

MOFA Podcast Episode 1, “Issei Pioneers of the Old West”

(Introductory music by Rob)

NARRATOR: Welcome to *Look Toward the Mountain*, a podcast series about life inside the Heart Mountain Japanese American Relocation Center in northwestern Wyoming during World War II. I’m your host, Rob Buscher.

Thanks to the support of the Embassy of Japan in the United States, the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation is presenting a special three-episode series exploring the Japanese American experience beyond Heart Mountain, and our relationship to Japan. This first episode tells the stories of Japanese immigrants who achieved great success in the California agriculture industry, others who settled rural parts of the West as railroad laborers or miners, and the undercurrent of racism and xenophobia that ultimately restricted further immigration after 1924.

Prior to 1853, Japan had been living in isolation for nearly two and a half centuries after shutting off foreign trade. With the exception of a privileged few Japanese merchants who engaged in limited trade with the Dutch under permission of the Shogun, the average Japanese person did not dare to leave Japan without risking punishment of death. In the late 1500s, Portuguese Jesuit missionaries began converting Japanese peasants to Christianity, which was initially encouraged by powerful Daimyo Oda Nobunaga. After learning of the Spanish colonization of the Philippines, the second great unifier of Japan Toyotomi Hideyoshi sentenced

Catholic priests and their converts to death by crucifixion in 1597. Foreigner traders were expelled and increasingly strict isolationist policies were enacted by the Tokugawa Shogunate who came to power in the following decades. This culminated in the Closed Country Edict of 1635 issued by Tokugawa Iemitsu that stated,

TOKUGAWA IEMITSU VOICE OVER: “No Japanese is permitted to go abroad. If there is anyone who attempts to do so secretly, he must be executed. If any Japanese returns from overseas after residing there, he must be put to death.”

It was the sudden appearance of four gunboats led by US Navy **Commodore Matthew Perry** sailing into Tokyo bay in 1853 that shifted Japan’s focus outward, as they were coerced under threat of cannon fire into signing an unequal trade agreement that opened several of Japan’s ports to US merchants. By 1859, Japan and the United States had opened formal diplomatic relations, charting a course that would eventually lead to war as we discussed in the first episode of season 1 of this podcast.

Major political and economic changes occurred in the decade and a half following the first unequal treaty signed by Commodore Perry. This also began a period of intense social upheaval in Japan, which ultimately led to the first large scale migration of Japanese people in the modern era. The mercantile aristocracy had long resented the noble samurai class who held dominance in their class based society. After centuries of peace during the Edo period, the Tokugawa Shogunate or *Bakumatsu* as it was referred to in their final years, had long since passed its

prime. The total mismanagement of the trade treaty negotiations was used as a catalyst for popular revolt that would take root over the next decade.

Although the United States was deeply involved in the initial negotiations that forcibly opened Japan to trade with the West, by 1861 attention turned inwards as the Confederate States of America waged a civil war attempting to secede from the Union. During this time, certain elements in Japan attempted to capitalize on American weakness in the region and renegotiate the unequal trade agreements. While the Shogun was tacitly supporting diplomatic efforts with the West, Emperor Komei issued an imperial decree in 1863 that simply stated *Joi jikko no chokumei* - loosely translated to “expel the barbarians.”

The Choshu clan under the leadership of Daimyo Mori Takachika was bitterly opposed to Western intervention and at the behest of Komei’s decree, ordered his samurai to begin attacking all foreign vessels attempting to cross the Shimonoseki Strait. This narrow passageway connected the Sea of Japan with the inland Sea and was the main trade route to the major Eastern Japanese treaty ports of Hyogo and Kanagawa. From the vantage point of their hillside fortress, Choshu fired their cannons without warning on an American merchant steamer the SS Pembroke and several European vessels. Once word reached the US consulate in Yokohama, they ordered the battleship frigate USS Wyoming to conduct a counter offensive. Sinking two of the Choshu clan’s European built warships and firing upon the town of Shimonoseki, USS Wyoming won the battle but it would take a joint naval campaign between Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and US to end resistance to foreign trade from the Choshu.

Although this conflict subsided between the Western powers and Japan, tensions between the Bakumatsu and Choshu clan would ultimately fester into a civil war. The powerful Satsuma clan hailing from the Southern island of Kyushu had also engaged in combat with the British Navy, who shelled their home city of Kagoshima after a row involving the killing of a British merchant. Settling the matter with a reparation payment of £25,000, Satsuma eventually became allies with Britain who sold them cutting-edge steam warships that would later be used against the Bakumatsu.

Under the leadership of Saigo Takamori, the Satsuma clan banded together with the Choshu under a secret pact known as the Satcho Alliance. Together they plotted to overthrow the Shogunate and restore the Emperor to power in a conflict known as the Boshin War. The Satcho Alliance fought against several Daimyo from Northern Japan who were still loyal to the Shogun, led by the Aizu clan. Although a series of battles would follow over the next two years, the decisive defeat of Tokugawa forces at the opening Battle of Toba-Fushimi in January 1868 would spell the demise of the Shogun.

Shortly after the Battle of Toba-Fushimi, Emperor Meiji issued an imperial decree stating:

EMPEROR MEIJI VOICE OVER: The Emperor of Japan announces to the sovereigns of all foreign countries and to their subjects that permission has been granted to the Shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu to return the governing power in accordance

with his own request. We shall henceforward exercise supreme authority in all the internal and external affairs of the country. Consequently, the title of Emperor must be substituted for that of Taikun in which the treaties have been made. Officers are being appointed by us to the conduct of foreign affairs. It is desirable that the representatives of the treaty powers recognize this announcement.

Later in 1868, the first 149 Japanese contract workers left for the sugar and pineapple fields in the Kingdom of Hawaii. An American businessman named Eugene Van Reed based in Yokohama recruited these laborers who became known as the *Gannen mono* - or people of the first year. Their name refers to the *genko* - a naming convention used in Japan to count each era by the number of years its current emperor has reigned, with 1868 being the first year of the Meiji era.

Several of the *Gannen mono* like Sentaro Ishii were former Samurai, who fled Japan in the aftermath of the Boshin War. Ishii and others in his position feared reprisal for having fought on the losing side. Some immigrants were second or third sons who stood to inherit nothing of their father's estates, instead seeking opportunities abroad. Others were poverty stricken subsistence farmers who left Japan out of desperation. Whatever their motivations for leaving Japan, these Issei pioneers viewed Hawaii as their best chance at a better life. Some even referred to Hawaii as *Tengoku* - or Heaven. Sadly they would soon learn that it was anything but, amidst deplorable conditions performing backbreaking stoop labor from sun up to sun down, amidst the racist hierarchy of Hawaiian plantation society.

