



An Issei on the Plains: The Story of Richi Ugai

(Article begins on page 2 below.)

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Article Summary: Nebraska's Japanese remained a small percentage of the population and generally tried to avoid publicity. Richi Ugai of North Platte was an exception. The restaurateur and hotel owner became a locally-prominent businessman in the early twentieth century, prospering even through World War II.

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Photographs / Images: exterior of Richi Ugai's Hotel Palace and Palace Café, North Platte; Ugai; ad for the Palace Café, 1913; ad for a Mikado dinner and supper at the Palace Café, 1911; Shinayo Ugai; the Palace Café kitchen; the Hotel Palace; ad for the New Hotel Palace and Café, 1919; ad for the Hotel Palace Bazaar, 1922; interior of the Palace Café (2 views); interior of the Palace Bazaar; North Platte's Union Pacific Depot, across the street from the Hotel Palace and Palace Café

The Hotel Palace and
Palace Café. Unless
otherwise credited, all
photos are courtesy of
Susan Ugai.



AN —————
ISSEI ON THE
PLAINS



THE STORY OF RICHI UGAI



—By Griffen Farrar

Few articles have addressed Nebraska's small yet persistent Japanese population. Unlike the Germans or the Irish, the Japanese remained a small percentage of the population and generally tried to avoid publicity. Mostly they worked in their fields or shops and did not travel often. They lived far from the larger cities of Omaha and Lincoln, settling instead in Scottsbluff to work in the sugar beet fields, or in North Platte to work for the railroad. This Japanese-American community has lived in the state since 1900 and has not been given the historical spotlight it deserves. —continued

The first generation of Japanese immigrants, known as the *Issei*, played an important role in shaping the future for their children, the *Nisei*, and their grandchildren, the *Sansei*. After Japan opened up following the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the first Issei traveled to Hawaii and gradually relocated to the coastal states of Washington, Oregon, and California. There Issei men obtained railroad jobs and began their slow march east into the central United States. Father Hiram Kano, a leader of the Japanese community in Nebraska, explained that "such companies as the Burlington (CB & Q) [Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy], the Rock Island, the Union Pacific and the Santa Fe liked the Japanese because they were faithful, cooperative and hard workers."¹ According to Kano, this eastward movement left around seven hundred Issei men in Nebraska in the years following 1900.² One of the men, Richi Ugai, played a prominent role in the development North Platte Valley's Japanese community through his business ventures and community involvement.

Born in Hiroshima in western Japan on December 15, 1883, Ugai spent his first twenty years in Japan. Coming from a poor family, he desired to travel to America and seized his chance at a time when many others from Hiroshima were doing the same.³ They arrived in San Francisco harbor on January 15, 1903. Ugai stayed in California for a year before moving inland. He finally settled in North Platte, Nebraska, in January 1904, one of the first people of Japanese ancestry to settle in the state.⁴

Little is known about Ugai's first few years in North Platte. He knew no one when he arrived and presumably spent these years working and building connections in the city. Nebraska's Japanese population grew from three men in 1900 to around 580 men in 1910. Of these, 75 resided in North Platte, though many were boarders who left soon after.⁵ Ugai first appears in the North Platte city directory in 1907, listed as a porter at the Union Pacific Hotel and residing in the same location.⁶ Soon afterward he left the hotel and began work at the Palace Café, becoming a partner with Ben Nakashima, another Issei.

The partnership was short lived. Ugai bought out Nakashima's share of the business on June 22, 1909.⁷ As the café's sole owner, Ugai took the business to new heights and employed many Issei men. The 1910 census shows the restaurant as having fifteen employees, including three cooks, nine waiters, two dishwashers, and Ugai as proprietor.⁸

Ugai joined the ranks of homeowners in 1910, when over the span of four months he purchased

four lots for \$1,105 from George W. Stewart's estate as he had gone into bankruptcy.⁹ Many Issei in North Platte were renters their entire lives, but Ugai, after six years in North Platte, now had a place to call his own. The farm house and surrounding land was the first of many properties he would own. Over the next several years he bought other lots adjoining his property: two lots for \$712.50 in November 1912; and another two lots for \$1,300 in May 1914.¹⁰ He would occupy the farm house while building his businesses and family, and later use it as a rental house. As a real estate investor, Ugai's properties not only added another source of income but also raised his standing in the community—a departure from traditional attitudes of Asian immigrants, who usually avoided the public eye.

Ugai bought a 1912 Chalmers automobile in August 1911 for \$1,500. A few months later he bought a \$900 piano from the Hershey Co. in Omaha.¹¹ He began garnering attention in North Platte as a man who was not afraid to display his wealth, making a name for himself less than ten years after arriving in North Platte.

It is unclear how Ugai acquired the capital to make these purchases so soon after going into business. Perhaps he used his connections in Japan to help bring people to America, accepting a cash payment from those he helped bring to the United States. Such assistance would help a prospective Japanese immigrant circumvent the Gentleman's Agreement, an informal agreement between Japan and the U.S. to limit immigration. Another possibility is that Ugai at first lived well below his means in order to save enough money to appear well off while the Palace Café began to draw customers. Both of these ideas are speculative.¹²

Regardless of how Ugai acquired his early capital, the café brought substantial income and he continued to reinvest in his business. He added more than a thousand dollars worth of enhancements in early 1912 until a fire in the bake shop halted his work in late March. Employees noticed the blaze before it engulfed the café itself; the bake shop, however, had to be gutted. The café closed for three weeks while renovations to the bake shop and café were completed. The fire cost Ugai another \$875 he had not anticipated having to pay that year.¹³ Renovations were swift, however, and Ugai hosted a Grand Re-Opening on April 13. According to the *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune* the event was "attended by several hundred people. The tables were decorated with pink and white, cut flowers and an elaborate spread served."¹⁴ These

improvements continued to establish Ugai as a household name in North Platte.

