



Reverend Shutai Aoyama arrives in 1909 and makes Koyasan a reality in 1912.

with fresh determination.

Working first as a farm laborer and then for the Santa Fe Railway Co. and a San Pedro shipbuilder, Rev. Aoyama spent the next few years schooling himself in the hardscrabble life of privation, ostracism and oppression that was at that time the typical lot of the displaced fellow-countrymen he sought to serve.

His strength of character, humility and quiet zeal attracted the admiration of Mr. Kiyotaro Nakano, a wealthy immigrant. With Nakano's help, Rev. Aoyama began slowly piecing together a small but solid foundation of support. In 1912, after many rounds of calls and much discussion, a plan to establish a Daishi mission in Los Angeles was approved at a meeting attended by just ten people.

With renewed inspiration provided by the arrival that year of the famous Prince Shinnyo portrait of Kobo Daishi, the recruitment of new members throughout Los Angeles and Orange counties continued. By 1913 the new mission counted 58 local chapters. In 1914, when the growing mission moved to Commercial Street in downtown L.A., the service celebrating the move was attended by 300 worshippers.

Soon the mission was attracting 500 worshippers to its annual Shomieku service! Clearly, there was need for even larger quarters and in 1919, after years of careful planning and persistent, dedicated fundraising, the former "Baiken" restaurant in the heart of Japanese town was leased. 1500 people attended the service for the Honzon enshrining ceremony on March 21, 1920. The Daishi Kyokai was now the largest Buddhist church building in the Los Angeles area.

Looking back on the success of his mission with deep satisfaction, the now-Bishop Aoyama announced his retirement in 1920. With Rev. Hokai Tokada installed as his successor, Bishop Aoyama sailed home to Japan on May 19, 1921. Hundreds of people – representing a community he himself had willed into existence through faith and tireless effort – assembled at the San Pedro pier to bid him farewell.

among the Japanese immigrant population on the West Coast of the United States. Struck with a life-threatening illness shortly after arriving from Yokohama and left destitute on emerging from that ordeal, Rev. Aoyama was nonetheless so profoundly grateful for his recovery that he recommitted himself to his mission

1912-1921

The story of the founding of our temple is a story of struggle and sacrifice and faith, of a seed taking root on a surface of sheer rock and blossoming beyond all expectation.

In 1908 the Rev. Shutai Aoyama was entrusted by Archbishop Misumon Yuhan with the propagation of Shingon Buddhism



1912

• Koyasan Beikoku Betsuin, formerly Daishi Kyokai is founded by Reverend Shutai Aoyama, a native priest of Toyama-Ken, Japan.



• Reverend Aoyama originally holds services at the Miyako Hotel where he resides.



1920

• An old building on Central Avenue, located near the present site of the Japanese American National Museum (JANM), is purchased and remodeled for the mission.



1913

• A small altar of the Daishi Kyokai is installed inside a rented house near Elysian Park in Los Angeles.



• Daishi Kyokai is moved and established on Commercial Street in Los Angeles.

1912-1921

1914

• The Women's Association (Fujin-kai) is inaugurated.

• Formation of Daishiko gatherings is organized.

1921

• Reverend Hokai Takada succeeds Bishop Shutai Aoyama.



1912 1913 1914 1915 1916 1917 1918 1919 1920 1921

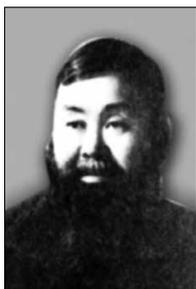
Miyako Hotel - 1912



Reverend Aoyama resides and originally holds services at the Miyako Hotel owned by Kiyotaro Nakano. On November 28, 1912, an important meeting takes place here to discuss the future plans to construct a Daishi Kyokai.

Seikichi Aihara 1916

Seikichi Aihara, a member from Orange County who ardently supports the founding of the Daishi Kyokai.



Saburo Takasugi, Founder of the Daishi Kyokai

Saburo Takasugi, owner of Maru-san Miso-ten, one of the many influential founders of the Daishi Kyokai.

Daishi Kyokai - January 26, 1913



Daishi Kyokai opens its doors to members on January 26, 1913 near Elysian Park. The unveiling ceremony of Kobo Daishi's portrait, painted by Prince Shinnyo, is celebrated on May 31, 1913.

Opening
Ceremony
for Koyasan
Daishi Kyokai
at 335
Commercial
Street
March 21, 1914

Among the congregation are influential members instrumental in participating in the hopeful future of the Daishi Kyokai: Kintaro Asano, Katsuichi Kazahaya, Sumio Ono, Saburo Takasugi, Tomozo Tomio, and Ginnosuke Yuasa (chairman for the ceremony).



