

FREER, DETROIT AND JAPAN

An exhibit from the historic Charles Lang Freer House, Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute,
Wayne State University, 2015



Freer with Hara family and guests, Honmonku Sannotani (present day Sankei Gardens),
Yokohama, Japan, 1909 or 1911. *Freer Gallery Archives, Smithsonian.*



THE FREER HOUSE

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THE FREER HOUSE

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Created in conjunction with the Freer House lecture:

In Attendance to the Realm:

The Kano School of Painters in 17th & 18th Century Japan

by Yukio Lippit, PhD

Professor, History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University
at the Detroit Institute of Arts, May 4, 2014.

Program Host

David Weinberg, PhD

Lecture and Exhibit Sponsors

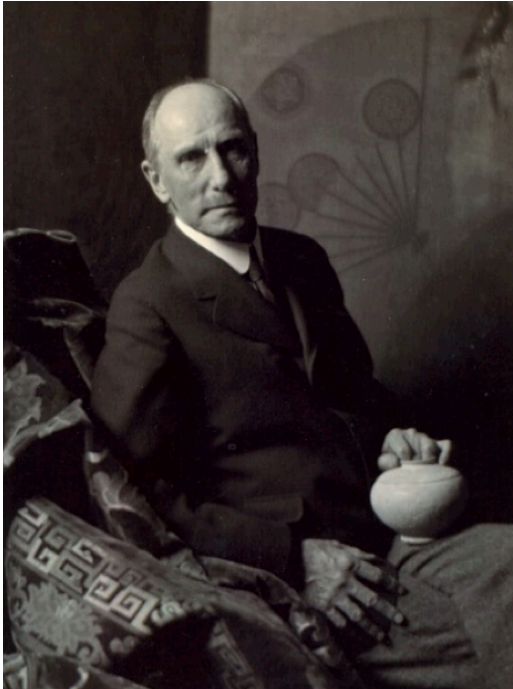


THE FREER HOUSE



**Charles Lang
Freer, 1916.**

Photograph by
Edward
Steichen. *George
Eastman House,
International
Museum of
Photography
and Film.*



**Freer House,
1906.**

Photograph by
C.M. Hayes. *Freer
Gallery of Art
Archives,
Smithsonian
Institution.*



**Freer Gallery
of Art, 1950.**

*Library of
Congress.*



Charles Lang Freer (1854-1919)

