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A TRAVELERS JOURNEY THROUGH SACRED JAPAN

Japan Grand Tour — 1924 Photographic Album Fragment [13 Annotated Photographs]

Original photographic record of Buddhist temples, sacred sites, and cultural landscapes in Japan, preserved with contemporary handwritten captions.

A Western traveler's personal photographic record of Japan in 1924, preserving thirteen original photographs documenting Buddhist temples, religious observances, and cultural sites. Surviving from a deteriorated Japanese travel scrapbook album, the photographs retain contemporary handwritten captions identifying locations, events, and subjects encountered during the journey.

The group presents a personal record of travel, preserving not only views of important Japanese sites but also evidence of how an early twentieth-century traveler recorded and remembered the experience. Several photographs relate to major Buddhist centers including Kōyasan and Nara, capturing temples, sacred landscapes, and cultural scenes during the Taishō period.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Thirteen original black-and-white photographs, each printed on photographic paper and individually captioned in pencil on the verso. Sizes vary from approximately 4 × 3 inches to 5.75 × 3.25 inches. The irregular formats are consistent with personal travel album photography rather than a commercially issued photographic series.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE: A WESTERN TRAVELER'S JAPAN.

These photographs preserve a view of Japan during the Taishō period, when foreign travelers increasingly documented the country's historic architecture, religious traditions, and cultural landscapes through photography and collected travel materials.

PRESERVING SACRED PLACES.

The images are particularly notable for their focus on Buddhist sites and religious environments, including Kōyasan and Nara, areas central to Japan's cultural and spiritual heritage. Unlike commercial souvenir views alone, these photographs retain the handwritten observations of the album compiler, preserving both the places recorded and the experience of travel itself.

CONDITION: The photographs are in Very Good condition overall. Images remain clear and visually strong, with expected age-related toning and minor handling consistent with photographs removed from a scrapbook album. The verso captions remain generally legible, with variation in pencil strength.

PHOTOGRAPHIC INVENTORY & CAPTION TRANSCRIPTIONS

The following inventory records the thirteen surviving photographs in sequence. Captions have been transcribed as closely as possible from the original pencil annotations. Where handwriting remains uncertain, readings are indicated as approximate.

RELIGIOUS LIFE / PILGRIMAGE

Students on the way to Kōbō Daishi's Temple



DESCRIPTION

A procession of students walking along a temple approach in Japan, identified on the verso as 'Students on the way to Kōbō Daishi's Temple.' The photograph captures a moment of religious travel and pilgrimage associated with one of Japan's most revered Buddhist figures, Kōbō Daishi (Kūkai), founder of the Shingon Buddhist tradition

Location: Japan (exact temple unidentified)

Subject: Buddhist pilgrimage / student procession / temple approach

Verso inscription: 'Students on the way to Kōbō Daishi's Temple'

Students Process to the Kōbō Daishi Celebration, Japan — June 21, 1924



DESCRIPTION

A procession of students from the Kōbō Daishi Temple walking toward a celebration honoring Kōbō Daishi (Kūkai), the founder of the Shingon Buddhist tradition.

The image shows participants in traditional dress moving along a temple road, with stone walls, wooden buildings, and the landscape of a Japanese Buddhist temple complex visible in the background.

Location: Japan (temple not specifically identified)

Subject: Buddhist festival procession / student pilgrims / temple life

Verso inscription: 'Students of the Kōbō Daishi Temple on their way to the celebration of Kōbō Daishi, June 21, 1924.'

Torii Gate in the Deer Park, Nara, Japan — 1924



DESCRIPTION

A torii gate marking the entrance to a sacred area within Nara's Deer Park, photographed during a 1924 journey through Japan. The image captures the close relationship between religious sites, wooded landscapes, and pilgrimage routes that define the historic Nara environment.

Location: Nara, Japan — Nara Park area

Subject: Torii gate / sacred landscape / pilgrimage setting

Verso inscription: Contemporary pencil caption: 'In the Deer Park, Nara'

SACRED ARCHITECTURE

Hōryūji Main Temple From the Rear, Nara Prefecture, Japan — 1924



DESCRIPTION

Rear view of the Main Temple (Kondō / Golden Hall area) at Hōryū-ji, one of Japan's oldest and most historically significant Buddhist temple complexes. The photograph shows the traditional wooden architecture, broad tiled rooflines, and surrounding temple grounds as they appeared in the early twentieth century.

