MAP 1: Yamashita-chō / Kannai

Karl Lewis addresses in Yokohama

MAP 1
1. Grand Hotel, 18-20 Bund
2. Wright's Hotel, 40 Katago Street
3. Karl Lewis Studio, 136-5 Honmura Road
4. Karl Lewis Studio, 102 Honmura Road
5. American Roller-Skating Rink, 97 Honmura Road
6. Grand Automotive Sales Company, Ltd., 30 Water St. (earlier)
7. Grand Automotive Sales Company, Ltd., 16 Bund (later)
8. Sale and Frazier, 83 Main St. (later)
9. Sale and Frazier, 27 Water St. (earlier)
10. U.S. Consulate, 6 Bund (later)
11. U.S. Consulate, 234 Nippō Odōri (earlier)
12. Central Post Office, 169, 170, 233 Nippō Odōri (post 1934)
13. American Express, 75A Main St.

MAP 2
14. Karl Lewis home, 804 Kamō-chochō
15. Shinjūgō Burial Grounds, Kamō-chochō

NOTE: These maps are composite drawn from historical sources for the periods both before and after the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, so not all locations shown would have been contemporaneous.

MAP 2: Yokohama and environs
Karl Lewis
Yokohama Years

by Todd Lewis (KL Project coordinator)

Introduction

Many well-researched articles have been presented in the pages of *Japanese Philately* on Karl Lewis’ life. Over the years, information pertaining to his activities has been refined. This article combines previously published information with new data to provide an overview of his years in Yokohama, Japan.

More specifically, locations pertinent to Karl Lewis’ daily life are identified on the accompanying maps (Maps 1 & 2, page 26). Map 1 depicts Yamashita-chō, the district referred to as the foreign settlement, in which Lewis both lived and worked during his early years in Yokohama. As a map usually captures its applicable geography at a point in time, it was difficult to produce a map that provided information about the locations relevant to Karl Lewis over his 41 years in Yokohama, particularly when that period extended over the time before and after the Great Kantō earthquake of 1923. Accordingly, some artistic license has been taken in order to show the location of each address at the time it was most pertinent to Lewis.

The background of the Yamashita-chō map has been derived from a number of map sources, the majority issued as tourist maps by private organizations. One of these was published by the Grand Hotel (Figure 1) at Bund 18-20 (Location 1) around 1898. This was a large, expensive hotel located in the foreign settlement section of town. It housed visiting dignitaries, trade missions and wealthy foreigners. It would have been beyond the means of Karl Lewis to live there, although as described below, it does appear that The Grand Hotel provided him with employment.

The foreign settlement was divided into sequentially numbered lots snaking through the area. Based upon this organization by lot number, street addresses as we presently know them were unnecessary as lot numbers were never duplicated. Instead, addresses were referred to just by lot number, or most frequently by lot number followed by the street name of the location’s main entrance, e.g., 18-20 Bund. All the mapped locations are referenced where they are described in the text (Location 1, Location 2, etc.), and numerically listed within the illustrated maps.
By the beginning of the 20th century, Yokohama, which was incorporated as a city on 1 April 1889, was a fairly modern and cosmopolitan city. It housed Japanese and foreign citizens including 758 Americans in 1905. The city had an electric street car service that probably helped expedite some of Lewis’ local trips such as his frequent visits to the post office. Map 2 (page 26) shows a representation of the greater area of the Yokohama environs.

**Arrival**

For most of the period 1875 through 1901, Karl Lewis traveled extensively by sea visiting most of the world including Japan. He visited Japan in 1894 and 1895 while working aboard ships. It is not known why he decided to establish roots in Yokohama on 17 July 1901, after which he never returned to live in the United States. During a vacation in 1922 he made a port call to Honolulu, Hawaii, traveling from Sydney, Australia, aboard the S.S. Makura (Figure 2). He arrived on 1 April 1922 and departed back to Japan on the Korea Maru on 8 April (Figure 3).

**Dwelling Addresses**

**Earliest known Accommodation**

His first known address in Yokohama in 1901 was Wright’s Hotel, No. 40 Futago-chō (Location 2). It is not known whether he just rented a room and/or was an employee. A postcard sent to Lewis (Figure 4, page 29) at this address conveying New Year’s 1902 greetings was reported at JP 58/110-112.

![Figure 2](Passenger list, S.S. Makura to Honolulu, 1922)

![Figure 3](Passenger list, Korea Maru to Yokohama, 1922)
First Stable Address

By 1902, Karl Lewis was already advertising as a photographer and was selling picture postcards from his 136-D Honmura Road address (*Location 3*). *Figure 5* shows detail from a Karl Lewis PPC mailed by himself on 10 September 1902 that is fully illustrated and described at JP 58/110-112. It reads: KARL LEWIS / No. 136-D HONMURA RD. / YOKOHAMA JAPAN / IS THE ONLY AMERICAN / PHOTOGRAPHER IN JAPAN, / AND CATERS TO THE / WANTS OF AMATEURS/ [bottom line illegible].