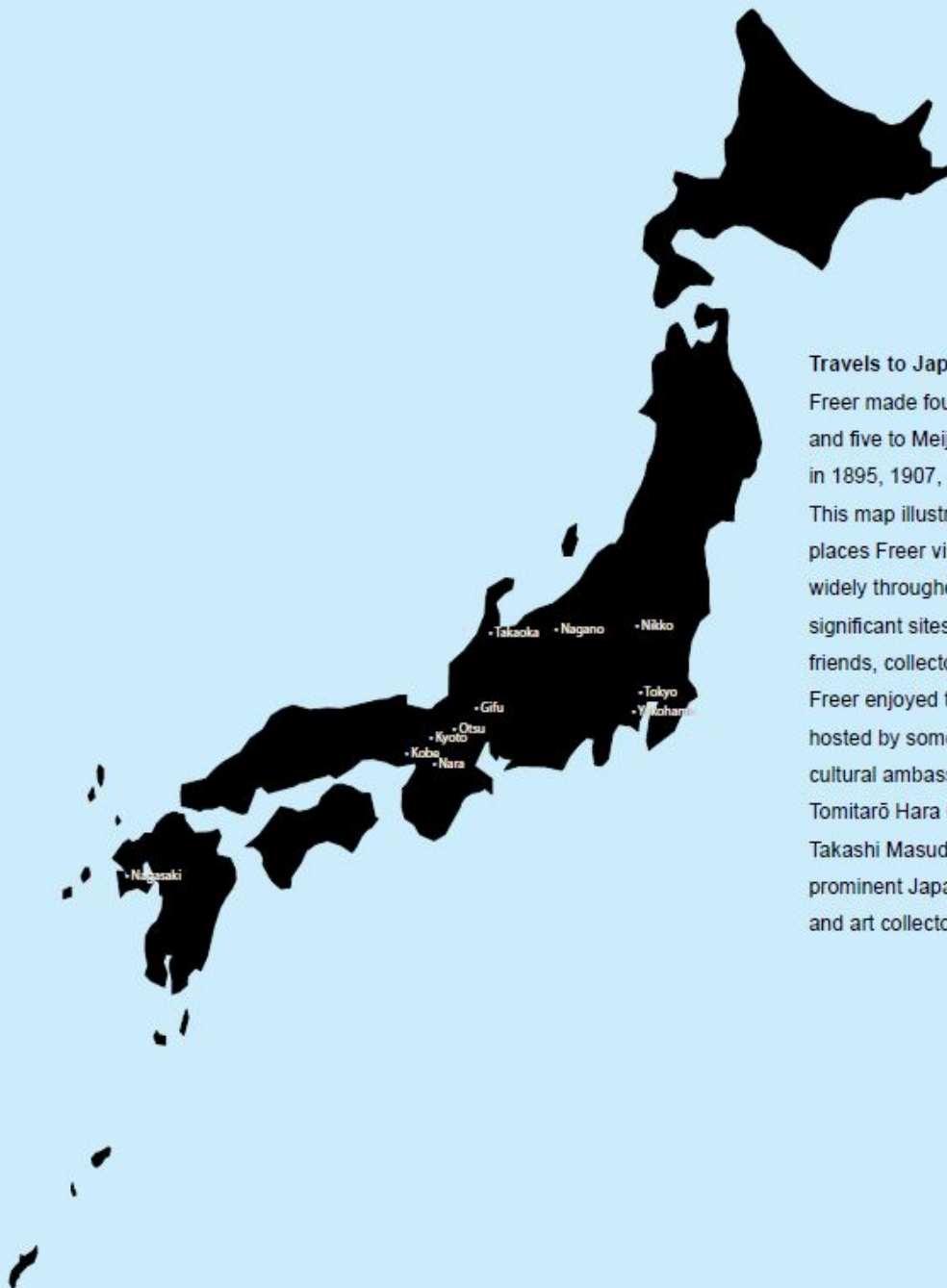
Born in Kingston, N.Y., Freer came to Detroit in 1880 to establish the Peninsular Car Works, a railroad freight car manufacturing company, with Frank J. Hecker. In 1890, the young industrialist and art collector commissioned Wilson Eyre to design his Ferry Avenue home. A collaboration of client, architect and artists, the house reflected Freer's ideals of harmony, simplicity, and surface beauty.

His fortune secure, Freer devoted his life to the study of art. His acquisitions included paintings by the American artists Dewing, Tryon, Thayer, and the largest collection of works by James McNeill Whistler. Encouraged by Whistler to explore aesthetic points of contact between East and West, Freer expanded his interests to Asia and the Middle East - establishing one of the world's greatest collections of Asian art.

Visitors from around the world came to Detroit to meet Freer and view his home and collection. Freer was a major cultural force in the city, actively supporting Pewabic Pottery, the Detroit Museum of Art (today's DIA), the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts (today's College for Creative Studies), and the University of Michigan. In 1906, Freer signed an agreement with the Smithsonian to bequeath his collection to the nation. Upon his death in 1919, Freer's collection was moved to Washington, D.C., to be housed at the Freer Gallery of Art, America's first national art museum. From 1906-1919, his Detroit home served as the original Freer Gallery of Art.

Freer's home was acquired in 1921 by the Merrill-Palmer School. Today, the house is listed on the City of Detroit, State of Michigan and National Register of Historic Places. The Freer House members and supporters, Merrill-Palmer Skillman Institute and Wayne State University are dedicated to preserving and restoring this internationally significant historic structure.

FREER AND JAPAN



Travels to Japan.

Freer made four major trips to Asia and five to Meiji-era (明治時代) Japan in 1895, 1907, 1909, and 1910-1911.

This map illustrates some of the places Freer visited as he traveled widely throughout the country, touring significant sites and meeting with friends, collectors, and dealers.

Freer enjoyed the privilege of being hosted by some of Japan's finest cultural ambassadors, such as Tomitarō Hara (原富太郎) and Takashi Masuda (益田孝), both prominent Japanese businessmen and art collectors.

