

*Buddhist Temple of Salinas
75th Anniversary Celebration*



感謝

*Sunday
November 14, 1999*

*14 California Street
Salinas, California*

HISTORY





First Altar of the Salinas Buddhist Temple, 1926

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Cover: Under the Wisteria Crest or "Safari fugi" is the Japanese characters "KANSHA" which means "gratitude or appreciation"



A

step into the past: 75 Years of History



The Beginning

By the late 1800's Salinas had become the sugar beet center of the United States. Many single Issei Japanese immigrants came to the Salinas area to work in the sugar beet fields as laborers. These young men came with the intention to save their money and return to Japan and enjoy a higher standard of living. But shortly after arriving in Salinas, they found it almost impossible to save money because their work was seasonal. To survive during the off seasons, they had to find other jobs to meet their basic needs.

As the years passed by, these men broke away from the labor pool, and became independent growers, share crop farmers, labor contractors or business people, to improve their wages and standard of living. It was during this period that the United States Government permitted picture bride marriages. This started the era of Japanese families in Salinas.

As the sugar beet industry declined in the Salinas area, and with the climate ideal to grow lettuce, strawberries and other vegetables, many Issei farmers moved into the Salinas area and became vegetable and strawberry growers. With the increase of Japanese families in the area, a place



Original Temple Building

was needed to raise their children with religious values, the Japanese culture and their Japanese heritage. With the majority of the Issei being of the Buddhist faith, the Buddhist Church became the center of the Japanese community with ministers coming from Kyoto Japan.

The Jodo Shinshu religion in the Salinas area began when Reverend Josho Ishiguro of Watsonville performed a Buddhist service at the home of Yasuku Enna, a strawberry grower who lived on the outskirts of Salinas. On March 9, 1924, the first steps were taken to officially organize the Buddhist Church of Salinas when a group of Issei men held a meeting at a temporary church located on 36 Sausal Street (later renamed Market Street) in Salinas. Reverend Raisho Surubashi of the

Watsonville Church presided over the group as they met to establish a permanent church. The first officers of the church were President Kihei Yamashita, Vice President Kyojiro Matsumune, Treasurer Dr. Sanji Oda and Auditor Hikobei Nakata.

On October 12, 1924, the



**Ground Breaking, Oct. 12, 1924
By Gomonshu
Geika Sonyu Ohtani**

AT A GLANCE

officers of the Church acquired three lots at 14 California Street as their permanent site for the Buddhist Church. *The honorable Gomonshu Geika Sonyu Ohtani* of Hongwanji, Kyoto, Japan, performed the ground-breaking ceremony. The construction of the building began in January 1926 and it was completed in the late spring of the same year. Six ministers presided over this new building dedication with an Ochigo parade, and many Japanese from the area attended the ceremony. The church was incorporated as the Buddhist Church of Salinas with the State of California. The first seven Nisei Board of Directors were: John Urabe, Takeo Yuki, Masato Shintaku, Mrs. Riji Oune, Yasuo Shirachi, Teichi Yoshioika and Masaru Oune. Reverend Hideo Shimakawa became the first minister, and the staff was soon augmented by Reverend Shokei Himeji to manage the increasing

activities of full church programs, along with the increased workload of branch churches in Monterey, Castroville and Chualar.

On the 5th anniversary of the temple, the construction of the Young Men's Buddhist Association (Y.M.B.A.) Hall was completed. During this era, there were few temples with a comparable multi-purpose hall. It was used for the Japanese Language School, tournaments, movies, stage plays and other activities. The hall became the center of Japanese interaction.

Mid & Pre-war Years

During the height of the depression in the 1930s, the church came under the leadership of Ichikuro Kondo, Kanichi Takahashi, Kihei Yamashita, Manki Abe,

February 1, 1921. Jodo Shinshu religion introduced to Salinas. Rev. Josho Ishiguro of Watsonville performed a Buddhist service at the home of Yasaku Enna

March 9, 1924. Meeting held at temporary church at 36 Sausal Street, now Market Street. First officers President Kihei Yamashita, Vice President Kiyojiro Matsumune, Treasurer Dr. Sinji Oda, Auditor Hikobei Nakata.

October 12, 1924. Group acquires initial three lots of the present church site of 14 California Street.

November 9, 1925. Ground breaking with Daika Sonyu Ohtani of the Hompa Honganji, Kyoto, Japan.

January 7, 1926. Construction begins on church site. The temple was completed in the spring of the same year.

June 1, 1926. The new church was incorporated as the Buddhist Church of Salinas. Seven Nisei members comprised the original Board of Directors since Issei could not serve due to provisions of past laws.

June 1926. The new building dedication held with six ministers presiding at the ceremony, many children participated in the Ochigo Parade.

July 1, 1926. Rev. Hideo Shimakawa was installed as the first minister of the Salinas Church. The staff was soon augmented by the following three ministers: Rev. Sengetsu Tsukamoto, Rev. Kenshi Iwao, Rev. Shokei Himeji.

September 1, 1926. Fujinkai, Sunday School, and Japanese Language School began during this period.

January 1928. Acquired the adjoining northeast lot of present church site. Construction of YBA Hall for classroom and recreational purposes.

December 4, 1929. On the 5th anniversary of the church, the construction of the YBA Hall was completed. The beginning of the Athletic clubs for men and women (Basketball, Baseball.) Teams competed with other churches in California. Programs included Kendo, Judo, and a special



First Board of Directors

Front row left to right: Ryusuke Tazumi, Kanichi Takahashi, Saburo Iwamoto, Kihei Yamashita, Ichikuro Kondo, Manki Abe. Second row left to right: Nasato Nakamura, Kyojiro Matsumune, Morimoto, Masuda, Hikobei Nakata.

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step into the past: 75 Years of History



The last 5 years of the 30's was a very busy period for the church. The Fujinkai, the Young Buddhist Association (YBA), Japanese School, Sunday school and other affiliated organizations were at the height of their activities, keeping the four ministers on a full schedule. They served Monterey, Castroville and Chualar with a weekly Sunday School Service and a monthly adult service. In addition to this heavy schedule, a minister traveled twice a week to Castroville and Chualar to teach Japanese. With the rapidly growing population, the ministers were unable to adequately teach all the Sunday school classes. Soon the YBA Nisei got involved and started teaching Sunday School to assist the ministers. While all this growth and activity was taking place, the teachers and students started an annual program called Ga-Ku-Ge-Kai to show their

parents and friends what they had learned and accomplished during the year. This was one of the largest functions ever attended during this time.