Modifications were a never-ending process. Soon after renovations from the fire, Ugai made another set of improvements for \$1,000. These upgrades and repairs brought the café praise from patrons and reporters. In the words of the *Semi-Weekly Tribune*: "New York has its Martin's, Chicago has its Rector's, Omaha its Maurer's and North Platte has in the Palace a café that has the class style and finish." The article goes on to say that "the service could hardly be improved and here we find no fault."¹⁵ Patrons echoed the praise, and the café was full of people talking, laughing, and eating Ugai's food. To maintain the upbeat atmosphere his patrons expected, Ugai hired Miss Millie Lang and Miss Kosbau as waitresses early in 1916.¹⁶

After owning and operating the Palace Café since 1909, Ugai purchased the land beneath his business in July 1915 for \$11,000.¹⁷ After the U.S. entered World War I, he purchased the land next to the café for \$16,000 in November 1917 and began work on what would become his second business, the Hotel Palace.¹⁸ With these purchases, Ugai freed himself from being a renter and kept more income within the business, allowing him to make many more improvements.

In 1920 Ugai bought a home closer to work. The house at 320 East 6th Street, purchased for \$6,500, is where Ugai would spend the majority of his life.¹⁹ Now just a block away from work instead of two miles, he could be even more involved in running his businesses. He kept the farm house as a rental property.

When Ugai got married during a visit to Japan in 1913, the story was front-page news in the *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*. The article said that Ugai and his new bride, Shinayo, went on a world tour before returning to North Platte via New York. In Ugai's absence, his employees did such a good job that he purchased gifts for them upon his return.²⁰ Ugai understood that learning to speak English had been a prerequisite to his success in America; therefore he hired a private tutor for Shinayo.

In the years leading up to U.S. entry into World War I, the Ugai family experienced big changes, both spiritually and financially. Richi and Shinayo welcomed Fred, the first of their four children, into the world on April 20, 1915.²¹ Then all three members of the family were baptized at the Episcopal Church in North Platte. The *Tribune* reported that "this is probably the first time in North Platte that this rite has been administered

THE PALACE CAFE

Offers to residents of, and visitors to, North Platte, the most finely appointed service in Western Nebraska, and with this is a menu that cannot be excelled for the price. Regular means are served and short orders can be obtained any hour day or night.

THE PALACE CAFE,
Opposite U. P. Depot.

RICHI UGAI,
Proprietor.

North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune, January 21, 1913

MIKADO DINNER AND SUPPER

Thursday, Nov. 2d,
Being the Mikado's Birthday
The Palace Cafe

Will celebrate the occasion by serving a grand dinner and supper. Dinner will be served from 11 a. m. to 3 p. m., and supper from 5 to 8 p. m. Both meals will be cooked and served by Orientals and the public is invited to dine at this popular cafe.

DINNER MENU.

Soup---French Oyster	Celery,
Sour Pickles,	Roast Turkey, Cranberry Sauce,
Oyster Dressing,	Brown Gravy,
Baked Halibut with Lobster Sauce,	
Mashed Potatoes,	String Beans.

DESSERT

English Plum Pudding, Brandy Sauce,	Pear Pie,
Apple Pie,	Mince Pie,
Coffee,	Tea,
	Milk.

SUPPER MENU.

Nuts,	Clam Chowder,	Celery,
Roast Turkey, Cranberry Jelly,		
Oyster Dressing,	Brown Gravy,	
Loin Beef Roast and Juice,		
Steam Potatoes,	Chicken Salad,	Stewed Corn,

DESSERT---Sliced Oranges.

Coffee,	Tea,	Milk.
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Meals 35c Each.

North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune, October 31, 1911



Shinayo Ugai

to Japanese.”²² It was not until a number of years later that the church began reaching out to the Japanese community at large and converting them from their traditional Buddhism. A leader of the church, Reverend Hiram Kano, was himself of Japanese descent and became an active member of the ministry in the mid-1920s. Richi and Shinayo remained members and actively supported the Episcopal Church for the rest of their lives.

A second son, Norman, was born in 1916, followed by daughters Maguerite in 1918 and Virginia in 1920. The children’s names reflect the family’s assimilation into North Platte and American society. Ugai was not alone among Japanese immigrants in wanting to prove the worth of the Japanese people as a whole and to demonstrate their love of their adopted country. According to Kano, “This is the thinking behind the immovable determination by the Japanese immigrant to Americanize. This is because they believe the United States is their adopted country, which is dear to them. They believe America will be their final resting place and they want to give it their best.”²³

Nevertheless, the Ugai family was not shy about showing off their heritage. For local parades the family would decorate their car with Japanese lanterns; Shinayo would wear a traditional kimono.²⁴ This pride, however, may have also been a marketing strategy for Richi’s businesses. He played a delicate game balancing the distinctiveness of his ethnicity against the reality that many Americans were working to strip Japanese immigrants of their rights and properties. Ugai’s mastery of this game enabled him to capitalize on his ethnicity, apparently without being targeted for it.

