

LESSON 1 SOURCE 1.13 THE KUMANO FAMILY

Family Name: Kumano

Family Members: Roy, Bobby, Harry, Masuye, and Sukge

Street Address: 203 Powell Street Vancouver, B.C.

Occupation: Taxi Driver, Printer and Entertainer

Location: Vancouver, British Columbia



Vancouver sits on the coast of British Columbia's mainland, on the shore of the Pacific and near the mouth of the Fraser River. New arrivals to the region recognized the geographic advantage of a settlement in this place. The land on which it stands has long been home to people of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh-ulh Temíxw (Squamish) and səliwətaʔtəməxʷ (Tsleil-Waututh) territory).

In 1939, Vancouver is the economic engine of the province. The Canadian Pacific railway carries timber, coal, and canned fish across Canada. The port delivers the same resources across the world. It is a time of optimism: this year has shown the first signs of economic prosperity since the Great Depression. Newcomers pour into the city hoping to take advantage of the province's natural wealth.

Powell Street is the heart of Japanese Canadian life in Vancouver. It is lined with Japanese Canadian-owned shops, businesses, restaurants, boarding houses, and food merchants catering to Japanese Canadians in and beyond Vancouver. Powell Street begins in the business centre of Vancouver and runs east toward the city's working-class districts. Shipyards and lumber mills lie north of Powell Street. Residential neighborhoods, with family homes, expand southwards. The streets bustle with millworkers, entrepreneurs, established families, and new immigrants.

Not all Japanese Canadians live in the Powell Street neighborhood. Some families have moved to different parts of the city. Successful entrepreneurs live in wealthier neighborhoods like Kerrisdale. Even as the community grows, however, Powell Street remains a vital centre to Japanese Canadian life. Only there can you find the home-turf of the beloved Asahi baseball team, uniquely Japanese cuisine, and the headquarters of community newspapers.

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ABOUT THE KUMANO FAMILY

Two brothers rent a two-storey, wooden house at 203 Powell Street: Bobby and Roy Kumano. They are *nisei*, or second-generation Japanese Canadians. Their parents immigrated to Canada in 1887 and are recognized as pioneers in the local community. Bobby and Roy's third brother, Harry, and two sisters, Masuye and Sukge, live elsewhere in Vancouver.

Bobby, 26-years-old, is the eldest. He works as a driver for Yama Taxi, a business owned by Mr. Shintaro Yamashita. He has had this job for years. Yama Taxi has six automobiles on the street at any given time.

Bobby and his wife, Asae, have three young children: May (age 6), Leslie (age 3), and Hiroshi (2 months). Their growing family is filling the five-room home quickly.

Bobby's younger brother Roy is 24 and single. He works as a printer at a nearby business, Taiyo Printing. In the evenings, however, Roy is an entertainer. He is the star of the Gakuyukai Harmonica Band. He is also part of a second musical ensemble that features a *koto*, a Japanese string instrument.



Left: Yama Taxis lined up outside the home of Shintaro Yamashita. Nikkei National Museum 2011.11.1.4

Centre: Portrait of Yama Taxi Drivers. Bobby Kumano stands second from the right. He is wearing a grey suit and white scarf. Nikkei National Museum 2011.11.1.5

Right: Roy Kumano with the Gakuyukai Harmonica Band. Roy stands at the centre, wearing a light grey suit. Nikkei National Museum 2001.19.9