In 1940, to commemorate the 15th Anniversary of the church, the Najin (altar) was remodeled by the members and a dedication service was performed by Dr. Rakusho Hosui of Ryukoku University in Japan. After the 15th Anniversary celebration, Reverend Yoshihiro Tokuno and his family returned to Japan and Reverend Bunyu Fujimura became the head resident minister assisted by Reverend



**YBA parading the Bonsho through the area.
Largest bell imported into the United States at that time.**

Kyojiro Matsumune and Ryusuke Tazumi, and maintained activities with fund drives to meet various financial needs. It was a very difficult time for all the families, but the members struggled and kept the church active. In 1937, commemorating the 10th anniversary of the church, the bell tower was built to house the largest bell (Bonsho) of its kind imported to the United States from Japan. Renshi Shojo Ohtani of Hompa Hongwanji, Kyoto, Japan, officiated at the commemoration service, unveiled the bell and led the Ochigo parade through the area. The 10th anniversary program and the importation of the Bonsho created such a high interest from the public that Fox Movies of Hollywood came to Salinas and filmed the event for

their weekly show.

During the summer of July 1934, Reverend Yoshihiro Tokuno arrived from Japan to become our fifth resident minister along with Reverend Bunyu Fujimura and Reverend Hoshin Fujikado. A couple of years later, Reverend Koyo Tamanaha arrived and joined the other three ministers. During this period, Mr. John M. Kubota was hired as the Japanese School and Sunday School Teacher until he moved back to Reedley to manage his father's farm. Upon Mr. Kubota's departure, Mrs. Yoshio Matano assumed the position of Japanese School Teacher and taught classes in Salinas and Castroville.

Hoshin Fujikado and Reverend Koyo Tamanaha.

World War II

Immediately after the United States declared war with Japan, the FBI came and took the Ministers and the Issei Cabinet members to Bismark, North Dakota to be interned and interrogated. Soon after the Ministers and cabinet members were taken away, Executive Order 9066 executed by President F. D. Roosevelt quickly sent all Japanese and Japanese Americans into concentration camps in the interior of the United States. The majority of the people from Salinas and the surrounding area were sent to Poston II in Arizona for the duration of the war. Reverend Yoshio Iwanaga from the Watsonville Buddhist Temple was also sent to Poston, where he was able to establish a Buddhist Church at the camp. Attendance was heartening with people from Salinas and Watsonville attending the services. Reverend Bunyu Fujimura joined the group after his release from Bismark.

Executive Order 9066 closed the Buddhist Church of Salinas and all of its activities for the duration of the war. The Buddhist Church was notified by the Salinas City Council and the City Police to dismount the Bonsho from the bell tower. They were concerned that the church would use the bell to signal the Japanese military. The church complied with this order and completed the arduous task to lower the heavy bell into the cellar of the tower. Another issue was the Buddhist emblem (a reversed swastika) on the multipurpose building sign between the 19 and

29. This caused a ruckus; the public imagined that the Buddhist Church was connected with Nazi Germany. To deter possible vandalism and destruction to the building, the Buddhist emblem was covered with a piece of wood.



dhist emblem was covered with a piece of wood.

As the war neared its end, the U.S. government encouraged people to leave the camps hoping that they would go somewhere else besides the West Coast. Many did leave to start new lives in different parts of the United States. Reverend Fujimura left for Chicago to become the minister of the Chicago Buddhist Church. When the war finally ended, the government gave notice that people may return to their place of origin or any place they chose. The majority of the Issei and Nisei from Salinas moved elsewhere because the Salinas area was so highly discriminatory towards the Japanese. The people in power did not want the Japanese back in Salinas, since the Japanese had dominated the agricultural industry in Salinas before the war and a few families even owned homes and farms in the area. This caused a bleak situation for the Salinas Buddhist Church with only a handful of people returning.

The Salinas Buddhist Temple:

AT A GLANCE

chapter of the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 57. Japanese stage shows and movies were shown.

July 1932. Rev. Hideo Shimakawa returned to his temple in Japan after serving six years and overseeing a tremendous increase in activities for the church.

July 1934. Three new resident ministers were added to staff with additional workload created by branch churches in Castroville, Chualar, and Monterey with over 300 families. They were Rev. Yoshihiro Tokuno, Rev. Bunyu Fujimura, Rev. Hoshin Fujikado. A few years later, Rev. Koyo Tamanaha joined the staff.

July 1934. The Buddhist Church hired John Kubota of Reedley, to teach Sunday School and Japanese Language School. After several years he returned to Reedley. He was replaced by Mrs. Yoshio Matano.

October 1934. 10th Anniversary of the church. In commemoration, the bell tower was constructed, to support the largest bell (Bonsho) of its kind to be brought to America. Officiating at the commemoration service and unveiling the Bonsho was Renshi Shoji Ohtani of Hompa Hongwanji, Kyoto. This was followed by the Affirmation (Award of Buddhist Name) and the Anniversary Services performed by Abbott Ohtani for the congregation.

October 12, 1939. In preparation for the 15th anniversary of the church, the alter was remodeled by committee and church membership.

March 2, 1940. Dedication Service in observance of the remodeled church alter. Dr. Rakusho Hosui of Ryukoku University, Japan, was the main speaker.



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Post – World War II and Re-Integration

During the fall of 1945 and through the spring of 1946, the members who returned held several unofficial meetings with the Issei and Nisei leaders to discuss the reopening of the church. In the summer of 1946 on the advice of the Issei leaders, the church was officially re-opened with the responsibility of the future administration vested in the Nisei with the Issei serving in an advisory role.

The re-opening started with a letter of invitation extended to Reverend Bunyu Fujimura serving in Chicago, to again serve the Salinas Church. To his everlasting credit, he accepted the invitation, forsaking the security and comfort of his post in Chicago, and returned to Salinas. On August 23, 1946, the first post war meeting was held and Saburo Iwamoto was elected the first post-war Nisei president. At that time, the membership was only 26 families, a small percentage of the pre-war total. The church was still intact and the Y.M.B.A. Hall was still leased as a movie theater; however it was soon returned to church use. After years of neglect and abuse, the buildings needed repairs. Some of the repairs were done by the members. Saburo Iwamoto took it upon himself to spend many hours fixing and restoring the buildings to keep the church operating. Salinas was very fortunate to have such a skilled and unselfish person like Saburo Iwamoto, who spent many endless hours for the benefit of the church and its members. This was all during the period when everyone was having difficulty making a living, so church was not a high

" - EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066. . .SENT ALL JAPANESE AND JAPANESE AMERICANS INTO CONCENTRATION CAMPS."