However, the menu at the Palace Café was strictly American, with meals such as oyster gumbo, roasted turkey and stewed tomatoes. In 1910 such a dinner cost twenty-five cents a plate, and business was brisk. For three years beginning in 1909, Ugai hosted a dinner to celebrate the birth of the Mikado on November third.²⁵ While the celebration had Japanese overtones, the food was, as usual, American rather than Japanese.

While Ugai made a name for himself through business, he became a pillar of the community for additional reasons. Due to his business connections, he hosted many important community events that brought people into his establishment. The Palace Café was the preferred venue for many local and regional organizations,

including the Retailer’s Association, Firemen’s Association, the Cheyenne County football team, plus a number of local businesses and events such as class reunions. Few local organizations never held a meeting or hosted a dinner at the Palace Café. Ugai also played host to dignitaries from Japan, including the consul from Chicago who visited North Platte and Sutherland in 1914.²⁶

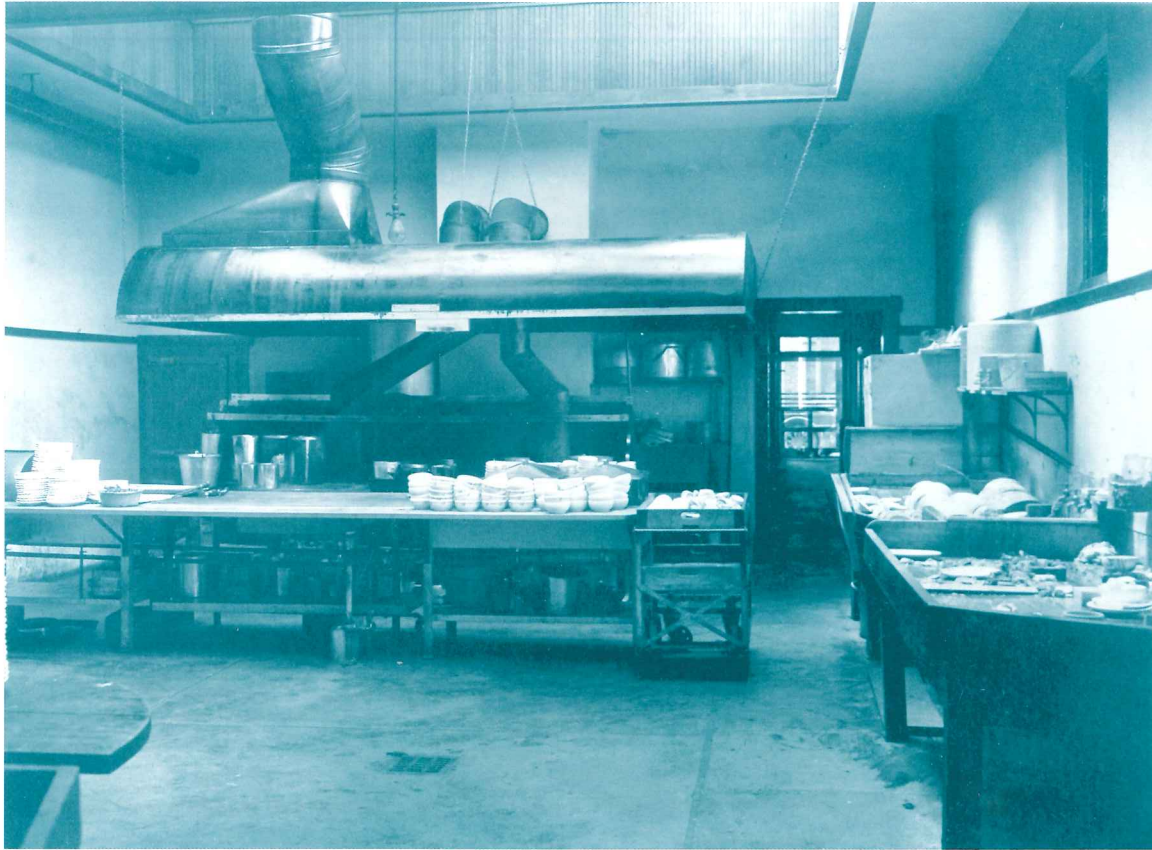
Ugai was generous when it came to donating items for fundraisers or otherwise helping the community. In 1922, for example, local businesses each donated an item to be auctioned for the firemen’s annual fall festival. Rather than donate just one item, Ugai provided a teakwood tray and three sewing baskets.²⁷

Ugai’s mastery of advertising and promotion helped make his name well-known. Other local restaurant owners advertised in the local newspaper, but none duplicated his innovative advertising and marketing strategies. In 1914, for example, he gave away a new Saxon automobile as a contest prize. Patrons could earn tickets by purchasing meals and merchandise at the Palace Café; the person with the most tickets would win the car. The *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune* published the contest rules on June 26, stating the number of tickets awarded for different dollar amounts.²⁸ On October 31, a North Platte High School student named John Lincoln won the car after garnering over one million tickets both from his own purchases, as well as getting tickets from other patrons.²⁹

Ugai also participated in larger community events. In 1921 local businesses sponsored an event called Ford Jubilee Day in order to draw people into the city. The *Semi-Weekly Tribune* claimed it would be the largest celebration in the history of Western Nebraska. Ugai was among the business owners behind the event, and his ad in the August 26 paper naturally invited everyone to the Hotel Palace and Café.³⁰

