

Joseph Hardy Neesima

In 1864, a 21-year-old Japanese man named Neesima Shimeta risked death by leaving his country secreted in the hold of a brig, eventually finding his way to Boston aboard a ship owned by Chatham native Alpheus Hardy and skippered by Horace Taylor, also a Chatham resident. Dubbed "Joe" by Taylor, Neesima was more or less informally adopted by Hardy, and spent summers with Taylor's family in North Chatham while attending school. Eventually, Neesima's services as a translator for Japanese dignitaries touring the United States earned him a pardon for his crime of leaving Japan, and he returned to his homeland to found the university.

Born into a family of samurai who served a prince, Neesima was unhappy with the life he was expected to follow. At a young age he studied Dutch, and as a young adult studied mathematics and navigation at the Tokugawa Shogunate military academy. He began to study English and read "Robinson Crusoe" and The Bible in Chinese, even secretly attending Bible study groups. Seeing the power of Christian nations, he came to believe in the Christian God and dreamed of studying abroad. But instead, he was consigned as a record keeper or guard to his family's prince.

Playing on his interest in navigation, he took a short voyage on a schooner to Hakodate, which was an open port. Neesima gained the confidences of several people at the port and was smuggled aboard the American brig Berlin hidden inside a small boat. It was a major risk; at the time, the penalty for leaving Japan without government permission was death.

Nonetheless, Neesima thought the risk worthwhile, convinced as he was that Japan needed "moral reformation," he later wrote. On the Berlin, he worked as a cabin boy, and Captain William T. Savory taught him English words for objects until the ship landed at Shanghai. There, Neesima was transferred to the Wild Rover, since the Berlin was headed back to Japan.

On the Wild Rover, Neesima again worked as cabin boy to Captain Taylor, reportedly selling the captain his remaining samurai sword for money to purchase a Chinese copy of the New Testament (what happened to the sword is uncertain; it is not in the historical society's collection). The ship sailed to Hong Kong, Saigon and Manila before heading back to Boston in April 1865. Neesima continued to study English and help out on board during the four-month voyage, which was uneventful. "We enjoyed fine weather and fair winds throughout the voyage, with the exception of one or two storms," he wrote. When the ship neared Cape Cod, a fisherman informed the crew that the Civil War was over and President Lincoln had been assassinated. Arriving in Boston brought Neesima to his "happy destiny."

"Through the kindness of the captain of the ship, I was introduced to the owner of the ship and his wife. They became at once my foster parents, in the land of my adoption, through whose untiring care, wise guidance and constant prayers I was permitted to realize some

dreams I used to dream at home so often and so vaguely in my younger days," he wrote. He adopted the name Joseph Hardy Neesima in his benefactor's honor.

Hardy, a Chatham native whose shipping company was among New England's most successful, was impressed with the young man. Hardy sent Neesima to Phillips Andover Academy, where he was an alumni and trustee, and later to Amherst College, where he was also a trustee. Many summers were spent at the Taylor home on Kendrick Road in North Chatham, where Neesima continued to study but also took time out to go walk the beach and dig clams.

"It is a rather quiet place," he wrote in a letter to Mrs. Hardy, "but I like it more than a noisy city because the quietness of nature leads me to quiet meditation." It's unclear whether Neesima spent more time in Chatham, or if he spent all of his summers here.

Neesima received a bachelor of science degree from Amherst — the first Japanese to receive a degree at a Western institution of higher learning — and graduated from Andover Theological Seminary in 1874. He was ordained at the Mount Vernon Congregational Church in Boston on Sept. 24, 1874, as a "missionary pastor" for the Japanese people.

While he was in school, Neesima served as an aid and interpreter for Japanese officials both in the United States and Europe. This allowed him to observe educational systems in both regions, and he apparently began formulating his views on how to adopt these philosophies in his own country. He also made valuable connections, and this service apparently also earned him a pardon from his crime of leaving the country.

Before returning to Japan in late 1874, he solicited donations toward the establishment of a Christian school. With the government's approval and \$5,000 in gifts, he did just that a year later, founding Doshisha (which means "One Endeavor") in Kyoto.

