to the Museum when she volunteered for a pilgrimage at the invitation of Scott Bassett, who at that time was the principal of the Delta Elementary School, where she worked. Like Margo, Patricia was a lifelong educator dedicating 30 years as a kindergarten teacher and seven years as a first-grade



teacher.

Patricia and Margo traveled to the Manzanar National Historic Site in California to attend the "Topaz Stories" presentation by Ruth Sasaki, on June 10, 2023. They spent the day on a tour by NPS Ranger Alisa Lynch with Topaz descendant Joe Yoshino and wife, Leona Lau.

**Your donations to the Topaz Museum are a powerful way of preserving Topaz and its stories and heritage.**





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# Numbers Tell the Story

We'd like to share a few statistics with you. Since the Topaz Museum opened its doors in 2015, we have had 53,665 visitors! Our peak annual number of visitors occurred in 2019 with 9,649 people touring the Delta, Utah facility. COVID 19 took a toll on our numbers for the following eighteen months, but it looks like in 2023 we will top 10,000 for the first time!

While visitation is a huge part of the Topaz narrative, it doesn't paint the entire picture. When "Topaz to the Classroom" numbers are added to museum visitation numbers, we have shared the Topaz story with over

71,343 people.

During 2022, we took Museum programs to 5,803 students throughout Utah and Nevada. "Topaz to the Classroom" numbers for 2023 currently stand at 5,257 and we have four school months to go!

Please help us grow these numbers by telling your friends and family about the Topaz Museum. Encourage them to visit the Museum and site where our twenty knowledgeable volunteer docents will give them an experience long to be remembered.

Museum hours are from 10 - 5 daily, except Sundays.

## Keep in touch

The Topaz Museum newsletter continues as a print version but also is shifting to an email format, which allows us to send you the news immediately and cut down our postage and printing expenses. Regardless of which version you prefer we would love to update your contact information and ask if you would kindly email your name, email address and phone number to:  
[topazalumscommittee@gmail.com](mailto:topazalumscommittee@gmail.com).

**Send a copy of this newsletter to your friends and family.  
You can find it on our website: [www.topazmuseum.org](http://www.topazmuseum.org)**