

LESSON 1 SOURCE 1.21 THE HASHIZUME FAMILY

Family Name: Hashizume

Family Members: Tashiro, Etsu, John (Eichi), Tayeko,

Street Address: Mission, B.C.

Occupation: Midwife, Farming: strawberries, loganberries, raspberries, rhubarb, and prunes

Location: Mission, British Columbia



The Fraser Valley is the flood plain of the Fraser River, the most important waterway in British Columbia. Natural cycles created this fertile valley: each flood of the Fraser River deposited a layer of topsoil and debris onto the plain. Over thousands of years, these rich soils accumulated and created some of the best farmlands in Canada. These lands sit on the traditional and unceded territories of the S'ólh Téméxw (Stó:lō), Kwantlen, and the Stz'uminus.

The rich region is Stó:lō territory. Before the discovery of gold in the Fraser Valley in 1858, they had lived in the region for millennia. The Gold Rush became the first major challenge to the ownership and control over their lands and resources. In the decades that followed, Stó:lō communities were pushed from their land and faced, sometimes, violent conflict with settlers.

In 1939 Mission is known as “Home of the Big Red Strawberry” — the heart of the berry industry in the Fraser Valley. Those who settled in the region cleared shrub and forest by hand. They used dynamite to blast stumps. Backbreaking farm labour followed the hard work of clearing the land. In time, however, the strawberry farms flourish. Japanese Canadians joined those seeking to build a life in the region. Many farmers purchased land after years of working in Vancouver’s sawmills. In 1939, there are over 100 Japanese Canadian-owned farms in the region. Many families are sending their second- or third-generation Canadian children to Mission’s elementary school.

Mission’s Japanese Canadian community is vibrant. The Japanese Farmer’s Association (or Nokai), established in 1916, is the heart of the community. The farming co-operative creates business opportunities for its members. They work together to break into a market that privileges those of European ancestry. The co-operative’s hall is a meeting place, but it also hosts social gatherings, festivals, and picnics. Other organizations also serve the growing community: the Mission Judo Club, the Mission Buddhist Church, and a Japanese Language School.

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ABOUT THE HASHIZUME FAMILY

John Eichi (age 26) inherited the Hashizume family farm when his father passed away last fall. The family farms strawberries, loganberries, raspberries, and prunes. Over the winter, they grow rhubarb in greenhouses.

His father and mother, Etsu, immigrated to Mission in 1913. Their first home was merely a shack. Over thirty years, they expanded their farmland. Today, they own 32 acres. It is one of the most successful farms in the region. Labourers on temporary work visas from Japan, *yoniyoses*, work in the fields.

John's mother, Etsu, is a midwife. She has caught many of the Japanese Canadian babies in Mission. When she is unable to attend a birth in

person, she sends instructions to expecting families. She is in high demand; families in Mission are growing quickly.

John practices judo with *sensei* Steve Sasaki in Vancouver. Soon, he will be a father: he and his wife, Tayeko, are expecting their first child. John's youngest brother and sisters are still teenagers. One of his father's final wishes was for Etsu them to Japan to finish their high-school educations. They are just about to leave.



Scenes from the Hashizumi farm. Library and Archives Canada/RG33-69/e011167836