Ugai had begun work on the Hotel Palace in 1918. Having established himself as a premier restaurateur in North Platte, he was ready to expand his business. A hotel was a lucrative idea in a railroad town, as Ugai knew from his earlier work at the Union Pacific Hotel. After selecting Victor F. Beck as architect, he solicited bids for many aspects of the project before hosting all bidders for a luncheon at the café.³¹

Costing \$75,000 for the hotel itself and another \$6,000 for a refrigeration unit, the completed Hotel Palace was a sight to see. The grand opening on June 26, 1919, brought together hundreds of



料理場之中不左四洗内場所

The Palace Café kitchen

residents of North Platte and the surrounding area. Ugai personally welcomed guests along with a reception committee made up of other local businessmen. Once inside, guests rode the elevator to the third floor, toured the hotel, then descended to the second floor where the ladies received roses and the men cigars. The guests saw the new refrigeration unit as well as the kitchen and bakery, and then enjoyed light refreshments in one of the hotel dining areas.

The event was a success. In the words of *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*: "The hundreds who inspected this new hotel had none but complimentary words for its modern equipment and bright and cheerful appearances and complimented Mr. Ugai for the enterprise he displayed in giving to North Platte such as splendid hotel."³² The Hotel Palace soon became one of the best-known features of the main strip on Front Street.

The hotel provided income in multiple ways. One early success involved renting a showroom to the Logan Knitting Mill of Logan, Utah. For several years their agent, D. A. Freedman, set up shop in the hotel whenever he was in town; customers who wished to view Mr. Freedman's wares went to the

Hotel Palace, which tended to generate business for Ugai. It was also a smart advertising ploy, as the Logan Knitting Mill listed the Hotel Palace in its advertisements.³³

Ugai launched the Palace Bazaar in the back of the Hotel Palace in 1921. The bazaar specialized in traditional Japanese items such as kimonos, teas and fine china. Ugai promoted the new business with large newspaper ads that showcased the items as exotic and oriental and even suggested gift ideas for men and women. While these items would have been considered a novelty, they appear to have sold well, as Ugai had repeated sales on certain items such as kimonos.³⁴

Though the café and hotel continued to be Ugai's main businesses, he further diversified when he began to buy and sell typewriters in 1920 and purchased stock in such businesses as the North Platte Air Terminal Company.³⁵ Ugai's diverse interests not only illustrate his ability to seize opportunities where others might hesitate, but they also set him apart as one of the few Asian men of his era who managed to integrate himself fully into the business environment of his adopted country.

Despite the advancement of Ugai and other Japanese in Nebraska, not everyone was accepting



The Hotel Palace opened in 1919.

of this minority population. In 1921 the State Legislature proposed House Roll #138; the bill set limits to Issei land ownership and stated that the Japanese were a menace to society. In response, Ugai and other prominent men of Japanese descent took out a large ad in the *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*, laying bare the facts about the land ownership by Japanese people. Ugai, along with Hugh Wada and C. H. Shinn, identified the top Japanese in the state and listed only six men that owned a large amount of land or carried influence; Ugai was one such man.³⁶

Nebraska was not the only state to draft legislation to disenfranchise the Japanese; in fact, Nebraska was among the last states to implement restrictive policies. As early as 1900, California was enacting plans to limit Asian immigration; it set up an Asiatic Exclusion League in 1905, implemented segregation of Japanese in public schools in 1906, and passed a law to prohibit agricultural land acquisition in 1913.³⁷ While some states wanted to strip the Japanese of all property, under the 1911 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan, people had the right:

To own or lease and occupy houses, manufactories, warehouses and shops, to employ agents of their choice, to lease land for residential and commercial purposes, and generally to do anything incident to or necessary for trade upon the same terms as native citizens or subjects, submitting themselves to the laws and regulations there established.³⁸

With commercial and residential rights thus guaranteed by treaty, the states attacked agricultural rights instead.

Fr. Kano, president of the Japanese-Americanization society, summarized the original Nebraska House Roll 138 as providing "that aliens ineligible for U.S. citizenship would not be allowed to hold or inherit land, nor to lease farm land for more than two years. They would not even be allowed to be stockholders of any company or financial corporation which they themselves might organize."³⁹ A similar bill passed; however, its scope had been substantially narrowed due to pressure from Kano, Rev. George Allen Beecher, and numerous businessmen around the state who sent letters to their representatives.⁴⁰ A North Platte lawyer named Hoagland proposed the alternative

bill that passed. In Kano's words, it would: "Allow ownership of city property, but no more ownership of farm land. And allow tenants to have a five-year, rather than a two-year lease on farm land."⁴¹ As a result, all farming Issei in Nebraska were required to be tenants, but their children, as full citizens, could own land when they came of age.

Ugai continued to support local interests in North Platte as well as Japanese interests around the state. He was one of the founders of the Japanese-Americanization Society, which was formed by the merger of the Lincoln County Association, the Nebraska Japanese Association in Scottsbluff, and the Mitchell Business Association in the Mitchell Valley. The Hotel Palace served as headquarters of the North Platte chapter, and Ugai was one of the directors.⁴² The society promoted equality for Japanese immigrants and tried to integrate the Japanese into traditional Nebraskan life.

