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The Japanese American Family Album (American Family Albums)

Dorothy Hoobler, Thomas Hoobler

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The first Japanese immigrants to the United States came to Hawaii to work on sugar plantations, quickly followed by others who came to mainland cities. Their images of America were formed by popular guidebooks with titles such as *Mysterious America* and *Come, Japanese!* that promised, "Gold, silver, and gems are scattered on [the] streets. If you can figure out a way of picking them up, you'll become rich instantly." The Japanese arrived with the hope of making a better life for themselves. Their experiences, however, were often far different from what they had expected.
The Japanese American Family Album documents the lives of generations of Japanese immigrants through their own diaries, letters, interviews, photographs, articles from newspapers and magazines, and personal reflections. This personal history tells us--in their own words--what it was like to leave the beloved homeland for a life as different from life at home as could be imagined. The *Issei*--members of the first generation of Japanese immigrants--faced racial prejudice and even laws that effectively stopped Japanese immigration from 1924 until 1965. By then there were well over 100,000 Japanese immigrants on the U.S. mainland who daily faced unfamiliar customs, terrible working conditions, and strong anti-Japanese sentiment. Even in the face of such adversity, Japanese Americans formed labor unions, successfully purchased land and built farms, and established flourishing communities in Los Angeles, Sacramento, Fresno, Portland, Seattle, Tacoma, and Salt Lake City, as well as the Hawaiian cities of Honolulu and Hilo. The very success of these farmers and other Japanese immigrants caused jealousy and fear, and the *Album* also tells of anti-Japanese groups, boycotts against Japanese shops and businesses, discriminatory laws, and even violence. With World War II came the nightmare of the concentration camps, and then the struggle to heal the many wounds caused by internment.
A strong sense of family, religion, and a resilient spirit allowed Japanese Americans to survive the prejudice in their new homeland. Profiles of noted Japanese Americans such as Daniel K. Inouye, Patsy Takemoto Mink, and astronaut Ellison S. Onizuka are testaments to the success the Japanese American community has achieved. The heartfelt words and remarkable family photos in *The Japanese American Family Album* tell a true American story that is an important part of our history.
Eighty-eight year old Osuke Takizawa, who emigrated to the U.S. as a young man, says in *The Japanese American Family Album*, "I believe children and grandchildren must know the way their grandparents walked." The precious stories and pictures of the Japanese Americans from our past and present show us the way.

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