

addressUSA

Know your home's value. Then make your move.

The market won't wait. And neither should you.

Buying or selling? Don't wait—make your move now.

Discover more at addressUSA.com

My dream home...

Help me sell fast...

SERVING ASHEVILLE SINCE 1870

CITIZEN TIMES

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2026 | CITIZEN-TIMES.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

SBI investigating jail death

Buncombe County detainee died over the weekend

Ryley Ober
Asheville Citizen Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

ASHEVILLE — A Buncombe County Detention Facility detainee died over the weekend after he was found unrespon-

sive in his cell, according to the sheriff's office.

On Jan. 24, a detention center officer was conducting routine cell inspections when he found Grey Alan Hester, 50, of Candler, unresponsive in his cell just after 8 p.m., the Buncombe County Sheriff's Office said in a news release Jan. 26. The jail's medical team began life saving measures until EMS arrived, the release said.

Hester was taken to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead, accord-

ing to the release. The Office of the State Medical Examiner will determine Hester's cause of death, but at this time it is believed to be related to an unknown medical condition, the sheriff's office said.

Hester was booked into the Buncombe County Detention Facility on Jan. 8. He was scheduled to return to federal custody after his trial on state charges in the Buncombe County courthouse.

See DEATH, Page 4A

"His family has been notified of his passing, and we have notified all of the appropriate parties including the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation."

Sheriff Quentin Miller
in the news release

WORD FROM THE SMOKIES

FOR LOVE OF THE MOUNTAINS



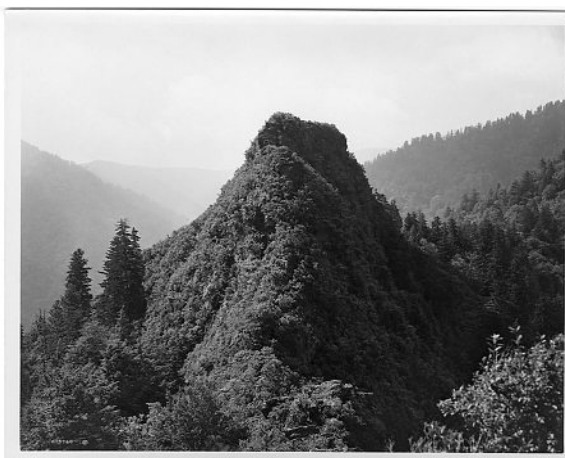
New discoveries enhance understanding of Smokies photographer

Janet McCue and Paul Bonesteel
Asheville Citizen Times

From George Masa's 1915 arrival in Asheville, North Carolina, until his death in 1933, the trailblazing Japanese photographer explored the Smoky Mountains, mapping trails and capturing the region's grandeur and beauty in photographs that helped make the case for the creation of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. But Masa's friends—and the researchers who followed—have long wondered: where did Masa's love of the mountains originate?

We now know that it started long before his arrival in Asheville. Growing up in Shizuoka, a prefecture on Honshu, Japan's largest island, Masa—born with the surname Takahashi, becoming Shoji Endo (sometimes spelled "Endow") when he was adopted following his mother's death, and only later known as George Masa—would often catch glimpses of Mount Fuji in the distance. At 12,385 feet, it is the highest point in Japan. The southern

See MASA, Page 7A



ABOVE: After moving to Asheville, North Carolina, in 1915, George Masa would go on to create many iconic images of the Great Smoky Mountains. This black-and-white photo of Chimney Tops, presumed to be his, was colored and used as a postcard by Asheville Post Card Company. PROVIDED BY SMOKIES LIFE'S HORACE KEPHART FAMILY COLLECTION

TOP: George Masa grew up glimpsing 12,385-foot Mount Fuji in the distance. The towering mountain likely captured his imagination, leading him to ascend it twice, at the ages of 17 and 20. PROVIDED BY T.KUNIKUNI VIA FLICKR

Shutdown possible despite DHS deal

Plan would buy time to work out ICE reforms

Zac Anderson, Zachary Schermele, Kathryn Palmer, Francesca Chambers and Karissa Waddick
USA TODAY

Lawmakers appeared to be closing in on a deal endorsed by President Donald Trump to avoid an extended government shutdown, but a key player said a brief government closure may be inevitable as there still was work to

More from Washington

Read the latest at usatoday.com and in the Nation & World Extra section, a subscriber-only feature in your eNewspaper.

be done Jan. 30 as funding was set to expire at the end of the day.