By 1870 nearly half of these laborers returned to Japan, complaining of contract violations and poor pay. Further immigration to Hawaii was banned by the Meiji government, fearing that the degradation of Japanese immigrant laborers would further tarnish the reputation of Japan abroad as they desperately sought to prove themselves as equals to the Western empires who were actively colonizing Asia.

Meanwhile on the US Mainland, a group of 22 Aizu samurai and one Issei woman fled in the aftermath of their clan's total defeat in the Boshin War. There they established the first Japanese settlement in a rural farming region of California near present day Placerville. Known as the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony, this short lived endeavor was stymied by drought, labor disputes, and inadequate funding. Declaring bankruptcy in 1871, the Issei colonists dispersed - some returning to Japan while others settled elsewhere in California. The only female member of their party, Okei Ito, stayed on to work as a nursemaid with the Veerkamp Family who purchased the land after the colony failed. Sadly Ito died of an illness later the same year, and is thought to be the first Japanese woman buried on American soil.

Back in Hawaii, many of the Gannen mono men who remained after their labor contracts expired intermarried with Native Hawaiian women and established the bedrock of Hawaii's mixed race Japanese American community. Later when Japanese immigration to Hawaii resumed in 1885, the Gannen mono and their descendants served as a bridge between Native Hawaiian and Issei communities.

Poor labor conditions and meagre wages proved an issue for these later Issei immigrants as well, and as the demand for Japanese labor in the West coast increased, many went on to try their luck in America. There the Issei found their fortunes closely intertwined with immigrant workers from China, particularly in the West Coast and Intermountain West.

The first mass migration of Chinese to the United States took place in the years following the discovery of gold in California in 1849. The Gold Rush came at a pivotal moment in Chinese history as the once mighty Qing Dynasty empire was mired by decades of European imperial incursions. Great Britain had already fought its first of two Opium Wars, winning extraterritorial rights and major trade concessions from China.

In 1850 the Taiping Rebellion led by Hong Xiuquan would claim an estimated 20 to 70 million lives over the next decade of civil war. Taking advantage of the opportunity to further destabilize the Qing, Britain would launch its second Opium War in 1856, this time with the aid of France. Although the United States was officially neutral, the US Navy participated in two naval engagements on Britain's behalf, and were later included in the treaty negotiations at the war's end.

Chinese who found a means of leaving China did so in great numbers during this era, and many came to the United States to fill the growing labor needs of Westward Expansion. Chinese laborers won favor from employers, because it seemed impossible to work them too hard or pay them too little. The Chinese immigrants of this era were almost entirely bachelors, or men who had left their

families behind in China with few expenses in their daily lives. With limited English proficiency in a country that was openly hostile to them, Chinese laborers were reliant on the companies who employed them and forced to take the wages they were offered.

European immigrants and working class Americans who made up the existing labor force viewed the Chinese as the ruin to white labor. Compared to the Chinese who were forced to accept their lot as strangers in a strange land - white laborers were not willing to work the same long hours under harsh conditions. Many of them also had families to feed and could not put food on the table with the reduced wages being offered to them after the influx of Chinese immigrants drove down the price of labor.

Although many white Americans found employment in other sectors, the European immigrants who mostly hailed from famine-ravaged Ireland seethed with resentment. Despite being white, Irish were considered second class citizens in the United States for much of the 19th century at a time when their homeland was being subjugated under British imperialism. Irish laborers were exploited by their bosses and outworked by the Chinese, who they ultimately scapegoated for their loss in wages.

Chinese labor enabled the construction of the transcontinental railroad, completed in 1869. Nearly 90% of the Central Pacific Railroad labor force was made up of Chinese laborers. But when the official photograph of the Golden Spike joining the first transcontinental railroad was taken in Promontory Point

Utah, the Chinese were intentionally excluded from the image. Chinese laborers also worked alongside Issei immigrants in the sugar and pineapple plantations of Hawaii, and they toiled in mines across the West.

A series of racially prejudicial tax laws targeting foreign miners of Chinese and Mexican descent put many immigrants out of jobs. While many of the Mexicans migrated back to Mexico, the Chinese began moving to cities in large numbers, living and working in ethnic enclave neighborhoods that soon became known as Chinatown.

After the Panic of 1873 resulted in widespread unemployment and massive inflation, tensions between working class whites and the Chinese immigrant laborers reached a boiling point. It was at this time that the California Workingmen's Party became a force in politics - who called for the implementation of a total immigration ban on the Chinese. Their demagogue leader Denis Kearney was himself an Irish immigrant, yet his fiery racial rhetoric decried Chinese immigrants as a cancer on the Western states.

DENIS KEARNEY VOICE OVER: Here, in San Francisco, the palace of the millionaire looms up above the hovel of the starving poor with as wide a contrast as anywhere on earth. To add to our misery and despair, a bloated aristocracy has sent to China—the greatest and oldest despotism in the world—for a cheap working slave. It rakes the slums of Asia to find the meanest slave on earth—the Chinese coolie—and imports him here to meet the free American in the Labor

market, and still further widen the breach between the rich and the poor, still further to degrade white Labor.

DENIS KEARNEY VOICE OVER: These cheap slaves fill every place. Their dress is scant and cheap. Their food is rice from China. They hedge twenty in a room, ten by ten. They are whipped curs, abject in docility, mean, contemptible and obedient in all things. They have no wives, children or dependents. They are imported by companies, controlled as serfs, worked like slaves, and at last go back to China with all their earnings.

DENIS KEARNEY VOICE OVER: The father of a family is met by them at every turn. Would he get work for himself? Ah! A stout Chinaman does it cheaper. Will he get a place for his oldest boy? He can not. His girl? Why, the Chinaman is in her place too! Every door is closed. He can only go to crime or suicide, his wife and daughter to prostitution, and his boys to hoodlumism and the penitentiary.

DENIS KEARNEY VOICE OVER: Do not believe those who call us savages, rioters, incendiaries, and outlaws. We seek our ends calmly, rationally, at the ballot box. So far good order has marked all our proceedings. But, we know how false, how inhuman, our adversaries are. We know that if gold, if fraud, if force can defeat us, they will all be used. And we have resolved that they shall not defeat us. We shall arm. We shall meet fraud and falsehood with defiance, and force with force, if need be.

