



Landscapes of Injustice

This article in our series on the four claims highlights Claim #2, Dispossession Required Sustained Work. It comes to us from Laura Saimoto from the Vancouver Japanese Language School, one of our partner institutions. Congratulations to the hard work to have their school and Japanese Hall designated as a National Historic Site.

Examining the Sato Fonds

By Laura Saimoto, Community Relations Committee

With the help of Landscapes of Injustice's former post doc, Eiji Okawa, and the Nikkei National Museum's Collections Manager, Lisa Uyeda I spent the day at the museum archives to look at the original source documents from Principal Sato's collections. This was to prep our materials for our National Historic Site Announcement. I found the letter from Principal Sato, who was Secretary on the Board, to the School's lawyer who helped us navigate through the internment and keep the building.

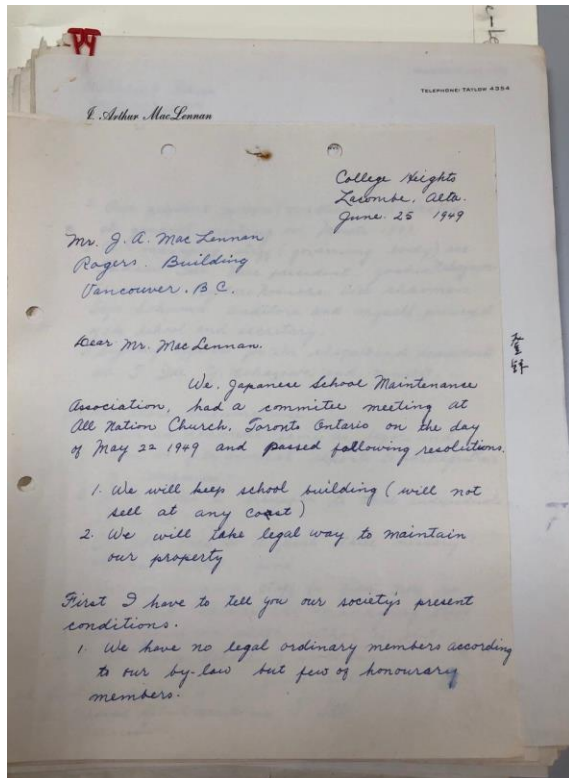


Photo: Source: Sato Fonds, Nikkei National Museum Archives

I pieced together the timeline based on the original source letters in the Sato fonds, and now have a much better understanding of what actually happened. It was definitely a zigzag miracle that we are still

here. There are Custodian original documents and also the board's responses, collected from the directors. The board of directors, who were scattered in various internment sites, did everything through our lawyer, Norris MacLennan to manage all issues dealing with the property and organization. Really, when you look at it, it's against all odds that the property wasn't sold. The Custodian waited until 1946 to announce the sell-off of Society & Association properties. The board told the Custodian they would only sell for \$35,000. It cost \$40,000 to build the building in 1928. What is very interesting is that the 1949 property value assessment of 475 Alexander was \$2250. This is very undervalued. No buyers bit. In the meantime, the building was under lease to the Department of National Defence and then the Army & Navy Department Store. All transactions were being managed through our lawyer.

The next hurdle: because of the internment, we were in default from 1942 - 49 with the Company of Registrar for not filing our Annual Reports and Financial Statements and not holding AGMs. Somehow, with the help of the lawyer and getting all the documentation together - all the director lists, the financial statements or Custodian financial statements, and then holding meetings via post and the AGM within BC - they managed to get in good standing with the Company of Registrars by 1952. There was no membership during the internment since no one paid fees. According to our bylaws, because the fee was 50 cents/month and you became a voting member when you paid 3 months, they collected \$1.50 retroactively or \$5 for annual member fees so that lapsed members due to being interned could vote at the first post-internment AGM. In 1952 the Society once again came into good standing with the Registrar. Thanks to the community making the building usable again - fixing and cleaning while they themselves were again starting their lives from scratch, the School reopened in 1953. An unbelievable story of community resilience, which includes our trusted lawyer, J. A. MacLennan, who used the system to beat the system!

How VJLS-JH kept property				
Source: Sato Fonds				Still continued to pay property tax throughout the Internment years through lawyer
	File #1580	Property address: Lots 20 to 22 and Lots 23 and 24, Block 38, D.L. No. 196, Group 1, New Westminster District		
Fonds #	Timeline	Addressed to:	From	Content
	May 3, 1941			Last general meeting before war started (officers elected)
1996.170.1.8	June 10, 1942	Sato	M.L. Brown, Office Manager, Security Commission	Equipment list of School loaned to Hastings Park Clearing Station. 374 desks; 377 benches; school bell 1; blackboards 8. Crown paid \$400 to borrow equipment.
	July 1942			Custodian gets permission from board to lease building to Department of National Defense