Trump and Senate Democrats announced a compromise government spending bill Jan. 29 that reflects Democrats' concerns about immigration enforcement.

The plan extends spending for the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol, for two weeks while lawmakers negotiate over ICE reforms, but it funds other agencies through September.

Trump's support for the deal could help get congressional Republicans to support it. He encouraged lawmakers to "give a very much needed Bipartisan 'yes' Vote" on the measure, writing in a social media post that "the only thing that can slow our Country down is another long and damaging Government Shutdown."

The Senate had yet to vote on the measure as of mid-morning on Jan. 30, though, and a Republican Senate aide indicated the deal wasn't yet finalized as discussion of possible amendments was likely to take place. The legislation also still required approval in the House.

See SHUTDOWN, Page 6A





“Appreciation of mountaineering itself was born among a small elite of Japanese youth,” wrote Yasuji Yamazaki in the *British Alpine Journal v. 71* (1966). Masa was one of them. In 1905, at the age of 20, he joined the Japanese Alpine Club.

Such clubs often published periodic newsletters that included tidbits about their members. It was in one of these publications that we first learned new details about George Masa. The June 1906 journal of the Japanese Alpine Club reported that two of its members, Mr. Kiyosawa and Mr. Shoji Endo, left for Seattle, promising to research the Rocky Mountain Club and send reports home to the membership.

Masa had first tried to enter the US in 1904 but was turned away at the port of San Francisco due to a serious eye infection. He enrolled in Tokyo’s prestigious Meiji University, left after one semester, and tried once again to come to the States. This time, he succeeded.

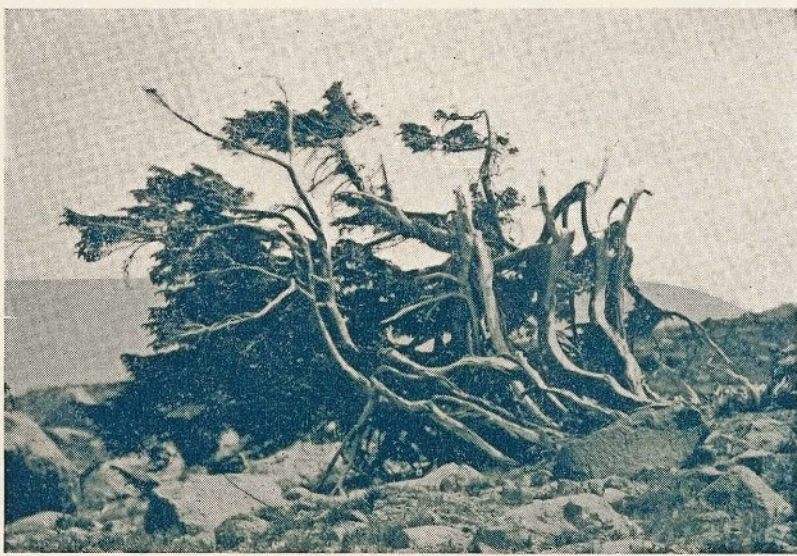
Masa spent nearly a decade on the West Coast, mostly in Seattle and Portland, working a variety of jobs but playing hard in his spare time. Talented on the baseball field, he played, coached, and managed for various Japanese teams in the Pacific Northwest, and he also continued his mountain climbing pursuits.