The school grew from six to 250 students over the course of the next decade, and Neesima again visited the United States in 1885, afterward overseeing the conversion of the school to a university. In 1889 he was granted an honorary degree by Amherst College, and Doshisha established exchange programs with Mount Vernon Church and, eventually, Amherst and several other U.S. schools.

He died, apparently of peritonitis, in 1890. Although he had married, he left no family. Today, Doshisha University has more than 20,000 graduate and undergraduate students.

From: Hideo Isso <deoisso@mac.com>View Contact
To: whitneydurand@yahoo.com; saldurand@yahoo.com
Sun, July 11, 2010 6:31:14 PM
2 Files View Slideshow Download All Hardy家系図.jpg (307KB); 09-9-17.2.004.jpg (154KB)

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Durand,

Firstly, please allow me to introduce myself. I am Hideo Isso, Japanese filmmaker of Tokyo, Japan. I made a 47-minute documentary on Rev. Joseph Hardy Neesima almost a decade ago and am now involved in making a revised one having more information about the Hardy family.

As you may know, Mr. and Mrs. Alpheus Hardy of Boston had sent Neesima to Phillips Academy at Andover, Amherst College and Andover Theological Seminary. I understand that without their financial support Neesima would have not studied there. Returning to Japan at the end of 1874, he founded a small English school in Kyoto in 1875, and now it expands to one of the largest Christian Universities in Japan. Believe it or not, Doshisha University has now some 27,000 students including post graduates.

In fact, Doshisha expects me to deliver a talk on the Hardy family on August 7. Quite frankly, I have learned a lot from your website and there's one thing I would like to ask. Would it be possible for you to grant permission to use a photo of Thornton Sherburne Hardy introduced at your website. I am quite sure the audience (the Doshisha professors and fellows) will be excited to see it at my slide show. Thank you for your cordial consideration.

Warmest regards,

Deo

ps: The family trees of the Hardys that both Doshisha and I made will be attached for your reference.

Hideo ISSO

e-mail: deoisso@mac.com <<mailto:deoisso@mac.com>>

cell phone: (+81)90-8807-5364

fax/phone: (+81)50-3127-6417

post address: Suite 422, 4-12-22,

Yotsugi, Katsushika-ku,

Tokyo 124-0011

Japan

The family tree Doshisha University officially made (although they excuse it is not perfect)
The family tree I have made.

Sun, July 11, 2010 11:41:37 PM

Re: Request for use of a photo of T. Sherburne Hardy

From: Hideo Isso <deoisso@mac.com>

[View Contact](#)

To: Whitney Durand <whitneydurand@yahoo.com>

Dear Mr. Durand,

Thank you so much for your permission to use the photo of Thornton Sherburne Hardy, grandson of Alpheus Hardy of Boston. He looks just gorgeous. I'm sure the audience will like it.

Speaking of the documentary, I'd be delighted to send you a DVD copy, but I'll have to get an official approval from the executive producer. So please give me some time to proceed it.

In fact, I delivered another hour talk on "Mrs. Alpheus Hardy chrysanthemum" at Doshisha last February. It is a special variety of white Japanese chrysanthemum Neesima had sent to Mrs. Hardy. No one had known anything about it here. Introduced at a Chrysanthemum Show in Boston in 1888 for the first time, it brought a craze for Japanese chrysanthemums in New England. Soon it was named for Mrs. Alpheus Hardy and also called "Ostrich Plume". Surprisingly, it had been introduced more than a dozen cities in the United States as well as Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Everywhere it gained a wide popularity and was awarded the best prize. I'll attach the news article and some photos introducing my talk, although the Japanese article may be all Greek to you.

I'd be most delighted to hear from any descendants of Alpheus Hardy and learn something from them!

I'll stay in touch and introduce a person at the University soon. Thank you again for your help.

All the best,

Deo

(Please. No need for the formalities)

Hideo ISSO

e-mail: deoisso@mac.com

cell phone:

(+81)90-8807-5364

fax/phone:

(+81)50-3127-6417

post address:

Suite 422, 4-12-22,

Yotsugi, Katsushika-ku,

Tokyo 124-0011