Ugai also took care to demonstrate his patriotism during times of war. In 1917, in compliance with government recommendations, he implemented Meatless Tuesday and Wheatless Wednesday at the café. In an article for his patrons, he stated that while inconvenient, everyone must do their part to support the war effort and that the quality of the food would not be lacking on these special days. Ugai also registered for the draft on September 10, 1918, though he was not called to serve.⁴³ Ugai further contributed by purchasing \$1,000 in Liberty Bonds. While he purchased the most, many Japanese laborers living in North Platte also purchased government bonds in the amount of \$50 to \$100.⁴⁴

Twenty-three years later, as information reached Nebraska about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Ugai brought the news to Fr. Kano saying, "A serious matter has occurred! War has begun!"⁴⁵

The Japanese-Americanization Society disbanded the next day, along with many other Japanese organizations. The Japanese in the country's interior wanted to distance themselves from any activity that might raise suspicions of their loyalty. These measures allowed for a relatively calm life in the heartland—unlike the West Coast, where Japanese (and Americans of Japanese ancestry) were sent to internment camps.

Unlike other Japanese owned cafés—such as the Eagle Café in Scottsbluff, which servicemen on leave twice vandalized—the Palace Café apparently was never threatened during the war.⁴⁶ Although the café was across the street from the

— The New Hotel Palace and Cafe —

Is now Open for the Accommodation of the Public.

While a few of our fixtures are still lacking we are able to take care of the public both as to rooms and dining room and lunch counter service. All rooms are equipped with running hot and cold water and a number of the rooms have private baths attached. All rooms are neatly and attractively furnished, thus giving to our patrons the maximum of comfort. In our dining room and at the lunch counter the best the market affords is served, and throughout our service is second to none.

Upon the arrival and installation of the delayed fixtures we will have a public opening and will be pleased to show the public one of the best appointed hotels and cafes in the state.

RICHI UGAI, Owner.

HUGH Y. WADA, General Manager.

W. S. CHENEY, Assistant Manager

When in North Platte
COME AND SEE US
Hotel Palace
Palace Cafe
Palace Bazaar
Everything first class and prices reasonable. Opposite Union Pacific Station.

Christmas Gifts for Everybody.

THE HOTEL PALACE BAZAAR HAS A LARGE STOCK OF ORIENTAL GOODS MOST SUITABLE FOR CHRISTMAS GIFTS. THESE GOODS ARE REASONABLY PRICED AND RUN FROM 5c to \$100.00

Hand-Painted China

Cups and Saucers, 25c to \$1.35 each.
Vases, all styles, 50c to \$1.00.
Japanese Tea Sets, \$4.00 to \$15.00.
Japanese Chocolate Sets at \$7.75 to \$15.50 set.
Berry Sets at \$4.50 to \$3.50.
Cake Sets at \$4.50 to \$5.50 set.
Salt and Pepper sets at \$6.00 to \$2.50 set.
Japanese Tea Pots at 75c to \$2.50.
Japanese Flower Bowls at 75c to \$3 each.
Salad Sets at 50c each.

Hand-Embroidered Needlework

Embroidered Ladies Slippers at \$1 to \$2.50.
Men's Silk Robes at \$12.50 to \$18.50.
Baby Comforts at \$3 to \$7.50.
Cotton Crepe Kimonos at \$5 to \$6 each.
Ladies Silk Handkerchiefs at 75c to \$1.25.
Men's Silk Handkerchiefs at \$1 to \$2.
Silk Cushion Tops at \$3 to \$7.50.
Ladies Silk Shawls at \$10 to \$20.
Ladies Silk Hand Bags at \$7.50 to \$9.00.

A PLEASURE TO SHOW GOODS.

WORTH ANYONES TIME TO SEE

HOTEL PALACE BAZAAR

Entrance Through Hotel Lobby.

famous North Platte Canteen, there is no evidence that anyone vandalized or disrupted Ugai's business.⁴⁷ While Ugai continued life as usual, three of his four children entered military service. Fred, the oldest, enlisted in January 1941, months before his draft number was called and almost a year before Pearl Harbor. Norman likewise served in the army, and youngest daughter Virginia enlisted as a nurse. Maguerite remained in North Platte to help her parents with the family business. All four Ugai children survived the war and returned home to

