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## Yoshiaki Yamashita Photograph Album

- [Digital](#)

ca.1904

1 volume (0.25 linear ft.)

Call no.: PH 006

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  - [SCUA home](#)
  - [Credo digital](#)
- [Scope](#)
- [Inventory](#)
- [Admin info](#)
- [Download](#)
  - [xml version](#)
  - [print version \(pdf\)](#)



Read collection overview

From 1903 to 1906, Yoshiaki Yamashita of Tokyo toured the United States providing instruction in the new martial art of judo. In Washington, D.C., he provided instruction for the sons and daughters of the nation's political and business elite and was brought to the White House to teach President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1905-1906, he was employed by the U.S. Naval Academy to train midshipmen, but after his contract ended in the fall 1906, he returned to Japan and continued to teach judo until his death on October 26, 1935. He was posthumously awarded the 10th degree black belt, the first ever so honored.

The Yamashita photograph album contains 53 silver developing out prints apparently taken to illustrate various judo throws and holds, along with Yamashita's calling card and four documents relating to his time teaching judo in Washington.

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## Background on Yoshiaki Yamashita

Yoshiaki and Fude Yamashita, ca.1904

Seeking to strengthen his nine-year old son's "character," Samuel Hill sought out a suitable man to provide instruction in an exotic art he had seen during a business trip to Japan: judo. A wealthy Seattle railroad executive, Hill had the contacts -- and funds -- to hire the best and in February 1903, Kazuyoshi Shibata, a Yale student and friend of a Japanese acquaintance, recommended Professor Yoshiaki (Yoshigutsu) Yamashita as the best man for the manly job.

Born in Ishikawa Prefecture on Feb. 16, 1865, the son of a minor samurai, Yamashita had a basic grounding in the traditional martial arts before joining the new Kodokan dojo of Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo, in August 1884. Yamashita rose steadily, even rapidly, through the ranks, achieving his sixth degree black belt in 1898 and gaining wide respect for his technical mastery. By the turn of the century, his reputation earned

him a position teaching judo at the Japanese Naval Academy and Tokyo Imperial University.

Having long believed that making judo better known abroad would be good for Japan, Yamashita was an outstanding choice to spread the discipline in America, and he quickly responded to Hill's inquiry. Accepting the offer in August 1903, Yamashita sailed for Seattle the following month, bringing with him his wife, Fude, and a 19-year old assistant, Saburo Kawaguchi. Barely a week after their arrival, the trio gave a private judo exhibition for Hill and prominent invited guests, which historian Joseph Svinth believes may have been the first Kodokan judo exhibition for a non-Japanese audience in North America.

From Seattle, Yamashita and his party traveled across country by rail to Washington, D.C., where Hill's son, John Nathan Hill, was then living. Offering demonstrations and lessons through the Japanese Legation, Yamashita found an eager audience of students in the nation's capitol, and a surprisingly strong interest among the daughters of the nation's political and corporate elite. Among the many who took notice was the President, Theodore Roosevelt, who had a well-known passion for what he considered manly pursuits. Through the Japanese Naval Attaché, Isamu Takeshita, Yamashita was introduced to Roosevelt at the White House in 1904 and by the spring, he had Roosevelt adding judo to his regular fitness regimen.

In January 1905, Yamashita left Washington to accept a position instructing midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. At the same time, representatives of the Army visited Annapolis to investigate the potential of Japanese martial arts, but while these representatives were favorably impressed, the Academy opted instead to hire a wrestling champion to train the cadets, a man who preferred the traditional western sports of boxing and wrestling.

From this point forward, Yamashita's American sojourn wound down. His contract with the Naval Academy was not renewed for the fall 1905, but after Roosevelt personally intervened, Superintendent James H. Sands agreed to rehire him for another year. At the end of this second term, however, Sands recommended that the judo program be discontinued as not essential to shipboard life. Yamashita returned to Japan in the fall 1906 and continued to teach judo until his death on October 26, 1935. He was posthumously awarded the 10th degree black belt, the first ever so honored.