DENIS KEARNEY VOICE OVER: We are men, and propose to live like men in this free land, without the contamination of slave labor, or die like men, if need be, in asserting the rights of our race, our country, and our families. California must be

all American or all Chinese. We are resolved that it shall be American, and are prepared to make it so.

Angry mobs of white laborers who shared Kearney's perspective began a series of violent attacks on Chinese communities throughout the West. Chinatowns in Los Angeles and Denver were burnt to the ground in a series of anti-Chinese riots. The 1871 massacre in Los Angeles Chinatown saw the largest mass lynching on record in US history, when an angry mob of white Americans sought vengeance for the killing of a white bystander who died in an earlier conflict between two Chinese men. These were just a few of many such attacks that happened during this era.

Anti-Chinese fervor and immigrant scapegoating by white working classes led Congress to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, placing a 10-year moratorium on immigration of Chinese to the United States, which was later extended indefinitely by the Geary Act of 1892. Although this was viewed as a major victory for white working classes, cheap immigrant labor remained at the core of Western industrialism as wealthy industry barons of the Gilded Age continued hiring Chinese already residing in the United States.

The Chinese who remained faced increasing violence, even after the Exclusion Act. One particularly brutal incident was the 1885 massacre in Rock Springs, Wyoming, where at least 28 Chinese miners were killed. A lynch mob of white nativists destroyed 78 Chinese owned homes, causing the approximately 500 Chinese community members to flee the region and disperse around the country.

Factory owners, mining companies, and railroad barons allowed the Chinese to be scapegoated for decisions they made, motivated entirely by profit. Wealthy American industrialists had no desire to pay European immigrants more money if they could get Asians to work at a fraction of the cost. As the tide of Chinese immigrant labor waned, they turned their eyes instead to Japan.

Frank Miyamoto was a pioneering Japanese American sociologist. Conditions in Japan and the opening of the Meiji government made the immigration to the United States possible, he recalls,

<https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-1000/ddr-densho-1000-50-2-transcript-f8e9548ab8.htm>

<https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-50-2/>

FRANK MIYAMOTO RECORDING FROM DENSHO: I would say that the main factor was the push already started in Japan of changing from this feudal, isolated background to, under the Meiji era, a new expansionist country. Now, the other factor however, is that Japan was a deeply ossified country in terms of status arrangements. It was so deeply set in its way, that despite the psychological push that is now present in the Meiji era, the actual fact was that it was difficult for people to move up. And given this kind of contradiction in the situation, there were a lot of people who were disposed to move if they could or disposed to try to do whatever they could to rise, and migration or movement to, let's say, a country like the United States was seen as a way to do it. So that was part of the picture and then there were other circumstances. For example, if you were a

second son or third son and were not going to inherit the family property, then you were freer to move. These kind of incentives were often a factor in the migration of the *Issei*.

In the Kingdom of Hawaii where many of the *Issei* first immigrated, pro-American business interests who controlled the sugar plantations conspired with the US Navy to overthrow the last Hawaiian monarch Queen Liliuokalani in 1893. A new one-party state called the Republic of Hawaii briefly existed until it was incorporated as an official territory of the United States in 1898.

Although Japanese immigrants living in Hawaii were largely apolitical, they were also silent on the issue of annexation because the same people who organized the coup against the Hawaiian monarch owned the sugar plantations they worked on. However, the Meiji government did issue a formal letter of protest to the annexation of Hawaii on the grounds that because Asians were barred from US citizenship, the wellbeing of *Issei* laborers would be jeopardized by their lack of status under American dominion. In response, Hawaiians collaborating with the US government in favor of annexation accused Japan of wanting to acquire the islands themselves.

Although the Meiji government accurately predicted the *Issei*'s inability to naturalize as US citizens as a source of difficulty for Japanese subjects living in the US Territory of Hawaii, annexation also made *Issei* Hawaiian residents eligible to move to the US mainland, who did so in great numbers.

Another result of Hawaii's new territorial status was a sweeping restriction on overseas contract labor. This enticed an additional 30,000 *Issei* to move to Hawaii

in a single year before the new restrictions took effect, almost doubling the Hawaiian Japanese population. By 1900, there were 61,000 Japanese in Hawaii. The passage was arduous. One Issei recalled the conditions.

VOICE OVER FROM PASSAGE IN *NISEI, THE QUIET AMERICANS*: We were packed into the ship in one big room, men and women together. There was no privacy, no comforts, no nothing. We were like silkworms on a tray, eating and sleeping and wondering what the future held for us. The fortunate ones found jobs.

As with the Chinese laborers, most of the Issei were single men. Few intended to permanently settle in Hawaii or the US mainland. Rather, they hoped to earn enough for them to return to Japan, build a home and carve out a place in their own society with the resources they had gained abroad.

Frank Miyamoto said his father was rare among that first wave of Issei because he planned to stay.

<https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-1000/ddr-densho-1000-50-2-transcript-f8e9548ab8.htm>

<https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-50-2/>

FRANK MIYAMOTO SOUNDBITE FROM DENSHO: When he came to the United States, he came with the idea of staying permanently in this country, which was not the characteristic of most of the *Issei* parents of that time. The attitude among many Japanese immigrants was they would come to this country, make a killing, and then go back and become persons of status in Japan, which they could not do within the system as it was. So the idea was that migration and then return to

Japan would make possible this kind of status mobility that was not possible in the, you know, if they remained where they were.

More often, however, work in Hawaii led to the mainland, not to Japan. That was how **Seikichi Yamashita** arrived on the West Coast, said his son, **Takashi**.

<https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-1000/ddr-densho-1000-365-1-transcript-fb5c39c559.htm>

<https://ddrstage.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-365-1/>

TAKASHI YAMASHITA SOUNDBITE FROM DENSHO: He was in the Russo-Japanese War when he was fourteen years old, and then he was there for a couple years, I think, he told me, and then he got a furlough to come home to see his parents, so-and-so. And then he told himself that he's never gonna go back to the Russian territory to fight for Japan, so then he decided he wanted to go someplace so he was wandering around in the town in Kagoshima, and at the employment agency he saw a sign saying "recruiting sugar cane cutters for the Hawaii, Hawaii sugar factory." So then he decided, "Oh, I think I want to get out of here and then go to Hawaii to cut sugar cane," so he went to cut sugar cane. I don't know exactly what year that was, but he cut sugar cane there for one or two years. I don't really, I don't exactly know how many years, but I think one or two years. And then he decided that's too hard of a work, so he says, "I'm gonna go to USA."