1996.170.1.8	October 21, 1946	Ide, Tadasu (Ingersoll ON)	A.G. McArthur, Office of the Custodian	"You are aware that Japanese owned real estate in the protected are has been subject to sale under the Government policy of liquidation. Properties owned by or registered in the name of an association or society have so far not been advertised for sale. . . With the present demand for every type of building, this would appear to be an opportune time to dispose of such properties." Liquidation announcement letter
	October 28, 1946	A.G. McArthur, Office of the Custodian	Sato	Executive mtg held on Oct. 21 File No. 10526. States: "That if it is the policy of the government to dispose of the property, then we will be obliged to sell. However, we would like to sell it for not less than thirty-five thousand dollars."
	October 31, 1946	A.G. McArthur, Office of the Custodian	Ide, Nakazawa, Sato	Original letter in response to Custodian announcement to start liquidating
1996.170.1.1	June 11, 1947	Sato	Norris & MacLennan	Extend lease to Department of National Defense another 5 years; Would they accept \$2266 for damages incurred during their lease
	June 24, 1947	Sato	Norris & MacLennan	439 Alexander St. in very bad shape; tear down condition; both structures require roof repair
	July 10, 1947	Sato	Norris & MacLennan	Department of Defense will surrender their lease
	Oct 15/47 to March 31/50			Army & Navy Store Ltd leases 475 Alexander for \$150/M then \$160/M in current condition of building
	Oct. 22, 1947	Ide, Tadasu	Norris & MacLennan	Resolution to authorise 3 directors execution of lease; Annual Returns not filed from 1942 - 47 to keep in good standing and not be struck from Register of companies, need to file
	Oct. 26, 1947	Resolution of Directors		Tsutae Sato, (Secretary) authorized to sell 439 & 475
	Nov. 22, 1947	Judge Advocate General, Department of Defense, Army Headquarters	Norris & MacLennan	Leases surrendered end of Aug. 1947. Cash settlement for damages in lieu of restoration. 439 Alexander St (\$2226). 475 (\$850)
	Nov. 22, 1947	Sato	Norris & MacLennan	439 property sold to William Macht for full purchase price. \$2750.
	Dec. 31, 1947	Nakazawa, Yoshio	Norris & MacLennan	Dept National Defense agrees to pay \$850 for damages for 475 & \$2265 for 439

	March 11, 1948	Bank of Montreal	Norris & MacLennan	Requesting confirmation of receipt of payment from Dept of Nat Defense
1996.170.1.2	July 26, 1948	Mr. G.W. Smith, Macaulay, Nicolls, Maitland & Co. (realtor)	Sato (handwritten)	Macaulay had sent letter asking if they would sell. Sato replies, "But we don't want to sell the property for any coast". Before May 1949 meeting, stance was not to sell at any cost
	May 22, 1949			Japanese School Maintenance Association had committee meeting at All Nation Church, Toronto, ON and passed following resolutions
	June 25, 1949	Norris & MacLennan	Sato (handwritten)	Meeting resolutions
				1. We will keep school building (will not sell at any cost)
				2. We will take legal way to maintain our property
	July 5, 1949	Sato	Norris & MacLennan	Lawyer acknowledges desire to keep school buildings & do not desire to sell at any price and that you desire to take such legal steps as may be necessary to maintain property,
				From this point, lawyer helps school to get into good standing with Registrar of Companies as had not filed Annual Report; AGM minutes or financial statement from Jan 12/1942 - Jan. 12, 1949. So in default. Needed to get back into good standing
	Oct 5, 1949	Norris & MacLennan	Sato (handwritten)	Obstacles to getting back into good standing with Registrar:
				1. "no lawful member who paying membership fee" (during internment)
				2. Present directors elected at general meeting of 1942
				3. Directors M. Ishiawa (sic), President; G. Nakayama, Chairman; S. Uchida, Auditor are in Japan and K. Ishii and S. Okumura were dead
	Nov. 17, 1949	Sato	Norris & MacLennan	Lawyer's opinion that due to 'War Emergency Legislation' between 1942-49, would e be possible to reinstate Association on register of companies by filing Annual Reports & hold a meeting to agree that paying of membership fees be waived from 1942 - 49. But would still need to file Annual Reports.
				Very difficult to file necessary returns, but lawyer still advises to do so and not transfer property.

	Jan. 28, 1950	Norris & MacLennan	Sato (handwritten)	Sato lists director's lists and AGM meeting times, Financial Statements from 1941-42; 1942-49.
				Requests to send Custodian's statements as substitute for 42-49 Financial Statements
	Feb. 23, 1950	Norris & MacLennan	Sato (handwritten)	Bank balance of May 26, \$9963.23. "As for your letter of February 16, as i told you many times it is very hard to have Annual Meeting at our present condition. However, i can make necessary arrangement by asking with letter to our Directors instead of meeting. How do you think about this?
	March 29, 1950	Sato	Norris & MacLennan	School Report was accepted by Registrar of Companies and School is now in good standing. Paid lawyer \$75.25 for fees.
	Sept 2, 1950	Sato (handwritten)	Norris & MacLennan	Sato sends financial statement from June 1949 to May 1950 and Name of Directors from period of May 1950 to May 1951. Approved by Directors by letter as of June 26, 1950 because can't have general meeting.
	1950 Financial Statement			\$13,065.74 balance
	Aug. 4, 1952	Norris & MacLennan	Sato	AGM must be held in BC; in order to vote at AGM, must pay min. 3 months membership dues. Our by-laws said 50 cents per month membership, so needed to pay \$1.50 (3M fees) or annual of \$5.
	Sept. 6, 1952			Annual General Meeting held 8 pm gymnasium of United Church at corner of Powell & Jackson Streets.
	March 17, 1953	Sato	Norris & MacLennan	Annual Report and Notice of Change of Registered Office for Society filed an acknowledged by Registrar of Companies