

## **‘We Americans Have Carried on Much as Usual’: The American Association of Nagasaki**

Lane R. Earns

Contrary to what one might imagine, the American Association of Nagasaki was not a product of the bustling foreign settlement period (1859-1899) when well over a hundred Americans resided here and thousands of sailors flocked to this seaport town, but of a quieter time between the two world wars when the influence of the United States had already waned considerably. It grew out of an idea originally hatched by American merchants on Wall Street in 1898 who felt that with the end of extraterritoriality an organization was needed to protect U.S. commercial interests in East Asia.

By the time a branch had been established at Nagasaki in 1923, there were, however, few American commercial interests left to protect, and the local American Association became dominated by missionaries, consular officials and U.S. Army Depot employees. Active annual Association membership remained constant at about two to three dozen, with members gathering primarily to celebrate American holidays and to remind one another of their bond to a country thousands of miles away. More practical accomplishments included the contribution of money for those in need and care for the many American graves scattered in cemeteries around the city. The Association disbanded when nearly all of its members left Japan to escape the increased hostility directed toward foreigners on the eve of WWII.

### **Creation of a National Organization in Japan**

The first organization specifically tailored for Americans in Japan had its origins in a January 1898 meeting on Wall Street in New York City of “merchants and others interested in the defense and maintenance of the commercial rights and privileges possessed by the United States in China.” This led to the formal organization in June of the American Asiatic Association, with Everett Frazar as its first President. Soon this group realized that it would be imperative to look after American interests in Japan as well, so it “encouraged the formation of branch Societies in China and Japan. Thus [in October 1899] the A.A.A. of Japan was organized, with its officers and executive committee in Yokohama, its first president being the late Mr. James R. Morse, the distinguished head of the American Trading Company.”

The American Asiatic Association at Yokohama remained active until 1917. At that time the organization was changed “into a larger American society to be known as the American Association of Japan. The central office of the Association remained in Yokohama and ‘Local Committees’ were organized in Yokohama, Tokyo, Kobe and Seoul.”

Although efforts were made to draft a common constitution for the American Association of Japan, “the organization proved too cumbersome and the local communities soon fell apart, and became the...American Associations of Kobe, Tokyo, and Yokohama.” Kobe first drafted its local constitution in 1910, with separate associations being formed in Yokohama and Tokyo in 1919. Nagasaki followed with its own local branch in 1923, thus creating four separate associations in Japan.

### **Establishment of the American Association of Nagasaki**

The driving force behind the establishment of the Nagasaki branch was U.S. Consul Henry B. Hitchcock, who earlier had been active in the Yokohama chapter. When Hitchcock arrived in Nagasaki

in November 1922, the American residents of the town were in desperate need of something to rekindle a spark in their lives. Not only had the American presence in the area diminished, but the previous U.S. Consul had committed suicide earlier in the year, after having been recalled to Washington to explain some financial difficulties related to an earlier posting in Seoul. The establishment of an American Association in Nagasaki seemed like just the remedy for the situation.

The American Association of Nagasaki was founded on July 4, 1923 at the Nagasaki Hotel when thirty-four of the thirty-nine adult U.S. residents of Nagasaki attended the inaugural meeting. The meeting was in response to a June 25 letter sent by Hitchcock to American residents of the town inviting them to attend a dinner at the Nagasaki Hotel on America's Independence Day. The dining room and tables at the hotel were decorated with American flags and toasts were made to U.S. President Warren G. Harding and the First Lady.

After dinner, a meeting was held to discuss a draft constitution drawn up by Consul Hitchcock modeled after American Association constitutions in Tokyo, Yokohama and Kobe. With a few amendments added to satisfy local conditions, the constitution was adopted by the gathering.

### **Officers and Membership of the American Association**

The next step was to elect officers of the Association. Chosen as President was Rev. Francis N. Scott, a Methodist missionary teaching at Chinzei Gakuin. Selected Vice-President was Major Rigby D. Valliant of the U.S. Quartermaster's Office in Nagasaki. Rev. Walter W. Krider of the Methodist Episcopal Church was named Secretary, and the Consul's wife, Sarah Hitchcock, was appointed Treasurer. An Executive Committee was also created with the following members selected: Rev. Luman B. Shafer, Rev. David C. Ruigh and Minnie Taylor, all from the Reformed Church in America and Tozan Gakuin; Henry Hitchcock, and Harriet M. Howey, a teacher at Kwassui Woman's College.

The inaugural meeting of the American Association of Nagasaki ended with the singing of the national anthem. Afterwards, some of the members met in the hotel parlor and passed the remainder of the night singing patriotic songs.