Most Issei who either came to the mainland from Hawaii or directly from Japan immigrated to the West Coast. The majority settled in California, primarily in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and the San Jose area. Others went to the Pacific Northwest in Washington and Oregon. Many worked as sharecroppers or tenant

farmers before starting their own small farms, scratching out a living on poor quality land that no white farmers would purchase.

Japanese American successes in the West Coast farming industry are often cited as a major factor in the economic motivation for the forced removal and wartime incarceration. Japanese Americans were estimated to produce more than 40% of the state's total vegetable crop prior to WWII, and the average value per acre of their farms were a whopping \$280 compared to the overall California average of \$38 per acre.

From these statistics alone, it is clear that Japanese Americans dominated the market, but the stories of the Four Kings of California Farming demonstrate the full extent of this community's success.

George Shima was an Issei businessman who had the distinction of becoming the first Japanese American millionaire. A self-made man, Shima immigrated to California in 1889 where he worked multiple jobs as a domestic servant and migrant farm laborer. After mastering the English language – a skill that few Issei possessed in that era, Shima began negotiating labor contracts for Japanese fieldhands who worked for white farm owners.

Within a decade Shima had saved up enough money to purchase his own plot of land in the San Joaquin Delta where he started his own farm. Shima used the latest farming techniques to reclaim what were essentially swamplands, turning them into profitable potato fields. Employing diverse immigrant laborers that

included South Asians from the Punjab region of India alongside his fellow Japanese countrymen, Shima's operation had completely cornered the California potato market by 1910.

By 1920 lands that Shima either farmed himself or leased to other Japanese American tenant farmers were producing approximately 85% of the statewide potato crop and his "Shima Fancy" brand of potatoes was valued at over \$18 million, roughly \$229 million in today's currency value.

Despite his overwhelming success, Shima was still subject to the racism of his times, as Issei journalist Kiyoshi Kawakami noted in a 1913 article he wrote for The Independent Weekly Magazine.

KIYOSHI KAWAKAMI VOICE OVER: George Shima was called the "Potato King." The man had breathed deep the atmosphere of the Golden State, and he learned how to grow with the country. Yet when he moved into his new home at Berkeley, the "society" of the college town began to talk, heaping upon him all sorts of insinuations and invectives.

The newspapers of San Francisco, Berkeley and Oakland quickly lined up with the frivolous society gossipers, and conspired to pull down the man whom they had voluntarily placed upon a royal dais. "Jap Invades Fashionable Quarters," "Jap Puts on Airs," "Yellow Peril in College Town," such were a few of the thousand and one tirades and epithets which the dignified editors of the noble press of California hurled upon George Shima.

But Shima was a philosopher and a strategist. He lived in his new home in regal fashion, employing a retinue of servants and embellishing the rooms with elegant furniture; and also purchased the adjoining lot and converted it into a garden adorned with rare shrubs and flowers imported from Europe and Asia. Then his “exclusive” neighbors, who had a short while before indulged in uncharitable criticism, rubbed their eyes and began to wonder what sort of a “Jap” had come to live in their midst. And when he donated \$500 to the YMCA of the University of California, the townsmen had to recognize that even a Japanese could be as public spirited and respectable as they. That settled it. Shima was no longer a social outcast, and today the crown of the “Potato King” rests upon his head as securely as ever.

George Shima died in 1926 after suffering a sudden stroke, and was posthumously decorated as a member of the Order of the Rising Sun by Emperor Hirohito.

Although Shima was the most successful of the Four Kings, Lettuce King Yaemon Minami lived a similar rags to riches story, nearly a generation later. Immigrating in 1905, Minami worked as a stoop laborer on a sugar beet farm in Guadalupe California. By 1909 he had saved enough money to begin growing his own crop for the Sugar Company. He would later find his niche in the lettuce crop, and by 1917 his 1,200-acre operation known as General Farms was recognized as the best in the business.

In the years before Pearl Harbor, General Farms was generating an annual revenue of nearly \$3 million. However, Minami's success did not grant him immunity from the wartime incarceration, and if anything made him more of a target. Minami and his son Yataro spent the war years in the DOJ camp at Santa Fe, New Mexico, separated from the rest of their family who were incarcerated at Gila River Relocation Center in Arizona.

Reuniting at the war's end, the Minami family managed to reestablish their farm business under the new name of Security Farms. In 1970 Yaemon Minami was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun for his many contributions to the Japanese American community.

Like Minami, Yutaro Uyeda who was better known as the "Strawberry King" of Monrovia California, shared a deep passion for his community. Uyeda first immigrated to Hawaii in 1903 before coming to the mainland for a job with the Pacific Electric Railroad, laying tracks on the Monrovia-Glendora line. In 1907 he settled in Monrovia and began working as a stoop laborer for local strawberry farmers. After learning the trade he branched out into his own farm project growing strawberries on Monrovia city land and other unused empty lots that he found, employing other Issei laborers to help harvest the crop.

As Uyeda's farming project steadily grew, he began hiring Mexican laborers as well. A full scale operation from production to distribution, the Uyeda family opened a fruit stand just off the busy Route 66. By 1910 about 80% of the strawberry market in Southern California was controlled by Japanese growers.

A valued member of the community, the Uyeda's regularly sponsored floats in local parades where their daughters would hand out strawberries. Yutaro Uyeda was also a benefactor and supporter of the Monrovia Japanese language school. Sadly, the Uyeda's dreams were cut short when the wartime removal forced Yutaro and his family into Heart Mountain. Yutaro's friend and neighbor Orman Good was able to temporarily lease out the Uyeda family home on their behalf during the war years. With the rental income they were able to reestablish the family business in the postwar era. Although less successful than the other Kings, Uyeda continued to make a positive impact on the lives of his fellow Japanese Americans and the Monrovia community at-large.

"Rice King" Keisaburo Koda was the last of the four kings to start his business in 1928, but Koda Farms is the only of their contemporaries to remain in business today – now under the management of Keisaburo's grandson, Ross Koda. A descendant of Taira clan samurai, Keisaburo Koda was a visionary leader who took care of his community on both sides of the Pacific. A college graduate, Koda was working as a school principal in his hometown of Ogawa Fukushima when he decided to seek his fortune in California.

A born entrepreneur, Koda tried his hand at oil drilling and the laundry business before partnering with several investors to found the North America Tuna Canning Company, that processed catches from many of the Japanese American fishing boats docked near San Pedro. This venture led him to canned vegetable processing, and from there he decided to pursue his own agricultural business.