## Scope of collection

The Yamashita photograph album consists of 53 silver developing out prints of Yamashita's tour of the United States in 1903-1905. Laid onto stiff cardboard pages in a canvas-bound album, the images appear to have been used as teaching aids or as promotional material for classes taught by Yamashita in Washington, D.C., during the early months of 1904. A small number of images show Yamashita, Yamashita's wife, Saburo Kawaguchi, and their students, but the majority are intended to depict particular judo holds and throws.

Laid into the album are four documents: a list of judo exercises (2p.); Yamashita's address ("kindness of Lt. [Isamu] Takashita" of the Japanese Legation); a receipt in Japanese and English for payment by George de Geofroy, (presumably for judo lessons); and instructions for various judo throws (6p.). Yamashita's calling card is included in an envelope laid into the front of the album. Many of the images are numbered in the negative and appear to have been photographed in a rather elaborate setting.

## Inventory

[Mr Kamaguchi -- Mr. Kitagaki -- Prof. Yamashita -- Mrs. Yamashita](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Children's class: Margaret Perrin -- Miss A. Lee](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Nage no kata: Uki Otoshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Se oi Nage](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Sukui Nage](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Uki Goshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Harai goshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Tsurikomi goshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Uchi mata \(rotation \[arrow\]\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Tomoe nage \(a\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Tomoe nage \(b\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Ura hage](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Tsuru otoshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Yoko gake \[photo loose, laid into album\]](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Yoko gake](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Yoko guruma](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Uki maza \(a\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Uki maza \(b\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Dai i kyo: Tai otoshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Osoto gari](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Da ashi harai](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Yoko otoshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Dai san kyo: Harai goshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Dai shi kyo: Kata guruma](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Dai roku kyo: Giyaku maki komi \(a\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Giyaku maki komi \(b\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Dai i kyo: Tai otoshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Dai hi kyo: O goshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Sumi gaeshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Dai san kyo: Obi otoshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Dai shi kyo: Utsuri goshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Tawara gaeshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Dai go kyo: Uchi maki komi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Se oi otoshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Se oi otoshi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Osoto guruma](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Dai raku kyo: kube nage \(a\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Kube nage \(b\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Hiza guruma](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Kueki raoshi \(a\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Kuyeki raoshi \(b\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Uchi konei \(a\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[\[Uchi konei\] \(b\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Tsuki komi \(a\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[\(same\)](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Ke komi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[Yoko uchi](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[\[unidentified throw\]](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[\[unidentified kick\]](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[\[unidentified throw\]](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[\[Prof. Yamashita, Mrs. Yamashita, unidentified American\]](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[\[Prof. Yamashita seated between unidentified Americans\]](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

[\[Prof. Yamashita seated between unidentified Americans\]](#)

ca.1904

Silver developing out print

Geofroy, George de: Receipt for \$50 to Yoshiaki Yamashita

ca.1904

Receipt, 1p.

In Japanese and English, signed "Received payment, Prof. Y. Yamashita."

Yamashita, Yoshiaki: Address in Washington, D.C.

ca.1904

AMs, 1p.

In English, listed as c/o Japanese Legation and "kindness of Lt. Takashita" and "Jiu dow in London, Ukio Tani, co. Jap. Embassy."

Yamashita, Yoshiaki (?): Instructions on judo throws

ca.1904

AMs, 6p.

In English, includes detailed information on how to perform throws, parrys and counters.

Yamashita, Yoshiaki (?): List of judo holds and throws

ca.1904

AMs, 2p.

In English, organized by kata and roughly equivalent to the images in the album.

## Administrative information

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

Gift of Caroline Watson, December 2007.

### Bibliography

Svinth, Joseph R., "Professor Yamashita goes to Washington," Journal of Combative Sport (Oct. 2000)

### Digitized content

All images in the collection have been scanned and are [available online](#) through our digital repository, Credo.

### Processing Information

Processed by rsc, February 2008.

### Language:

English

### Copyright and Use ([More information](#) )

## Search terms

### Subjects

- Judo--Photographs.
- Kawaguchi, Saburo.
- Yamashita, Fude.

### Contributors

- Yamashita, Yoshiaki [main entry]

### Genres and formats

- Photographs.

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