As stipulated in the Association's constitution, there were three classes of membership: active, associate and honorary. Each candidate for membership had to be nominated by one member of the Executive Committee and seconded by another before the entire committee voted on it. Election to membership was effective upon the payment of dues (three yen annually for active members and one yen for associate members). Only active members had the right to vote at Association meetings.

Although the city of Nagasaki was the headquarters of the Association (offices were at the U.S. Consulate at no. 5 Tokiwa-machi), active members could reside in any of the nine prefectures within the Nagasaki consular district: Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, Saga, Nagasaki, Oita,, Kumamoto, Miyazaki, Kagoshima and Okinawa. Associate membership was limited to those district residents living outside the city limits of Nagasaki. From 1923 to 1940 approximately 150 adult Americans held membership in the American Association of Nagasaki.

In spite of the fact that the national organization had its roots among New York businessmen, the only U.S.-operated company in town was Standard Oil (with two American employees), so in practice the Nagasaki branch of the Association was dominated by missionaries, consular employees,

and military personnel attached to the Army Depot. Of the seventeen presidents of the American Association of Nagasaki, fourteen were missionaries and three were Quartermaster offices.

As noted earlier, officers in the Association included a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. Election was for one year, but members were eligible for re-election. The Executive Committee consisted of five members, chosen from a slate with at least six names on it. Its members, like the Association's officers, also held one-year terms and were eligible for re-election. The Executive Committee supervised "the affairs, funds and property of the association." In practice, the U.S. Consul was usually appointed a member of this committee.

The annual general meeting of the American Association of Nagasaki was held in conjunction with the 4th of July picnic. According to the constitution by-laws,

*At this meeting shall be submitted the annual reports of the officers of the association and of the executive committee. The election of officers and members of the executive committee for the ensuing year shall also take place at the meeting.*

Amendments to the constitution could be made by a two-thirds vote of the active members present.

### **Objectives and Activities of the American Association**

According to Article II of the constitution, the American Association of Nagasaki had the following objectives:

- (1) To unite the Americans in this community in upholding the ideals and maintaining the traditions of the United States;*
- (2) To foster and safeguard, so far as it properly may, the interests and welfare of Americans;*
- (3) To gather and distribute information of interest and value to its members;*
- (4) To afford relief to Americans in distress who may be considered worthy;*
- (5) To act in concert with other American Associations in the Empire of Japan and the Far East, as occasion may require.*

Most of the activities of the Association related to the first objective listed above, although the obligation of number four was also taken seriously. The members generally met three times a year: Memorial Day, Independence Day and Thanksgiving. On occasion the American children would also host a Christmas party for other children of the foreign community. People also gathered from time to time to entertain visiting American naval officers or to honor departing members.

All three annual holiday celebrations were accompanied by specific projects. Memorial Day would begin with a religious service performed by a local minister and then members would visit the three local cemeteries (Oura, Inasa and Sakamoto) where Americans were buried to decorate the graves with flowers and American flags. Gifts were also given to the caretakers of the international cemeteries at Oura and Sakamoto.

In 1924 Association members were joined in memorial Day services by officers from the U.S.S. Blackhawk. A salute was fired over the Navy dead at Oura International Cemetery. In 1935 cleaning Inasa International Cemetery became the Association's project for the year after Rev. Scott read the group a letter from the niece of a ship's captain who had died in the 1860s and was buried there.

In general, the Association spent considerable time locating, caring for, restoring and permanently marking the American graves in town. Its most lasting contribution was identifying graves that had once contained Americans, but in which the bodies had later been disinterred for transport back to the United States. These graves belonged predominantly to sailors who had died in East Asia and were buried temporarily in Nagasaki. Sometime later when an American ship came to port, the bodies would be disinterred and returned to relatives in the U.S. for permanent burial at family cemeteries. Association members went through Sakamoto International Cemetery and marked twenty graves (eighteen in the main section and two in the addition across the street) with simple crosses containing the inscription "U.S.A." plus the number of the cemetery plot. The U.S.A. marked graves became a mystery after the war and the prevailing rumor for years was that they represented American POWs in Nagasaki that had been killed by the atomic bomb.

On July 4th, Association members usually held a day-long session at a local beach. Festivities began with sports and recreation along the beach, followed by the annual business meeting and a picnic dinner, and then concluding with a fireworks display. The business meeting was thus crowded between a number of entertaining events and made as painless as possible.

On Thanksgiving, festivities began with a reading of the Presidential Proclamation by the U.S. Consul. This was followed by a formal address by a visiting clergy and a religious service at the Seamen's Home. At the latter, contributions were made to the Fund for Needy Americans to assist with the care and repatriation of destitute Americans in the district. Events then concluded with a turkey dinner and entertainment hosted by the U.S. Consul and his wife at their home.