Eventually purchasing land in the San Joaquin Valley under the names of his American-born children, Koda pioneered an innovative technique to rapidly sow rice seeds over a large plot of land by dropping them from a crop-dusting airplane. The technique of aerial application has now become industry standard for many farmers of rice and other cover crops.

Like his contemporaries, Koda was forced to abandon his business during the war years, which he spent with his family in the WRA camp at Amache Colorado. Koda Farms was so prolific in production of the US rice supply that the federal government mandated it continue to be operated in their absence. However when the Koda family returned to their farm after the war ended in 1945, they found it stripped bare. Anything of value had been liquidated, along with their house and hog farm. Devastated by the loss of their once thriving farm, but determined to build back their business, the Koda family purchased a plot of land less than a mile from their original home and gradually rebuilt Koda Farms over the next several decades.

In the postwar era Keisaburo Koda became an active member of the Japanese American Citizens League, and a leading advocate in the fight to overturn the California Alien Land Law. His leadership in the Naturalization Rights League also led to the McCarran-Walter Act that for the first time in US history, granted Asian immigrants the ability to become naturalized citizens. Keisaburo Koda was among the first Issei to be sworn in as US citizens in 1954, but never lost sight of his

homeland as he continued to support his overseas relatives who are also in the rice business, even to this day.

Besides the Four Kings, Issei owned farms were far more productive on average than those of the European immigrants and white American farmers on the West Coast. This incurred the jealousy of rival farmers, who resented their success and by 1913, California passed the Alien Land Law, prohibiting Asian immigrants from buying land. Many Issei like Keisaburo Koda were able to circumvent the restrictive legislation by placing ownership of their farms in the names of their American-born children, most who weren't old enough to drive or vote.

However, the mounting anti-Japanese prejudice also encouraged some Issei to push farther inland - particularly the bachelor laborers. Like the Chinese who built the transcontinental railroad before them, at least 30,000 Issei found jobs laying tracks on the many regional lines that now spanned the United States. That was where **Seikichi Yamashita** ended up after he left Hawaii, as his son Takashi remembered.

<https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-1000/ddr-densho-1000-365-1-transcript-fb5c39c559.htm>

<https://ddrstage.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-365-1/>

TAKASHI YAMASHITA SOUNDBITE FROM DENSHO: He told me that he went to the employment office and he saw a sign saying they're recruiting railroad spike, spike pounders in the United States. So he told me it said to report in Seattle, Washington, so he took a boat to Seattle, Washington, I don't know how long it took him to get there, and then he got there, then he went right directly to the

employment office and they put him on the spike pounding crew from Seattle, Washington, to meet the south, no, meet the east and the west, the railroad track would come from the east to the west, they pound the golden spikes for them. That's what completed the spike pounding job. So I don't know, he didn't tell me how long it took, but anyway, he was on that crew, and then after the golden spike was pounded they had a big celebration there, and I forgot what the name of that celebration was, golden spike something, just don't remember.

Railroad work dispersed Japanese immigrants across the intermountain West to sparsely populated rural states that had seen few Asians before.

Many of the same labor contractors who previously sent ships of Issei to work in Hawaii during the monarch period, shifted their attention to the mainland, recruiting workers for the railroads and mining companies.

One such operation was the **Oriental Trading Company**, which started in 1898 and soon had offices stretching from Seattle to Montana, where many of the Japanese railroad workers settled.

The Oriental Trading Company contracted laborers for the Great Northern Railroad and sent nearly 6,000 workers to eight other railroad companies in Montana, Idaho, and North Dakota. Issei laborers contracted by other companies built railroads in Colorado, Nebraska, and South Dakota.

The Issei worked under dreadful conditions toiling away for up to 16 hour each day and living in overcrowded workers housing with dozens of other bachelors. To save money, some even slept in empty boxcars that were kept at the railyard.

Labor contractors, called *keiyaku-nin*, took a cut from the workers' pay in addition to what they were paid by the railroad companies who hired them. Northern Pacific railroad contractors charged each worker 10 cents out of their daily wage of \$1.10. Many of the workers got sick from overcrowding, exhaustion, and malnutrition.

Those who endured left their mark on the West as the Japanese community steadily spread throughout the region. Small settlements of Issei appeared in almost every town with a railroad station. While most of the Issei laborers were bachelors, some of the railroad workers brought their families with them. The Issei women and Nisei children established more permanent roots in the larger railroad town community while their husbands and fathers traveled the line laying down tracks.

Rokuazem "Roy" Matsumura and his family settled in Granger, Wyoming, one of the stops on the Northern Pacific Railroad. Matsumura arrived in the United States in 1906, shortly before the Gentlemen's Agreement between the US and Japan sought to curb Japanese labor immigration the following year. By 1910, there were 1,500 Japanese in Wyoming, mostly along the railroad line across the southern part of the state. Railroad construction from the Wyoming line continued into Utah, which also brought a number of Japanese immigrants there. Among them was a cousin of my great grandfather Masaichiro Marumoto, who worked the railroad near Ogden, Utah.

Although in far smaller numbers than the Chinese, Issei workers had been on Utah railroad gangs since the late 1800s. The first known Japanese visitors to Utah came in 1872, when about 50 members of a diplomatic mission led by Ambassador

Iwakura visited Salt Lake City and got stranded by a snowstorm for a week. Two decades later in 1892, Japanese immigrants established permanent roots in Utah. After the Chinese Exclusion Act, more Japanese came there for work on the railroads and the mines.

Yozo Hashimoto was the earliest Japanese labor agent to supply workers for Intermountain West industries. In 1890, he recruited his nephew, **Daigoro Hashimoto**, to work as a cook on the Great Northern Railroad in Montana. After white nationalist vigilantes attacked the camp where he worked, killing several of the Issei laborers, Daigoro fled for his life.

Unsure of who he could trust, Daigoro hid in the fields by day and travelled by night until he reached Salt Lake City where his uncle had opened a branch of their labor agency. Daigoro joined up with his uncle working for the Hashimoto Company and started going by the name of **Edward Daigoro** to his white business clients. To the Japanese American community he was better known as Daigoro-sama, an honorific title used to show the highest level of respect.

The Hashimoto Company supplied workers to the railroads and imported Japanese foods, rice, and clothing. Daigoro handled the payrolls, sent money to the men's families in Japan and extended lines of credit so they could purchase essentials if they ran out of cash before payday. By 1904, Daigoro had become a prominent member of Utah's business community, where local papers dubbed him "Salt Lake City's Mikado."