**Charles Lang Freer:
America's Great Collector
of Japanese Art.**

Freer's first Asian art purchase in 1887 was a painted Japanese fan. As Freer became increasingly interested in Japanese art, he visited Japan five times between 1895 and 1911, building a pioneering collection including: Buddhist works from the 7th–17th century; significant examples of both Rimpa (琳派) and Kano school (狩野派) paintings; major works by the artists Hon'ami Kōetsu (本阿弥 光悦) and Tawaraya Sōtatsu (俵屋 宗達); Ukiyo-e paintings from the early 17th–19th century; the world's premier collection of paintings by Katsushika Hokusai (葛飾北斎); and the largest selection of ceramics outside of Japan by Ogata Kenzan (尾形乾山).



Buddhist sculpture.
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution. F1911.437.



Snow-laden grasses and snow-laden pine branches, 18th century, Ogata Kenzan, (Japanese, 1663 -1743), Edo Period. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, F1897.31a-b.



Tea bowl with design of pampas grass, early 18th century, Ogata Kenzan (1663-1743), Edo period. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, F1911.402.



Freer in Japan with the Hara Family, Sannotani, Yokohama, 1907. Freer poses with Tomitaro Hara, silk merchant and art collector, as well as Hara's wife Yasu (left), and daughter Haruko (right.) Second row (left to right): Miss Gates, the Hara family English tutor; Yokohama art dealer Yōzō Nomura; and one of Freer's ricksha men. *Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution.*

Tomitarō Hara (原富太郎) (1868–1939).

A notable collector of Japanese art, Hara also led the Imperial Silk Company and Yokohama Kōgyō Bank. In 1907, the Hara family hosted Freer at Sannotani (三之谷), their large villa overlooking Yokohama Bay, known today as Sankei Gardens (三溪園). Here Freer studied Hara's art collection and strolled in the elegant gardens, which included several historic buildings Hara had purchased and moved to his estate. Freer remembered the visit in a letter to his friend, Frank J. Hecker, as "one of those extraordinary manifestations of [Japanese] hospitality of which I am extremely unworthy and can never repay." Each of Freer's subsequent trips to Japan included a visit with the Hara family at Sannotani. Freer and Hara remained close friends, keeping in touch through correspondence and gifts of art.

“Collectors ought to help Mr. Freer get anything he wants for the sake of the world’s good.”

Takashi Masuda to Yōzō Nomura, as recalled by Nomura in a letter to Freer, November 29, 1907.

Takashi Masuda (益田 孝) (1848 – 1938). A highly charismatic and influential director of Mitsui & Company, Ltd., Masuda was a passionate collector of Sino-Japanese art and proponent of the tea ceremony. His tea gatherings functioned as salons where colleagues, collectors, and dealers could view and discuss works of art. Freer met Masuda during a 1907 trip to Japan. Their relationship began as rival collectors, but mutual admiration of artistic taste and business acumen blossomed into a lasting friendship. Masuda oversaw the 1930 dedication of a memorial monument to Freer at Kōetsu-ji (光悦寺) a temple in Kyoto dedicated to the Rimpa artist Kōetsu, whose significance and reputation Freer is credited with restoring in Japan and internationally.



Takashi Masuda in the tearoom of his Odawara estate.
Collection of Hisako Hatakeyama.



Takashi Masuda with teabowl.
Collection of Hisako Hatakeyama.



Bunkiō Matsuki.
From *“Descriptive Catalogue of an Important Collection of Japanese and Chinese Pottery,”* 1898.

Bunkiō Matsuki (松本文恭) (1867 -1940) was born in Nagano Prefecture to a family with commercial and artistic roots. Educated at a Tokyo Buddhist temple, Matsuki moved at age 21 to Salem, Massachusetts, where he established himself as a dealer in Japanese goods. In 1895, he opened a shop in Boston specializing in Japanese fine art. Freer became an important client and Matsuki frequently visited Freer's home on his annual buying trips to Asia.