On September 13, 1909, Masa applied for membership in the Mazamas Club, an alpine club that had been established on the summit of Mount Hood in 1894. His application listed two ascents of Mount Fuji, made at the ages of 17 and 20. Rightly proud that one of its climbers was now a Mazama, the Japanese Alpine Club announced in its November 1909 journal that Masa was likely “the very first member of us who was allowed to join an overseas mountain club in our history.” In 1911 he and his climbing buddy Gaintsu Senow signed the summit register on 11,249-foot Mount Hood, the highest mountain in Oregon. In addition to their names and club affiliations, the two friends added their signatures in Japanese. Masa remained on the Mazamas membership roster through 1916.

We also learn through the journal of the Japanese Alpine Club that Masa climbed Mount Rainier, the highest mountain in Washington State at 14,410 feet in elevation. Although the early summit registers for Mount Rainier are not in any archive, both the newsletter of the alpine club and the *History of Japanese*

See MASA, Page 8A

to
est
the
ed
an.
fire
into
the
the
les,
ead
the
of
ner
his



Outposts of the Forest. Storm-swept White-bark Pines on Mount Hood.

TOP: Authors Janet McCue and Paul Bonesteel visit Tokyo in their quest to illuminate the mystery surrounding the life of George Masa.

PROVIDED BY CAMILLA CALNAN

LEFT: Storm-swept whitebark pine trees offer evidence of the harsh living conditions on Mount Hood.

PROVIDED BY GEORGE MASA (CREDITED AS SHOJI ENDOW) AND PUBLISHED IN THE GUARDIANS OF THE COLUMBIA (1912) BY JOHN H. WILLIAMS

Masa

Continued from Page 1A

portion of the Japanese Alps also stretches into Shizuoka prefecture. Today more than ten percent of the land in Shizuoka is protected. When he had time and money, Masa went mountain climbing.

USA 250

**This is more than history.
It's your competitive edge.**



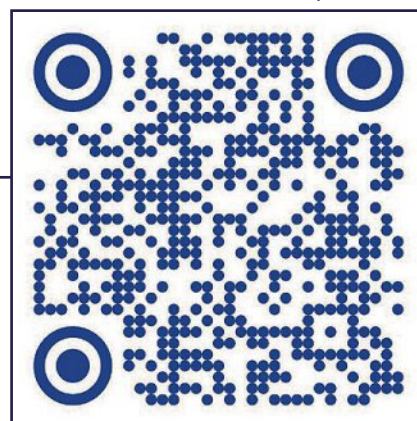
In 2026, America turns 250—a milestone that will capture the nation’s attention and spotlight that which define us.

This historical year creates a sustained moment when customers’ attention spikes and their engagement is intentional. The businesses that are visible—that people remember—will win.

USA TODAY Network’s coverage is the pulse of a nationwide milestone.

By partnering together, your business shows up in the moments customers are already paying attention—building familiarity that carries into real buying decisions when it matters most.

SEE HOW IT WORKS



Masa

Continued from Page 7A

Mountain Climbing (1969) assert that Masa was the first Japanese man to climb Mount Rainier.

“What a spectacular glacier,” Masa exclaimed in a letter home to the Japanese Alpine Club. Apologizing to his climbing community for not writing a full report, he confided that a recent baseball injury prevented him from submitting one. Hit in the chest by a pitch, Masa had been laid low with an infection and a fever. Eager to explore again, he reluctantly conceded in his November 1910 update that he wouldn’t be able to “climb mountains this summer with this physical condition.” Likely his injury knocked out his baseball season as well.