Daigoro opened another agency in California just before the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, which upended that city's Japanese community. This made it even easier for Hashimoto Company to supply the railroads and mining companies with

workers who were looking to leave the rubble of San Francisco. Conveniently for Hashimoto Company, the earthquake coincided with an increased demand for labor in the mining industry further inland.

Mining

Aside from the railroad, mining was the other major industry that brought Issei pioneers to the Great Plains and Intermountain West.

By 1909 there were 300 Issei miners in Colorado, accounting for about 10% of the total 3,555 Japanese Americans in the state. In Wyoming, Japanese miners worked in at least seven mines. In Utah, Japanese immigrants moved to Carbon County, where, as the name suggests, the area was rich in coal. Carbon County's oldest mine was started in the 1870s, although it took about 30 years for the first Japanese miners to arrive.

Daigoro Hashimoto was the Issei immigrant who made the first inroads for Japanese miners in Utah. Daigoro brought seven experienced workers from Rock Springs, Wyoming, where some of the locals still bore ill will to the next generation of Asian immigrants. But Utah wasn't much safer for Japanese miners, where the mining company had to hire two armed guards to keep the Japanese safe from mob violence.

By 1905, there were 80 Issei miners in Utah, although seven years later, the number had dwindled down close to zero mostly because the miners hated the camp boss who made the Japanese do the most dangerous and difficult jobs. After a change in management, miners returned to the area. Children of the miners lived an isolated existence, said **Paul Bannai**, whose father worked in the Utah mines.

<https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-1000/ddr-densho-1000-128-3-transcript-93de5e3066.htm>

PAUL BANNAI SOUNDBITE FROM DENSHO: "Well, you know I started there in the very first elementary school -- oh, I forgot to tell you. When I was there in Grand Junction, I also took the car and drove over the border into Utah, because we lived in a little coal-mining town called Segoe, Utah. That's where my father had the pool hall and where he got injured. It was a town which was operated by a company that did the coal mining. They operated a general store, little store, where we had the post office, where we had to buy everything. And that school was, again, a two-room school, and it was, the school was a church also. It was a meeting place for the community. And I remember that -- I think it was Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, the husband taught the higher grades, and the wife taught lower grades. But that school, too, I went to. And I do remember that when you were at a certain grade and they felt that you learned enough, you were moved to the next room and the husband took over to teach you. But there were no grades. I mean it was just a matter of... but that town of Segoe, Utah, went back to visit. I could not go up with my car because the road was blocked off. So I went back to the town near the railroad. It's called Thompson. Thompson, Utah. And I asked, "What happened to Segoe?" And they said, "It is abandoned. The company has given it up, and there's really nothing to see there." Which I found out, because when I was going up the road I could see that the little store that they had was completely crumbled, the road was not used. So it's a town that I lived in, but I do remember so well that we lived up the road. This town in the winter months was closed because the road was unpassable. Snow would come down. But going to school, I remember that since it was at the bottom of the hill, what I would do was, I had a sled. I'd get on

the sled and go all the way down the hill to school. And I'd have to pull the sled back up the hill, but at least one way I didn't have to walk. I could sleigh all the way down. And I remember that, the enjoyment that we had.

“There was very few people that lived in the town. We were the only Oriental, there was another Oriental family. I think there was, the father was a coal miner. But I remember that it was, in the winter months, no communication. We didn't know what was going on in the world. There was no radio, no television, and no newspaper. So we were isolated. So there was three, four months that we were oblivious of what was happening in the world. Not that it made a lot of difference. But I remember that it got so cold that what we did is we'd put water down out in the front. Made a skating rink out there. And we all had skates, so we could skate to pass time. So I remember the good times in all those places, not only the bad but the good.”

As Issei laborers began to settle down and have families, other tertiary businesses began to crop up that specifically catered to the Japanese American community. Import/export trade companies established supply chains to even the most remote regions of the country wherever the Issei were living in significant numbers to supply them with Japanese food products. Some Issei entrepreneurs also began manufacturing their own specialty food products in the United States like Shinzo Ohki, who founded the Detroit-based Oriental Show-You company in 1918, later relocating to Indiana where he manufactured soy sauce that was distributed throughout the Western states. Buddhist Temples and Japanese Christian Churches also followed wherever the community took root.

Flowers

Some Issei found success in other mainstream American industries, like the Domoto family who rose to prominence through their flower nursery business.

Takanoshin Domoto arrived in the United States in 1884. Soon, three of his brothers followed and by 1885 they had established a small flower nursery in Oakland California. In 1902 the Domoto Brothers Nursery moved to a larger 40-acre site in the hills above Oakland and they began recruiting residents of their native Wakayama prefecture to come work with them. So many Japanese florists worked for the Domoto brothers that their nursery became known to other Issei nurserymen as Domoto Daigaku - the Japanese word for College.

The Domoto Brothers' success drew other family members to the United States, including distant cousins like **George Kumemaro Uno**. Uno left Japan to work for the Domotos and eventually made his way to Salt Lake City, Utah, which by then had a thriving Japanese American community. Trade publications from the late 1910s show that Uno cut a wide swath through the flower distribution industry in the Intermountain region. His daughter **Kay Uno** remembers his impact.

KAY UNO SOUNDBITE FROM DENSHO: They started working for Mr. Domoto, and he had flower, flower gardens, and some of them worked in the flower gardens. Others did, worked in stores where he had his items and all. My father, somehow my father learned English and spoke it well, from the very early part of his being here in the U.S., and so he was one of those who my uncle set up to sell his good here and there, and sent him to Salt Lake. And my father lived in Salt Lake and started the Christian church there.”

In many ways, George Uno was ready to be an American the moment he arrived in this country.

KAY UNO SOUNDBITE FROM DENSHO: “He was a funny man. [Laughs] He loved to talk, and he had really fascinating memory. If he got interested in something, he would go study it, you know, and he'd go get books from libraries or from, he'd go to used bookstores and look for books on the subject he was interested in. He'd go search people that he thought would know more about the subject and visit with them and learn from them. He was self-taught, but he became an entomologist that way. And he knew all about, well, before that, he knew all about flowers, he could tell you the scientific name, the regular name, he could tell you where it came, how it grew, everything about the flowers. And he had a fabulous memory. And then he did this with insects also, when he became, he was working for an insecticide company, and because he could speak Japanese, they gave him all the Japanese farmers to go and work.”

Kosaku Sawada was another Issei pioneer who made his way in the world through the flower business. Sawada came to the United States from Osaka and ended up settling in Mobile, Alabama, a port city on the Gulf of Mexico. There Sawada used a chest of seeds sent to him by his wife's family in Japan to cultivate varieties of camellia flowers that had never been seen before.

By the time he died at age 85 in 1968, Sawada developed thousands of new varieties of camellias. Currently Sawada's flowers, plus hundreds more, are on display amid a 100-acre site of gardens and longleaf pines in southern Alabama.

Sawada was just one of many Japanese immigrants who settled in isolated pockets in which they were often the only Asians in town.

Another was **Haru Tanaka**, who started the first Japanese restaurant in St. Louis, Missouri. His son Chester remembered being one of a very small Japanese community.

CHESTER TANAKA SOUNDBITE FROM DENSHO: “In St. Louis where I grew up, there were four Japanese families. I really didn't get to know any of them very well. There was a consul, the family on the consulate, two other people ran a restaurant, and I think there was an old medicine man, doctor. But we maybe got around seeing each other, my family, the older folks, got together once a year, maybe Christmas or whatever, but the children never, myself, we never got together. Maybe once a year, but we really didn't know each other. I grew up essentially with Germans, Italians, and a sprinkling of French. This is essentially the St. Louis population, of course, there was a mixture of all the races, but strongly German and Italian. And this is where I grew up, in a German neighborhood, really, with the Italian neighborhood just around the corner, over the hill, as they say.

I: Did you have any identification with the Japanese culture? Did your parents talk of Japan or tell you stories? Did you have any identification with Japan?

CT: There was very little discussion about Japan in the family. I think they came from rather severe conditions back home. After the war they did mention

something to me something, somewhat. My mother came from a broken home, they had remarried and so forth, and she was sort of a, if not... I'm not quite clear on it, but she evidently wasn't happy because of this second, her second father, or whatever you call it. My dad evidently came, he was the son of a *sake* foreman, but the whole area, Kyushu, which is a southern island near Fukuoka, I understand, had been depressed during this period economically, and so many Japanese left there, I guess, even as the people from other countries leave depressed areas. So they came to the U.S. looking for a new source of livelihood.”

The Tanaka family avoided the wartime incarceration because they lived in the middle of the country, outside of the Military Exclusion Zone on the West Coast. When the Army opened enlistment to Japanese Americans in 1943, Chester Tanaka volunteered and fought his way across Europe as a member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

Kuroki family in Nebraska

Shosuke Kuroki arrived in the United States in 1895 from Kagoshima in southern Japan. At his first job in San Francisco he worked as a pin boy in a bowling alley, resetting the bowling pins between frames. Next he joined a railroad gang and started working on the Union Pacific railroad line that ran through Wyoming. There Kuroki married his wife Naka Yokoyama, who was a picture bride. This was a common practice among Issei bachelors who were legally forbidden from intermarriage with women from other races in most Western states during that era. Instead they arranged marriages through overseas marriage brokers called *baishakunin*, exchanging photographs with Japanese women through the mail.

Not all matches were well suited, but Shosuke and Naka Kuroki got along. They would go on to have 10 children. One of their sons, **Ben Kuroki**, would be heralded as a war hero during the second world war. As one of the only Japanese Americans in the Army Air Force, Ben Kuroki flew 58 bombing missions as a ball turret gunner on a B-24 crew in Europe. Ben remembered a story that his father Shosuke shared about settling in the area he would call home.

<https://ddrstage.densho.org/media/ddr-csujad-29/ddr-csujad-29-63-1-transcript-96f2f49d73.pdf>

BEN KUROKI VOICE OVER: "At one time they were renting a boarding house there for railroad workers, and eventually, why, the Union Pacific Railroad section crews took him into Nebraska. That's where he saw the fertile valleys of the North Platte River Valley and decided that farming is what he wanted to do. I think there were about a dozen other Japanese man who also became farmers in the North Platte River Valley."

https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Ben_Kuroki/

<https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-122/ddr-densho-122-21-7-transcript-e18d5b5d05.htm>

The Kuroki family remained in Nebraska, where Shosuke grew potatoes on a farm near the small town of Hershey. Life on a Nebraska farm changed the Kuroki family's life, Ben remembered.

BEN KUROKI SOUNDBITE FROM DENSHO: "Well, that's where I was born and brought up and raised in Nebraska and I think it's going to school there, and all my friends and everything. Nebraska gave me a real solid foundation for patriotism. During the war, I think it was, really played a very important part in my life. Like I

said before, I can remember back in school, in the second grade we started saying the Pledge of Allegiance, and all those things seemed to have had a profound effect on me in the crucial years of the war. So I'm always proud that I was born and raised in the state of Nebraska.

BK: No, I don't think so. We knew we were different as kids, you know. Of course, my parents all spoke Japanese and when they got together with the few Japanese, other Japanese in the community, why, they would always speak in Japanese and bow and all that stuff and of course, you realized that you were different when your Caucasian friends would see them doing that.

FA: How many Japanese American families were there in Nebraska?

BK: Well, right in our area I think there were only about four or five families. Maybe in, maybe 50-mile radius, probably a dozen more. But we didn't see much of each other. It was entirely different than those on the West Coast.

Immigration law and racism

Although Ben Kuroki did not experience overt racism as a child in Nebraska, racial hatred and xenophobia was surging across the United States in the first two decades of the 20th century.

It was during this time that white supremacists and historical revisionists raised funds to construct monuments and memorials to the Confederacy in former confederate states. A 1982 scholarly study by historian Ralph W. Widener estimated that nearly half of all confederate memorials were built between 1902 and 1912.

Furthermore a popular novel written in 1905 titled *The Clansmen* glorified the Klux Klan as saviors of a free white South. Selling over 100,000 copies, the book was adapted as a play that same year. Later in 1915 a Hollywood film adaptation directed by D. W. Griffith titled *Birth of a Nation*, was widely credited as instigating a resurgence of the Klan.

Reaching millions of viewers across the country, *Birth of a Nation* was the first feature length film screened at the White House during the presidency of Woodrow Wilson, himself a descendant of confederate soldiers. Wilson did not hide his disdain for African Americans whom he called “an ignorant and inferior race” in his 1902 book, *A History of the American People*. Wilson also went on to defend the KKK thusly.

WOODROW WILSON VOICE OVER: “The white men of the South were aroused by the mere instinct of self-preservation to rid themselves, by fair means or foul, of the intolerable burden of governments sustained by the votes of ignorant negroes and conducted in the interest of adventurers.”

Statements like these emboldened white supremacists who staged lynchings with impunity, including several documented lynchings that took place in Bainbridge Georgia and Springfield Missouri immediately following presentations of *The Clansmen* play.

Anti-black violence culminated in a series of race riots that worsened after many white working class soldiers returned home from WWI to find their factory jobs had been given to African Americans in their absence. The Summer of 1919, known as Red Summer for the amount of violence, saw race riots in 26 cities. The

single most destructive attack targeting African Americans happened in Oklahoma two years later when the Tulsa Massacre of 1921 resulted in over \$26 million in property losses, 10,000 people were made homeless, and at least 39 people were killed. A 2001 report from the Oklahoma Commission to study the Tulsa Riot estimates that as many as 300 people were killed.

Aside from the openly racist beliefs being espoused in the highest office of the United States government, a larger movement of white nationalist literature was being produced from the ivory towers of American academia. Yale graduate Madison Grant wrote his fear mongering 1916 book *The Passing of the Great Race* expounding the virtues of eugenics and pseudo-scientific race theory that positioned Nordic peoples of Scandinavia as the most desirable specimen of whiteness whose racial strains were undiluted. Another Ivy league graduate Lothrop Stoddard, who held a PhD in history from Harvard wrote an equally repugnant book *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* in 1920. Both Grant and Stoddard's writings would later be cited by prominent Nazi racial theorists in their own conceptualizations of Aryanism.

Through a combination of popular culture, political rhetoric, and pseudo-academic literature - the United States was experiencing anti-Black and xenophobic racism to a degree that greatly impacted the lives of all non-white peoples. On the West Coast, the same flawed logic that led to the Chinese Exclusion Act came to focus on the Japanese as the main victim of racial animus.

Homer Yasui grew up in Hood River, Oregon, where he witnessed the growing pressures on the local Japanese community.

His father, Masuo, had arrived in 1901 and traveled across the United States, spending time in Cincinnati, Ohio, before going west to Portland, Oregon, and then Hood River.

<https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-one-7/ddr-one-7-26-20-transcript-9b72761bca.htm>

<https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-one-7-27-20/?tableleft=segments>

HOMER YASUI SOUNDBITE FROM DENSHO: Well, it did begin in Hood River a long time, but of course, the genesis of the anti, actually Oriental feeling probably began in California at around nineteen... well, before that is during the Chinese Exclusion Act in the 1880s. But that spilled over because the Chinese Exclusion Act did become effective in 1880 and renewed in 1892, and so no more Chinese were allowed to come to the United States. So that's when the heyday of the Japanese immigration to the United States occurred, and it was that period of time when anti-discrimination rose as early as 1903 in California, and then it spilled over to Oregon and Washington. Washington had a larger number of Japanese than Oregon did. So about 1903, they had an Asian Exclusion League which was started in California, and they had a chapter in Portland, not Portland, in Hood River, for a very short time, and then it became defunct because there just wasn't that much interested. That time, 1903, the Japanese were just beginning to come in to Hood River Valley. Before that, there were none. But anyway, in 1919, they did have a formal Oriental Exclusion League, and there were several of the bigwig officers that were bigwigs in the Hood River Caucasian community, but that wasn't the worst about it. The worst part about it was the American Legion, Hood River

American Legion Post Number 22 which was formed around 1919 after World War One, and they had an instrumental man. His name was George C. Wilbur, and he was a lawyer. He was also a senator, an Oregon senator in the Oregon State Legislature, and he and his cohorts in the American Legion, the Hood River American Legion Post Number 22, I believe, first proposed the Oriental, the Asian Exclusion Act, the anti-alien land law, excuse me, the anti-alien land law which was directed at preventing Japanese *Issei* who were not eligible for citizenship from owning real property.”

Kumeo Yoshinari was a future president of Japanese American Citizens League who grew up with the Yasui children in Heart Mountain. He remembered Masuo Yasui as the one man who held the local Japanese community together.

KUMEO YOSHINARI VOICE OVER: “He urged our parents to sink their roots into the American soil. And when we Nisei came along, he admonished us to become good Americans. ‘You are American citizens,’ he used to tell us. ‘You have an opportunity your parents never had. Go to school and study. Don’t miss that opportunity when it comes.’”

Both generations of Japanese Americans faced new and strong headwinds by the early 1920s. During this time the Ku Klux Klan began to exert greater influence in national discourse, at a time when their membership swelled to between 2.5 and 4 million in that decade. **Bill Hosokawa** lived in Seattle at the time. He remembered little about the racism itself, but it was definitely something his parents experienced.

<https://ddr.densho.org/media/ddr-densho-1000/ddr-densho-1000-129-transcript-242431cdfc.htm>

<https://ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-129-2/?tableleft=segments>

BILL HOSOKAWA SOUNDBITE FROM DENSHO: “I can't remember that we had any conversation like that. He was busy, I was busy with my things, and I did not feel discriminated against. And he wanted me to be a good student and he encouraged me to study, learn English, but I don't ever recall him talking to me about any discrimination that I might feel. Now, I know that he was aware of those things. I could hear him talking with his *Issei* friends about the Ku Klux Klan and some of the hostility that Japanese immigrants were facing in California. But there was not too much of that in Washington at that time.”

With the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, signed into law by President Calvin Coolidge this ended Japanese immigration to the United States as part of a total ban on immigrants from Asia and the Middle East. Overall immigration from Europe was also drastically reduced by setting an annual quota based on 2% of the total foreign-born population from each country in 1890. Using the Italian immigrants as an example, 200,000 immigrated in 1923 - it dropped to a meagre 4,000 immigrants per year after the immigration act went into effect.

Although some immigrant communities repatriated in the wake of this institutional oppression, the Japanese American community continued to grow with the children born to the *Issei* and subsequent generations. It would take until 1965 for a new law to eliminate the quotas and open immigration to people from around the world.

ROB BUSCHER: *Look Toward the Mountain* is presented by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation. Written by Ray Locker and Rob Buscher. Produced, Edited, and Hosted by Rob Buscher. Voice overs sourced by Darrell Kunitomi. Special thanks to Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project. Many of the oral histories used in this podcast series were provided by Densho. Visit the Heart Mountain website for a full list of credits.

ROB BUSCHER: Join us for the next episode of this special three-part series titled, "Something Lost and Something Found"