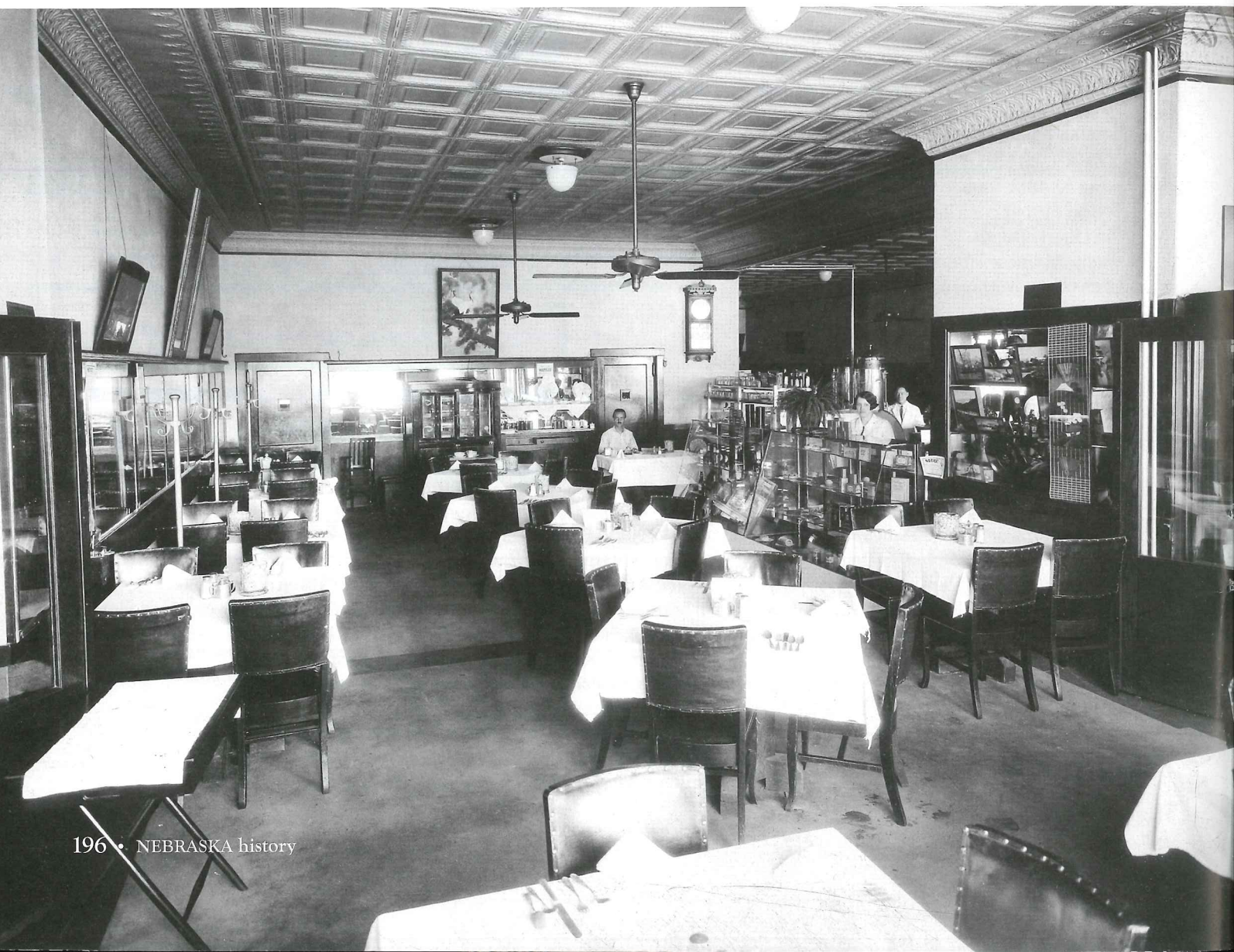
Above top: *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*, June 24, 1919

Above bottom: *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*, December 15, 1922



North Platte. None of the Ugai family was relocated during the war. Of the Nebraska Japanese, only Fr. Hiram Kano was arrested as a Class 1 enemy and sent to a relocation center.⁴⁸

Nebraskans demonstrated a range of attitudes toward Japanese Americans during the war. The University of Nebraska and Nebraska Wesleyan both admitted Nisei students from the internment camps, setting quotas of fifty and fifteen students respectively.⁴⁹ But not all Nebraskans approved. In July 1942, Addison E. Sheldon, Superintendent of the Nebraska State Historical Society, wrote to Governor Dwight Griswold on behalf of Sheldon's brother, a farmer near Scottsbluff who employed a Japanese family. Some members of this family had been residing in California at the time of Pearl Harbor, and were now interned in Manzanar. Sheldon asked that the governor intervene to have them returned to Nebraska. Griswold declined, saying that he couldn't guarantee their safety if he did so.⁵⁰





After the war, Ugai sold the property at 320 East 6th for \$11,000 on October 27, 1947, and made his final real estate purchase the following February with the purchase of a house at 104 N. Sycamore for \$17,000.⁵¹ This was the first property for which Shinayo co-signed at the date of purchase, and was the home in which she would spend her final years. She died on April 8, 1951, at age fifty-five.

Although the population of Japanese in Nebraska had remained steady since 1910, the number of Issei purchasing property had risen sharply by this time. Ugai, meanwhile, eventually sold his properties to his children and to the business. The first property he purchased in 1910 was sold to his two sons and their wives on January 20, 1953; his most-recently-purchased property was sold to his daughter Virginia the same day. The land for the Hotel Palace and Café was sold to the Hotel Palace Inc., which incorporated in 1948. Richi Ugai was the company's president, eventually replaced by his son Norman. All of the properties were sold

for less than face value as means of transferring property to his children.

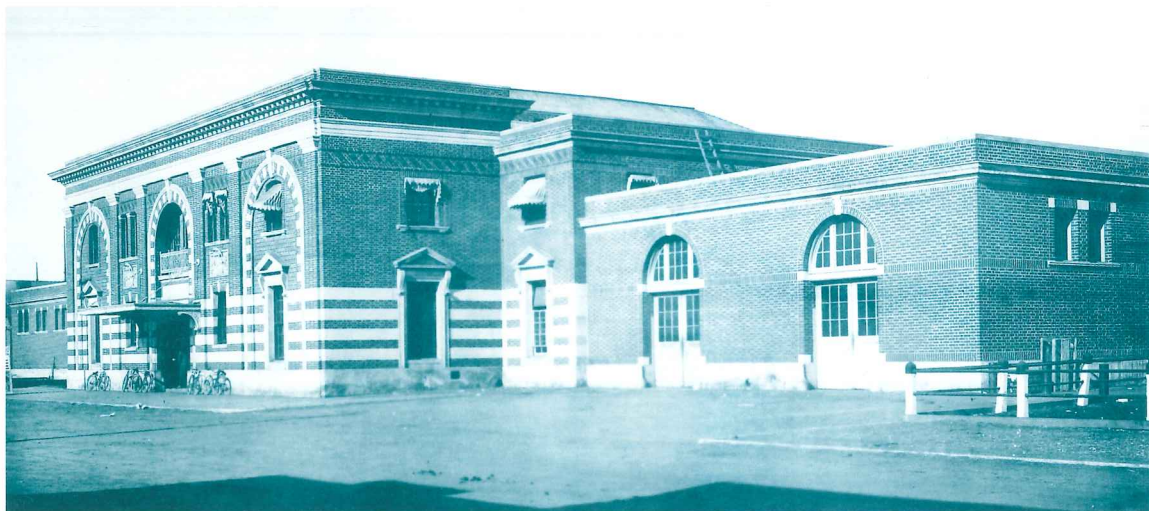
With the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, the Nebraska Issei were finally allowed to apply for citizenship.⁵² Ugai was in the first group to take the oath on September 8, 1953. He spent the rest of his life in North Platte, dying in 1961 at age seventy-eight. He is buried in the North Platte cemetery.

