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Collection Summary

Repository: Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries

Creator: Uriu, Shigeko, 1861-1928

Title: Shigeko Nagai Uriu Papers

**Inclusive
Dates:** 1878-1999

Quantity: 0.2 cubic feet (1 box)

Abstract: The collection includes correspondence, most of which is transcribed from the original letters; clippings and other published materials; photographs; and other miscellaneous documents related to the life of Shigeko Nagai Uriu.

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Biographical Note

Shigeko Nagai Uriu (1861-1928) came to the United States from Japan in 1872 with the Iwakura Mission, a group of diplomats, scholars and students sent abroad as political and cultural ambassadors. The mission included 5 young girls ranging in age from 6-14. Nagai, then ten years old, was placed with the family of the historian John S. C. Abbott in New Haven, Connecticut. She spent five years there, learning about American life and attending the local high school. In 1879, Nagai and Sutematsu Yamakawa (VC 1882), another young member of Iwakura Mission placed in New Haven, were accepted at Vassar College. Yamakawa (later Princess Oyama) went on to become the first Japanese woman to earn a college degree. Nagai did not earn a degree, but remained at Vassar for three years as a Special Student in music. She returned to New Haven during the summers, and while there was introduced to Baron Sotokichi Uriu, then a cadet at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. The two returned to Japan after he graduated in 1881 and were married in 1882, making her the Baroness Uriu. They had four sons and three daughters.

During a visit to the United States in 1909, the Baroness presented Vassar College with a silver and enamel bowl. The bowl had originally been given to her by the Emperor of Japan. When the Emperor heard of the Baroness's upcoming visit to Vassar, he gave permission for the Baroness to present the bowl to the College. The bowl is maintained within the College's collections.

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Scope and Content Note

The Shigeko Nagai Uriu Collection includes correspondence, most of which is transcribed from the original letters; published materials, photographs, and miscellaneous realia. The greatest portion of the collection are periodical articles and newspaper clippings covering the period 1882-1995, the bulk from 1909, the year that the Baroness and her husband revisited the United States.

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Access and Use

Access

This collection is open for research according to the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#) without any additional restrictions.

Restrictions on Use

Permission to quote (publish) from unpublished or previously published material must be obtained as described in the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#).

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Related Material

Related Materials

- [Caroline Furness Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.](#)
- [There are additional letters from the Shigeko Nagai Uriu to Alice Bacon in the Sutematsu Yamakawa Oyama Papers in the Vassar College Archives and Special Collection Library.](#)
- [Shige Nagai \(Shigeko Nagai Uriu\), Vassar College Alumnae/i Biographical Files \(AAVC\), Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.](#)

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Subject Headings

Names:

- Uriu, Sotokichi, Baron, 1857-1937

Organizations:

- Vassar College--Students

Subjects:

- Japanese students--United States
- Marriage--Japan
- Women college students--New York (State)--Poughkeepsie
- Women--Education

VCL Categories:

- East Asia, South Asia, and India
- Vassar College

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Encoding Information

Encoded by Elizabeth Clarke, June 2007. Updated by Emma Gronbeck, November 2025.

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Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Shigeko Nagai Uriu Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

Processing Information

Original processing date unknown. Guide last updated October 2008.

Acquisition Information

Gift of various donors.

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Container List

Series I. Correspondence

- Folder 1 Letter from Shigeko Nagai Uriu to Rev. James H. Ballagh, 1919 Mar 7 (copy made by Rev. James H. Ballagh)
- Folder 1 Letter from Rev. James H. Ballagh to Dr. William B. Hill, 1919 Mar 12
- Folder 1 Letter from Dr. William B. Hill to [Amy L.?] Reed, 1920 Mar 6
- Folder 1 Letter from Shigeko Nagai Uriu to Jessie Wheeler, 1928 Mar 30
- Folder 1 Letter from Jessie F. Wheeler to Elizabeth M. Howe, 1928 May (photocopy)
- Folder 1 Letter from [I. Isogaki?] (Uriu's great-nephew) to Mary R. Sanford, 1929 Jan 12 (photocopy)

Series II. Printed Material

- Folder 2 Article - Uriu, Shigeko Nagai, "Japan's Leading Women and the War," Harper's Bazar, Vol. 39, No. 1, p. 20-24, 1905 Jan
- Folder 2 Article - Uriu, Shigeko Nagai, "The Days of My Youth," The Japan Advertiser, Tokyo, 1927 Sep 11 (photocopy)
- Folder 3 Clippings and articles published about Shigeko Nagai Uriu, 1878-1995 (photocopies)
- Folder 4 Clippings about the Baron and Baroness Uriu's 1909 visit to the United States, 1909 (photocopies)

Series III. Miscellaneous Materials

- Folder 5 Japan Society of New York dinner invitation honoring Baron and Baroness Uriu, 1909 Jun 1
- Folder 6 Program of Eighth Soirée Musicale, Vassar College School of Music, 1879 (photocopy)
- Folder 7 Transcript of courses taken by Shigeko Nagai Uriu while attending Vassar College, 1878-1881 (photocopy)
- Folder 8 Family tree of Shigeko Nagai and Sotokichi Uriu prepared by her great-grandson, Kenichi Furumi, 1999 Oct

Series IV. Photographs

Folder 9 Shigeko Nagai Uriu while at Vassar, circa 1881 (4 photographs, 2 poses)

Folder 10 The silver and enamel bowl given to Vassar College by Baroness Uriu, 1909, 1999 (3 photographs)

Folder 11 Takeo Uriu and Kenichi Furumi (grandson and great-grandson of Shigeko Nagai Uriu) during a visit with their wives to Vassar College, 1999 Aug (5 photographs)

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