Salinas Index-Journal

ESTABLISHED 1911 SALINAS, CALIFORNIA, MONDAY EVENING, MARCH 22, 1942 FIVE CENTS

MASS JAP EVACUATION STARTS

Auto Caravans Leave Coast Area For Inland Center

Military Police Accompany Enemy Aliens to District East of Sierra Nevada

LOS ANGELES (UP)— Large-scale evacuation of Japanese aliens and their American-born children from strategic Pacific coast military and industrial areas began Monday as a caravan of 350 automobiles and trucks left Pasadena for the army's new reception center east of the Sierra Nevada.

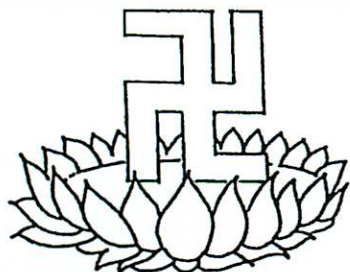
More than 600 aliens and American citizens of Japanese descent assembled before dawn at Pasadena's rose bowl, scene of the annual New Year's day football game in pre-war years. Leaders

Filipinos to Assist Farm



Evacuation of 120,000 Enemy Aliens From Coast to Begin Next Week

" -THE PUBLIC IMAGINED THAT THE BUDDHIST CHURCH WAS CONNECTED WITH NAZI GERMANY."



6 JAPANESE SPIES

SEIZED ON COAST

...ed quarters that the purposes of the society were "to inform the Japanese people of their national heritage and rights to dominate the world and further to conceive a counter movement to rectify any and all projects detrimental to Japan."

ABOVE: BUDDHIST SWASTIKA
RIGHT: NAZI PARTY SYMBOL



on, an organization of Buddhist priests and Japanese army officers so powerful that it even threatened Prince Konoye when that statesman was making peace overtures to this country in pre-war days.

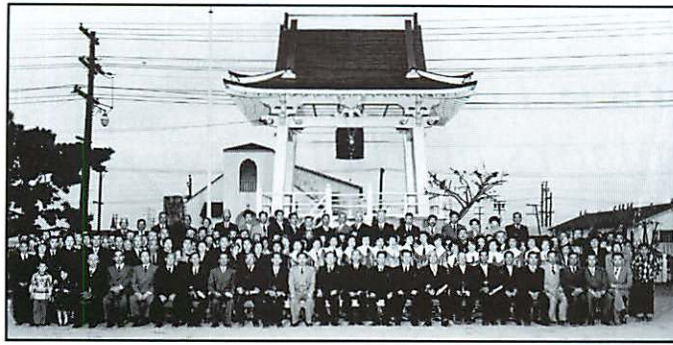
TEXT SOURCE: THE NEW YORK TIMES

AT A GLANCE

priority.

The church experienced two fires within a few years of reopening. The cause of the first fire was a faulty heating system in the Y.M.B.A. Hall, which resulted in extensive damage. The hall was restored with the skill and labor of the membership. During this period, Japanese could not purchase insurance since the Japanese were considered a high-risk target for hate crimes. The second fire was due to arson and resulted in a complete loss of the residential building. The area was turned into a parking lot and was also used for the annual Obon Festival.

On October 16, 1949, the Silver Anniversary, the Buddhist



October 16, 1949, 25th Silver Anniversary

Church of Salinas was commemorated with the liquidation of its pre-war debts. Funds were raised by soliciting past and present members. The membership increased from 26 to 52 families, a 100% increase since the start of the post-war era in 1946.

On February 11 & 12, 1952, the church was honored by the official visit of Lord Abbott (the honorable Gomonsu) and Lady Kosho Ohtani of Homba Hongwanji in Kyoto Japan. The Gomonsu performed affirmation



First Post WWII Board of Directors

Front Row L-R: Advisors Takizo Oshita, Tetsuzo Miyonaga, Kyojiro Matsumune, Rev. Bunyu Fujimura, Advisors Manki Abe, Kihei Yamashita, Yonezo Ichikawa, Mr. Oka and Shintaku. Second Row L-R: John Terakawa, George Tanimura, Sid Shiratsuki, James Abe, Frank Oshita, Bill Inouye, Harry Sakasegawa, Saburo Iwamoto

February 1942. Shortly after the start of World War II, Executive order 9066 evacuating all people of Japanese ancestry from the west coast into the interior of the United States. This closed the church.

January 15, 1945. A small group of twenty- six families returned to Salinas after the war. Original Issei leaders and Nisei members decided to reopen the church. Rev. Fujimura a minister in Chicago was asked by Manki Abe if he would return to Salinas, and a small congregation. He agreed and left his secure post in Chicago

August 23, 1946. Official re-opening of the church on the 20th Anniversary. Administration handed over to the Niseis with Isseis as advisors.

1947. First post-war scare as fire damage the YBA Hall from a faulty heating system. Damage estimated at \$6,000.00. Within a month, the hall was restored with a new paint job.

1948. Fire completely destroyed the leased home, located next to the YBA Hall.

October 16, 1949. Silver anniversary commemorated by final liquidation of all church's prewar debt. Funds were raised by past and present members. The membership increased from 26 to 52.

February 11, 1952. Official visit by Lord Abbot and Lady Kosho Ohtani of Homba Hongwanji. Affirmation Rites Ceremony (Receiving Buddhist Name) given by Lord Abbot Ohtani to those who requested them.

March 1954. New YBA group formed under the adult leadership of Lloyd Urabe and Kiyu Hirano as advisors.

February 9, 1958. Rev. Shawshew Sakow became resident minister to replace Rev. Fujimura who was transferred to West Los Angeles.

July 1959. First official visit to Salinas by BCA Bishop Dr. Shinsho Hanayama and his wife since their arrival from Japan.

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rites for members and an Ochigo parade was held. A banquet followed in honor of the Gomonsu and Lady Ohtani.

In March 1954, an enthusiastic post-war Y.B.A. group was formed under the leadership of



1952 Lord Abbot & Lady Kosho Ohtani

Lloyd Urabe and Kiyo Hirano. This group consisted primarily of 3rd generation Japanese (Sansei), and they participated with other Coast District Churches in athletic activities and social events. Meetings and conferences were also a big part of their activities.

Reverend Bunyu Fujimura, the first minister after the war, remained in Salinas for ten years until he was transferred to the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church in the Fall of 1957. During his tenure, he presided over the liquidation of pre-war church debts. This was considered a great accomplishment during this time of uncertainty for the future of the church, with

a small sangha and severe economic times. Reverend Fujimura also presided over the Monterey Church which had become independent from Salinas in 1946.

In February of 1958, five months after Reverend Fujimura departed for Los Angeles, Reverend Shawsheu Sakow arrived to be the new minister. During the interim, Reverend Junjo Tsumura of Watsonville Buddhist Church temporarily assumed the duties of minister for Salinas.

In July 1959, Dr. and Mrs. Shinsho Hanayama visited Salinas for his first official visit as the new Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA). The members hosted a banquet to celebrate his visit and appointment as Bishop. Soon after Reverend Sakow arrived, he and Mrs. Sakow reactivated the Fujinkai. With the reactivation, they organized the internal workings of the Fujinkai and got involved with the overall function of the church and its programs. The Salinas Fujinkai has always been the backbone of the church since its inception. It can be said that the Salinas Church survived the difficult periods because of the support from the Fujinkai. They were always there for the

many church functions and their dedicated support is credited for the success of many programs and functions. On July 20, 1960 the Buddhist Church of Salinas, supported by the Fujinkai, hosted their first Obon Festival, which was open to the public. They hosted a bazaar with entertainment, a Japanese food sale, and culminated the festival with the traditional Obon Dancing. This was the beginning of the annual Obon Festival, which is held during the end of July.

In commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Buddhist Church, the church building and the Y.M.B.A. Hall renovation was undertaken. In May of 1964, Bishop Shinsho Hanayama and Reverend Shawsheu Sakow officiated at the Commemoration Service, with past ministers and the Coast District ministers in attendance.

Reverend Sakow was transferred to his new post in Santa Barbara in February 1969, after serving Salinas for 11 years. Within three months, on May 17, 1969, Reverend Shiro Nishii and his family arrived to assume the responsibilities of Resident Minister. Reverend Nishii reactivated the Japanese Language School and also started a bus service for the Sunday school children who lived in the outlying area. The 1960s was an unexpected boom period for the Salinas Buddhist Church. During this period, the Salinas Church gained many new members due to the influx of the Shin Issei (*The new 1st generation of Japanese from Japan*). These Shin Issei were people who applied to immigrate to the United States to make a better life for themselves after the war. This movement to Sali-

AT A GLANCE

nas started when a few successful pre-war flower growers from the Bay Area moved to Salinas and started the cut flower industry in this area. This attracted the Shin Issei to move to Salinas and work in the flower industry.

The Shin Issei learned the flower industry and soon started their own business. This brought the second wave of Shin Issei into the Salinas area and into the Buddhist Church. These successful new flower growers now invited their relatives and friends into their flower business and Salinas. This was an unexpected fortune for the church, since the membership was so small and really not able to function efficiently. The increased membership brought new life to the Buddhist Church.

These flower growers were on such a busy schedule that Reverend Nishii took the Nenbutsu to the flower growers so their interest in the Nenbutsu would not falter. He started a Ho-Wa-Kai, a monthly service at the different flower grower districts. The flower growers also attended the major services during the year. Reverend Nishii knowing that some of the elderly ladies of our Sangha were not able to attend services at the church due to the lack of transportation, made it a point to pick them up once a month for a sutra chanting session and sermon at the church. This selfless dedication to these elderly ladies was very much appreciated by them and they looked forward to the day of their sessions. Reverend Nishii was a sincere and firm believer in spreading the teaching of the Nenbutsu. He even held monthly services at Soledad State Prison for those prisoners who were interested in Buddhism.

During Reverend Nishii's tenure, a new parsonage was built and it was dedicated on BCA's Founding Day. Bishop Kenryu Tsuiji was the guest speaker with the Reverend Shiro Nishii and the Coast District Ministers participating.

In February, 1972, Reverend Nishii departed for Los Angeles in pursuit of an independent religious endeavor. The Board of Directors faced one of the church's lowest points when Reverend Nishii decided to leave Salinas.

On April 4, 1972, Miss Setsuko Iwamoto was honored from among all the BCA Sunday School Teachers, as the recipient of the prestigious Reverend Kyogoku Award. Setsuko had served twenty years as superintendent and teacher for the Salinas Church despite suffering with muscular dystrophy for most of her life.

In June 1972, Reverend and Mrs. Shuei Iwai arrived from Seattle to assume the role as resident minister. Reverend Iwai and Mrs. Iwai had an extraordinary ability to get 100% involvement from church members. Reverend Iwai also motivated the Y.B.A., Dharma School and Japanese Language School Students to participate in church activities with high interest. Not only did he have an immense talent to stimulate everyone's interest, he was able to maintain it. This gave a true feeling of oneness to the Sangha (membership) as the Nenbutsu teaches.

The first project he suggested was to clean the Naingin (altar), which badly needed cleaning after nearly 50 years of

October 1959. Fujinkai reactivated for support and efficiency of overall church program by Rev. Sakow and Mrs. Sakow.

July 20, 1960. First year Obon Festival open to the public as fund-raiser with a food sale and entertainment.

May 1963. In preparation of the 40th anniversary, renovation of the church building and YBA Hall undertaken.

May 3, 1964. 40th Anniversary Commemoration Service with guest speaker Bishop Hanayama and all coast district ministers participating.

May 1, 1969. Rev. Shiro Nishii arrives as, new minister to succeed Rev. Sakow who was transferred to Santa Barbara in February. Rev. Nishii reactivated Japanese Language School and initiated bus service for Sunday School.

June 1969. Monthly Ho-wa-kai (Service on site) started by Rev. Nishi within different flower growers districts. He also started a monthly service for prisoners at Soledad State Prison.

September 27, 1970. Members decided to build a new residence. Old parsonage too small for the minister's family. Construction to coincide with the 45th Anniversary.

September 27, 1970. New minister's residence dedicated during observance of Buddhist Churches of America Founding Day. Guest speaker, Bishop Tsuiji with Coast District ministers participating.

February 9, 1972. Rev. Nishii leaves the church to pursue an independent religious endeavor. A farewell dinner held in his honor.

April 4, 1972. Setsuko Iwamoto honored from among all the BCA Sunday School teachers as the recipient of the Rev. Kyogoku Award. She served twenty years as teacher and as superintendent despite suffering from muscular dystrophy.

June 2, 1972. Rev. Shuei Iwai and wife arrive from Seattle to assume responsibilities as resident minister.

August 7, 1972. Rev. Iwai spearheaded project to clean the altar. The gold leaf

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Foundation for the new Temple with Rev. Iwai on the left and President Frank Oshita on the right.



Wooden frame structure of the Temple Building.

service. Under Reverend Iwai's supervision, members got a rare once in a lifetime opportunity to disassemble and reassemble all of the gold leaves of the Butsudan. The members washed and cleaned the delicate parts with special materials and a technique Reverend Iwai learned in Japan. The task took several weeks to complete, however seeing the Butsudan brought back to its original luster and beauty was a worthwhile project for everyone. Other Buddhist Churches asked him to help clean their Naigin, and the board of directors supported their request.

A couple of years after Reverend Iwai assumed the duties of resident minister, plans were made by the Board of Directors to build a new temple for the upcoming 50th anniversary. On March 3, 1974, the Salinas Buddhist Church celebrated its 50th anniversary, and held a commemoration service with a groundbreaking ceremony for the new temple. Bishop Kenya Tsuji from BCA and Reverend Shuei Iwai officiated with past ministers of Salinas and Coast District ministers in attendance. An Ochigo parade and a banquet were held at the Y.M.B.A. Hall, with entertainment by the members. During the banquet, Saburo Iwamoto was honored and recognized for his extraordinary service, which was far beyond what is expected of any one person. In recognition for his service, the plaque honoring him is displayed in the Temple Multi-Purpose Building forever.

October 7, 1975

To the Congregation of the Buddhist Church of Salinas:

Rarely does an architect serve a client so knowledgeable and sensitive to the essentials of a building that he inspires its creation.

Reverend Iwai was a scholar of Japanese Buddhist Temple architecture. He loved and appreciated the subtleties of color and proportion, and the importance of religious and historical details.

Reverend Iwai gave so much of himself in the development of each of the slightest details of your church building that it is difficult to believe that his participation in its construction is ended.

Those of us closely involved with this project are now particularly challenged to see its completion without loss of the spirit of perfection that went into the design. Mr. Holewinski and our staff share with me in assuring you that our office will do everything possible so that, when completed, your church will stand as a perfect blend of traditional and modern architecture as Reverend Iwai dreamed it would be.

Sincerely yours,

M. L. Blevens
M. L. BLEVENS
HOLEWINSKI & BLEVENS, INC.

Letter of condolence from the Holewinski and Blevens company.

AT A GLANCE

Following the 50th anniversary celebration, a Building Committee was formed, and the members were asked for a 10-year building fund pledge to finance the new church at the cost of \$400,000. The response was beyond expectation. The Cabinet and the Building Committee awarded the architect contract to the Holewinski and Blevens firm and the construction contract to the Spears Construction Company.

Reverend Iwai's well-prepared plans in the architecture of the temple and his supervision and liaison between the Building Committee and the contractor affected maximum effort and efficiency during construction of the temple. Reverend Iwai's talent was so immense that he built a miniature scale model of the new temple's exterior and interior, in detail, to show the congregation what the temple would look like when completed. This scale model is displayed in the lobby area of the temple in memory of his inspiration and encouragement to build the new temple.

To proceed with the construction, the Building Committee was faced with the need for more real estate. The bell tower and the parsonage had to be moved to free space for the new temple. Fortunately, the family of the late Yonezo Ichikawa who owned adjacent property, offered to donate their three lots to the temple. The temple accepted their donation with much gratitude and proceeded with the planned construction. The Ichikawas were dedicated temple members and Yonezo Ichikawa was a post-war advisor to the church.

During construction of the church in October 1975, Reverend Shuei Iwai suffered a fatal heart attack. It was a terrible shock and an immense loss to the cabinet and members of the church. With the church still under construction, the Y.B.A. Hall was utilized to host Reverend Iwai's funeral. BCA sponsored the funeral to honor Reverend Iwai's years of service. Bishop Tsuji officiated with other ministers from various churches in attendance. His ashes were escorted to Kyoto, Japan, by Mrs. Iwai for a memorial service and interned at Muryojudo Columbarium for ministers. Mrs. Iwai was asked to remain in Salinas until the temple was completed, and for the dedication ceremony. Reverend Iwai designed the architecture and landscape following the pattern of the Muro-Machi era of 575 years ago. Fortunately, before his death, Reverend Iwai had planned the garden and had discussed his design with Mr. Sam Obara, the landscape committee chairperson, who was able to carry out the design. The huge rocks used for the rock garden were brought from the mountains in the vicinity of Hollister by the members of the church. Heavy equipment supplied and operated by Mr. Garth Cranford, who volunteered his time and labor, was used to dig out and load these huge heavy rocks. The trucks and trailers to transport these rocks were supplied by the member farmers.

On March 28, 1976, the dedication ceremony honored the late Reverend Iwai and his design of the beautiful church. At the same time, the Buddhist Church of Salinas was officially renamed "Buddhist Temple of Salinas." The

alter disassembled and cleaned with special techniques Rev. Iwai learned in Japan. The project took three weeks to complete.

February 9, 1973. Members approve plans to build a new temple for the 50th anniversary. Adjoining three lots donated by the late Yonezo Ichikawa family for required space, a pre-war advisor and member.

March 3, 1974. Ground breaking ceremony for new church. Commemoration of 50th anniversary officiated by Bishop Tsuji along with Coast District ministers and past ministers in attendance. Saburo Iwamoto given special recognition with a plaque, for supporting the church above and beyond any expectation.

October 6, 1975. Sudden tragic death of Rev. Iwai. BCA sponsored funeral in the YBA Hall with construction of the temple not complete. Rev. Akira Ono of the Monterey Temple assumed ministerial responsibilities during interim until a minister arrives.

March 28, 1976. Church is completed at the cost of \$400,000.00. Church is officially renamed Buddhist Temple of Salinas. Design is patterned after the Muro Machi era, about 600 years ago. Dedication by Bishop Tsuji and Rev. Akira Ono. Attended by former ministers and Coast District ministers.

June 30, 1976. Rev. Yoshiaki Takemura and family arrive as the new resident minister from Fowler Buddhist Church.

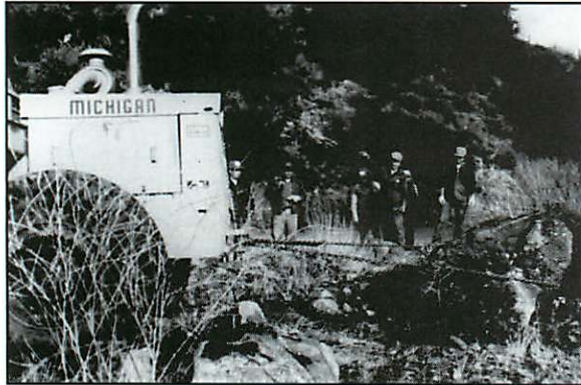
December 5, 1976. Opening ceremony, Issei Pioneer Museum, first of it's kind to honor the Issei for their years of struggle to create a better life for future generations. Displayed in the YBA Hall. Project started by members and Rev. Takemura as a tribute to the Issei Pioneer.

September 17, 1877. Abbot Kosho Ohtani makes short unexpected visit to see the new temple no formal plans were made.

August 6, 1979. First four day Summer Youth Retreat to San Luis Obispo sponsored by the Temple. Rev. Takemura escorts until 1993.

A step into the past: 75 Years of History

Dedication Ceremony was officiated by Bishop Tsuji and attended by former church ministers, Coast



Rocks from the Hollister area for the Japanese Garden.

District ministers and their wives, along with the BCA and Coast District representatives. Bishop Tsuji's words of gratitude to Reverend Shuei Iwai were: "I pay my highest tribute for his inspiration to the Sangha of Salinas. He will be missed by everyone and a big loss, not only to Salinas, but also to the Buddhist Churches of America".

During the interim between ministers, Reverend Akira Ono of Monterey Buddhist Temple was

again assigned by the Bishop to fill the needs of Salinas. Within two months after Reverend Iwai's passing, Salinas was notified by Bishop Tsuji that Reverend Yoshiaki Takemura would be the new resident minister. On June 30 1976, Reverend Takemura arrived in Salinas with his wife and children

from the Fowler Buddhist Temple, to assume the responsibilities of resident minister.

On December 5, 1976, Reverend Takemura performed an opening ceremony for the the Pioneer Museum, the first museum of its kind to honor the issei Buddhists Temple. Many articles and artifacts were collected through loans



Final Stage of Construction 1976

and donations to be displayed in the Y.B.A. Hall classrooms that were no longer in use for classes.

In November 1977, two beautiful bronze lanterns were donated by the family of the late Takeo Yuki of San Jose. They were shipped from Japan and placed at the front entrance to the temple. Takeo Yuki was a former member of the Salinas Buddhist Temple during the pre-war years. He also served as one of the original Board of Directors that signed the official documents that established the Salinas Buddhist Church.

On November 1, 1980, the succeeding Gomonshu (Lord Abbot) Koshin Ohtani of Kyoto, Japan, Hompa Hongwanji, officially visited Salinas. As part of his official visit, he performed the Affirmation Rite Ceremony (*award of the Buddhist name*) for those who requested it. To welcome and honor the new Gomonshu, a welcome banquet was hosted for the Gomonshu and his entourage.

On May 14, 1982, Reverend Takemura was honored for his twenty-five years of service to the BCA, with a testimonial dinner hosted by the Cabinet and members of the temple.

On September 30, 1984, the Buddhist Temple of Salinas celebrated its sixtieth anniversary officiated by Bishop Seigen Yamaoka of the BCA, and Reverend Yoshiaki Takemura. In attendance were former ministers of the Temple and other ministers from the Coast District.

In observance of the 60th

anniversary, special recognition was granted to Harry Sakasegawa, Hisao Tashiro, Kiyoshi Hirano and Ruth Ikeda for their contributions significantly above and beyond what is expected of any member of an organization. In recognition of their service, they were presented individual plaques with the Wheel of Dharma and their names engraved on them. Their plaques are displayed in the multipurpose building's conference room.

This occasion also started the discussion to replace the old Y.B.A. Hall, however due to controversy of the homeless issue in the vicinity of the temple, the plans were discontinued.

On June 10, 1988, Mrs. Ruth Ikeda was awarded the prestigious Reverend Kyogaku Award for her dedicated, devoted and unselfish service as a teacher and superintendent of the Dharma School. Her service extended twenty-five years and was during the period of the highest attendance of the post-war era.

On January 9 1994 the Young Adult Buddhist Association (YABA) was reactivated with Larry Tokiwa as the president. With the large number of young adults in Salinas who are Buddhist, who grew up as Buddhists or had parents who were Buddhists, the Temple Cabinet endorsed the idea of reactivating YABA. The old YABA had been disbanded in 1961.

Now with the Nisei's in their declining years, the cabinet of the Temple gradually shifted into the hands of the Sansei. At one of the General Membership Meetings, the members decided

to revive the issue of replacing the old Y.B.A. Hall. At a special general membership meeting, the discussion of the Multi-Purpose Building identified the kitchen for the Fujinkai as the main priority. A committee was created chaired by Frank Oshita with Douglas Iwamoto and Koichi Gatanaga as coordinators with the architect and building contractor and Melvin Aoki as the Building Fund Manager. The other members were Shinobu Gatanaga, Kiyo Hirano, John Hirasuna, Mary Iwamoto, Maisie Kondo, Shigetoshi Kuramura, Yoshito Matsuno, Susumu Onitsuka, Harry Sakasegawa, George Tanimura, Rod Tokubo, Jun Uchida, Bob Uemura and Herbert Wong.

A ten-year pledge was solicited from all members to finance this monumental task of constructing a new Multi-Purpose Building at the cost of \$1.4 million. With the recession plaguing the economy the initial building fund drive fell short of its goal to secure a loan. In time Frank Oshita and his committee made extra effort and visited members and solicited outside the temple membership to secure sufficient pledges to negotiate a loan with Union Bank of California. The design of the multi-Purpose Hall was again awarded to Holewinski and Blevens Architect and the construction award went to the Ausonio Construction Company.

April 6, 1994, with the loan secured, the aging 65 year old Y.B.A. Hall was demolished in just a few hours. This sadly removed the final evidence of the Issei construction era; however, it left in the minds of many Nisei, Sansei and some Yonsei fond memories of their childhood, and brought a new

November 1, 1980. Affirmation Rite Ceremony performed by the Lord Abbot Koshin Ohtani. Welcome luncheon was hosted at the YBA Hall.

May 1, 1982. Testimonial Dinner held in honor of Rev. Takemura's twenty-five years of service to the BCA.

September 30, 1984. 60th Anniversary ceremony with Bishop Seigen Yamaoka and Rev. Yoshiaki Takemura officiating. Former ministers and Coast District ministers in attendance. Members decide to build a new multipurpose building for 60th Anniversary. Plans postponed due to conflicts between City Council and membership. Hisao Tashiro, Ruth Ikeda and Kiyoshi Hirano given special recognition for their support of the church far beyond any expectation.

January 21, 1992. Members decide to celebrate the 70th Anniversary in March of 1994, with plans to revive construction of the multi-purpose building are initiated with a survey sent to members.

May 28, 1992. Response of survey showed support for construction. Building committee was selected with Frank Oshita as chairman and Douglas Iwamoto and Koichi Gatanaga as coordinators.

January 19, 1993. Membership postpone the 70th Anniversary to October 1994 instead of March 1994 to coincide with completion of building.

October 8, 1993. Architecture firm of Holewinski and Blevens again awarded contract to design the Multi-purpose building.

December 7, 1993. Final design of new multipurpose building submitted to the city. After various changes, plan approved by the city.

January 9, 1994. New Young Adult Buddhist Association chapter formed with Larry Tokiwa as 1st President, due to a high number of young adult Buddhists and potential Buddhists in the community. Old YABA group disbanded in 1961.