Daishi Kyokai on Commercial Street - March 21, 1914

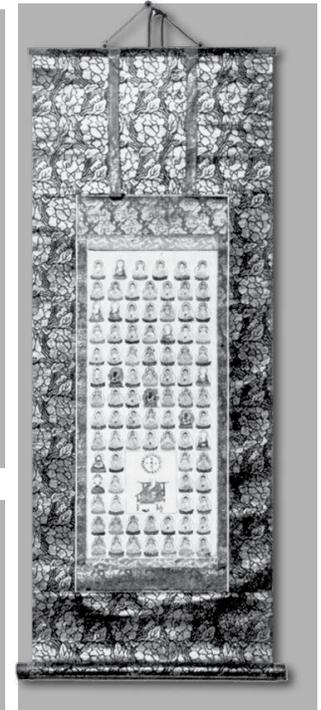
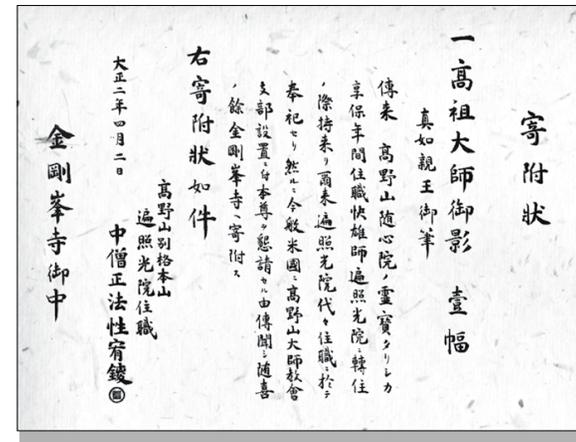
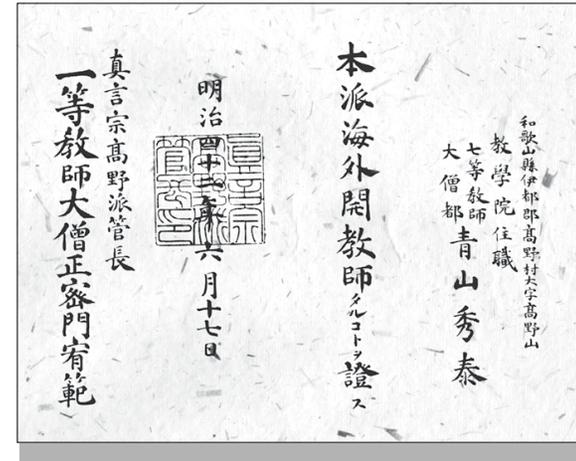


Commemorative picture for Goma Ritual. Pictured are Bishop Shutai Aoyama (far left) and Reverend Joshun Hosoya (far right).



The Daishi Kyokai is relocated on October 2, 1913. A service celebrating the move is scheduled for November 1st and 2nd, but due to the delay of the Buddhist fittings for the altar, the service is postponed until March 21, 1914.

Documents and Scrolls - Early Years



Upper left: Letter of appointment designating Reverend Shutai Aoyama as an Overseas Minister (June 17, 1909) before his departure to the United States. Lower left: Letter acknowledging the donation of a painting of Kobo Daishi to the Daishi Kyokai by Henjo Koin of Koyasan (April 2, 1913). Above: Scroll depicting Kobo Daishi believed to be carried by Reverend Shutai Aoyama during his Shikoku Pilgrimage.

Shomieku - 1915



The congregation gathers to commemorate Shomieku, the day Kobo Daishi entered into eternal samadhi, at the Daishi Kyokai on Commercial Street in 1915.



Shomieku - March 1917

Priests of the Daishi Kyokai address
the congregation in 1917.

First Wedding at Daishi Kyokai - June 25, 1918



The wedding of Jutaro and Yoneko Narumi is the first wedding of a Daishi Kyokai member officiated by Bishop Shutai Aoyama. Because the Daishi Kyokai on Commercial Street is not large enough, the ceremony is performed at Blanchard Hall on South Broadway Street.

Dedication Ceremony on Central Avenue -

March 21, 1920



Congregation gathers to commemorate the opening of the new Daishi Kyokai on Central Avenue.



Chigo pose in front of the Buddhist Altar with Bishop Shutai Aoyama standing on left in back.

Bishop Aoyama at the Daishi Kyokai
on Central Avenue - 1921



Bishop Shutai Aoyama stands next to a Moreton Bay Fig tree that will be recognized as a living landmark by the City of Los Angeles in 2008.