

## Akira Ohoka

Our research of your uncle Akira Ohoka's connection to Willoughby, Ohio has been very interesting for our team of volunteer historians. Although our studies are incomplete, I am sending what we have learned thus far. The letters sent to your family following Akira's untimely death provided our first clues in this investigation. It is obvious that the Kennedy family held your uncle in high esteem after being introduced to Akira by John Cecil Kennedy, your uncle's professor at Indiana University. Excerpts of Akira's diary that you sent relate the pleasant stay he had with the Kennedy's during the summer of 1931.

In his memoir Akira describes the Kennedy homestead as, "stately and beautiful, facing Lake Erie, commanding a marvelous view in front." We have not discovered the location of that residence. We do know that at sometime after Akira's visit, the Kennedy's moved to 315 East 324<sup>th</sup> Street in what is now the city of Willowick. This house is on a street that terminates at the lakeshore, but it is not on the water's edge. In fact, the ownership of this house is still listed to Genevieve Kennedy Colle, John C. Kennedy's youngest sibling who was born in 1908 and who is listed in the U.S. Federal Census of 1940 as residing at this same address. That is at least 74 years! Although we have a phone number for this residence, the calls are never answered. It is possible that Genevieve, now 95 years old, lives elsewhere, in a nursing home perhaps. Two of our researchers, Pat Lewis and Sue Beyerle, were classmates with Genevieve's daughter, Jane Colle, when they all graduated from Eastlake North High School in 1959. Jane moved to Dayton, Ohio some years ago and we have not located her. She is the niece of J.C. Kennedy, Akira's professor and friend who arranged his visit here in 1931. Jane and her mother Genevieve (aka Jenny) are probably the last living (?) members of this Kennedy family.

So, this will sum up what we have learned thus far:

1. John Cecil Kennedy was born in Michigan on May 17, 1904 and died in Ithaca, New York on August 23, 2002 at the age of 98. We do not know where his grave is located.
2. John C's parents were Peter John and Genevieve M. Kennedy. John's father Peter died in 1946 at age 68. John's mother Genevieve died in 1965 at age 87. Both are buried in the Willoughby Cemetery on Sharpe Avenue.
3. John C. had two brothers, one older and one younger than himself. The older brother, Cletis J. (Clay) was born in Michigan in 1903. He became

a stage actor and pursued a career in New York City. He apparently never married and had no progeny when he died in 1943 at age 41. Clay is also buried in the Willoughby Cemetery.

4. The 1930 U.S. Census lists John C's younger brother William as a 21 year old living at home. Thus far, we have no other information about William J. Kennedy who was born in 1909.

As previously mentioned, John C's sister, Genevieve is someone we would really like to find because she is probably the last connection to your uncle Akira.

So Takeo, while we have learned much about the Kennedy family associated with yours, we still need to learn if this family's history connects with another prominent Kennedy family which operated one of the earliest hardware stores in northern Ohio right here in Willoughby. I understand that OHIO, at least phonetically, is a cordial greeting in Japanese, so I close with best wishes in your quest, which we promise to keep pursuing. Rest assured, any information we find will be shared with you promptly.

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