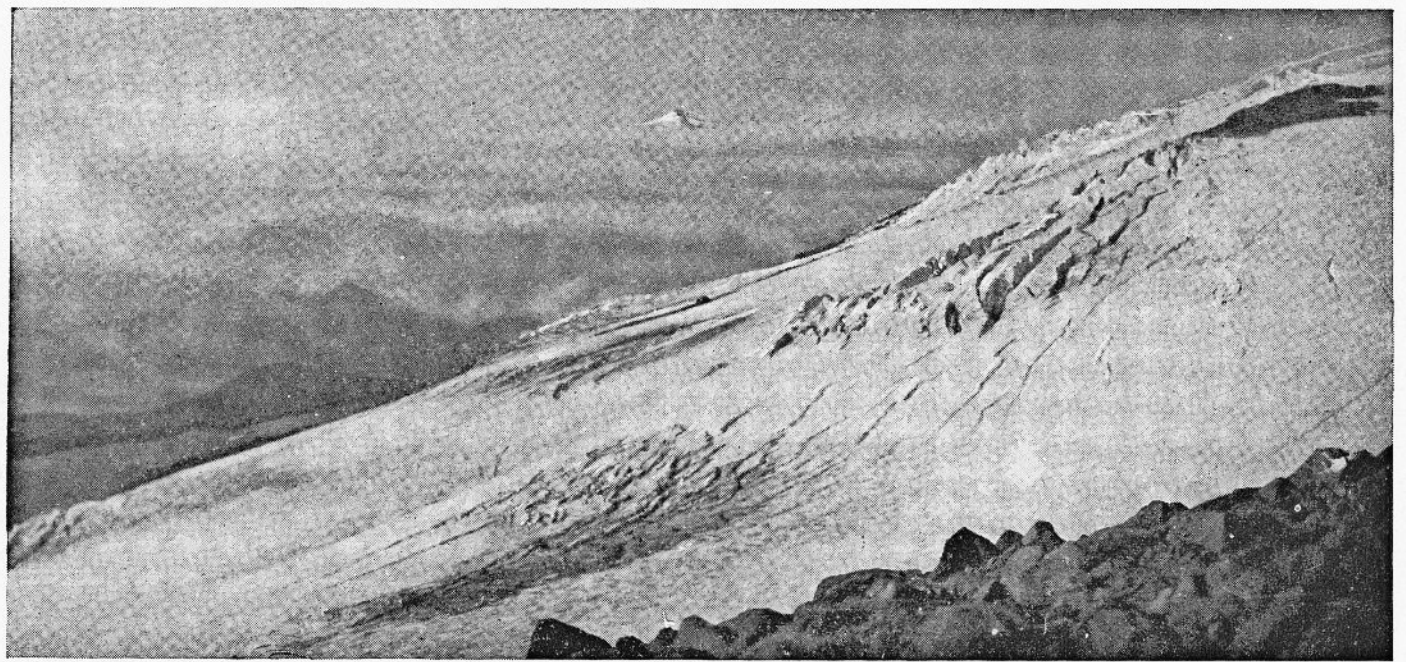
The setback did not prevent Masa from encouraging others to climb Mount Rainier, however. He reported in his letter that he had “urged the Asahi newspaper to recruit a climbing party ... of 15–16 people.” Photographs preserved in a photo album now held by the Nippon Kan Heritage Association and once owned by Juichiro Terusaki, who ran the *Asahi News* in Seattle, chronicle an expedition of a 12-person climbing party from 1910.

It was not easy to summit these peaks. Although both the historians’ reports in the *Mazamas* journal and the club’s 75th anniversary history, *We Climb High: A Thumbnail Chronology of the Mazamas, 1894–1964*, provide stories of the camaraderie and triumphs, they also offer glimpses of the harrowing experiences climbers faced—lightning storms on the summit, blind crevasses, limbs crushed by rolling boulders, rescue teams transporting injured or dead climbers off the mountains. We don’t know the route Masa used on his ascents, but we do know there were no highways or well-worn trails leading to the summits.

What’s more remarkable is learning that Masa was photographing some of his own climbing trips—evidence found in John H. Williams’ book, *The Guardians of the Columbia* (1912), now available digitally through Project Gutenberg. Williams focuses his book on three snow-capped peaks in the Cascade Range: Mount Hood, Mount Adams, and Mount St. Helens.