Yōzō Nomura with wife Michi, and guest on the Nomura's wedding day in the garden of Samurai Shōkai Gallery, 1890. *Nomura Family collection.*

Yōzō Nomura (野村洋三) (1870 – 1965) was a respected art dealer who owned the Samurai Shōkai Gallery (サムライ商会) and the Yokohama New Grand Hotel. Freer was one of his most valued clients.



Portrait of Shugiō Hiromichi.
Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

Shugiō Hiromichi (執行弘道) (1853-1927) was born into a samurai family and became the New York branch manager of the quasi-governmental Kiritsu Industrial and Commercial Company (起立工商会社), importers of high quality Japanese crafts. An expert in Japanese books, prints, and paintings, Hiromichi bought Edo-era paintings for Freer's collection, and became Freer's friend and guest in Detroit.

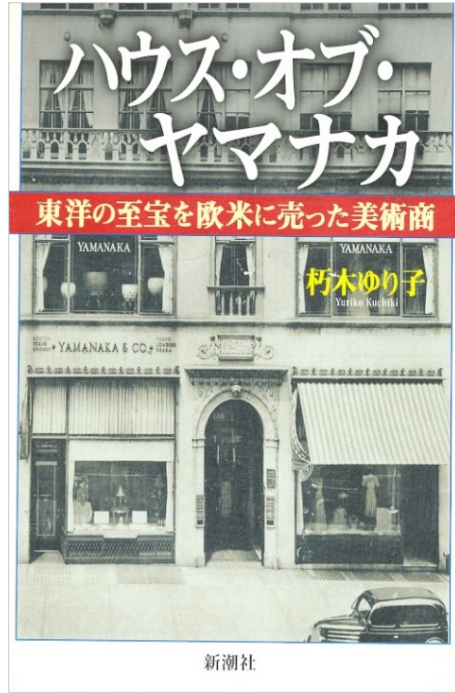


TOMB OF KÔETSU AND THE AUTHOR.

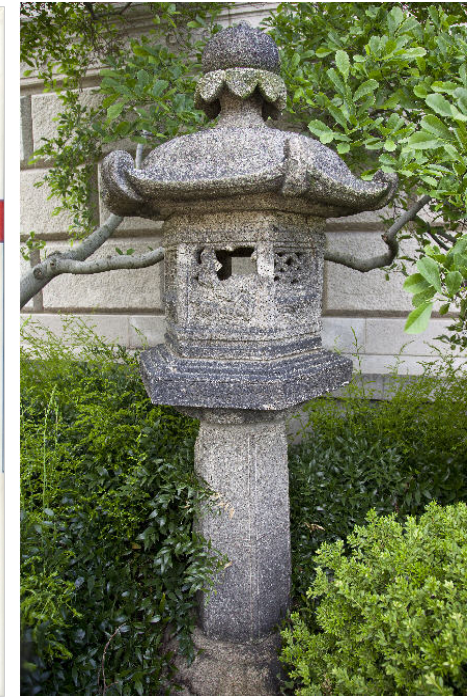
Daijiro Ushikubo at Kōetsu's Grave.
Kōetsu-ji, Kyoto, Japan, ca. 1926.



Sadajiro Yamanaka, 1896.



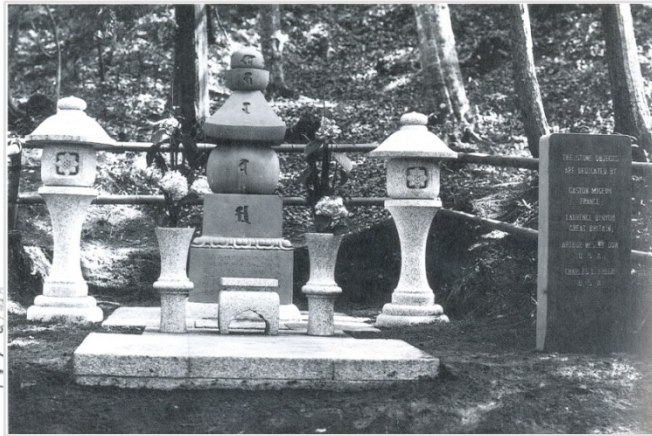
Yamanaka & Company, 5th Avenue Showroom, New York, c. 1925.
Book cover, House of Yamanaka: Art Dealer Who Sold Oriental Treasures to America and Europe.