February 8, 1994. Construction bids received for new multi-purpose

A

step into the past: 75 Years of History



'This is a sad time, but also a time of appreciation and gratitude for 65 years of happiness ... I think this building served its purpose.'

The Rev. Yoshiaki Takemura, of the Salinas Buddhist Temple

At right, Takemura retrieves part of the lettering from the front of the gymnasium-classroom building to preserve it as a memento.

Richard Green/The Californian



Demolition takes local Buddhist hall to new heights

By Larry Parsons
The Californian

It took \$20,000 in 1929 to build the best Young Men's Buddhist Association hall in the United States on California Street.

It took 90 minutes Wednesday morning to flatten the venerable building to a mass of broken planks and cracked sheets of white stucco.

For the Rev. Yoshiaki Takemura, minister for 18 years of the Salinas Buddhist Temple, the long-planned demolition of the gymnasium-classroom building was part of the cycle of endings and beginnings.

"This is the start of the new building, not just the demolition," Takemura said, scrambling to take photos from every angle possible of the vanishing building.

"This is a sad time, but also a time of appreciation and gratitude

for 65 years of happiness and sadness in that building," he said. "I think this building served its purpose."

Over the years, thousands of Japanese-American youngsters attended language and cultural classes, flocked to dances and played basketball in the simple, two-story building at 14 California St.

During World War II, when local Japanese-Americans were forcibly interned in relocation camps, many stored their possessions in the hall. After the war, returning internees found temporary shelter there.

The four upstairs classrooms housed the temple's museum collection after 1976 when new classrooms were built into the main temple building next door.

In 10 months, a new \$1.4 million gymnasium-multipurpose building should be up on the site.

The new building, a major un-

dertaking for the temple's 60th anniversary, will be twice as big as the old one and harmonize architecturally with the adjacent temple building.

Originally, temple members hoped to have the new building ready by this summer for their annual Obon Festival.

But permit and financing delays pushed the construction back — forcing cancellation of the Obon Festival this year, Takemura said.

Construction will start as soon as the demolition debris is cleared, a job that will take a couple days, contractor Dean A. Henningsen said.

"Most of it will wind up in the landfill," Henningsen said, watching a 28-ton tractor tear into the walls on the building's south side.

"It's in bad shape," he said. "Look at the dry rot there under-

neath the stucco."

Salinas auto painter Henry Reed was among a handful of people who watched the building come down.

"I just like to watch demolition," Reed said. "When you're tearing it down, you're tearing down history."

Next door, Fred Wurster took a last look at what had stood next to his upholstery shop for 28 years.

"It's a landmark. I'm going to miss it, but I'm happy to see something new going up," he said.

Tuesday night, 12 hours before the demolition crew arrived, Takemura spent 20 minutes inside the hall, taking a last solitary tour.

He walked each room reverently from corner to corner. And gave the building a final blessing.

"I said, 'Thank you for serving so many years,'" he said.

for new construction, on April 17, 1994, Reverend Takemura presided over the groundbreaking ceremony with President Les Kaneshiro as the Master of Ceremonies. This ceremonious event for the Sangha and the Building Committee took place with various dignitaries from the City of Salinas, the County of Monterey, and representatives from the architect and general contractor.

1994 was a very busy year with the introduction of three on-going activities for the Buddhist Temple. In April 1994, the Temple negotiated with the Franciscan Workers, a non-profit organization, and formed a partnership to take ownership of a new facility for the homeless named the Green Gold Inn. This negotiation culminated with the establishment of the "Wheel of Hope" a joint non-profit organization joining the Buddhist Temple of Salinas and the Franciscan Workers who now hold ownership of the Green Gold Inn. On the first Board of Directors of the Wheel of Hope representing the Temple were Douglas Iwamoto, John Hirasuna, Rod Tokubo and Margaret Hasegawa.

In October, 1994, the Temple opened a food booth at the Salinas Air Show for the first time, serving primarily Japanese/oriental food as a fundraiser. And in December of 1994, the Temple joined other churches in Salinas to support the "I Help" program for homeless men in Salinas. This program serves dinner and lodges a group of homeless men twice a month in the Multi-Purpose Building.

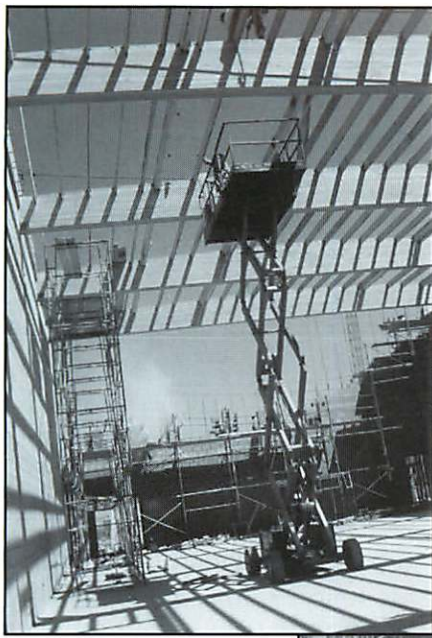
The Buddhist Temple of

Source: The Californian

chapter in the lives of the Nisei and the younger generations. It was a heart breaking experience for those who grew-up with the Hall to see the building fall into a heap of torn, broken and twisted pile of lumber

and wires. This also ended the existence of the Pioneer Museum which was to honor the Issei and was housed in the classrooms of the Y.B.A. Hall. With the Y.B.A. Hall removed and the ground open

AT A GLANCE



mittee Chairman Frank Oshita, Architect Mel Blevens and Contractor Andy Ausonio. As part of the ribbon cutting ceremony, the traditional Japanese custom of breaking the Sake Barrel

Construction of the new Multi-Purpose Building.

Salinas held its 70th Anniversary celebration on March 25, 1995. The service was officiated by Reverend Takemura

and attended by Reverend S. Fukuma representing the BCA. In attendance were past minister Reverend Fujimura and other Coast District temple ministers. Following the service, a dedication ribbon cutting ceremony was held by Reverend Takemura, Temple President Les Kaneshiro, Buddhist Women's Association President Mary Iwamoto, Building Com-

(Kagamiwari) was performed by President Les Kaneshiro, Committee Chairman Frank Oshita and Fujinkai President Mary Iwamoto, before the doors were officially opened for the first time. Following this ceremony, a banquet was hosted to celebrate the 70th Anniversary and the dedication of the new building. The banquet included toasts, speakers, presentation



Traditional Kagamiwari Les Kaneshiro, Mary Iwamoto and Frank Oshita.

building. Contract awarded to Ausonio Construction of Castroville.