Shoji Endow is credited with six of the 200 photographs featured in the book,

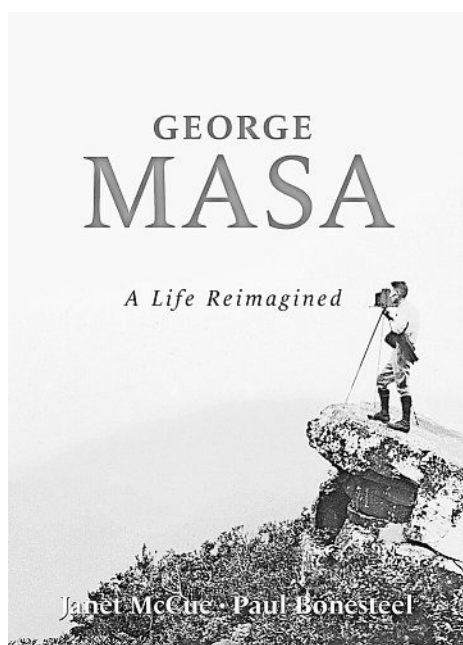
including a striking photograph of storm-swept white-bark pines, a sharp image of Newton Clark glacier on Mount Hood, another of Eliot Glacier taken from near the summit of Mount Hood, and a cluster of three climbers approaching the summit of Mount Adams, at 12,281 feet the second-highest peak in Washington state. A surprising photo of a butterfly poised slightly above its shadow is captioned “a butterfly on the summit of Mt. Hood.” While some of the other photographers in Williams’ book were using larger-format cameras, Masa was likely carrying a smaller Kodak #2 or #3 Brownie on these climbing



Newton Clark glacier, east side of Mt. Hood, seen from Cooper Spur, with Mt. Jefferson fifty miles south.

Newton Clark glacier stretches along the east side of Mount Hood as seen from Cooper Spur.

PROVIDED BY GEORGE MASA (CREDITED AS SHOJI ENDOW) AND PUBLISHED IN THE GUARDIANS OF THE COLUMBIA (1912) BY JOHN H. WILLIAMS.



Published in 2024 by Smokies Life, George Masa: A Life Reimagined is the most comprehensive biography available of the famed photographer, exploring his life both before and after arriving in the Southern Appalachians.

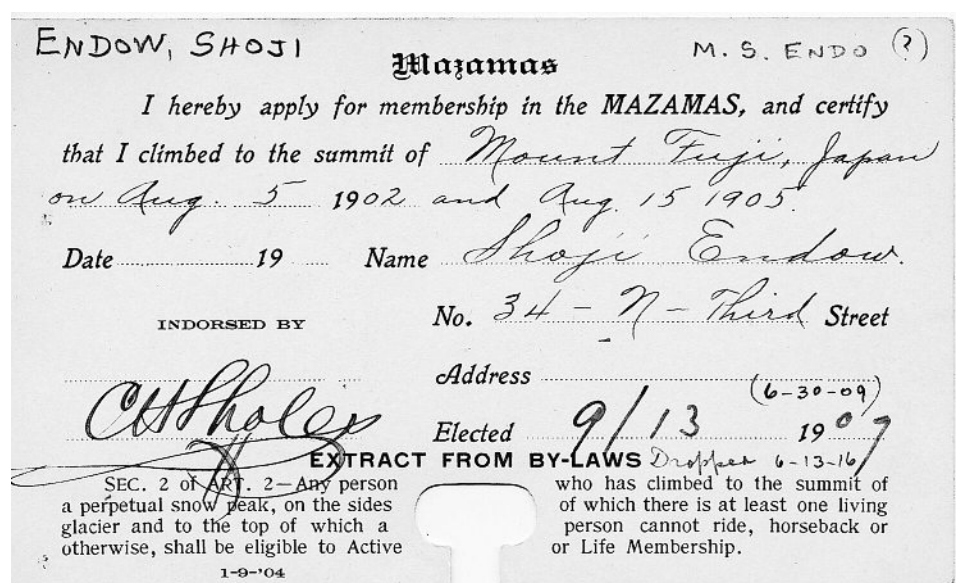
PROVIDED BY SMOKIES LIFE

trips. He had clearly gained enough experience to produce quality photos, proving an early interest in photography along with budding technical skills.