The Association also at times hosted U.S. naval officers when American ships were in port. One such occasion occurred in September 1928 when the officers of four U.S. naval vessels were entertained on the lawn of Association member Rev. Willis Hoekje overlooking the harbor.

It also hosted farewell dinners for members, as is evident from the October 1938 dinner held at Kwassui Women's College in honor of U.S. Vice-Consul Ralph Cory who was departing for the United States. The occasion was also used to welcome back U.S. Consul Arthur Tower and his wife to Nagasaki.

The American Association of Nagasaki was thus a social organization created to promote American values and to protect American interests in Nagasaki. It celebrated American holidays, cared for American graves, and supported destitute Americans in a cyclical pattern that seemed to isolate its members from the outside world. In 1939, with war raging in both Asia and Europe, its secretary recorded the following in the Association's annual report. "Thus comes to an end a year when the world at large has seen little but unrest, but a period during which we Americans living in Nagasaki have carried on much as usual."

The self-imposed cocoon would not continue much longer, however, as the climate in Japan was turning increasingly anti-foreign. In January 1941 Consul Tower sent his wife and children to Hawaii for reasons of safety. He was ordered in June to close the consulate in Nagasaki, and in early August he proceeded to Kobe to supervise the U.S. Consulate there. When the Japanese attack occurred on Pearl Harbor on December 7 (December 8 Japan time), only two Association members remained in the country. Consul Tower was arrested in Kobe and the Reformed Church missionary Sara Couch was arrested at her home in Nagasaki. Tower was repatriated in August 1942, while Couch served out the war in internment camps in Nagasaki and Tokyo, before returning to Nagasaki

in mid-September 1945. Upon Couch's return, the only Americans she encountered were Marines attached to the Occupation Forces who were administering the devastated city.

In retrospect, the ideals of the American Association of Nagasaki at times seem outdated and a reflection of the self-imposed isolation promoted by its members, but they also hark back to a time when Americans cared more about those who came before them and those less fortunate than themselves. Americans living in Nagasaki today might benefit from the greater sense of community and shared obligations that such an organization helps foster among disparate people living so far from home.

### **Membership List, American Association of Nagasaki**

Akard, Martha B.\*\* [Kyushu Jogakuin, Kumamoto]

Allen, Hugh A. (Mr. & Mrs.) [Army Depot]

Altman, Esther [Kwassui]

Anglea, T. Hoyes (Mr. & Mrs.) [Koto Shogyo Gakko]

Ashbaugh, Adella M. [Kwassui]

Benard, F.\*\* \* [Funatsu/Shimabara]

Bouldin, George Washington [Fukuoka]

Brittian, Blanche [Kwassui]

Brown, V.H.

Burmeister, Margaret

Bruner, Glen W. [Chinzei & U.S. Consulate]

Bruns, Bruno\*\* (Rev. & Mrs.) [Saga]

Burke, D.T.\*\* (Mrs.) [Seinan Jogakuin, Kokura]

Clarke, James S. (Capt. & Mrs.) [Army Depot]

Couch, Helen [Kwassui]

Couch, Sara [Tozan/Reformed Church]

Curry, Olive S. [Kwassui]

Darrow, Flora [Tozan]

Davis, Dee [U.S. Consulate]

Davis, Lois [Kwassui]

Dees, M.J.

DeMaagd, J.C.

Dozier, Rev. C.D.\*

Dozier, C.K.\*\* [Seinan Jogakuin, Kokura]  
Dozier, E.B.\*\* (Rev. & Mrs.) [Seinan Gakuin, Fukuoka]  
Ellis, J.  
Eringa, Dora  
Fehr, Vera J. [Kwassui]  
Fogle, F.M. (Capt. & Mrs.) [Army Depot]  
Frank, J.W.\*\* (Mr. & Mrs.) [Tokuyama]  
Gerrish, Ella  
Gillilan, Lillian  
Gorham, W.R. (Mr. & Mrs.)  
Hanson, C.T. (Mrs.)  
Harder, M. (Mrs. L.S. Miller)  
Hatter, David  
Heineman, L.E.  
Henry (Mr. & Mrs.)  
Hitchcock, Evelyn B. [U.S. Consulate]  
Hitchcock, Henry B.\* [U.S. Consulate]  
Hitchcock, Sarah [U.S. Consulate]  
Hoekje, H. [Tozan]  
Hoekje, Willis G. [Tozan]  
Hoeksema, Martin  
Holmgren, Valdemar L.  
Hospers, Hendrine  
Howey, Harriet M. [Kwassui/Fukuoka Jo Gakko]  
Kellogg, Walter W.  
Krider, Walter W. (Rev. & Mrs.) [American Episcopal/Chinzei]  
Kuyper, H.\*\* (Rev. & Mrs.) [Oita]  
Lang, G.W. (Mr. & Mrs.)  
Laurie, Louis M., Jr.  
Lawrence, Elizabeth

