



Guide to the Tomiyasu Family Photograph Collection

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	Tomiyasu, Bill, 1882-1969
Creator:	Tomiyasu, Nanyu, 1918-2002
Title:	Tomiyasu Family Photograph Collection
ID:	PH-00294
Date [inclusive]:	approximately 1908 to 1991
Date [bulk]:	approximately 1920 to 1940
Physical Description:	0.13 Cubic Feet (3 hanging file folders and 1 shared box of negatives)
Physical Description:	0.13 Linear Feet
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Tomiyasu Family Photograph Collection (approximately 1908 to 1991) consists of black-and-white photographic prints of the Tomiyasu family and their farming business in southern Nevada.

Preferred Citation

Tomiyasu Family Photograph Collection, approximately 1908-1991. PH-00294. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Biographical Note

The Tomiyasu farming and ranching business began in 1914 after Yonema "Bill" Tomiyasu bought forty acres of land in Las Vegas, Nevada. Tomiyasu migrated from Japan to California in 1898 and promptly began farming. He relocated to Las Vegas because of a California law that restricted immigrants from owning land for agricultural purposes. Tomiyasu originally grew alfalfa due to how well it grows in dry climates. Within a few years, Tomiyasu became proficient in farming the dry soil, becoming the lead supplier of melons, peppers, brussel sprouts, lettuce, cabbage, onions, carrots, radishes, and beets for Las Vegas stores and restaurants.

Tomiyasu married his wife, Toyono, in the late 1910s and they had two boys, Nanyu and Kiyo, and two girls, Uwamie and Mamie, "Mimi." Throughout the 1920s the Tomiyasu business expanded, and became the largest produce supplier for Hoover Dam workers. During those years, the Six Companies Inc. operated a store near the Hoover Dam project in Boulder City, Nevada, which the Tomiyasu farm regularly supplied with fruits and vegetables. Tomiyasu eventually purchased an additional 120 acres for farming and ranching in the 1930s. In addition to farming, the Tomiyasu family raised chickens and turkeys. By 1940, Tomiyasu supplied produce not only to the residents of Las Vegas and Boulder City, but also to Beatty, Jean, Goodsprings, and Sloan, Nevada.

Although Tomiyasu taught his children the farming business, they all attended college in pursuit of different careers. While Tomiyasu remained in horticulture the rest of his life, but following World War II, he primarily grew landscaping plants. Tomiyasu later lost his land due to a misunderstanding in a loan contract. Despite the loss of land, Tomiyasu continued to manage a plant nursery until his death in 1969. The city of Las Vegas commemorated Tomiyasu in the late 1980s by naming an elementary school and a street after him.

Sources:

Clark County Parks & Recreation, "Yonema 'Bill' Tomiyasu: Pioneering Horticulturist and Landscaper," Accessed November 27, 2019. <https://www.clarkcountynv.gov/parks/Documents/sunset-construction/tomiyasu-ranch.pdf>

Hardy, Nancy. "Asian-Pacific Heritage Month Photo Essay: The Tomiyasu Family", UNLV Special Collections and Archives, April 29, 2016. Accessed November 27, 2019. https://www.library.unlv.edu/whats_new_in_special_collections/2016/04/asian-pacific-heritage-month-photo-essay-tomiyasu-family

Green, Michael with Susan A. Myers. *Nevada: A Journey of Discovery*, Gibbs Smith, (Salt Lake City: 2005), 175.

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Scope and Contents Note

The Tomiyasu Family Photograph Collection (approximately 1908 to 1991) consists of black-and-white photographic prints of the Tomiyasu family and their farming business in southern Nevada. The photographs depict the family and their farm, located in what is today Sunset Park. The collection contains photographs of the machinery, fields, and livestock on the farm. Lastly, the collection contains photographs of Bill Y. Tomiyasu Elementary School; George Goto, the artist who created the Japanese garden at Tomiyasu elementary; and photographs of the Tomiyasu family at a Salvation Army event.

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Arrangement

Materials are arranged by topic.

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Administrative Information

Access Note

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

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Acquisition Note

Materials were received by UNLV Special Collections and Archives; accession number 2019-149.

Processing Note

In 2019, as part of an archival backlog elimination project, James Howard processed the materials, wrote the finding aid, and entered the data into ArchivesSpace.

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Related Materials

Related Collections

The following resources may provide additional information related to the materials in this collection:

Nanyu Tomiyasu oral history interview, 1977 April 12. OH-01835. Oral History Research Center, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Nanyu Tomiyasu oral history interview, 1978 March 11. OH-01836. Oral History Research Center, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Nanyu Tomiyasu oral history interview, 1986 April 30. OH-03352. Oral History Research Center, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Nanyu Tomiyasu oral history interviews, 2000 January 18, 2000 February 05, 2000 April 02. OH-03623. Oral History Research Center, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Names and Subjects