Coming to America with nothing, Richi Ugai made a name for himself in less than five years and became one of North Platte's most prominent businessmen in little over a decade. Throughout his career he worked hard and displayed a positive attitude, and invested boldly to promote and expand his businesses. All of his children attended college, and three of the four purchased land and property from their father in 1953. While few outside North Platte knew Richi Ugai personally, his contribution to the Japanese community reached across the state.

Above and left: inside the Palace Cafe.

Opposite, top: Ugai launched the Palace Bazaar, specializing in traditional Japanese items, in the back of the Hotel Palace in 1921.

North Platte's Union Pacific Depot, across the street from the Hotel Palace and Palace Café.



NOTES

Originally from Grand Prairie, Texas, Griffen Farrar is a senior at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, majoring in Political Science and History with a focus in East Asia. He works in State Historic Preservation Office at the NSHS, has interned with the U.S. Department of State at the U.S. Consulate in Guangzhou, China, and is writing an undergraduate thesis about Sino-Japanese relations seventy years after the end of World War II in Asia.

¹ I want to thank the Lincoln County Assessor's office and the Lincoln County Register of Deeds. These two offices were helpful in tracking down housing purchases that Richi Ugai made over the course of his life in North Platte. I also thank the State Historic Preservation Office at the NSHS for putting up with my myriad questions. This project would not have been possible without their support. Finally I thank my UNL faculty advisor Dr. Parks Coble for listening as I tried to explain parts of my research and for offering helpful suggestions to improve the project. Hiram Kano, *A History of the Japanese in Nebraska* (Scottsbluff: Scottsbluff Public Library, 1984), 3.

² Ibid.

³ In speaking with Richi Ugai's granddaughter Susan Ugai, she said he may have stopped in Hawaii on his way to California and then on to Nebraska. She remembers hearing stories of Richi working on the sugarcane fields while earning money to move to California.

⁴ Naturalization Record for Richi Ugai, found in the Nebraska State Historical Society Archives on RG218 microfilm roll #218 VII Petition and Records.

⁵ See Twelfth U.S. Census Record 1900. Census Place: Crawford, Dawes, Nebraska; Roll: 921; Page: 3B; Enumeration District: 0081; FHL microfilm: 1240921. Census Place: Lincoln Ward 6, Lancaster, Nebraska; Roll: 933; Page: 3B; Enumeration District: 0069; FHL microfilm: 1240933. Census Place: Lincoln Ward 6, Lancaster, Nebraska; Roll: 933; Page: 3B; Enumeration District: 0069; FHL microfilm: 1240933. See also, Thirteenth U.S. Census Record 1910, North Platte, Lincoln County. April 16, 1910. Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910 (NARA microfilm publication T624, 1,178 rolls). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C. By comparing the 1910 census with city directories from the 1911 and 1913 few of the seventy-five Issei listed on the census were still in North Platte a few years after.

⁶ The Union Pacific Depot was directly across from the Palace Hotel and Café. It was located at 221 E. Front Street, North Platte. The depot burned down in 1917, but was quickly rebuilt in the same general location.

⁷ *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*, June 22, 1909, 4. Richi Ugai is described as a "hustler" who will take the business far.

⁸ Thirteenth U.S. Census Record 1910, North Platte, Lincoln County. April 16, 1910. Enumerated District 180. Sheet No 21 A.

⁹ Lincoln County Register of Deeds. Property at 2104 East 2nd St. purchase information can be found in Book A11 pg 302,327 and 347. To see the deed when sold see: Book 107 pgs 191 and 193. Adjusted for inflation these three lots would cost \$27,000 in today's dollars. <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>

¹⁰ Lincoln County Register of Deeds. The house still stands at 2104 East 2nd St. in North Platte. To see deed see: Book B3 pg 529 and Book B5 pg 324. In book 95 pg 020 his wife is added to the deed. Adjusted for inflation the two lots would cost \$16,943 and the house \$31,000 in 2014 dollars. <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>.

¹¹ *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Aug. 4 and Nov. 17, 1911. Adjusted for inflation these two purchases would cost \$59,126 in today's dollars. <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>

¹² Richi Ugai is listed as a "friend" on a number of ship manifests of people from Japan who indicated North Platte, Nebraska, as their final destination. Located under the California, Passenger and Crew List #16. Arrival at Port of San Francisco on April 14, 1928.

¹³ *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*, April 5, 1912, 4.

¹⁴ Ibid., April 16, 1912, 5.

¹⁵ Ibid., Feb. 11, 1913, 5 and 7.