April 6, 1884. Demolition of old YBA Hall. Building was constructed by the Isseis in 1929. The last physical evidence of Issei construction vanish.

April 17, 1994. Ground breaking ceremony by temple president Mr. Les Kaneshiro and Rev. Yoshiaki Takemura. Representation from various temple's organizations, building committee, civic dignitaries, architect, contractor and temple members. Dharma School creating a "time capsule" to be buried in a special chamber near the entrance.

June 26, 1994. Decision made to forgo annual Obon festivities due to construction, and sponsor a food sale instead. Food sale succeeded with the efforts of the Fujinkai.

August 9, 1994. 70th Anniversary again rescheduled from October 1994 to March 25, 1995 due to construction delays.

December 1, 1994. Temple Cabinet accepts invitation as director to the "Wheel of Hope", a non-profit organization in partnership with the Franciscan Workers dedicated to the homeless shelter.

March 25, 1995. 70th Anniversary Commemoration Service. Rev. S. Fukuma represented the BCA for Bishop Yamaoka and officiated the service with Reverend Takemura. In attendance were the past ministers, Coast District Ministers, representatives from the district churches/temples and the Coast District Cabinet.

After the Service, the Dedication Ceremony followed with Sutra Chanting, Aspiration by Rev. Takemura and a ribbon cutting by Temple President Les Kaneshiro, Building Committee Chairman Frank Oshita, Buddhist Women's Association President Mary Iwamoto, Architect Tom Lukes, and a representative from Ausonio Contracting. The traditional Japanese breaking open the Sake barrel (Kagamiwari) was performed before the doors were opened. A celebration banquet followed. At the banquet, Harry Sakasegawa, Frank Oshita, Douglas Iwamoto and the Ladies of the Fujinkai received special

A step into the past: 75 Years of History



construction for many months. It also created the potential for other organizations and individuals to rent the facility on a daily basis.

In July, 1995, the Temple President received official notice from Bishop Seigen Yamaoka that Reverend Yoshiaki Takemura was being transferred to the Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple to serve as their Rinban (Lead Minister). Reverend Takemura was to assume his new position effective November 1, 1995. Following this notification a farewell potluck party was hosted using the Multi-Purpose Building to express gratitude to Reverend and Mrs. Takemura for their 20 years of dedicated service to the Sangha. The attendance was large and it was a sad farewell for many to see Reverend Takemura and Mrs. Takemura leave after 20 years of personal interaction. On



Frank Oshita, Harry Sakasegawa, Douglas Iwamoto, and the ladies of the Fujinkai.

of the 70th Anniversary & Building Dedication Ochigo and Parade.

On this occasion special recognition for service far beyond any expectation was awarded to

Following the 70th Anniversary and dedication of the building, on April 2nd, the 1st Temple hosted an open house to showcase the new Multi-Purpose Hall. It gave the community an opportunity to view the inside of this new building and its facilities after witnessing its



Harry Sakasegawa



Frank Oshita



Douglas Iwamoto

PHOTO OF THE FUJINKAI LADIES NOT AVAILABLE AT TIME OF PUBLICATION

Ladies of the Fujinkai

Honorable recognition is afforded to the members and organization above for their generous, unselfish and dedicated service to our temple. They gave their time, their labor and their wisdom towards the maintenance, management and improvement of our temple. Their active contributions were and are considerably far beyond what is expected of a member of any organization. Their services and contributions have earned them the respect and admiration of all with whom they have served. Their exemplary support is keeping with the highest tradition of our Buddhist teachings and reflects great credit upon themselves, the Buddhist Temple of Salinas and the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji.

AT A GLANCE

November 1, 1995, Reverend & Mrs. Yoshiaki Takemura bid farewell to the members who gathered in the parking lot, sidewalk and driveway to see them off, their car packed with their belongings, pull away from their home of 20 years, made the left turn on California Street and headed North leaving the Buddhist Temple and Salinas for Seattle, Washington.

August 1, 1996 Reverend Dennis J. Shinseki arrived from White River to assume the responsibilities of resident minister.

In July 1997, under the leadership of Bonnie Yokota, the Hikari no Gako (Shining School), a summer parent co-operative program, was started with the philosophy to introduce the Japanese-American and the Japanese

Children learned about Japan through games, crafts, dance, language, history, geography, art, calligraphy music, food and much more, to blend the past with the present. The school was open to the general public and attracted children of other ethnic groups beside Japanese Americans. Immediately after the first summer, the program became so popular, that it required the use of all the classrooms and the multi-purpose building.

On March 22 1999, His Eminence Koshin Ohtani visited Salinas and conducted Confirmation Rite for the members (Kikyoshiki giving the Buddhist name). As part of his visit, the Buddhist Temple of Salinas hosted a banquet in honor of his eminence Koshin



The Confirmation Rite conducted by His Eminence Koshin Ohtani.

heritage and culture to school aged children from Kindergarten through the sixth grade. The first teachers were Yoshie Maemura, Susan Zahnlecke and Tei Dacus.

Ohtani together with the Buddhist Temple of Watsonville and the Buddhist Temple of Monterey.



recognition for their extra ordinary support to the Temple above and beyond any expectation.

April 2, 1995. Open House to the public was showcased with served.

July 27, 1995. Temple President notified by Bishop Seigen Yamaoka, that Reverend Takemura is being transferred to Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple as their Rinban (Head Minister), effective November 1, 1995.

July 30 1995. First Obon Festival, celebrated utilizing the new multi-purpose building.

October 28, 1995. A Farewell Potluck Party hosted for Rev. & Mrs. Yoshiaki Takemura and family for 20 years of dedicated and faithful service

November 1, 1995. Rev. and Mrs. Takemura left Salinas by car to their new home and assignment in Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple.

August 1, 1996. Rev. Dennis J. Shinseki arrived from the White River Buddhist Temple as the new resident minister.

July 1997. A new program labled Hikari No Gakko, (Shining School) was started under the leadership of Bonnie Yokota, with the philosophy to introduce the Japanese American/Japanese heritage and culture to school aged children from Kindergarten through the sixth grades. This school was open to the general public. The first teachers were: Yoshie Maemura, Susan Zahnlecke and Tei Dacus.

March 22, 1999. Gomonsu Koshin Ohtani visited and conducted Confirmation Rite for the members. A banquet was hosted at the Salinas Temple, by the Salinas, Watsonville and Monterey Temples.

November 14, 1999. Celebration of 75th Anniversary. For the anniversary, temple adopted to renovate the Bell Tower with a new roof at the cost of \$26,000.00 and paint the temple building and the Bell Tower.



Buddhist Temple of Salinas - Present Day

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