Masa’s passion for mountains also gave him a new nickname, according to the November 1909 *Sangaku*, the journal of the Japanese Alpine Club. Writing back to his friends in Japan, he explained, “As I am so obsessed with mountains, my friends call me ‘Yama’ instead of my real name. Therefore, I’ve started to use ‘Yama’ as my penname.”

The word “yama” means “mountain” in Japanese.

When Masa arrived in Asheville in 1915, Fred Seely, his boss at the Grove Park Inn, had no idea that the “ironing



As shown by this membership card, while living on the West Coast of the United States, Masa—under the name Shoji Endow, as he was known during most of the first half of his life—applied for and received membership to the prestigious Mazamas Club of Portland, Oregon.

PROVIDED BY MAZAMAS LIBRARY AND HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS

man” he’d just hired for his laundry was both a talented mountain climber and an experienced photographer. Neither did his hiking friends from the Carolina Mountain Club who arranged his funeral 18 years later know of his early experiences with climbing and photography.

And, until recently, neither did we. We do understand, however, that we will never be “finished” with George Masa. Masa’s West Coast life provided the scaffolding for his work in the Smokies. We are the beneficiaries ... and now, the guardians.

An expanded version of this story was originally published in the fall 2025 issue of *Smokies Life Journal*, a twice-yearly magazine that is the primary benefit of joining *Smokies Life*. The piece follows the 2024 publication of the award-winning biography *George Masa: A Life Reimagined*, coauthored by

Jane McCue and Paul Bonesteel and published by Smokies Life. To read more stories like this while supporting Great Smoky Mountains National Park, visit SmokiesLife.org/Membership and become a Park Keeper.

Janet McCue is a writer, researcher, and avid hiker who, in addition to coauthoring George Masa: A Life Reimagined with Paul Bonesteel, wrote Back of Beyond: A Horace Kephart Biography with the late George Ellison. She is also a member of the Smokies Life board of directors. Bonesteel is a filmmaker, writer, and passionate lover of the outdoors whose work has informed the conversation about Masa’s life since he produced the film The Mystery of George Masa in 2002. George Masa: A Life Reimagined has received four awards, including an honorable mention in the 2025 Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Awards.

Obituaries

TODAY’S DEATH NOTICES

Name	Age	Town, State	Passed	Arrangements	Service Time	Service Location	Interment
*Coleman, S. Hampton	97	Williamsburg, VA	Jan 10	-	-	-	-

*Additional information in display obituaries
Obituaries appear in print and online at citizen-times.com/obituaries

S. Hampton Coleman

WILLIAMSBURG, VA - Solomon Hampton Coleman, Jr. was born in Red Springs, North Carolina February 12, 1928. He passed away on January 10, 2026 at the age of 97 in Williamsburg, Virginia at the Hospice House of Williamsburg. He spent the majority of his life in Buncombe County before moving to other states. He was signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers and played on several farm teams, most notably the Montreal Royals. He then worked for Oakite Products, Inc. for over 30 years. Hampton was known as a true Southern gentleman and a man of integrity.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Solomon Hampton Coleman Sr. and Doretha Wright Coleman; his sisters, Ruth Coleman and Dorothy Coleman McKenzie; and his brother William Coleman. Hampton Coleman was also preceded in death by Anne Odom Coleman, his loving wife of 50 years, his daughter, Nora Coleman DeVere and a granddaughter, Cassandra Anne Rutledge. He is survived by his daughters, Diane Coleman Rutledge (Gene), Jaine Coleman Burleson (Bobby), and Kathryn Coleman Gravely (Perry) as well as a sister, Helen Theodore. He is also survived by 9 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. Kathleen Crowley Coleman was his surviving wife with her daughter Raquel Crowley of the home.

Memories
BECOME
TREASURES