¹⁶ Ibid., Feb. 8 and 29, 1916.

¹⁷ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Lincoln County, Nebraska. The deed can be found in Book B7 pg 154. To see the deed when the property sold see Book 94 pg 253. This property was Block 103, east 24 feet. Adjusted for inflation, \$11,000 equals \$257,000 in 2014 dollars.

¹⁸ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Lincoln County, Nebraska. The deed can be found in Book 45 pg 698. The property was Block 103, west 44 feet of lot 2. \$16,000 in 1917 would be \$295,000 in 2014 dollars.

¹⁹ Lincoln County Register of Deeds, Lincoln County, Nebraska. The deed can be found in Book 52 on pg 191. The property was Block 113, east 44 feet of lot 1. Purchased April 12, 1920, for \$6,500 from Joseph and Julia Quinn. \$6,500 would be \$77,000 in 2014 dollars.

²⁰ *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Oct. 31 and Nov. 14, 1913.

²¹ Grave Marker, Fort McPherson National Cemetery, Lincoln County, Nebraska. Location: 12004 S Spur 56A Maxwell, NE 69151. Headstone displays Fred Ugai's date of birth.

²² *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*, June 15, 1915, 1.

²³ Hiram Kano, *Nikkei Farmer on the Nebraska Plains* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2010), 108.

²⁴ *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*, July 6, 1.

²⁵ The Mikado is a title given to the Emperor of Japan by the West, made famous in a play of the same name by Gilbert and Sullivan in 1885.

²⁶ *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Dec. 8, 1914, 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Sept. 22, 1922, 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, June 26, 1914, 5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Nov. 3, 1914, 8.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Aug. 21, 1921, 1-4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, June 11, 1918, 1.

³² *Ibid.*, July 29, 1919, 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, Sept. 2, 1919, 4. Over three or four years' time, D. A. Freedman took out periodic advertisements in the *Semi-Weekly Tribune*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, March 8 and Dec. 6, 1915.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Oct. 01, 1920, 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Feb. 11, 1921, 2.

³⁷ Edwin Ferguson, "The California Alien Land Law and the Fourteenth Amendment," *California Law Review* (1947): 62-66. The plan to segregate Japanese pupils failed because of the actions of President Theodore Roosevelt, who called the action a "wicked absurdity." See Edward Strong, *The Second Generation Japanese Problem* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), 41.

³⁸ U.S. Department of State, Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan, February 21, 1911. *United States Statutes at Large* 37, 1504. This treaty was in effect until July 26, 1939, when the United States government sent notice to abrogate the treaty. See "The Secretary of State to the Japanese Ambassador (Horinouchi)," *Foreign Relations of the United States 1939, Volume III: The Far East* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1955), 559.

³⁹ Kano, *A History of the Japanese in Nebraska*, 12.

⁴⁰ See George Allen Beecher, "Address Before the Judiciary Committee of the Senate of Nebraska," March 15, 1921. NSHS RG2509.AM, Box 14, Folder 3.

⁴¹ Kano, *A History of the Japanese in Nebraska*, 14. To see the brief overview of House Roll Bill 138 see: Nebraska

House Journal Fortieth Session, 1921, NSHS catalog number 328.32 N27j 1921 c.1, pp. 134 and 1882.

⁴² *Ibid.* Father Kano was the president of the Japanese-Americanization Society throughout the existence of the organization. Membership in the society numbered 179 in 1927.

⁴³ Richi Ugai Draft Registration Card. Registration State: Nebraska; Registration County: Lincoln; Roll: 1711704. Found at Ancestry.com, World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918. Original Data: United States, Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918. Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration. M1509, 4,582 rolls. Imaged from Family History Library microfilm.

⁴⁴ *North Platte Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Oct. 26, 1917, 7.

⁴⁵ Hiram Kano, *Nikkei Farmer on the Nebraska Plains* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2010), 103-104.

⁴⁶ Tuttle, William. "Daddy's gone to war": *The Second World War in the Lives of America's Children* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 167.

⁴⁷ Funded and operated by volunteers, the North Platte Canteen provided free meals and snacks to troop trains that stopped at the depot.

⁴⁸ Kano, *A History of the Japanese in Nebraska*; Kano, *Nikkei Farmer on the Nebraska Plains*. Entire.

⁴⁹ Andrew Wertheimer, "Admitting Nebraska's Nisei: Japanese American Students at the University of Nebraska, 1942-1945," *Nebraska History* 83 (2002): 58-72.

⁵⁰ Letter from A. E. Sheldon to Governor Griswold, July 8, 1942. Letter from Griswold to Sheldon, July 10, 1942. Dwight Griswold Gubernatorial Papers. RG1 SG32, Box 25, Folder 469. Found at NSHS. Manzanar was one of the camps where Japanese Americans were interned after President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066.

⁵¹ Lincoln County Register of Deeds. To see the deed see book 95 pg 061. To see the deed when the property was sold see book 107 pg 189. The N. Sycamore property was Block 178, the south 72 feet of east 4 feet of Lot 7 and the south 72 feet of Lot 8. \$11,000 in 1947 and \$17,000 in 1948 would be \$92,000 and \$167,000 respectively in 2014 dollars.

⁵² U.S. Department of State, Department of the Historian. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/immigration-act> See also: McCarran-Walter Act, so named for sponsors Senator Pat McCarran (D-NV) and Representative Francis Walter (D-PA). US Code, Title 8, Chapter 12, Subchapter III, Part II, Section 1422.