It has been determined that he lived at this address between 1902 and sometime between late 1906 and early 1907. His return address block (*Figure 6*) boasted that he was, “(The only WESTERN photographer in Japan.)”. During this period, he met his future spouse Sasako Sadako (Sada), and they were “married” on 15 August 1903. Actually, they could not formally marry as he was not a Japanese citizen, and their union would be termed a 内縁 (naien, or “unregistered marriage”). It is conjectured that he lived at the shop.

Second Address

Lewis moved his photography studio across the street to 102 Honmura Road (*Location 4*) sometime around 1907 (*Figure 7*, page 30). By that time, he was “married” and it is unknown as to whether the couple lived at the shop, apart, or at Sada’s family’s home; presumably they lived at the shop. Sada was known to assist him with business matters and certainly with the language. How she became sufficiently proficient in English to communicate with him and vice versa is unknown. It appears that he maintained this shop at 102 Honmura Road until 1918.
Documentation from 1904-1912 notes that Lewis used the telegraphic address of “Karlewis” (Figure 8) while working as an agent for the Paget Prize Plate Co., Ltd. (Figure 9). This company manufactured photographic supplies, predominantly papers and plates, and would have been his supplier in Japan. It is unknown as to whether Lewis worked as a
retailer/distributor of these photographic supplies, although this was quite probable given his industriousness and opportunity. By 1910, there was no shortage of competition for English speaking tourists in the picture postcard market, as evidenced by the Figure 10 scene captured outside the Kamigataya Branch Store at Motomachi. 

Final Address

During 1913 or 1914, Karl and Sada built a home in the hills to the west of Yokohama at 804 Kamiōoka-chō (Map 2, Location 14), situated in what is today part of Yokohama’s Kōnan Ward. The pair had taken up residence there by the end of 1914. In a letter, Lewis reported that the views reminded him of his old Kentucky homestead. Previous articles note that he left his Kentucky birthplace at age 5, then traveled across the United States and was at sea for 32 years. Thus, his actual memories of the Kentucky countryside appear to be romanticized. He lived in the new house with Sada even though revenues from his photography and postcard business appeared to be insufficient to support the couple. He held various jobs and expanded his personal business interests into providing export services supplying everything from tea to dolls as noted in his letters and later price lists. As noted above, it appears that he maintained his shop at 102 Honmura Road until 1918.

Hired Positions

Lewis held concurrent job positions during his early years in Yokohama. This all changed with the devastating Great Kantō earthquake of 1923. There is no information as to how he obtained his early employment and what brought him eventually to the field of photography. None of his writings describe the evolution of this interest. Based upon his opportunistic approach to life, it appears that there was an opening ripe for the picking and he grabbed it with respect to being an “American” photographer. He had a ready market for supplying photographs and picture postcards to English-speaking individuals including tourists and the numerous U.S. sailors visiting the port. In a 1936 passport affidavit (see JP 52/215-220), he claimed to have been in the photography business since 1901.

American Roller-Skating Rink

Lewis managed the American Roller-Skating Rink at 97 Honmura Road (Location 5) at least for some time in 1913. Evidence of this is based upon the 1913 Yokohama business census listing Karl Lewis as general manager. This was a seasonal business open only from October through April. There is an erroneous listing noting the address as “57” instead of “97.” This establishment was next to his shop at 102, reducing the inconvenience of managing both establishments.

The Grand Automobile Sales Company, Ltd.

This business has been incorrectly attributed in multiple previous articles to be a franchise of Sale and Frazar, Ltd., which distributed and assembled Fords and other high-end foreign automobiles throughout Japan including in Yokohama. The Grand Automotive Sales Company, Ltd. was actually run as the garage of The Grand Hotel. It supplied vehicles to visitors and sold Ford products and at some point Studebakers. The company occupied at least two addresses during Karl’s time in Yokohama, either due to moving, expansion, or both. These included 3B Water Street (through lot with 3 Bund) and later 16 Bund (Locations 6 and 7). The latter location was adjacent to the hotel. He probably worked for them from 1911 at least through 1922. This appears to have

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1 For additional information about this postcard dealer, see ISJP Monograph 17, The Tourist Sheets and Booklets of Japan, pp 57-59.
all ended with the 1923 earthquake, which devastated the area including the Grand Hotel (Figure 11).