Subject: Buddhist temple architecture / Japanese religious heritage

Verso inscription: Contemporary handwritten identification: 'Horyuji, Main Temple, from the rear.'

Hōryūji Pagoda, Nara Prefecture, Japan — 1924



CAPTION / INVENTORY DESCRIPTION

The five-story pagoda at Hōryūji, one of Japan's oldest and most significant Buddhist temple complexes. The photograph retains its contemporary handwritten verso caption identifying the structure, recorded by the original traveler during a 1924 journey through Japan.

Location: Hōryūji Temple, Nara Prefecture, Japan

Subject: Buddhist temple architecture / sacred monument

Verso inscription: Contemporary pencil caption: 'Hōryūji Pagoda'

Hōryūji Temple Gate and Pagoda, Nara, Japan — 1924



DESCRIPTION

A distant view of the Hōryūji temple complex near Nara, showing the approach to the historic Buddhist temple precinct with the pagoda visible beyond the entrance structures.

Location: Hōryūji Temple, Nara Prefecture, Japan

Subject: Buddhist temple architecture / historic precinct view

Verso inscription: Contemporary handwritten caption: 'Horiuji gate & Pagoda'

Benzaiten Statue, Outside the Daibutsu Temple, Nara, Japan

DESCRIPTION

Photograph of a Benzaiten figure associated with the Daibutsu Temple at Nara (Tōdai-ji complex), preserving a view of Buddhist religious sculpture encountered during the traveler's 1924 journey.

Location: Nara, Japan — Daibutsu Temple (Tōdai-ji complex)

Subject: Buddhist sculpture / religious figure

Verso inscription: Contemporary pencil caption: 'Benzaiten, outside the Daibutsu Temple, Nara'



Avenue in the Outer Enclosure, Hōryūji Temple, Nara, Japan — 1924



DESCRIPTION

A tree-lined avenue within the outer enclosure of Hōryūji Temple near Nara, Japan. The photograph shows the quiet approach through the temple grounds, with traditional structures partially visible beyond the trees.

Location: Hōryūji Temple, Nara Prefecture, Japan

Subject: Temple approach / landscaped enclosure

Verso inscription: 'Avenue in outer enclosure — Horyuji'

TRAVELER'S OBSERVATIONS

Japanese Travelers in a Rickshaw Along a Mountain Road, 1924



DESCRIPTION

A traditional rickshaw carrying travelers along a wooded road in Japan, photographed during a 1924 journey. The image preserves an everyday aspect of early twentieth-century travel, showing local transportation and the landscape encountered by a Western visitor.

Deer in Nara Park, Japan — 1924



A scene in Nara Park showing travelers and deer, photographed during a 1924 journey through Japan. The image captures one of Nara's most distinctive cultural landscapes, where sacred spaces, historic temples, and the famous free-roaming deer of the city existed together as part of the visitor experience.

Location: Nara, Japan — Nara Park area
Subject: Deer / cultural landscape / travel scene
Verso inscription: Contemporary pencil caption: 'At Nara'

Visitor With Deer in Nara, Japan — 1924



DESCRIPTION

A visitor standing with one of Nara's famous sacred deer, photographed during a 1924 journey through Japan. The scene captures the distinctive relationship between people, animals, and the historic landscape of Nara, where deer had long been associated with the city's religious and cultural traditions.

Location: Nara, Japan — Nara Park area
Subject: Sacred deer / cultural landscape / travel scene
Verso inscription: Contemporary pencil caption: 'At Nara'

In the Deer Park, Nara, Japan — 1924



DESCRIPTION

A quiet view within Nara Park, Japan, showing the wooded temple landscape and pathways of the historic park surrounding Nara's Buddhist monuments.

Location: Nara Park, Nara Prefecture, Japan
Subject: Historic park landscape / temple district
Verso inscription: Contemporary handwritten caption: 'In the Deer Park, Nara.'

On the Sands, Islet San Mitchell — 1924

DESCRIPTION

A coastal scene showing figures seated on the sands with a small island visible offshore.

Location: Japan (exact site unidentified)

Subject: Coastal landscape / travel scene

Verso inscription: 'On the sands, Islet San Mitchell'



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