Lawrence, Leila [Secretary, U.S. Consulate]  
Leblang, Joe  
Lee, Mabel\*\* [Kumamoto]  
Linn, J.K. (Mr. & Mrs.)  
Lippard, C.K.\*\* (Rev. & Mrs.) [Moji]  
Martin, Truman M. (Capt.) [Army Depot]  
Mason, Jackus (Mr. & Mrs.) [Warrant Officer, Army Depot]  
Matson, H.T.\*\* [Miyazaki]  
McAlpine, James A. [Manager, Seamen's Home/Tozan]]  
Miller, L.S. (Rev.) [Kumamoto]  
Mills, Ernest O. (Rev. & Mrs.) [Southern Methodist]  
Mokma, Gerald [Tozan]  
Moore, B.C. (Rev. & Mrs.) [Reformed Church/Kurume]  
Moore, Helen G.\*\* (Mrs. West) [Fukuoka Jo Gakko, Fukuoka/Kwassui]  
Noordhoff, Jeane [Kwassui]  
Norman. C.E. (Mr. & Mrs.)  
Oldridge, Mary Belle [Kwassui]  
Palmore, P.L.  
Peckham, Caroline S. [Kwassui]  
Peeke, Harmon Van Slyck [Tozan]  
Peete, Azalea  
Place, Pauline A. [Kwassui]  
Potts, M.E.\*\* [Kyushu Jogakuin, Kumamoto]  
Raisty, L.B.  
Ruigh, Christine C. [Tozan]  
Ruigh, David C. [Tozan]  
Ryder, Stephen W. (Rev. & Mrs.) [Tozan]  
Salisbury, L. [U.S. Consulate]  
Sauer, F.  
Schillinger, G.W.\*\* (Rev. & Mrs.) [Kyushu Gakuin, Kumamoto]

Scott, Annie J. [Chinzei]  
Scott, Francis N. [Chinzei]  
Shafer, Amy [Tozan]  
Shafer, Bessie  
Shafer, Luman (Rev.) [Tozan]  
Sharpe, Margaret [Secretary, U.S. Consulate]  
Sheets, Florence  
Simons, Marian G.  
Smith, Pauline (Mrs. James McAlpine)  
Smith, Van (Mr. & Mrs.)  
Smith, W. C. (Mr. & Mrs.) [Warrant Officer, Army Depot]  
Soden, A.M. [Kaisei Chugakko]  
Spamer, Carl O. [U.S. Consulate]  
Spamer, Frieda [U.S. Consulate]  
Spencer, Robert S.\*\* (Rev. & Mrs.) [Fukuoka]  
Stack, J.M. (Mr. & Mrs.)  
Stewart, S.A.\*\* [Oita]  
Strain, Philip  
Sykes, W.  
Taylor, Minnie [Tozan]  
Teague, Caroline M. [Methodist, Kumamoto]  
Ter Borg, John\*\* (Rev.) [Reformed Church]  
Thayer, Marian V. [Kwassui]  
Thompson, Everett W. (Rev. & Mrs.) [Chinzei]  
Tower, Arthur F. (Consul) [U.S. Consulate]  
Tower, Kathleen H. [U.S. Consulate]  
Trumbell, Walter A. (Capt. & Mrs.) [Army Depot]  
Valliant, Rigby D. (Major & Mrs.) [Army Depot]  
Vogel, J.H.  
Vogelweid, Louis V. [Clerk, U.S. Consulate]



Walvoord, Florence [Baiko, Shimonoseki]  
Wells, L.A.\*\* [Yamaguchi]  
West, R.E. (Rev.) [Chinzei]  
White, Anna L. [Kwassui]  
Williams, R.S.\*\* (Mr. & Mrs.) [Moji]  
Wright, F.S.  
Wythe, Grace K. [Fukuoka]  
Young, Marianna [Kwassui]  
Young, Whitney [Vice-Consul, U.S. Consulate]  
• deceased

\*\* associate member

### **Presidents, American Association of Nagasaki**

1923 Rev. Francis N. Scott  
1924-26 Rev. David C. Ruigh  
1927 Rev. Walter W. Krider  
1928 Capt. James S. Clarke  
1929 Anna Laura White  
1930 Glen W. Bruner  
1931-32 Capt. Truman M. Martin  
1933-34 Caroline S. Peckham  
1935-36 Rev. Henry O. Mills  
1937 Jeane Noordhoff  
1938 Louis M. Laurie, Jr.  
1939 Rev. Everett W. Thompson

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Lane R. Earns. ““We Americans Have Carried on Much as Usual’: The American Association of Nagasaki.” *Crossroads: A Journal of Nagasaki History and Culture*, no. 4 (Summer 1996), 107–125.