- Asian American business enterprises
- Ranching
- Agriculture

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Containers
Family, property, and workers	
Kiyo, Bill, and Nanyu Tomiyasu, identified left to right, in a lettuce patch on the farm: photographic print and negative, 1923 (0294_0001)	folder 01 box SH-032
Tomiyasu children, Nanyu, Kiyo, Uwamie, and Mamie "Mimi", identified left to right, with cousin Yoshiko next to car in rear: photographic print and negative, approximately 1920 to 1929 (0294_0002) (view online)	folder 01 box SH-032
Nanyu, Bill, and Kiyo, identified left to right: photographic print and negative, approximately 1920 to 1929 (0294_0003) (view online)	folder 01 box SH-032
Bill Tomiyasu: photographic print and negative, approximately 1908 to 1910 (0294_0004) (view online)	folder 01

box
SH-032

Mamie "Mimi" Tomiyasu: photographic print and negative, approximately 1935 to 1940 (0294_0005) ([view online](#))

folder
01

box
SH-032

Kawamura, Toyono's father and grandfather to the Tomiyasu children: photographic print and negative, approximately 1920 to 1940 (0294_0006) ([view online](#))

folder
01

box
SH-032

Tomiyasu family, Toyono Tomiyasu's sister Shimayo Nagamatsu, and cousin, Yoshiko: photographic print and negative, 1924 (0294_0007) ([view online](#))

folder
01

box
SH-032

Bill Tomiyasu with unidentified man: photographic print and negative, approximately 1910 to 1919 (0294_0008) ([view online](#))

folder
01

box
SH-032

Kiyo, Mimi, Nanyu, and their aunt, identified left to right: photographic print and negative, 1923 (0294_0009) ([view online](#))

folder
01

box
SH-032

Ranch hand Shigemura with Bill, Toyono, and Nanyu Tomiyasu, identified left to right, on farm: photographic print and negative, approximately 1920 to 1921 (0294_0010) ([view online](#))

folder
01

box
SH-032

Native American workers on the Tomiyasu farm: photographic print, approximately 1920 to 1929 (0294_0011)

folder
01

box
SH-032

Bill, Kiyo, and Nanyu, identified left to right, in wheat fields on Tomiyasu property: photographic print, 1925 (0294_0012)

folder
01

box
SH-032

"Limping" Jack Holmes, a Shoshone Native American worker: photographic print, approximately 1927 to 1928 (0294_0013) ([view online](#))

folder
01

box
SH-032

First Paradise Valley District School: photographic print and negative, approximately 1930 to 1939 (0294_0014) ([view online](#))

folder
01

box
SH-032

Tomiyasu children at the integrated elementary school, Paradise School: photographic print and negative, approximately 1928 to 1929 (0294_0032) ([view online](#))

folder
03

box
SH-032

Machinery, livestock, and crops

Machine which generated power for the Tomiyasu home: photographic print and negative, approximately 1920 to 1940 (0294_0015) ([view online](#))

folder
02

box
SH-032

Water wheel on Tomiyasu farm: photographic print and negative, approximately 1930 to 1939 (0294_0016)

folder
02

box
SH-032

Pump engine used on the Tomiyasu farm: photographic print and negative, approximately 1930 to 1939 (0294_0017)

folder
02

box
SH-032

Chicken coop on Tomiyasu farm: photographic print and negative, approximately 1930 to 1939 (0294_0018) ([view online](#))

folder
02

box
SH-032

Tomato fields on Tomiyasu farm: photographic print and negative, approximately 1920 to 1939 (0294_0019) ([view online](#))

folder
02

box
SH-032

Turkeys on the Tomiyasu farm: photographic print and negative, approximately 1930 to 1939 (0294_0020) ([view online](#))

folder
02

box
SH-032

Field of lettuce on Tomiyasu farm: photographic print and negative, approximately 1930 to 1939 (0294_0021) ([view online](#))

folder
02

box
SH-032

Elm trees on Tomiyasu farm: photographic print and negative, 1951 (0294_0022) ([view online](#))

folder
02

box
SH-032

Family, friends, and Tomiyasu Elementary

Unidentified group of people in Moapa Valley, Nevada: photographic print and negative, approximately 1920 to 1939 (0294_0023) ([view online](#))

folder
03

box
SH-032

Fremont Street, Las Vegas, Nevada: photographic print and negative, approximately 1930 to 1939 (0294_0024) ([view online](#))

folder
03

box
SH-032

Tomiyasu family with maternal grandfather Kawamura: photographic print, approximately 1920 to 1929 (0294_0025) ([view online](#))

folder
03

"Mimi" and Kiyō, identified left to right: photographic print, approximately 1920 to 1925 (0294_0026) ([view online](#))

folder
03

George Goto at First Annual International Language Fair: photographic print and negative, 1991 (0294_0027) ([view online](#))

folder
03

box
SH-032

The Japanese gardens outside Bill Y. Tomiyasu Elementary School, designed by George Goto: photographic print and negative, 1991 (0294_0028) ([view online](#))

folder
03

box
SH-032

Bill Y. Tomiyasu Elementary School: photographic print, approximately 1990 to 1995 (0294_0029) ([view online](#))

folder
03

Toyono and Bill, identified left to right,: photographic print, approximately 1905 to 1915 (0294_0030) ([view online](#))

folder
03

Kiyō, Bill, and Nanyu, identified left to right, in a lettuce patch on the farm: photographic print, 1923 (0294_0031) ([view online](#))

folder
03

Tomiyasu family at meeting organized by Salvation Army: photographic print, approximately 1927 to 1928 (0294_0033) ([view online](#))

folder
03

A close up of Tomiyasu family at meeting organized by Salvation Army: photographic print, approximately 1927 to 1928 (0294_0034) ([view online](#))

folder
03