Original Freer House garden lantern, located today outside the Freer Gallery of Art. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Yamanaka & Company. A respected international dealer in works of Japanese and Asian art, Yamanaka & Company was established by **Sadajirō Yamanaka (山中定次郎) (1865-1936)**. The company had showrooms in Kyoto, Tokyo, Beijing, London, Boston, and New York. Freer was a prized client of Yamanaka & Company, and Yamanaka a frequent guest at Freer's Detroit home. As a Christmas gift in 1905, Freer received an Asian granite lantern from S. Yamanaka and placed it in his courtyard. **Daijiro Ushikubo (牛窪第二郎)**, the American operations manager of Yamanaka & Company, also visited Freer in Detroit. Ushikubo published an English language book on Rimpa artist Hon'ami Kōetsu (本阿弥 光悦) in 1926 and dedicated it to "the late Mr. Charles L. Freer of Detroit, USA, by his most devoted friend, D. J. R. Ushikubo."

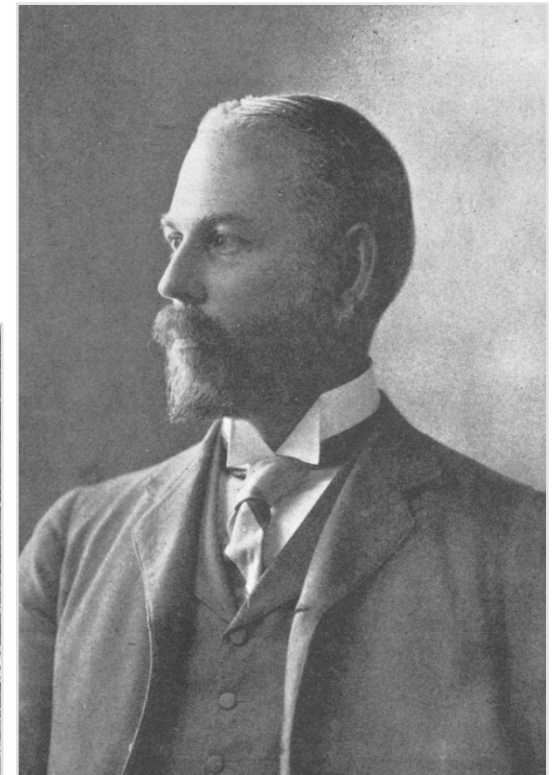
Ernest Fenellosa (1853-1908). One of the most distinguished American scholars of Japanese art and culture, Fenellosa taught at Tokyo Imperial University (東京帝国大学) from 1878 -1888. During this time he was awarded with the Order of the Rising Sun (旭日章) and the Order of the Sacred Treasures (瑞宝章) by Emperor Meiji (明治天皇). In 1890, Fenellosa returned to America to become the curator of Oriental Arts at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He began actively advising Freer on his Japanese and Asian art collection in 1900 and was a regular guest at Freer's Ferry Avenue home. Freer helped underwrite the costs of "a memorial monument from friends outside of Japan" to Fenellosa at Miidera temple (三井寺) in Otsu, Shiga Prefecture, and attended the 1909 dedication ceremony.



Fenellosa Memorial Monument, Otsu, Japan, 1909.
Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution.



Attendees at the Fenellosa Memorial Monument Dedication, with Freer on far right, Otsu, Japan, 1909.
Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution.



Ernest Fenellosa, 1890.
Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution.



Michi Nomura, ca. 1907.
All images from "A Trip
Around the World Diary
by a Meiji Woman: The First
Japanese Group Tour."

"The exterior of Mr. Freer's home is Western in style; however, the interior reflects his Oriental taste. There are no gaudy Western decorations, but the rooms are simple, plain and refined. As his taste has attained the realm of subdued refinement, Mr. Freer could be called an expert or master . . . After dinner, we saw the Peacock Room and more art. It seemed like endless time. As evening deepened into night and my eyes got tired, I was finally led to the bedroom. It was the first time I slept soundly and peacefully since I left Japan." Michi Nomura, 1908.