Surviving mail sent to and from Lewis during this period was previously described at JP 72/266-310. An early usage of the Grand Automobile Company addresses was discussed and illustrated at JP 72/280. Lewis reused a wrapper that had been sent to the old 3B Water Street (3 Bund) address to send a parcel dated 15 June 1917 on which he applied the new return address of 16 Bund. A former manager of the company, C. A. Pereire, is also identified as the addressee of the original sending of the wrapper. Another letter sent on 15 June 1917 to the same individual is on formal stationery and has the 16 Bund address written as a cross-out of the 3 Bund address. It also advertises that the company represented the Studebaker brand. A fancy script “KL” is handwritten over Studebaker on the return address (Figure 12). A postcard with the 16 Bund address sent by Lewis (as
manager) on 12 May 1917 was illustrated at JP 43/18 and reproduced here as Figure 13.

Sale and Frazar, Ltd.

A 1922 cover (JP 47/70) documents that at that time Lewis worked at Sale and Frazar, Motor-car Division, 83 Main Street (Location 8). This is further supported by his testimony as part of a passport application in which he describes a 1917 through 1927 employment tenure. Originally, Sale and Frazar was located at 27 Water Street (Location 9). He potentially held this position concurrently with his other motor sales jobs and this company probably “picked up the pieces” of the local automotive business after the 1923 quake which destroyed the Grand Hotel and its associated automobile operation. Sale and Frazar was headquartered in Tōkyō and was the major Ford distributor in Japan (Figure 14).

1923-1931

Lewis’s activities during these years are largely unknown. He is known to have worked for Sale and Frazar at least through 1927. He had eventually given up his primary photography and picture postcard business, selling his remaining stock through his illustrated cover pricelists over the years. He had lost many of his photographic negatives during the 1923 earthquake. Aside from producing Graf Zeppelin covers mailed to himself and other philatelic items, Lewis appears to have been working for others at least through 1931, perhaps in the establishment of a local Ford production plant after the earthquake. This is alluded to in an excerpt from his 1936 U.S. Passport affidavit (Figure 15, page 34). This was just one of several documents signed by Lewis at the U.S. Consulate in Yokohama in the period 1936-1940 that were discussed at JP 52/215-220. At that date the consulate was situated at 6 Bund (Location 10). It is also probable that Lewis would have needed to visit the consulate during his early years in Yokohama, when it was at 234 Nippon Ōdōri (Location 11).

Cover Business

Lewis started to work out of his home and changed his business mailing address to P.O. Box 69, using this address for the remainder of his business career. This P.O. Box was located at the Central Post Office, which occupied temporary accommodation for many years after the 1923 earthquake, before moving to a
more permanent home on Nippon Ōdōri (Location 12) in 1934. The earliest known usage of this post office address was 21 August 1929 on a Graf Zeppelin cover (JP 72/271). Since references quote 1918 as the date for the closure of his shop at 102 Honmura Road and no mailings have survived from 1918–1929, it is unknown what mailing address he utilized during this period. He may have sent and received his personal mail through his places of employment. This was during the time following the Great Kantō earthquake of 1923 and commerce was very slow during the prolonged rebuilding period in which Lewis was certainly involved.

The philatelic cover business for which Lewis is currently best known started in 1931 and eventually became busy enough to require the assistance of his wife Sada and two assistants. His assistants were particularly helpful with delivering mail to ships and the post office, particularly as Lewis experienced a number of maladies in his later life, including being struck by an “auto-cycle” in September 1936 (from which he probably suffered a rib fracture) and a stroke on 29 December 1939 that occurred less than three months before Sada died.

An additional business with which Lewis had dealings was American Express, which opened a travel agency in Yokohama in 1917 and had 4 offices including a bank by 1922. The offices were destroyed in 1923 and reopened 2 years later without banking services. Lewis was known to visit the American Express office at 75A Main Street (Location 13). He obtained waste paper there to create wrappers for mailing items overseas (JP 72/280).

Sada died on 16 March 1940 at age 54. Lewis continued to produce a few philatelic items up to at least 25 May 1941 (JP 48/254). Shortly after 8 December 1941, he was interred in a prisoner of war camp though the exact date and location of internment remain unknown. Through the efforts of his brother-in-law, he was released under house arrest to his “Japanese family” where he lived out the remainder of his days. No communications are known from this period. He died on 19 May 1942 at age 76 and was buried in his wife’s family plot at Shinkōji, a Buddhist Temple at Kamiōoka Higashi (i.e., Kamiōoka East) located (Map 2, Location 15) close to his home. Details of his death monument (Figure 16) can be found at JP 55/137.)

Figure 15
1936 Passport Affidavit Excerpt

Figure 16 - Karl Lewis grave, Shinkōji