A World Traveler. Michi Nomura (野村みち) (1875 – 1960) was the wife of **Yōzō Nomura**, a respected art dealer of Freer's in Yokohama, Japan. In 1908, Mrs. Nomura became one of the first Japanese women to travel around the world. When Freer learned of her voyage, he invited her to visit him in Detroit. Mrs. Nomura wrote about her experience of visiting the city, being a guest in Freer's home, and viewing his art collection and the Peacock Room in her memoir, *A Trip Around the World Diary by a Meiji Woman: The First Japanese Group Tour*, posthumously published in 2009.

Zenichiro Hara (原善一郎) (1892 – 1937). The eldest son of **Tomitarō Hara (原富太郎)**, Zenichiro was educated at Waseda University (早稲田大学), Tokyo, and worked as an executive at his father’s silk company and bank. He was a patron of art and literature. As a young man, Zenichiro spent the year 1914 studying in the United States, during which time he visited Freer’s home. Tomitarō Hara, expressing gratitude for the hospitality shown to his son, wrote to Freer:

“Zenichiro has written me very particular letters about his visit to your house . . . ‘I found your home filled with simplicity and love which I believe are the real essence of arts and humanity.’ ... He says that your house is what he likes best of all he has seen in America . . . I understand that your [house] is the one where the application of colour has succeeded to the highest perfection... intoxicating one with sublimeness and simplicity. He further says that he saw many valuable things by Kōetsu, Sōtatsu, Kenzan . . . It was certainly a great astonishment to him that your collection is so inexhaustible, especially in the works by these enviable Japanese artists whose names and works are undying.”

Tomitarō Hara to Freer, July 25, 1914.



Freer House, 1906,
Photograph by C.M. Hayes.
Freer Gallery of Art Archives,
Smithsonian Institution.

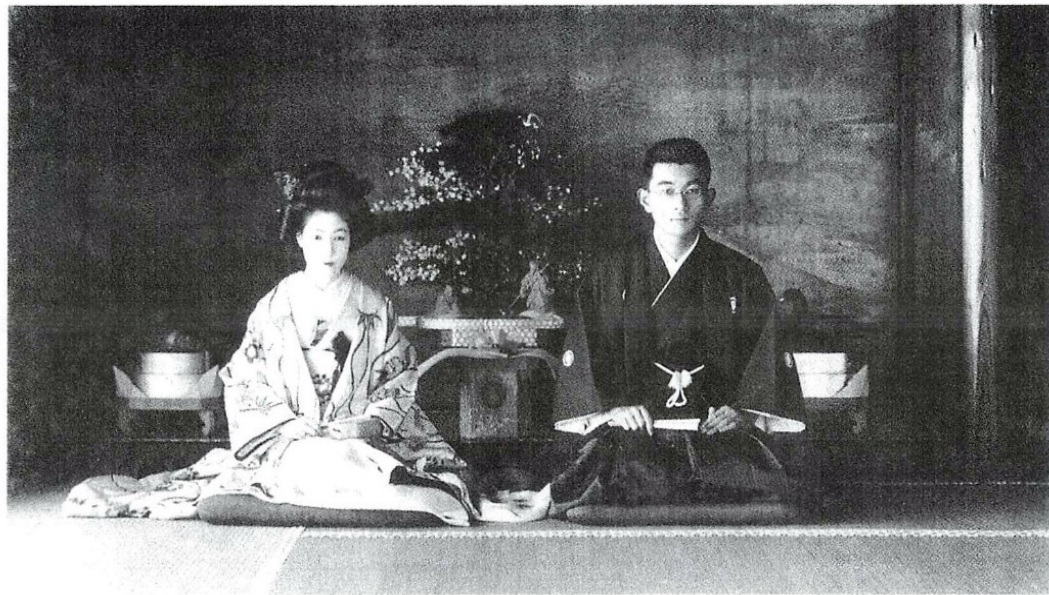


図6 原 善一郎・壽枝子結婚式(臨春閣にて／大正6年)

**Wedding Portrait
of Zenichiro Hara
and bride, 1917.**



Hisajiro and Eisuke Miura with Sezo Hatashita, at right, ca. 1917.
Collection of the Miura family.



Hisajiro and Eisuke Miura with Joseph Stephens Warring, Freer's caretaker and curator, in the Picture (Whistler) Gallery, Freer House, ca. 1917. *Collection of the Miura family.*



Sezo Hatashita with Warring family at the Freer House, ca. 1919.
Collection of Thomas W. Brunk, Ph.D.

Freer and the Conservation of Japanese Art. Freer hired several Japanese conservators to work at his Detroit home. **Sezo Hatashita** was an employee of Yamanaka & Company in Boston whom Freer hired to become a conservator of his Japanese and Asian art collection. From 1916-1917, Freer employed two brothers, **Hisajiro and Eisuke Miura**, from a well-known family of conservators in Kyoto, Japan, to work at the Freer House in Detroit on his Japanese and Chinese art, in preparation for its eventual installation at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. This photograph of the Miura brothers at the Freer House comes from a scrapbook the brothers made of their travels in the United States.

“[Freer] wanted more people, more Americans, to recognize the beauty and importance of Asian art. To this end he was exceptionally generous with his hospitality, with parts of his collection, with advice and assistance to museums . . . At a time when the United States and Europe had only a handful of men and women with even a modest appreciation or understanding of Asian art, Freer opened his house to students and determined to leave a legacy that would allow and facilitate the training of art historians, critics, and curators.”

Warren Cohen, *East Asian Art and American Culture: A Study in International Relations*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992.



The Japanese Galleries at the Freer Gallery of Art encourage enjoyment and understanding of the arts of Japan and the culture that produced them.

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Freer’s Lasting Legacy.

Freer sought to broaden exchange and understanding between the United States and Japan as witnessed by his membership on the Executive Committee of the Japan Society of New York. He envisioned the rising development of the Pacific Rim. His pioneering publication, *Pacific Era* (太平洋時代), an English language periodical devoted to Asian affairs was published in Detroit from 1907-1908.

To cultivate research and scholarship on Japanese art and culture in the West, Freer gifted objects to universities including Oberlin and Smith College as well as various museums. At the University of Michigan, Freer consulted with academics and lent art from his collection for display – including the first exhibition of American and Asian art together at Alumni Memorial Hall (today’s UMMA) in 1910. He established the scholarly journal *Ars Orientalis* and created a fellowship program for University of Michigan students at the Freer Gallery of Art that continues today.

“Mr. Freer truly introduced Kōetsu to the world, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say it was in his enhancement of Kōetsu’s reputation that he [Freer] rendered his greatest service to Japan.”

Takashi Masuda at the dedication ceremony of the Freer Monument, Kyoto, Japan, May 9, 1930.



Mayor of Kyoto at the dedication of the Freer Monument, Kōetsu Temple, Kyoto, Japan, May 9, 1930.
Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution.



William C. Cassel, Jr., American Ambassador to Japan, at the dedication of the Freer Monument, Kyoto, Japan, May 9, 1930.
Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

Memorial Monument to Charles Lang Freer at Kōetsu Temple, Kyoto, Japan, May 9, 1930. The mayor of Kyoto and a group of distinguished guests including Takashi Masuda (益田 孝), Sadajiro Yamanaka (山中定次郎), and the American Ambassador to Japan, William C. Cassel, Jr., gathered at Kōetsu temple (光悦寺) to dedicate a memorial to Charles Lang Freer. Masuda chose Kōetsu-ji as the location in tribute to Freer’s appreciation of the Rimpa (琳派) artist Hon’ami Kōetsu (本阿弥 光悦). Beside the rough-hewn stone that serves as Freer’s monument, Japanese officials placed an offering of tea and champagne, representing East and West.



Image of Freer displayed in a tokonoma setting, Kōetsu Temple (光悦寺), Kyoto, Japan, May 9, 1930.
Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

The Freer House in Detroit, the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., and the Freer memorial monument at Kōetsu Temple in Kyoto, are landmarks that bear witness to the pioneering vision and accomplishments of a man who fostered Western understanding and appreciation of the art and culture of Japan and Asia - establishing a rich legacy for all people that continues to flourish in the 21st century.



Memorial Shrine for Charles Lang Freer, Kōetsu Temple,
Kyoto, Japan, May 9, 1930.
Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution.