

PIONEERS AT THE EDGE OF THEIR UNIVERSE: JAPANESE RAILROAD
WORKERS IN IDAHO AND THE INTERMOUNTAIN WEST

by

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my children, Ashley, Tyler, Kimiko, Marti, and Hailey, and my grandchildren. This is the history of their ancestors. Thank you to those who shared stories from their family's experiences in Idaho with me personally. The stories remained in my mind and were the inspiration for this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

Although many scholars are aware of the history of Japanese Americans and their presence in the West Coast states, including their internment during World War II, few are familiar with the experiences of Japanese immigrants in Idaho and the surrounding Intermountain States. Little is written of the first Japanese who came to Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming at the end of the nineteenth century, or of the role of railroads in their moving inland. Because of this, scholars assume a similar experience of the Japanese in the Intermountain West with those who stayed on the West Coast. This thesis argues railroads were instrumental in bringing the majority of the Japanese immigrants to Idaho and the Intermountain West. Because of the nature of railroad work, Issei were scattered across the states with little ability to create ethnic communities. They integrated into the local communities more fully than those living in the ethnic enclaves in California, Oregon, and Washington. Their pioneering experiences gave Issei the opportunity to assert the values they brought as invisible baggage in their new communities because their values often paralleled American pioneering principles. As a result of their relative isolation, Japanese immigrants depended on their core values to help them succeed and persevere in the Intermountain West.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OSL	Oregon Short Lind Railroad
NP	Northern Pacific Railroad
GNP	Great Northern Railway
CMSPR	Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway

INTRODUCTION

Raised in rural Idaho, I came to know many Japanese American families. I found it intriguing that many of those in the Caldwell/Middleton area where I grew up did not arrive as a result of relocation during World War II. Instead, they were among the early pioneer farming families. I heard their stories of perseverance in the midst of discrimination as they established their families in rural Idaho. Consequently, as I began studying multicultural history, their experiences kept returning to my mind. In my investigation, I learned that a large percentage of Japanese Idahoans originally moved to Idaho and the surrounding states to work on the railroad. Although often overlooked, railroads instigated the migration of Japanese into Idaho and the Intermountain states.

This study addresses Japanese in Idaho and the part the railroad performed in bringing them to the area at the turn of the twentieth century. Secondly, it examines how the invisible baggage they brought with them affected their assimilation, and argues Japanese immigrants in Idaho and the Intermountain West were better able to assert their values in their new communities. Because of their relative isolation, they depended on their core values to help them succeed and persevere in the Intermountain West. Finally, this paper maintains Issei (first generation Japanese immigrants) in Idaho and the Intermountain West had to assimilate into the larger community more fully than those on the West Coast because of their scattered and small population.

Throughout rural Idaho, Japanese names dot the landscape, from Rexburg to Caldwell, and from Homedale to Lewiston. The first Issei arrived in Nampa, Idaho in

1891. Subsequently, Japanese spread throughout the state and into neighboring states as more railroads were built and extended throughout the Intermountain West. At its height, thousands of Issei worked for the numerous railroads crossing the Intermountain states as they were recruited by labor contractors on the West Coast, in Hawaii, and in Japan.

The social and cultural changes that took place amid the modernization of Japan during the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912), significantly impacted the Japanese immigrants who ended up settling in Idaho. The beliefs the Issei brought with them as invisible baggage affected how they adjusted and adapted to Idaho life because many were important principles in American society such as working hard, enduring hardships, independence, and self-reliance. It is significant that these ideas emanated from America. Some values such as perseverance and a strong work ethic were imbedded into Japanese culture long before western influence. Both are evident in those who worked for the railroads. Their education allowed the melding of Western and Eastern ideas together. The ability to choose their vocation instead of being limited to their social class, and the Western self-help philosophy popular in Japan at the time, created a generation of farmers' sons and daughters who believed they could achieve more than their traditional role allotted them. With the Meiji Restoration, Japanese culture changed to incorporate more Western ideals such as these, thus creating a rift between the generation of immigrants and their parents. Many Issei felt out of place in their homeland. Emigration was one solution to these dilemmas. Although the vast majority stayed on the West Coast near their place of arrival in the United States, a few thousand ventured into Idaho and

the Intermountain States seeking adventure and better paying work for the railroads.¹

Meiji Japan had experienced a dramatic change in the way Japanese society was ordered. Centralization of Japan economically, politically, and militarily, gave the new government more control than any time previously in its history. The resulting new worldview focused on Western patterns of thought politically, economically and socially. Education became universal for both boys and girls, teaching Western ideas of government, science and economics. Along with these were social ideals of “self-help” and survival of the fittest. By 1900, ninety percent of the school-aged children attended school, giving the Meiji government influence over children’s thought.²

Although scholars have penned histories of Japanese Americans in Idaho, no publication exists that focuses on the significance of the railroad in bringing Issei to the area. Including the social and cultural history of Issei railroad workers in the Intermountain West is necessary to expand the understanding of how and why they assimilated well into the communities. Their cultural background profoundly affected them, as they worked long hours for little pay, while striving to integrate into their new environment. Most worked honestly for their wages, as shown through the recent translation of Henry Katsuji Hashitani’s diary, an immigrant who eventually settled in Nyssa, Oregon. While working for the Northern Pacific Railroad in Montana, his list of demanding work included shoveling, changing ties, and building a bridge.³ This study expands the historiography of Japanese in Idaho to include cultural history. Additionally,

¹ Van Compernelle, Timothy J. "A Utopia of Self-Help: Imagining Rural Japan in the Meiji-Era Novels of Ambition". *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. 70, 1 (2010): 61-103; Kenneth G. Henshall, *A History of Japan: From Stone Age to Superpower* (London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2012), 56.

² Fumie Kumagai and Donna J. Keyser, *Unmasking Japan Today: The Impact of Traditional Values on Modern Japanese Society* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1996), 62.

³ *Henry K. Hashitani Diaries and Photographs, circa 1904-1949*, University of Montana, Mansfield Library, Archives and Special Collections, translated 2017, 1, 9-10, 16.

scholarship shows little historical analysis on the Japanese there. The Asian American Comparative Collection, housed at the University of Idaho, includes numerous sources. Northern Idaho is often omitted from studies involving Southern Idaho Issei. Adding research information from Northern Idaho broadens and enriches the history of Issei in Idaho, and corroborates the argument that Issei worked at integrating more completely into the community because of the sparse population.

Historiography

Because few historians have sought to explain the historical significance of the railroad in bringing Japanese immigrants to Idaho or attempted to explain why they moved to Idaho beyond the economic reasons, this paper adds to the historiography to create a more thorough examination of Issei in Idaho and the Intermountain West. By 1906, one third of the total population of Issei in the United States was employed as railroad laborers.⁴ There is a dearth of information on how those that came originally as railroad workers survived and thrived in Idaho areas with small Japanese communities such as Pocatello and the Treasure Valley. Often, the many histories on Japanese Americans focus on the larger population situated on the West Coast of the United States. Idaho Issei are usually relegated to simply a few sentences, and the role of the railroad is only mentioned in passing to the next stages of settlement. Yuji Ichioka's, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants 1885-1924*, is one of the few studies that have devoted any amount of attention to railroad workers and this focuses on the role of the labor contractors instead of the individual men who were recruited and worked for

⁴ Robert Arden Wilson and Bill Hosokawa, *East to America: A History of the Japanese in the United States* (New York: Morrow. 1980), 72.

the railroads.⁵ Kazuo Itō's work, *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America*, was the result of a compilation of hundreds of interviews, and includes a chapter on railroad workers.⁶ Most of the interviews are from those who settled on the West Coast or returned to Japan. Tsurutani Hisashi's, *America-Bound: The Japanese and the Opening of the American West*, takes a closer look at those who made their way to Wyoming as laborers for railroads and mines.⁷ Hisashi, Ichioka, and Itō used Japanese language primary sources. In so doing, they expanded the one-sided perspective of these immigrants through previous American historians. Although they add to the historiography, it demands expansion, especially when evaluating those who traveled into Idaho and other Intermountain states.

It is unfortunate that most historians assume the experiences of Japanese Americans in Idaho were similar to the larger populations on the West Coast—that they kept together in a close-knit community of Japanese, assimilating slowly because of the language barrier. This thesis argues that this assumption is false; that the Japanese came to settle in Idaho because of the railroad. It asserts that the small size of Japanese populations led to greater integration into the local community and economy. Many of the men who originally entered the Intermountain West as railroad laborers, and ended up settling here, made more of an effort to learn the language and understand the culture, allowing them to integrate into American society much quicker than those on the West

⁵ Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants 1885-1924* (New York: The Free Press, 1988); Wilson and Hosokawa, *East to America*, 8; See also, Yuji Ichioka, "Japanese Immigrant Labor Contractors and the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern Railroad Companies, 1898-1907" *Labor History* 21, (3), 1980, 326-350.

⁶ Kazuo Itō, *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America* (Seattle: Japanese Community Service, 1973).

⁷ Hisashi Tsurutani, *America-bound: The Japanese and the Opening of the American West*, trans. Betsey Scheiner (Tokyo: The Japan Times, 1989), 121-126.

Coast who were part of a concentrated population. Labor contracting companies enabled Issei movement into the Interior West for railroad work in larger numbers than would have otherwise happened.

Although much of the history already completed in Idaho is a general overview of the Issei and Nisei (second generation, born in America), there is much that can be added. This thesis dives deeper into why they originally came to Idaho and the surrounding area, and how they responded and adapted to life in Idaho, including the hardships they endured in order to expand the historiography and explain the reasons for the differences between their experiences and Japanese immigrants on the West Coast. Wilson and Hosokawa included in their book, *East to America: A History of the Japanese in the United States*, a chapter entitled “The Invisible Baggage.” This introduced the idea that the Japanese culture—its values and traditions— “profoundly influenced their adjustment to life as an alien minority within the diverse American population.”⁸ By applying this notion of cultural “baggage” we grasp the reasons for the reactions of Issei as they encountered discrimination and difficulties of various types in the Interior West while working for the railroad companies.

There are a handful of historians who focused on documenting Issei in Idaho. Robert C. Sims accomplished more in research and writing about the Japanese American experience in Idaho than any other historian. His research began in the 1970s, when multicultural history became prevalent. His articles include parts of Japanese history in Idaho and frequently focus on Japanese Americans during World War II. This thesis focuses on the much earlier time period—1891 through 1925—instead of the often-

⁸ Wilson and Hosokawa, *East to America*, 42.

studied internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, acknowledging the fact that Japanese have been in Idaho since 1891.⁹ Exploring this time frame creates a greater understanding of what drew Japanese to Idaho.

Sims' works do not cover the beliefs the Issei brought with them to Idaho and how these shaped the responses of the immigrants and their families. Their traditional Shinto, Buddhist, and Confucian ideals, combined with western thought, expands the historiography. For example, the concept of *shikata ga nai*, 'it cannot be helped' is one of the beliefs that influenced many Issei as they adjusted to circumstances in Idaho beyond their control and helps explain why they willingly worked so hard for the inadequate pay they received as seen through Henry Hashitani's diary. These values combined to give Issei the ability to endure hardships they experienced when they first came inland to work on the railroad and then later as they integrated into the local communities.¹⁰

Laurie Mercier and Carole Simon-Smolinski included Japanese Americans as part of one chapter in their work, *Idaho's Ethnic Heritage: Historical Overviews*.¹¹ In such a brief summary of the history of Japanese experiences in Idaho, they could not incorporate in-depth research into the Japanese railroad workers' lives in gaining a greater understanding of their reactions. Eric Walz' well written and researched works, "From Kumamoto to Idaho: The Influence of Japanese Immigrants on the Agricultural Development of the Interior West", and *Nikkei in the Interior West: Japanese Immigration and Community Building, 1882-1945*, include examples from Idaho and

⁹ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 50.

¹⁰ Debbie Storrs, "Like a Bamboo: Representations of a Japanese War Bride," In *Asian American Women: The "Frontiers" Reader*, edited by Linda Trinh Vo, Marian Sciachitano, (University of Nebraska Press, Google Books, 113); *Hashitani Diaries*.

¹¹ Laurie Mercier and Carole Simon-Smolinski. *Idaho's Ethnic Heritage: Historical Overviews* V. 1, [Idaho] (The Project, 1990), 44-89.

contain cases from other areas of the Interior West.¹² Walz focuses on farming, giving little credit to the role the railroad played in bringing Issei to Idaho and the Intermountain West. He asserts that the Interior Issei communities developed quite differently than those on the West Coast. Adding to his scholarship, this work focuses on the role of the railroad in developing the communities as Issei experienced the frontier and settlement periods of Issei immigration. It also touches on the beginning of the family period of Japanese immigration.

It is obvious that within the historiography of Japanese Americans, the history of Japanese railroad workers in Idaho and the surrounding areas is thin and in need of analysis. The Japanese communities, including those in Canyon County and Pocatello, Idaho, Utah, and Montana provide opportunities for analysis of Japanese railroad workers. There are some Nisei, children of original Issei pioneers, who are still alive. These men and women offered new insights into the lives of Japanese immigrants in Idaho and helped develop their history through interviews. By looking at these sources, we see that not all Issei can be grouped into the “sojourner” category as historians have previously claimed. It reveals the fact that Issei can be classified into two different categories—those who did plan to stay temporarily and those who arrived with the intention of never returning to Japan. Comprehending what characteristics, values and traditions these men brought with them as invisible baggage and how it influenced the choices they made is seriously lacking. The questions of how social and cultural stimulus not only touched the individual railroad workers, but also their ethnic communities and

¹² Eric Walz, "From Kumamoto to Idaho: The Influence of Japanese Immigrants on the Agricultural Development of the Interior West," *Agricultural History*. 74. No. 2 (2000): 404-418. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3744861>; Eric Walz. *Nikkei in the Interior West: Japanese Immigration and Community Building, 1882-1945*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012).

the areas in which they settled still require answers and should be incorporated in the historiography.

Organization of Thesis

In order to understand why Issei in Idaho responded to their circumstances as they did, one must understand their experiences in Japan. Chapter 1 encompasses the historical background of Meiji Japan and the social, cultural, political, and educational changes that occurred during the latter half of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. This gives a better context of the beliefs of the men who immigrated to Idaho and the Intermountain West to work for the railroad to explain why they adapted differently than those in the coastal states of California, Oregon, and Washington. Chapter 2 includes the first immigrants who came to work on the railroad beginning in 1891. As predecessors, their experiences clarify the beginning of railroad work in the area, showing the importance of it in bringing Issei to Idaho and the surrounding states.

Chapter 3 expounds the role of contractors and companies in recruiting laborers to the Intermountain West. It reveals why Issei in the Interior West used their ability to adapt to American culture faster and more fully integrate into the local communities than they did on the West Coast and allows a shift in the understanding of the Japanese immigrant experience. This shift includes a new view of the importance of railroads in the Issei experience in Idaho and the surrounding states and their melding of American values while keeping their “Japanese spirit.” By looking at the Japanese railroad laborers and their specific experiences, in Chapter 4 we see they did adapt differently than those on the West Coast. It also proves they did not fit into the notion that all Issei can be grouped into the temporary sojourner category as previously asserted. Tracing their

movement from railroad to farming and the influence of Japanese in political issues in Idaho—specifically land lease laws in the 1920s—reveals the influence and importance of education and cultural values that originated in Meiji Japan. Henry K Hashitani’s diary is used as a case study of railroad workers, who originally went to Montana to work for the railroad throughout this thesis.¹³ Other examples are added to confirm findings.

Because of the lack of information, this thesis gathers evidence from a four-hundred-mile radius from Pocatello, Idaho. It includes Northern Idaho, much of Montana, Wyoming, and Utah. Utah has a larger collection of oral histories to draw from. Because many Issei went to Montana to work on the railroad before moving to Idaho, such as Henry Hashitani and Henry Fujii, including the larger area is advantageous. The personal diary of Hashitani and interviews of Fujii enrich the text, giving firsthand accounts of the railroad workers’ experiences. It is interesting to note that there were a few Japanese working for the railroad in Montana in 1890 or 1891.¹⁴ Census records and reports are vital in researching the Japanese populations of Idaho and the surrounding states. The records illustrate how the Japanese railroad workers were together, usually in small groups spread along the rail lines as section crews. Others indicate the concentration of Japanese railroad workers in important hubs such as Nampa, Pocatello, and Missoula. These records and documents create a narrative of the Japanese who came to Idaho and the Intermountain West. From the once isolated island nation, this minority of Japanese immigrants ventured farther than most were willing to journey after leaving their rapidly

¹³ *Hashitani Diaries*, translation.

¹⁴ Helen Z. Papanikolas and Alice Kasai. “Japanese Life in Utah,” In *The Peoples of Utah*, ed. Helen Z. Papanikolas, 333–62. (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society), 1976, 337. Edward Daigoro Hashimoto went to Montana as a cook in 1890 or 1891 at the age of 15, two years before Tanaka recruited laborers to work in Nampa Idaho for the Oregon Short Line. This may have been in limited roles such as cooks, not large numbers of gang laborers.

modernizing country.

On one science program, a scientist stated, “We are reaching out to the edge of the universe.”¹⁵ The Japanese immigrants, or Issei, reached out to the edge of their universe by leaving their homeland and traveling to a new, exciting, and foreign world in Idaho. More often than not, it was the railroad that drew them to the Intermountain West. Surely, many felt alone with so few of their fellow countrymen in the area. Issei were often spread out along the rail lines in groups of 8-12. Because of their isolation caused by railroad employment in the Intermountain West, Issei used their invisible baggage of combined traditional and Western values as they integrated into the surrounding communities, transitioning from railroad laborers to farming or self-employment. Unfortunately—or fortunately, depending on the point of view—many never made the journey back to their homeland but stayed in this new frontier and built a life for themselves and their families.

¹⁵ “What Happens at the Edge of the Universe?” PBS Space Time.

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Issei, who settled in Idaho after working on the railroads, left a nation moving at lightning speed. Japan hurled into the industrial age while it grappled with preserving hundreds of years of tradition. The lives of Japanese railroad workers in Idaho and the surrounding areas can only be appreciated through both their experiences in Japan prior to their emigration and those after they arrived in the Intermountain West. As Hisashi argued in *America-Bound: The Japanese and the Opening of the American West*, immigrants' experiences in both countries are essential because these men and women took part in the histories of both America and Japan.¹⁶ This chapter focuses on the origination of the invisible baggage Issei brought to Idaho and the Intermountain West and explains why this smaller group entered the Intermountain West to work on the railroads. Three areas of change examined in this chapter tremendously impacted these immigrants—education, economic factors, and religious values—including the Japanese notion of adaptation. The Issei who came to Idaho and the surrounding areas to work on the railroads and later settled permanently, spent their lives adapting in a quickly changing environment; one that no other generation had experienced before them. Adventure and change were constants. Their lives can be called an experiment in

¹⁶ Betsey Scheiner, translator's preface to *America-Bound: The Japanese and the Opening of the American West*, by Tsurutani Hisashi, (Tokyo, Japan: The Japan Times, 1989), xvii. Scheiner stated: "Tsurutani sees immigration as a bridge between two countries. The people who travel across this bridge participate in the histories of both. Any account that concentrates on their experiences in one country and ignores the others cuts away half the lives of these people. It eliminates the significance of immigration as an international experience."

adaptation as they underwent change and transformation in both Japan and America.

In Japan, the education of the Japanese immigrant generation introduced them to Western philosophies such as self-help and freedom of choice. These contrasted with the rigid social class system of the Tokugawa Era (1600-1868). Those who migrated to the Intermountain West near the turn of the twentieth century felt drawn to these Western concepts above the traditional Confucian, Buddhist, and Shinto values because the education they received incorporated these values as integral concepts of Japan's westernization. Customary values included Confucian ideals of familial piety, loyalty to their parents, and Shinto beliefs of family harmony and submission of the individual to the group, whether, family, community, or nation. Although they learned western ideals, traditional values were never entirely eradicated from their core. Japan had successfully meshed other ideas into their culture for centuries: Buddhism, and Chinese written characters, kanji, are just two examples. The economic turbulence that affected the rural farming areas where most immigrants originated included a heavy tax burden, rural economic recession, and the industrialization of former cottage industries. Issei who eventually settled in Idaho and the surrounding areas sought to adapt to their new American homes with no intention of returning to their past lives--just as Japan adapted to Western civilization during the Meiji Restoration. This process of adaptation is apparent in Tokugawa Japan.

Tokugawa Period 1600-1868

As with most cultures, Japan's creation legend describes the formation of the nation and its people. The origin story asserts that Japanese emperors descended from the goddess Amaterasu, thus bestowing both legitimacy to the royal lineage and attesting to

the concept of supremacy over other nations. Emperors ruled the feudal society of Japan until about 1185 when a *bakufu* (tent headquarters) or military state, ruled by the shogun, first appeared. During the late sixteenth century, the nation unified under the warlords Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. By the end of the sixteenth century, Tokugawa Ieyasu ascended to power, reestablished the shōgunate, and received the title of Shogun. This period known as the Tokugawa period produced peace after hundreds of years of civil instability. Tokugawa Japan provided the backdrop for the military, economic and social transformations during the Meiji Restoration. Distinguishing the differences of Tokugawa Japan in contrast to the Meiji Restoration is vital to thoroughly comprehending the myriad of changes which bombarded the generation of immigrants who settled in Idaho and the surrounding states.

The Tokugawa shōgunate became a feudal state with stability as the primary goal. The Tokugawa era utilized a system of rigid orthodoxy as a way of maintaining this stability. The *bakufu* controlled every portion of life with a detailed list of laws. Specific policies for the daily life of *daimyo* (ruling class feudal lords) down to peasants, strictly regulated how people traveled, what they could eat, and even the type of clothing each class could wear.¹⁷ Overcoming social stratification proved difficult if not impossible. The *bakufu* utilized the inflexibility of classes in an effort to extend control over every person in the country. In Tokugawa Japan, *shi-no-ko-sho*, or the “warrior-peasant-artisan-merchant” system prevailed.¹⁸ Peasants ranked above artisans and merchants in the hierarchy. The *bakufu* considered peasants producers and therefore an essential part of

¹⁷ David J. Lu, *Japan: A Documentary History - The Dawn of History to Late Tokugawa Period* (Florence: Routledge, 2015), 205-219. The documents include the “Oath of Fealty, 1611” to regulations for farmers and those who lived in cities such as Edo.

¹⁸ Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 56.

the nation's economy instead of middlemen in the market like artisans and merchants. As is true with feudal societies, only the highest classes possessed any power. It is important to note that, although Japanese culture embraced compliance and respect, it consisted more of an outward appearance of conformity rather than overarching inward obedience and submission. Those who immigrated to the Intermountain West, such as Henry Hashitani, clung to the idea of family and country over self and sought to help their families. At the same time, the opportunity to emigrate brought with it freedom from both family and national expectations. The outward reasons of economically contributing to the success of the family and nation veiled more personal inward motives—such as feeling out of place in their homeland and seeking personal fulfilment—for leaving their homeland and families.

The stability and orthodoxy ensured shōgunate power for the next two and a half centuries. Maintaining constancy included dividing Japanese lands into domains or *han* with the shogun owning about twenty-five percent of the property. The *daimyo* consisted of three groups depending on the loyalty of those who had control. The *shinpan* included relations of the shogun; *fudai* covered vassals or allies to the Tokugawa; *tozama* included those outlying lords of questionable loyalty. *Tozama* lived in the southern regions of Japan; significantly, Issei emigration was most substantial in the same areas. The shogun pacified enemy *daimyo*, feudal lords, by granting them land and power. Some 275 *daimyo*, who controlled taxing and local administration, were obliged to follow the laws of the shōgunate or suffer the consequences. During the first fifty years, most of the *daimyo* lost, redistributed, relocated, decreased, or increased their land according to the shōgunate's standards. Shogunal authority made for a relatively consistent governmental

and social order throughout the period, at least by outward appearances.¹⁹ In reality, the Tokugawa era experienced transitions in education, urbanization, and economic reform. Behind the Tokugawa period's seemed constant and stable facade, a systematic social change took place, preparing Japan and its people for the rapid modernization and globalization experienced during the Meiji Restoration. The societal restructuring in Tokugawa Japan enabled the Meiji transition in about three decades; an extremely condensed amount of time in comparison to the slower or more radical modernization in other countries such as Britain, France, and the United States. It is essential to note that the *tozama* became vital participants in the downfall of the Tokugawa shōgunate and bringing about the Meiji Restoration. Because Issei originated from these 'rogue' areas, they understood the significance of nonconformity.²⁰

To ensure the continued loyalty of the *daimyo*, the shōgunate strategically put the alternate attendance system, *Sankin kōtai*, in place. *Sankin kōtai* required the daimyo to spend a significant portion of their wealth traveling each year, spending a year in Edo and every other in their domain. The *bakufu* also held *daimyo*'s family permanently in Edo as hostages. The shōgunate required a set number of retainers of the *daimyo*. They traveled on specific dates and only on approved routes guarded by the shōgunate military troops. Travel depleted much of the *daimyos*' income in meeting the alternate attendance obligations, keeping any questionable *daimyo* from accumulating economic power.²¹

The revival of Confucianism during the Tokugawa period focused on the ideas of natural or social order, loyalty, and filial piety. The shōgunate used this idea of duty or

¹⁹ Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 57.

²⁰ Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 56.

²¹ *Ibid*, 56.

absolute obedience to legitimize their control over every facet of life in Japan. Harsh penalties ensured compliance. Hayashi Razan, an advisor on education and foreign affairs, stressed orthodoxy when he wrote, “among the people, rulers are to be respected and subjects are to submit humbly.”²² The Tokugawa bakufu sought authority through Confucian teachings. Total compliance to the law was paramount above all as explained in the 1615 document, “Laws of Military Households (*Buke Shohatto*)”: “Law is the foundation of social order. Reason may be violated in the name of law, but law may not be violated in the name of reason. Anyone who violates the law must be severely punished.”²³

In addition to Confucian teachings, Shinto, Japan’s indigenous religion, deeply influenced immigrants. Concepts including harmony, purity, the connectedness of family and ancestors, and compliance to the group over the individual shaped their mindset as they sought to rationalize their reasons for leaving family and nation. Confucian ideas of loyalty and filial piety continued well into the twentieth century when immigration to Idaho and the Intermountain West peaked. Issei brought these values with them as they remitted money back to Japan for their families, honestly desiring to do all they could to help because of the desperate financial condition of rural Japan. It is apparent with such a narrow view of obedience in the generations before, the introduction of Western ideals such as individual opportunity for success must have awakened in men a desire to make their way in the world for better or worse.²⁴

Many Japanese had a fatalistic outlook. Because of strict laws and class structure,

²² Lu, *Japan*, 246.

²³ *Ibid*, 206.

²⁴ Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 107.

they felt they had no other option but to endure the hardships of life. Values such as perseverance and endurance became key facets of their culture. Loyalty to family and nation trumped individual desires. As explained in an 1881 instruction for elementary teachers, “Loyalty to the Imperial House, love of country, charity toward inferiors, and respect for oneself constitute the Great Path of human morality.”²⁵ The Five Relationships of Confucianism—ruler and subject, parents and children, husband and wife, elder and younger, and friend and friend—demanded no thought for self. Those who came to the Intermountain West displayed this outlook because they hoped to bring wealth or economic security to their families. The idea of saving 1,000 yen as quickly as possible meant disregarding their own needs including eating well.²⁶

During the Tokugawa period, because of the continued peace and stability, education became increasingly important not only for the children of nobles and samurai but also for those of wealthy merchants and even other classes. Issei originated from rural villages. Between 1830 and 1867, almost 10,000 schools including 8,675 *terakoya* or temple schools educated the samurai class and some commoners throughout Japan. These numbers do not include those established prior to 1830. Forty percent of boys and ten percent of girls attended school by the end of the Tokugawa period. The literacy rate rose to around thirty percent, giving Japan one of the highest literate populations in the world at the time.²⁷ Japanese often reserved literacy and education for the higher-ranking classes. During the Tokugawa era, samurai rarely performed their military duties due to the continued peace throughout the period. Accordingly, the lack of hostilities gave them

²⁵ Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 33, 52. Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 406.

²⁶ Itō, *Issei*, 27, 307-308.

²⁷ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 404.

more time to devote to learning and education as their roles adapted to bureaucratic positions. Although most of the immigrants to Idaho had roots in the commoner class, the focus on education of samurai transitioned into instruction for all in the Meiji era.

Along with the upsurge of education, an economic transformation took place in Japan simultaneously. Japan became more urban, with three cities containing over half a million people by 1800. Edo boasted a population of around a million people, making it one of the largest cities in the world.²⁸ As a result, the merchant class emerged as a new and influential group of men who led the way in the industrialization of Japan during the Meiji Restoration. This, and the dwindling of the samurai class, brought about change in the long-held class system. For the Issei who came afterwards, it opened up opportunities of realizing their dreams for success far beyond their families' commoner status.

During the two hundred plus years Japan functioned as a "closed" country, Westerners, including the Portuguese, Spanish, British, and Dutch, attempted to establish trade with the nation. Many useful ideas and goods kept the trade door cracked just enough and allowed Western interest to grow. Goods from the West included guns, clocks, and eyeglasses. Europeans acquired a taste for Japanese ceramics and lacquerware.²⁹ Along with the exchange of goods, came the exchange of ideas. European nations introduced Christianity into Japan through their proselytizing just as they had on the American continent. The Portuguese first introduced Christianity to Japan a few years after their arrival in 1543. The supreme authority of the Christian's God posed a political problem for the *bakufu*, not in theological terms but because Christ and His followers were above earthly laws and governments. Western nations represented Christianity and

²⁸ Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 68.

²⁹ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 81-82.

its threat to the Tokugawa shōgunate's authority. The conversion of Japanese to Christianity produced the possibility of internal discord and instability of the nation. "The Completion of Exclusion of 1639" banned the teaching of Christianity in Japan and the bringing of any Christian materials or people into Japan.³⁰ Despite the ban on Christianity, small groups of Christians continued to survive in Japan through the Tokugawa era. It must be noted that Henry Hashitani and Henry Fujii were Christians when they arrived in the United States. For these reasons, the Tokugawa shōgunate effectively closed Japan to all outsiders with the exception of Chinese and a minimal presence of Dutch on the manmade island of Dejima, in Nagasaki Bay. In addition to keeping others out, Japan also prohibited their citizens from traveling to other countries on penalty of death upon return.³¹

As a result of these regulations, Tokugawa Japan stayed largely isolated from Western civilization during the closed country period. The Dutch East India Company became the most successful European presence, relegated to the artificial island in the Bay of Nagasaki. Originally constructed for Portuguese traders in 1634, the Dutch acquired the island in 1641. For over two hundred years, this Dutch trading post functioned as the sole conduit for Western thought into Japan. Western science, medicine, and economics intrigued the Japanese as books slowly stole into Japan. The superiority and accuracy of the texts created a thirst for knowledge from the West for intellectuals such as Sugita Gempak. Sugita and his circle of scholars began the tedious work of translating *Anatomical Tables*, a Dutch book they had used while viewing a dissection of a corpse. They found the Dutch book much more accurate than anything

³⁰ Lu, *Japan*, 221-222.

³¹Henshall, *History of Japan*, 60-61.

they had previously learned from Chinese medicine. Consequently, these men spent years translating the text without the help of Dutch interpreters.³² *Rangaku* or Dutch learning initially gave a few select men the opportunity to study Western ideas and led the way for an interest in new and diverse knowledge that permeated Japan with the Meiji restoration three-quarters of a century later. By the end of the Tokugawa period, translations of Dutch books were more widely available to the public. These small and seemingly insignificant occurrences eventually influenced the education system in which Issei experienced in Meiji Japan.

In addition to Western sciences, the Japanese studied Western military tactics carefully. As news of the Opium War (1839-1842) made its way to Japan, the obvious superiority of Western military strength was undisputable against a feudal country such as Japan. Men such as Sakuma Shozan determined the only way to defend themselves from these foreigners was through learning their strategies, strengthening coastal defenses, and uniting the nation. Combining Western technology along with traditional ideas, Sakuma wrote “Eight Policies for Coastal Defense” which included uniting old and modern ideas. He advocated Japan utilize Western naval ships and tactics, expand education, “assure that all the common people follow the Way of Loyalty and Filial Piety,” “unify the minds of the people,” and “establish institutions so that men of talent will be promoted on the basis of ability.”³³ Hashitani cited Hideyoshi as an example of one’s ability to work his way up “through the ranks.”³⁴

Sakuma’s list showed how he and other intellectuals wanted modern ideas

³² Lu, *Japan*, “*The Beginning of Dutch Studies in Japan*”, 264-66.

³³ Peter Duus, *The Japanese Discovery of America: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 61.

³⁴ *Hashitani Diaries*, original translation, 2.

and traditional values integrated into new patterns of thought forty-five years before the Meiji restoration. Combining old with new is something the Japanese became skilled at, giving them a link to tradition while embracing and integrating new ideas. Japanese in Idaho and the Intermountain West followed this tradition as they adapted to American customs while keeping what they called the “Japanese spirit.”³⁵

In the midst of this proliferation of Western thought in Japanese society, Commodore Matthew Perry and his “black ships” sailed into Edo (Tokyo) Bay in 1853, using “gunboat diplomacy” to open Japan to the rest of the world. This incident proved the downfall of the shōgunate’s rule, and brought about the modernization of Japan, creating the environment for immigration to the United States. Perry carefully studied Japanese culture before his expedition to Japan. He dealt with the shōgunate and people effectively because of his preparation. Perry arrived with pomp in an effort to win the respect of the Japanese. He also used intimidation as he brought white flags, giving them to the Japanese negotiator along with a threatening letter encouraging their surrender instead of bringing on a war the feudal nation would most certainly lose. Perry also arrived with diplomatic gifts for the emperor. Included was a one-fourth scale working model train with 350 feet of track. The Japanese saw the railroad as the ultimate symbol of industrial power.³⁶

Perry left, vowing to return in a few months for an answer, giving the *bakufu* a

³⁵ Mr. Sashichi H Koyama, Mr. E. A. Huntley, Mr. Henry Hajimu Fujii, Mrs. Roy Abe, Mrs. S. Kawai, Mr. Takemaru Shinohara, interview by Joseph Masaoka and Robert Wilson, Caldwell, ID. Oct. 31, 1964, transcript, Japanese Oral History Collection, Special Collections, Box 2 folder 5, 46. J. Willard Marriott Library. University of Utah, 46; Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 122.

³⁶ Steven J. Ericson, *The Sound of the Whistle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 3.

limited time to make a decision. Along with the shōgunate's declining authority, came the realization that no alternative existed except to end its long-standing closed country policy. Consulting with the *daimyo* exposed its diminishing power. The shōgunate's attempt to gain a consensus instead resulted in a loss of respect and contributed to its collapse.³⁷

The inability to keep the Americans out of Japan translated into contempt for the shōgunate. Throughout the Edo period, continuous socio-economic changes occurred while the *bakufu* attempted to enforce orthodoxy and stability. As mentioned previously, both Henshall and Jansen remark on how the Japanese exhibited an outward display of deference and obedience while inwardly, the people and society as a whole were changing as exhibited by the education of all classes, the rise of the merchant class to prominence, along with population growth and urbanization.³⁸ The opening of Japan widened the crack for a clearer view of the rest of the world. The Japanese recognized their "superior" country actually lagged far behind. It was time to catch up. Fortunately, because of these changes that took place during the Tokugawa era, Japan positioned itself to make a speedy recovery. The modifications provided the environment in Meiji Japan in which Issei such as Henry Hashitani and Henry Fujii left. They were able to perform outward obedience by going to earn money for their families while at the same time, inwardly appease their desires to create individual success for themselves. Hashitani wrote, "Am I to be satisfied earning \$1.40, working on the railroad?"³⁹ He and his friend

³⁷ James L. McClain, *Japan, a Modern History*, (New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002), 137-138.

³⁸ Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 59; Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 223-24. Henshall uses the "continuing Japanese distinction between outward appearance (*omote or tatemae*) and inner reality (*ura or hone*)."

³⁹ *Hashitani Diaries*, original translation, 2.

Henry Fujii not only intended to save money, they longed for the opportunity to farm in America, putting their agricultural education to use.⁴⁰

The Meiji Restoration

1868 marked the end of the Tokugawa era and the beginning of the Meiji Restoration. It was not a revolution but a restoration of the Emperor and traditional ideals. Along with it came the modernization of Japan's government and economy. Contrasting modernization in Western nations, Japan's transformation transpired virtually overnight. In only about thirty years from the time it restored the emperor as the head, the country made a dramatic change from a feudal agrarian society to a modern industrial world power. Consequently, because of the Dutch at Dejima, the opening of Japan to foreigners by Commodore Perry, and the ensuing diplomatic missions, Japanese were exposed to Western political, educational, military, and industrial thought. It must be emphasized again, as exhibited during the Tokugawa era, that the Japanese did not select and use Western ideas as they stood. Japan had a long history of adapting and modifying ideas from other nations to generate a more Japanese version. The slogan '*Wakon Yōsai*' (Japanese spirit, Western learning) indicates the new government clearly intended on reworking Western thought. This "Japanization" of ideas gave Japan the ability to create its own unique version of a modern nation.⁴¹

The men responsible for initiating the Meiji Restoration fought against the Tokugawa shōgunate. Disgruntled samurai nationalists from western *tozma* domains including Chōshū and Satsuma had been unhappy with the status quo for some time.

⁴⁰ Henry Fujii, Interview by Mary Henshall, JACL Convention, Boise, Idaho. Idaho State Archives Oral History Collection, OH 2601, November 24, 1973.

⁴¹ Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 51-52.

They used the emperor as merely a figurehead to give credibility to those behind the restoration. The Japanese government endeavored to follow the example of Western nations, changing the national structure entirely.⁴² The government centralized to defend itself against the possibility of colonization occurring in places like the Philippines and China. One notable change for many who immigrated to the Intermountain West came as the military shifted from class-based to universal conscription. The centralized government subsidized rapid industrialization in its modernization efforts, changing from an agriculturally based economy. Subsidizations hastened the rise that had already begun of the merchant class over the higher-ranking samurai class during the latter end of the Edo period. Infrastructure and communication improved quickly. Education became universal for both boys and girls. Japan had been moving to a more urban society, but the shift to an industrial-based economy resulted in an even greater population shift where seventy-five percent of the people lived in urban areas. Most industrial and service-related jobs were situated in cities. The result of this modernization, which had already begun prior to the Meiji restoration, brought Japan from a feudal agrarian society to a major world power in less than fifty years from the time Commodore Perry steamed into Edo Bay in 1853. What had taken European nations centuries, Japan accomplished in decades. The title of Meiji Miracle absolutely fits the tremendous leap forward Japan made at the end of the nineteenth century. Impressively, Japan became an empire instead of being conquered by Westerners. In his work *Gakumon no susume*, (“An Encouragement of Learning” 1872-1876) Fukuzawa Yukichi, an avid supporter of

⁴² Linda Tamura, *The Hood River Issei: An Oral History of Japanese Settlers in Oregon's Hood River Valley* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1949), 1-2; Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 61.

modernization, education, and emigration noted, "If we compare the knowledge of the Japanese and Westerners, in letters, in techniques, in commerce, or in industry, from the largest to the smallest matter, there is not one thing in which we excel."⁴³

Fukuzawa was an instrumental figure in the push for modernization and also in the lives of immigrants. He advocated education for all. One of his tenets (stemming from Western and Christian thought) affirmed that all men were equal, a far cry from the rigid class system of the Tokugawa era. The move from a class-based society to one of merit, he believed, could be attained through education. Education enabled those with the best minds the ability to rise to power and influence society as a whole. Fukuzawa's newspaper, *Jiji Shimpo*, "The Times," gave him a platform in which he wrote prolifically. His writing to the general public influenced many on such subjects as education, women's rights, and emigration. He advocated a united, educated people working toward the common goal of becoming a civilized and modern nation. Fukuzawa became a member of the first Japanese delegation to visit America, traveling to San Francisco in 1860, prior to the downfall of the Tokugawa shōgunate. By 1867, at the age of thirty-two, he had completed three visits to America and Europe, bringing volumes of books back to Japan for translation. His first-hand knowledge of "civilized" culture made him one of the most influential intellectuals in transforming Japanese society during the Meiji Restoration.⁴⁴ His influence helped create the education system and integration of Western thought into which the Issei pioneers who make their way to Idaho were born.

A significant portion of bringing Japan into the present incorporated the

⁴³ McClain, *Japan*, 177.

⁴⁴ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 321, 460-461.

modernization of its infrastructure. It included the development of railways, telegraph lines, and a postal system. Travel and communication expanded considerably both within Japan and to other parts of the world. Thanks to the *bakufu's* requirement for dual attendance, an extensive road system already in place, facilitated modernization. Between 1868 and 1900, the Japanese government expanded the national infrastructure. A postal system and telegraph lines quickened the transfer of information and ideas. The Meiji government went to work rapidly building railroads and steamships, seen as important components of modernization. In 1868, Japan had a total of eighteen miles of railway. By 1900, it increased to 7,100 miles of railway; nearly a four thousand percent increase. In addition, the Meiji Miracle began with 26 steamships. In 1900, it was a marvel indeed that the nation boasted 1,514 steamships. With the drastic improvements in communication and transportation, Japan propelled itself into the modern era and rapidly became a world power.⁴⁵

Concurrently, Meiji leaders sought to build the nation and unify its people by emphasizing education. As early as April 6, 1868, the new Meiji leaders announced the Charter Oath which professed “knowledge shall be sought throughout the world” and “all classes of people shall be allowed to fulfill their aspirations.”⁴⁶ The required memorization of the Oath ingrained these beliefs in Issei. They believed they were helping not only their family but also their country as they sought employment in America, and also fulfilled their ambitions.

The education system underwent a complete transformation during the Meiji

⁴⁵ McClain, *Japan*, 237.

⁴⁶ Marius B. Jansen and Gilbert Rozman, *Japan in Transition, From Tokugawa to Meiji* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 203.

Restoration. For the first time in the history of the nation, centralized and universal education existed in Japan. An expression used for 'school' in the Tokugawa era had not existed. School buildings were unheard of. Signalling the transformation from feudal to modern, everything about the schools and school system improved. The preamble to the Fundamental Code of Education expressed the priority of education in the new Meiji state in its march toward modernity. Its goals for the nation's education encompassed in phrases such as, "there shall, in the future, be no community with an illiterate family, nor a family with an illiterate person... every man shall, of his own accord, subordinate all other matters to the education of his children."⁴⁷ Consequently, education and family responsibility remained the primary focus of Issei when they began raising their children in Idaho and the surrounding areas.⁴⁸

In keeping with the strict control of the Tokugawa era, the Meiji government sought to regulate the education of all the population. The *Imperial Rescript on Education* fostered the traditional ideals of loyalty, familial piety, and nationalistic fidelity. The state government controlled the textbooks and by so doing shaped the worldview of the next generation. The training young men and women received at the beginning of the twentieth century took them away from the traditional teachings of their families and brought formal education to all classes. At home and through Confucian teachings, they learned obedience to parents and sacrifice of self for nation and family. In contrast, Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help*, translated by Nakamura Masanao into *Tales of Men Who Achieved Their Aims in Western Countries (Saikoku rishi hen)* espoused similar

⁴⁷ "Preamble to the Fundamental Code of Education, 1872 [Government Document]," as cited in Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 403.

⁴⁸ Koyama, Huntley, Fujii, Abe, Kawai, Shinohara, interview, 23.

values and goals of Meiji Japan, including perseverance, character, and thrift in achieving a civilized status among Western nations. Immigrants had these values ingrained into them and saw America as an opportunity to put them to the test, while at the same time traditional Confucian ideals enforced filial piety over self, giving Issei a dual purpose in coming to the West. These seemingly opposing philosophies melded together into a uniquely Japanese worldview. Japanese held tight to duty to family as they also exercised their individual desires to leave Japan, seeking the land of opportunity and the “American dream” for themselves. The “japanization” of Western education and nationalism gave way to such slogans as “rich nation, strong army,” “catch up, overtake,” and *ryosai kenbo*, “good wife, wise mother.” Universal education of all economic classes sought to unify Japanese people through the shared goals of modernization. Issei believed they were helping their family and their nation by emigrating and bringing wealth back to Japan.⁴⁹

In an effort to achieve cultural and social unity throughout Japan, the Japanese Education Code made schooling mandatory in 1872, and most children attended for an average of eight years by 1900.⁵⁰ The goal of creating a literate modern Japanese society transpired by educating children regardless of class or gender. The Preamble to the Fundamental Code of Education explained the importance of centralized education to the modernization and Westernization of the nation. It stated,

It is only by building up his character, developing his mind, and

⁴⁹ Henshall, *A History of Japan*, 83, 218. Henshall uses the term ‘japanisation’ or ‘Japanese’ to explain how the Japanese borrowed ideas from other countries or cultures and adapted them. “the Japanese seem to have a great ability to ‘Japanise’ the new and foreign to make them more easily blended with tradition and more acceptable.”

⁵⁰ Kei Tanaka, “Japanese Picture Marriage in 1900--1924 California: Construction of Japanese Race and Gender”, 6. Order No. 3066787, available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, (276460567). Retrieved from <http://libproxy.boisestate.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.boisestate.edu/docview/276460567?accountid=9649>.

cultivating his talents that man may make his way in the world, employ his wealth wisely, make his business prosper, and thus attain the goal of life. But man cannot build up his character, develop his mind, or cultivate his talents without education – that is the reason for the establishment of schools.⁵¹

Using their education to succeed in life may have encouraged Hashitani, Fujii, and others to seek better opportunities in America. They could put their agricultural education to better use farming in America than on their families' minute patch of land. Fujii recalled he wanted to come farm and Idaho had good farming country. Fittingly, Fujii became the first to begin large scale onion farming in the Treasure Valley.⁵²

In addition, the new focus on education required a school system with dedicated structures. In the 1870s, Japan built the first modern school buildings; modeled after Western style buildings. The prominence and permanence of the architecture of schools symbolized the importance of education. Communities used school buildings for other public functions including police stations and community centers. The school became the heart of the community. By 1900, when Issei attended school, Western style school buildings spread into rural areas as well. The state approved textbooks for use until 1903 when the law required use of a uniform state-sanctioned curriculum by all elementary schools across the nation. The national curriculum included Western-style math, geography, and science along with reading and writing courses. It also included divisions comparable to Western schools.⁵³

⁵¹ "Preamble to the Fundamental Code of Education, 1872 [Government Document]," in *Children and Youth in History*, Item #129, annotated by Brian Platt. accessed June 19, 2018, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/items/show/129>

⁵² Henry Fujii, interview by Annebelle Alexander, Idaho State Archives Oral History Collection, OH 37. 23 August 1971; Robert T. Hayashi, *Haunted by Waters: A Journey Through Race and Place in the American West*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2007), 65.

⁵³ Jansen and Rozman, *Japan in Transition*, 209-215. In Chapter 8, "Education: From One Room to One System," (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986).

The Japanese education system encompassed three levels of schools, elementary (*shōgakkō*), middle (*chūgakkō*) and university (*daigaku*). Higher level education included both middle schools and universities. The majority of the population did not progress past an elementary education. The latter two often included foreign language, and much of the instruction happened in English. Those who advanced into these schools usually had some knowledge of a foreign language.⁵⁴ Both Hashitani and Fujii went to an agricultural school in their prefecture formed to train farmers, but did not learn English at their school even though they progressed through the middle school grades. Both Hashitani and Fujii recognized the importance of knowing English for their success in America.⁵⁵ Their diligence in completing this level of school carried over as they continued learning after arriving in America. Kameji Okamura was another Idaho Issei who obtained English language skills either in Japan or shortly after his arrival. His English-speaking ability allowed him to integrate into the Pocatello, Idaho community, building a business that served the entire population regardless of race or language.⁵⁶

The 1870s also marked the beginning of training for teachers in Japan. Prior to that, teachers usually had no formal training. They were often ill-prepared along with their students that attended intermittently. Teachers received their training in middle schools. Some immigrants, such as Henry Fujii, worked as teachers before making the journey to the Intermountain West to work on the railroad. This meant they were somewhat familiar with the English language, or were positioned to learn quickly, which

⁵⁴ Jansen and Rozman, *Japan in Transition*, 212-213. In Chapter 8, "Education: From One Room to One System" Richard Rubinger does an exceptional job of explaining the transformation into a centralized state school system from the late Tokugawa period to 1905. Included, are graphs showing the elementary school enrollment rates and enrollment rate in selected prefectures,

⁵⁵ Fujii, Henshall interview, 4.

⁵⁶ Okamura, Paul, Jr. personal papers.

gave them an advantage over less educated immigrants. In addition, students wore military style uniforms in middle schools, encouraging the focus on a military form of obedience to authority. All facets of education promoted consistency and loyalty to the nation, demonstrating how the government used education to create a new worldview for all of its citizens. Although wearing military style school uniforms encouraged military conscription, Issei often, but not always, emigrated to avoid their military duty. During the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War, some men returned to Japan and enlisted, fulfilling their patriotic duty.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Ichioka, *Issei*, 13.



Picture 1: Portrait of a young Katsuji (Henry) Hashitani in Japan (Courtesy of University of Montana--Missoula. Mansfield Library)

Effects on the Meiji Transformation on Immigrants

The dynamic changes going on in Meiji Japan at the turn of the century created the perfect environment for emigration. The population increase, crop failures, lack of income, and the encouragement from prominent figures such as Fukuzawa who traveled to America along with those in government, pushed these men out of their villages and into a new frontier in the Intermountain West with unique challenges to face. The

experience of growing up in a nation that transformed all facets of society while they lived in it, gave men like Hashitani, Fujii, and Okamura the capability to reach out to the edge of the universe in the attempt to not only help themselves, but also their families they left behind. Their lives, even before emigration, had been an adventure, or could be called an experiment in adaptation. The economic and social changes of the Meiji Restoration created the perfect storm for immigration to America and the Intermountain West, creating a considerable pull factor for many young men.

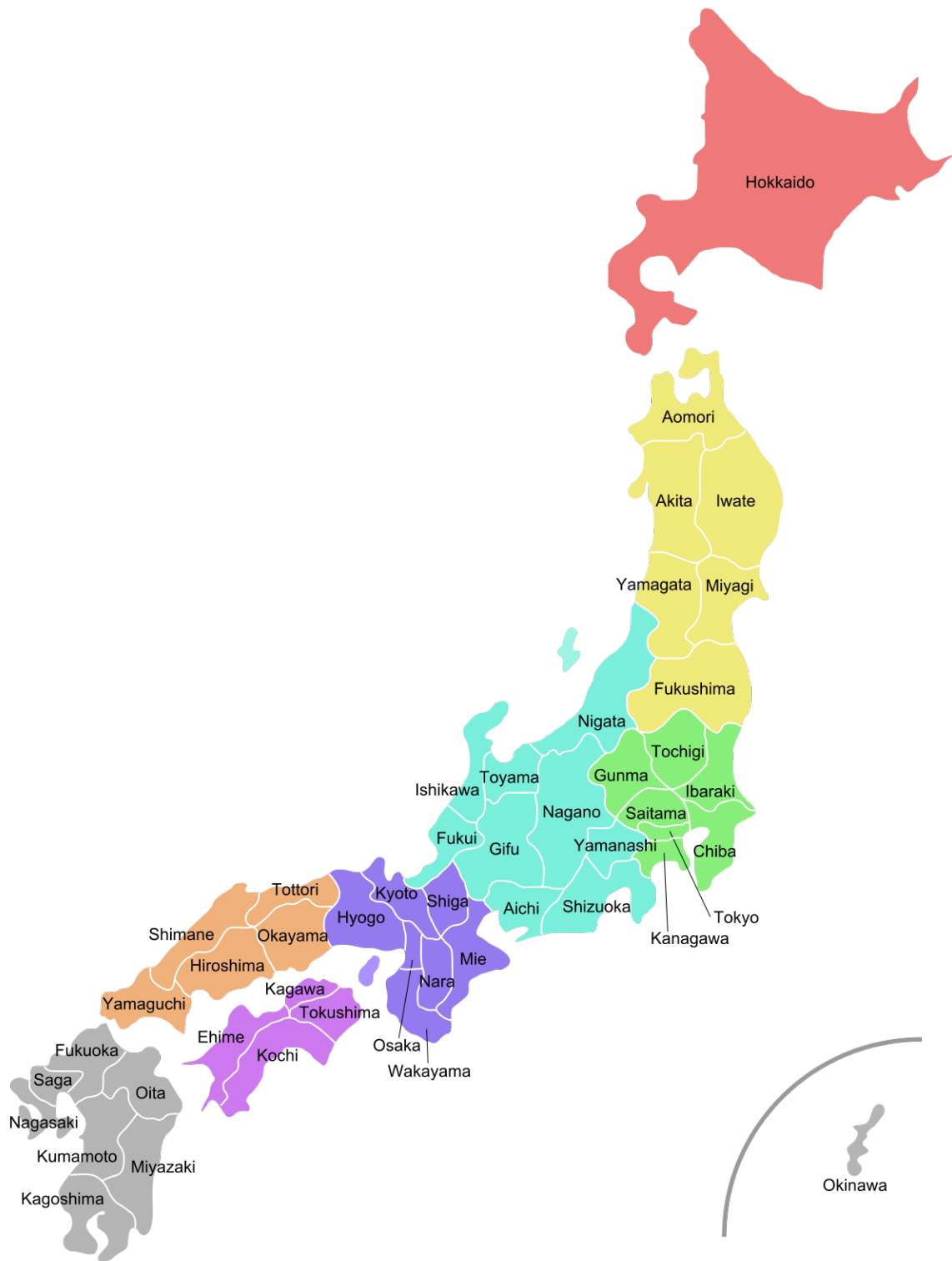
Economic Push Factors

Southern Japan contained the concentration of main industrial areas as the Meiji government industrialized. Similarly, the majority of emigrants originated from the southern prefectures. Industries appear to have influenced emigrants as they decided to leave. According to interviews and other sources, most immigrants to America hailed from farming villages.⁵⁸ Small landowning families could not survive entirely on what they made from farming. Household industries such as rope making, spinning cotton, or making cotton cloth commonly supplemented farm incomes. Cotton was one of the main crops in the Hiroshima prefecture from which a large percentage of immigrants originated. The number of modern spinning mills increased dramatically from three in 1877 to twenty-three in 1886, including one near the city of Hiroshima itself. Because of the modernization of the cotton textile industry, those who previously depended on this cottage industry lost the opportunity to earn supplemental income. The development of industries previously centered in homes created an economy with farming families unable

⁵⁸ Hyoza (Harry) Kumagai, Interview, Utah State Historical Society, Japanese American Oral History Program. MSS A 2970. December 9, 1975, 1; Terumasa Miyagishima, Interview, Utah State Historical Society, Oral History Project, MSS A 2810, January 31, 1976, 1.

to adequately provide for themselves. Many men who began working for the railroads grew up in the Hiroshima prefecture, including Taisuke Tom Nishioka and his father, Nobukichi Nishioka. The family must have been in dire straits for both to immigrate. Other father and son groups left home in hopes of earning enough money to send back to their families. The number of fathers who left their families along with their sons is an indication of the desperate financial situation for so many in rural Japan. Sending two family members increased the odds of financial assistance. Tragically, other factors contributed to their dismal financial circumstances also.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ 1910 Census, Nampa, Idaho; Archie Yamamoto, interview by author, 2017.



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Figure 1: Map of Japan with Prefectures.

The Meiji regulatory changes required new taxes to pay for government programs such as a conscripted military and public education. Unfortunately, taxes hit farmers and landowners hardest. As a result of the increased tax burden and debt associated with it, a rural depression overwhelmed farming regions. On top of the new and higher taxes, crop failures in 1884, 1897, 1902, 1905, and 1910 intensified the situation. As an example, in the Miyagi prefecture, farmers harvested a mere twenty percent of usual in 1905.⁶⁰ As a result, in the 1880s, famines also aggravated the already bleak situation. Many lost their farms because of their inability to pay taxes or insurmountable debt as a result of farming families borrowing money to pay their taxes. Historians estimated that over 350,000 people were unable to pay their taxes from 1883-1890.⁶¹

Because of the inability to pay their taxes or feed their families, many sold their property. One way to keep the family's land secure was sending a father or son to the U.S. where seemingly limitless opportunities enticed these men with a goal to save 1,000 yen and return home with financial security for the family.⁶² In an interview, Hoyza (Harry) Kumagai recalled how his father and oldest brother left to work in Hawaii for one dollar a day. Interestingly, Kumagai's family was from the southern island of Kyushu in the Fukuoka prefecture, the same area from which Fukuzawa Yukichi came. The average wage in Japan was a mere ten sen (equivalent to five cents) a day. With his father and oldest brother away, thirteen-year-old Kumagai delivered newspapers for six cents a day, thereby adding to the family income. His mother earned eleven cents making 300 feet of

⁶⁰ Hisashi, *America-Bound*, 29.

⁶¹ Yasuo Wakatsuki, "Japanese Emigration to the United States, 1866-1924: A Monograph." In *Perspectives in American History*, edited by Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn, 1979. 12:387-516, as cited in Barbara J, Hickman, *Japanese Railroad Workers in Wyoming, 1891-1941: An Interdisciplinary Study*. M.A. Thesis. Laramie, Wyoming. 1989.

⁶² Itō, *Issei*, 307.

twine for fishermen from pine leaves and branches. The family of five left at home survived on seventeen cents a day, a mere 5 yen a month. The wages were so small that they could not accumulate any savings. Even Kumagai's father and brother failed to save any money until they had been in Hawaii for about a year and a half. Even then, they sent a meager twenty dollars to their family in Japan.⁶³ Henry Fujii made twelve to fifteen yen a month as a teacher the year before he left. The opportunity to more than double their income provided a strong pull to America for many Issei.⁶⁴

Economic hardship was the most significant push factor for immigrants leaving Japan. A majority of Issei emigrated from rural areas. Along with the increase in industries, agriculture lost its place as the fundamental economic force when the Japanese economy transitioned to a free market. As the government built up industry, infrastructure, and its military, the newly levied taxes weighed upon farmers. Land and tax reforms of the restoration consisted of four main features that changed farmers' situations, often for the worse. First, landowners could buy and sell land as they wished as part of a free market. Second, the Japanese government gave landowners certificates of ownership with the land value used as a basis for taxes. Third, the Meiji government made significant adjustments in calculating and equalizing the tax burden throughout the prefectures. These reforms resulted in a tax rate of between twenty-five and twenty-nine percent. The Chūgoku region, which included the Tottori, Okayama, Hiroshima, and Yamaguchi prefectures, had some of the higher rates.⁶⁵ Many immigrants to Idaho came

⁶³ Kumagai, Interview, 2.

⁶⁴ Fujii, Henshall interview, 5.

⁶⁵ Jansen and Rozman, *Japan in Transition*, 390, noted that the tax rates went down from previous Tokugawa rates in some prefectures due to the effort to equalize rates across the nation. See table 14.2; Ichioka, *The Issei*, 42. Ichioka states it was 3 percent initially and then 2.5 percent.

from these areas. In correlation, the last three prefectures also experienced high percentages of farms below the eight *tan* average with 66 percent, 70 percent, and 61 percent respectively. One *tan* equaled .245 acres. Lastly, in contrast to Tokugawa era taxes paid in rice, the new fees required cash payments. Rural peasants possessed very little cash and resorted to loans to pay taxes. Many lost or sold their lands when they could not pay. The percentage of tenant farmers increased and by 1899 sharecroppers farmed half of all cultivated land.⁶⁶

Many men who immigrated to the United States were sons of farmers from rural villages in prefectures such as Hiroshima and Kumamoto in Southern Japan like Nishioka. For those that did not lose their land, the feudal practice of primogeniture, in addition to the fact that family farms averaged between one and three acres, created a difficult situation for younger sons with few options for remaining at home when seeking to fulfill their familial duties.⁶⁷ Henry Fujii, the youngest of five sons, immigrated to Idaho from the Tottori prefecture. Not all who emigrated claimed the title of youngest son. Harry Kumagai's father and older brothers also left their small village to work. Eldest son, Ben Yamamoto, exchanged his inheritance for adventure in Montana and Idaho.⁶⁸

With little choice but to leave their villages to find work, men faced few alternatives. Family members often dispersed to make money. One possibility involved moving to a large city such as Tokyo to obtain a job, although many of the positions were

⁶⁶ Hisashi, *America-Bound*, 30. One *tan* is equal to .245 acres. Eight *tan* is just less than 2 acres.

⁶⁷ Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 43; Hisashi, *America-Bound*, 30. Hisashi cites a Japanese government report that listed 2,000,000 farms as "five *tan* farm." Five *tan* is equal to 1.225 acres.

⁶⁸ Census, 1910; Census Place: Nampa, Canyon, Idaho; Roll: T624_223; Page: 16B; Enumeration District: 0091; FHL microfilm: 1374236

better suited for young women instead. Other alternatives included working in mines or industrial factories, farming as a colonist in Hokkaido, or immigrating to another country to find work. All required leaving their families behind. Although the diaspora included a variety of destinations such as Canada, Peru, and Brazil, many chose the United States. These rural men may have thought it better to go to a foreign country than moving to a crowded city after growing up in the countryside. Henry Fujii commented that he and Henry Hashitani only stayed in Seattle for two months after he arrived in America because “Mr. Hashitani and I decided we [are] not city people.”⁶⁹ The Intermountain West presented a better option with its wide-open spaces and farming opportunities. It gave them the occasion to use their agricultural education rather than staying in a city.

In the 1880s, the new Meiji government sought to fend off the threat of invasion by western countries by modernizing through industrialization and militarization. As Japan focused its energy on becoming a world power, it applied the same methods as western nations. Tōgō Minoru, in his publication, *On Japanese Emigrants*, argued, “Imperialism and colonization policies are the great ideas of the modern universe.”⁷⁰ Modern world powers utilized colonization and Japan followed suit. Japan identified only two possibilities, either colonize or be colonized. Therefore, it integrated colonization into the nation’s strategies. Tōgō advised “emigration colonization.” Instead of overzealously attempting total annexation of much larger countries, Tōgō encouraged small groups creating a colony within America or other nations.⁷¹

Following the lead of influential men such as Fukuzawa and Tōgō Minoru, the

⁶⁹ Fujii, interview by Alexander, 8.

⁷⁰ Hisashi, *America-Bound*, 44.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 44.

Japanese government no longer discouraged emigration in an effort to alleviate the population issues on the small island nation. Japanese workers first arrived in Hawaii to work on sugar cane plantations in 1868.⁷² The United States' Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which prohibited further Chinese immigration into America, opened the door for Japanese immigration to fill the need for laborers building the infrastructure of the west. Japanese immigrants replaced Chinese workers throughout the west, building and maintaining railroads. From 1870 to 1900, the Chinese population in Idaho had dropped by two-thirds, thus opening the way for Japanese workers.⁷³ Consequently, the first Japanese railroad workers came to Idaho, brought by the Japanese labor contractor Tanaka Tadashichi in 1891.⁷⁴ Soon, the Issei spread throughout the Intermountain West. Initially, railroad laborers in western states were recruited from the larger Issei population along the West Coast and included those that stowed away, jumped ship, or arrived on the mainland, and those without jobs awaiting them such as Terumasa Miyagishima. Miyagishima stowed away on a ship, arriving in America illegally. America's seemingly limitless opportunities drew many who doubted their ability to enter lawfully. Later, labor contractors on the West Coast expanded to Hawaii and Japan as they recruited men for the railroads. Endo Yoshi, of Pocatello, Idaho, made the return trip to the Shizuoka prefecture, enrolling and training men to work on the railroad before they left Japan. Thus, by 1905, many were recruited before their arrival in America.⁷⁵

⁷² Walz, *Nikkei in the Interior West*, 16.

⁷³ Woojin Chang, *Cultural Geography of Early Chinese Americans in Idaho and Montana, 1865-1900*, University of Kansas, 2010, 13, accessed 26 February 2019. <http://dissertations.umi.com/ku:10830>;

⁷⁴ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 49-50.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 2, 7-8.

Social Push Factors

Social conditions resulting from the major transformations that occurred in Meiji Japanese culture likewise encouraged emigration. The young men and women, such as Hashitani and Fujii, emerging from the new educational system had limited opportunities in Japan. Among their options included, moving to a city or industrial area, working in a mine, or emigrating, either to Hokkaido or a different country. Young men came of age in a society where the values often seemed opposed to each other; at the same time urging a contradictory restoration of the traditional imperial rule while the slogans “civilization and enlightenment” and “be a success” abounded in the rhetoric of the day.⁷⁶ The creed of *risshin shusse*, used by immigrants, with its original meaning of self-help and upward mobility, encouraged Issei to seek to improve their lives in America rather than their limited opportunities in Japan. They believed their highest aspirations could be realized “with dedication, diligence, thrift, and perseverance.”⁷⁷ Men such as Fukuzawa witnessed first-hand the power of a nation where all citizens had an equal opportunity for success and desired to harness this potential for Japan. Fukuzawa encouraged youth to come to America. He believed “Japanese should go to foreign lands without hesitation.... The more emigration flourishes, the further our national power will expand.”⁷⁸ Immigrants were ambitious, and many thrived in America where opportunities were abundant. They left home to find success not only for themselves and their families, but also for their country. Youth repeatedly heard the slogan “For the sake of the country” (*kuni no tame*)

⁷⁶ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 460.

⁷⁷ Yoh Takeuchi, “The Structure and Functions of “Risshin-Shusse” in the Late Meiji and Early Taisho Japan”, abstract, DOI: https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/eds1951/31/0/31_0_119/_article; Ichioka, *The Issei*, 8.

⁷⁸ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 10.

as the Meiji government sought to encourage the rising generation to expand their horizons and opportunities by going abroad. The conflicting dogmas helped Issei as they left their homes to seek success for their families, nation, and at the same time, for themselves. Significantly, finding a place in America away from what immigrants may have been interpreted as oppressing or overshadowing voices of family members and government edicts allowed men to more fully take control of their fortunes than they ever could have had they stayed in Japan.⁷⁹

Fukuzawa's influence is apparent in the lives of men such as Henry Hashitani, Henry Fujii, and Kameji Okamura. These men used the education they received in Japan and continued learning English and American ways to prove they could find success for themselves, their families, and their nation. They perceived the rapid development of infrastructure in Japan similar to the expansion of the West. Hashitani and the other Issei not only contributed to the modernization of the Interior West but also worked to improve circumstances for their fellow Issei who arrived after them. Hashitani wrote in his journal that he aspired to become a section boss, so he could show others how leaders could help those under them. "As I am here for a long time, I have a desire to organize a true model gang for the fellow workers."⁸⁰ Hashitani and Fujii diligently studied English on their own to expand their potential as Fukuzawa believed.⁸¹

In addition to using their education, immigrants from Japan, as with most immigrants that chose to leave their homes and families, were more adventurous than those who stayed home. Issei, asserting their unique "Japaneseness," claimed their

⁷⁹ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 460.

⁸⁰ *Hashitani Diaries*, translation, 3.

⁸¹ Fujii, Henshall interview, 6.

boldness sprung from their prefectures. Terumasa Miyagishima of Utah, grew up in the village of Shimizu in the Shizuoka Prefecture. Many men from farming villages on their peninsula depended on both farming and fishing for their livelihood. In a place with little chance of finding success, men with a “venturesome spirit” demonstrated their masculinity to women by emigrating to America. In an interview, Miyagishima asserted women in his hometown encouraged men to go abroad. With this added incentive, and nothing to lose, many seized the challenge and sought their fortunes in America. Issei infused their villages in Japan with hope for the future.⁸²

According to Yosaburo Yoshida, an Issei immigrant, people from the southern prefectures were considered “venturesome and enterprising”.⁸³ The immigrants considered America an adventure and willingly took a risk to make a better life. Unlike China, the strong Meiji central government regulated emigration, allowing (in theory) only those who would “maintain Japan’s national honor” to journey to the United States.⁸⁴ Once in the U.S., the Japanese government continued to monitor the immigrants; not for the welfare of those immigrants, but for the purpose of maintaining the national image abroad.

In addition, powerful merchants with businesses in many different industries such as shipping expanded into the emigration business too. Emigration companies popped up throughout Japan, under the auspices of “helping” emigrants on their journey to America or Hawaii. In reality, these companies were only interested in making a profit. A selection of guidebooks and magazines written to assist potential immigrants to America

⁸² Miyagishima, Interview, 2.

⁸³ Tamura, *The Hood River Issei*, 20.

⁸⁴ Tamura, *The Hood River Issei*, 1-2; Walz, *Nikkei in the Interior West*, 20.

began appearing in 1886. The vast majority of these were written between 1901 and 1906, at the height of emigration fever. The publications included practical information for advice about passport applications, facts on emigration companies, and what to expect upon arrival. Those who possessed first-hand knowledge of America and the procedures for immigration authored most of the guidebooks. A few like Reverend Shimanuki Hyōdayū and his Christian organization, Nihon Rikkōkai, identified emigration as a social solution to help those approaching starvation improve their lives.⁸⁵

Pull Factors to The United States

Equally important to the push out of Japan, was the pull to America for both economic and social motives. As the Japanese economy worsened, young men began looking toward the United States as a way to help their families and make higher wages than if they stayed home. Men heard how others made twice as much as they could in Japan. One dollar equaled two yen at the time.⁸⁶ Many perceived what appeared to be an opportunity to get rich quickly. A majority of these men intended to stay in the United States for only a short time. With the money they made, they planned to return to Japan to help their families, buy land to farm, and then marry. Henry Fujii gleaned information from his older brother's friend who returned from working in California for a few years. His knowledge of the immigration process helped Fujii and Hashitani decide and prepare for the adventure.⁸⁷

More importantly, their education, which incorporated western teachings and values, left some men hungering for first-hand experience of America and its

⁸⁵ Hisashi, *America-Bound*, 44-48.

⁸⁶ Linda Tamura, *The Hood River Issei*, 22.

⁸⁷ Fujii, Henshall interview, 4.

opportunities. Class conflicts were interesting to Hashitani. Roosevelt inspired him because of his love of justice and loyalty to the American people.⁸⁸ The adaptation of Western economic and social ideas made men and women eager to learn more about America and even test its principles. For example, Hashitani had an interest in American government and labor relations. E. D. Hashimoto acquired an extensive library of American works as he explored more of America and its core beliefs.⁸⁹ The infusion of Western social and economic thought dramatically influenced Issei who eventually settled in Idaho and the surrounding areas. The ability to succeed as an individual, away from family expectations encouraged many to stay permanently.

A careful inspection of Tokugawa and Meiji Japan clearly demonstrates the men and women who immigrated to the Intermountain West were prepared for the adjustments required when traveling to the United States because they had experienced so much change in their lives already. Push and pull factors brought Issei to the Intermountain West. The invisible baggage they brought with them was developed through education and the modernization of Japan. They acquired Confucian ideals such as perseverance and filial piety along with the western ideas of “self-help” through their education. These changes included a unity/equality of Japanese people. Goals of modernization permeated all economic classes of the emerging generation, from Samurai to commoners. As a result, the drastic transformation of Japanese society left many men feeling out of place in their own country. All of these values combined and empowered men such as Henry Fujii, Henry Hashitani, and Harry Kumagai, who left their homes in

⁸⁸ *Hashitani diaries*, translation, 7.

⁸⁹ Hashimoto, Dr. Edward I. Interview with Leslie Kellen, April 25, 1984. Salt Lake City, Utah: Transcript digitized by J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, 5. Accessed August 17, 2018. <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=801296>, 5; *Hashitani Diaries*, translation, 7.

Japan to reach to the edge of the universe and make a better life for themselves and their families they left behind.

CHAPTER TWO: THE EARLIEST VOYAGERS: THE ORIGINS OF RAILROAD
LABORERS TO THE INTERMOUNTAIN WEST

Idaho originally opened railroad work to Japanese immigrants before other states in America. In the fall of 1891, Tanaka Tadashichi brought the first Issei railroad laborers to work on the Oregon Short Line based out of Nampa, Idaho. His efforts launched Japanese laborers working for the railroad. Those original men paved the way for thousands of Issei who came to Idaho and the surrounding states, initially as railroad hands. The resulting influx of Japanese laborers created communities in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Utah where some eventually shifted to farming and other employment. Railroad work presented the proverbial “foot in the door” for many Issei coming to the Intermountain West. The construction of the stub line into downtown Boise in 1893 provides an example to explore the early hardships, discrimination, and challenging work experienced by the first Issei railroad laborers. It clarifies the importance of Idaho in the history of Issei and railroad work and its role in introducing Japanese immigrants to the Intermountain West.⁹⁰

According to the 1890 census only twenty-seven Japanese lived in all the Mountain States with none in Idaho or Wyoming and merely six in Montana. By 1900, the number shot up as over 4,500 resided in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah

⁹⁰ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 49; Hisashi, *America-Bound*, 121, 133.

including 1,291 in Idaho, 2,441 in Montana, 393 in Wyoming, and 417 in Utah.⁹¹ In comparison, 1,500 Issei lived on the West Coast in 1890, jumping to some 18,000 by the turn of the century. Issei rail workers account for the majority of the increase in the Intermountain West. The populations of Issei in Idaho were concentrated in main railroading areas including Ada and Canyon counties, Pocatello's Bannock County, and in Northern Idaho. In Kootenai County, Japanese lived along the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, (known as the Milwaukee Road) and the Northern Pacific Railroad. In Montana, Issei worked for the Great Northern and North Pacific Railroad; they spread along the Oregon Short Line into Wyoming. Many railroads including the Oregon Short Line, the Denver and Rio Grande Railway, the Union Pacific, the Southern Pacific and numerous smaller lines, all of which needed laborers for building tracks and continued repair, employed Japanese rail workers throughout Utah.⁹²

Tanaka, a seaman, took the opportunity to abandon his duties on his ship when it anchored in the American port of Seattle. Issei called it “jumping ship” or “smuggling in.” Illiterate and with no English ability, Tanaka spent the first few years in Seattle adapting and adjusting to American culture. He lived in Seattle, like many Japanese immigrants; unemployed and with no prospects for finding a job, and unfamiliar with the American way of life. Most likely, Tanaka spent time in the Japanese section of town, frequenting gambling and prostitution houses. As cited by Ichioka, most Japantowns

⁹¹ Department of Commerce, *Chinese and Japanese in the United States 1910*. Bureau of the Census. Bulletin 127. GPO. 1914, Table 53, (including Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Nevada). <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/03322287%20no121-130ch08.pdf>

⁹² E.A. Goldenweiser and Daniel Folkmar, “*Chinese and Japanese in the United States, 1910*”, *Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Bulletin 127, GPO, Washington, D.C. 1914, 25*. <https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/03322287no71-80ch6.pdf>, accessed August 4, 2018. The mountain states included Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada. I have included Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah as part of this thesis research. The few numbers suggest those may have been prostitutes in mining camps.

bordered the Chinese area that included gambling establishments. Japanese enclaves also often possessed pool halls and bars that catered to immigrants from a prefecture.⁹³ After living in the United States for five years, even men who jumped ship were allowed to obtain a “formal certificate of residence” from the Japanese Consulate.⁹⁴ Eventually, he left Seattle, taking a Japanese prostitute with him. Whether she was his girlfriend or he was her pimp is uncertain, but because of her, his reputation as a pimp endured among his men. He made his way to Ogden, Utah with his prostitute "girlfriend." Tanaka wrangled the opportunity of subcontracting for the Oregon Short Line from a Chinese labor subcontractor, known as Ah-Say or Arthur, during the Chinese man's visit to Ogden. Arthur became infatuated with the woman. In return for the opportunity to take her back to Wyoming with him, Arthur allowed Tanaka to subcontract under him in Idaho.⁹⁵

Tanaka arrived, in the newly incorporated city of Nampa. The town had been created only eight years earlier in conjunction with the construction of the railroad. Tanaka left Ogden, set up his employment agency, and soon recruited his first employees. He gathered forty to fifty Japanese labors from Portland. Staff of the Nampa office consisted of students from San Francisco. Tanaka utilized connections in California, Oregon, and Washington in bringing Japanese workers to Idaho. By 1892, Tanaka bypassed "Arthur" and worked directly under William Remington, a white contractor, based out of Ogden. He sent 500 men from his headquarters in Nampa throughout Idaho as they built and repaired rail lines.⁹⁶

⁹³ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 88-90.

⁹⁴ Itō, *Issei*, 57. *Hashitani Diaries*, 7. Hashitani recorded in his diary when submitted his application for his certificate of residence.

⁹⁵ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 49-50.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 50; Hisashi, *America-bound*, 109; “Budget from Nampa. Social and Other Events in our Neighboring City,” *Idaho Daily Statesman*, (Boise, ID) May 1, 1892.

Japanese were not the first men from Asia hired to build railroads in America. Twenty-four years earlier, in May 1869, the first transcontinental railroad was completed, connecting Council Bluffs, Iowa to Sacramento, California. Thousands of Chinese laborers undertook the hazardous task and built the Pacific line, from Sacramento to Promontory Utah. By 1882, anti-Chinese sentiment peaked as the economy experienced a downturn, resulting in the Chinese Exclusion Act. Railroads continued expanding across the western states, and the demand for laborers outdrove the local supply. At its nearest point, Boise was still about 250 miles from the railroad in Kelton, Utah. Both goods and passengers traveled in wagons for the last grueling step of the trip. Although Boise lagged behind other western cities in population, at less than 2,000 citizens, its residents campaigned for a railroad for decades before the Oregon Short Line made its way through Idaho in 1882 and 1883. The Oregon Short Line ran from Granger, Wyoming to Huntington, Oregon. Unfortunately for Boiseans, the line went south of Boise, following a more natural grade through Nampa.⁹⁷ The second transcontinental railway, the Northern Pacific Railroad, was completed in 1892. It ran through Montana and the panhandle of Idaho before wending its way through Washington to the Pacific.⁹⁸

The introduction of Japanese railroad workers into Idaho and the Boise valley, employed by the Oregon Short Line, created anxiety in both the Issei and the local population. It was anything but a friendly welcome. Biases and labels used against Chinese immigrants ultimately became attached to Japanese sojourners. Japanese were

⁹⁷ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nothing Like It in the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 237.

⁹⁸ Donald B. Robertson, *Encyclopedia of Western Railroad History*, (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers. 1986), 331.

often referred to as “little yellow (or brown) men” in local newspapers.⁹⁹ What they found after arriving in the Boise Valley did not meet their expectations, but through hard work and perseverance, a minority of these men took the circumstances given them and not only survived but also thrived in their new land. The desire to become an accepted part of the community was evident with the first men who moved to Idaho. The Issei began integrating into the community of Nampa almost immediately. At the time some three hundred Japanese outnumbered Caucasians in Nampa. Tanaka and the other Issei contributed a magnificent firework display for the entire community on the Fourth of July one of those early years as a gesture of goodwill. One longtime Nampa resident recalled the acceptance of Issei in the Nampa area saying, “they mixed right in.”¹⁰⁰ Those who took the time to get to know the Issei remained loyal friends even after the attack on Pearl Harbor years later. As a child, Mr. Huntley and his friends even taught one early Issei railroad laborer English.¹⁰¹ Not only did they strive to learn English and become Americanized, but they also shared Japanese culture with their neighbors to increase mutual understanding of each other. The invisible baggage they brought with them helped them meld Japanese and American traditions as they began assimilating into the Nampa community.

Japanese men in the late nineteenth century left their families and oppressing poverty to work in America. They hoped to return home with their riches within a few years. The misfortune and hardships Japanese railroad workers experienced in this valley

⁹⁹ “Japanese Run Out. Mountain Home People Try to Abate the Nuisance,” *Idaho Daily Statesman*, (Boise, Idaho) July 9, 1892, Newsbank; “They Learn Quickly,” *The Kalispell Bee*, (Kalispell, Mont.), 03 Aug. 1901, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Lib. of Congress.

¹⁰⁰ Koyama, Huntley, Fujii, Abe, Kawai, Shinohara, interview, 21, 23.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 21, 23.

were important because they were caused, not only by local residents but at times by those who brought them here as well.¹⁰²

Tanaka did not always treat the men he hired honorably, but as a result of his efforts in getting jobs for Japanese laborers in the railroad industry, the demand increased throughout the Interior West and into the West Coast. By the end of the year, Tanaka hired a sufficient number of men as Issei toiled the length along the Oregon Short Line East to Kemmerer, Wyoming. The next year, some 400 Japanese worked the entire stretch from Granger, Wyoming to Huntington, Oregon.¹⁰³ Soon, railroads hired Issei in as large of numbers as they could acquire. By the time workers built the Boise stub line in 1893, Tanaka's fortune and the opportunities he created for fellow immigrants expanded to include all of southern Idaho. Tanaka and the labor contractors that followed prompted the migration of Japanese away from the West Coast and Hawaii, allowing men to earn more money than they could make elsewhere.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ibid, 21, 23. "Tough on Japs," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, April 2, 1891; Tsurutani, *America-bound*, 107-108; Walz, *Nikkei in the Interior West*, 93.

¹⁰³ Wilson and Hosokawa, *East to America*, 72.

¹⁰⁴ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 50; Hisashi Tsurutani, *America-bound: The Japanese and the Opening of the American West*, trans. Betsey Scheiner (Tokyo: The Japan Times, 1989), 121-126.



Figure 2: Map of Idaho included in the Meiji Report to the Japanese government about 1896

Although benefits included lodging, Japanese railroad laborers paid for their meals out of their wages. Tanaka took advantage of the situation and used it to make more income off his workers by owning a restaurant near his office for the men. In addition, he also supplied the food which came in on the Oregon Short Line, giving him another means of stuffing his pockets. Tanaka, like the Japanese government, sought to separate Japanese immigrants from Chinese laborers. His men wore western-style shirts and pants. Tanaka also prohibited them from eating rice, miso soup or soy sauce. He told

them, “Since you are different from Chinese, live like Americans!”¹⁰⁵ In response, his workers often ate dumplings as they adapted food they knew into their new American diet. Inota Tawa, one of these early rail workers, and the other Japanese laborers ate dumpling soup for breakfast and dinner. “We chopped bacon and fried it, then added potatoes and onions with salted water, and cooked the flour dumplings in that” Tawa remembered.¹⁰⁶ The poem below, penned by one Japanese immigrant railroad worker describes how the value of perseverance encouraged fortitude in challenging situations, such as their poor diets in order to assist their families in Japan.

None but Japanese
 Could stand on a foundation
 Of mere dumpling soup!
 (Yozan)¹⁰⁷

Tanaka’s insistence on dressing and eating like Americans enabled the Issei to assimilate into the communities faster than Chinese and those on the West Coast had.

Because of the dire economic circumstances in rural Japan, many of the contract laborers came for the same reason as Tawa. One described it as, “fasting for three years.” The drive to help their families by living off little food cost some men their lives and many their health. Some of the men suffered from night blindness due to their poor diets. Their lack of knowledge about American food resulted in their unwillingness to pay for more nutritious provisions. Issei assumed, incorrectly, the price of a healthy diet extended beyond their budget. The men took turns preparing meals for their section, which added extra work at the end of their ten-hour days. Tawa asserted, often, if food costs rose above three or four dollars a month for each person, men, including him, began

¹⁰⁵ Itō, *Issei*, 293.

¹⁰⁶ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 185; Itō, *Issei*, 293-296.

¹⁰⁷ Itō, *Issei*, 296.

complaining.¹⁰⁸ In the Kolherlawn cemetery in Nampa stand headstones; some with three men each. Most are from this early period when the immigrants worked for the railroad. Among the Japanese graves stand those of two men, Tashima Otomats and H. Kimura, both of whom died in the fall and winter of 1892. Japanese railroad deaths were usually caused by railroad accidents or from disease. The night-blindness caused by malnutrition increased the chances of being run over by a train at night and also made them more susceptible to diseases than healthy men.¹⁰⁹ Luckily, within a few months, Issei railroad workers figured out how to improve their nutrition by adding fresh vegetables and fish, and their eyesight returned. Available nutrient-rich America food proved less expensive than they first believed.¹¹⁰ Tawa spent the winter of 1893 in Nampa while not working. Often, the men spent their money gambling and surviving on dumpling soup.

On cold and wintry nights,
 Sound of the boiling kettle
 Of dumpling soup-blub, blub...
 (Taro)¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Itō, *Issei*, 307.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 302. Author's photos of headstones. Taken September, 2016.

¹¹⁰ Itō, *Issei*, 27, 307-30.

¹¹¹ Itō, *Issei*, 302.



Picture 2: Headstones in Kolherlawn Cemetery Nampa, ID. Photo taken by the author.

As well as adjusting to new foods, housing proved meager. It usually consisted of box cars or shacks, neither of which protected them from the heat or cold of the seasons. The converted boxcars accommodated six to eight men per car and were often located next to the train tracks. The Japanese were especially unhappy with the poor living conditions, and grumbled more than Italians or Slavs. Issei grew up accustomed to clean, orderly homes and bodies in Japan. The poor housing situation required men adapt to their new living conditions. Local members of the community often chose to ignore railroad workers, unless they affected their town negatively.¹¹²

¹¹² Itō, *Issei*, 301, 318; W. Thomas White, "Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the Railway Workforce: The Case of the Far West, 1883-1918," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 16, no. 3. (July, 1985), 274.

Local papers rarely mentioned Japanese laborers for their contributions to the Boise Valley. Any appearances in newspapers often cast a disapproving opinion of Issei. As Japanese numbers increased, their presence caused uneasiness among the local citizens. Some locals believed Issei competed with and took jobs away from white laborers. "The Japanese have within the last four months completely demoralized the laboring interests of Southern Idaho."¹¹³ In early July, 1892 Tanaka sent a section crew of a dozen Japanese workers to Mountain Home. When the town's people discovered Issei workers, "about eighty *best* citizens" including "men of position" forced the crew out and demolished the newly constructed "shanty." The mob ordered the men to depart on the first train.¹¹⁴

In another example, at the end of July of the same year, a smallpox scare connected to the Japanese proved enough for citizens of Nampa, Caldwell, Notus, and Boise to force all the "filthy Japanese" out of the valley.¹¹⁵ One Japanese man traveling to Portland by train became sick, and initiated a panic. Tanaka was in Portland at the time, probably recruiting more laborers to bring to Nampa. City officials ordered all Japanese railroad workers out of Nampa and ordered them quarantined in a "vacant building two miles north of town and an armed guard was placed over them."¹¹⁶ The *Idaho Daily Statesman* warned the public of exposed Japanese sneaking into town. Law

¹¹³"Smallpox at Nampa. Three Well Developed Cases Discovered. Filthy Japanese Forced to Depart Caldwell and the Junction City." *Idaho Statesman* (Boise, Idaho) 28, July 26, 1892, 8.

¹¹⁴"Japanese On the Move," *Caldwell Tribune* (Caldwell, Idaho) July 30, 1892 *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress*; "Smallpox at Nampa," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, July 26, 1892; "Budget from Nampa: Social and Other Events in our Neighboring City," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, May 1, 1892; "Mountain Home: White Laborers Reinstated on the Union Pacific," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, July 13, 1892.

¹¹⁵"Smallpox at Nampa. Three Well Developed Cases Discovered. Filthy Japanese Forced to Depart Caldwell and the Junction City." *Idaho Statesman* (Boise, Idaho) July 26, 1892, 8.

¹¹⁶"Driving out the Japs," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, July 26, 1892.

enforcement expelled any Issei from the capital. At the same time, a “committee of citizens” ran the Japanese out of Caldwell at one in the morning. The Caldwell newspaper commented that the smallpox scare would be enough of an excuse for ousting every Japanese in the county, including any Chinese. Another article stated Caldwell citizens were divided over the problem. “The more conservative condemn the action as an outrage, while others believe the proper thing was done.” The article went on to assert “the Short Line will not again permit them to come into our midst.”¹¹⁷

Concurrently, an anti-Japanese movement caused excitement in San Francisco. California politician and labor leader, Dennis Kearney, changed his anti-Chinese rhetoric to suit the Japanese in 1892 proclaiming, “The Japs Must Go.” News of the movement undoubtedly reached Boise. Prior to that, a May 9, 1891, article ran in the *Idaho Daily Statesman* explaining the immigration of Japanese to the West Coast. It reported the positive characteristics of the Japanese laborers as compared to Chinese. The article optimistically stated, “There is room for a hundred thousand of these laborers on the Pacific coast,” while in the next sentence, it lamented the awful conditions of European immigrants on the East coast. The article alleged that if these men, women, and children had a way of getting to California, there would be no need for Japanese laborers. The demand for Japanese labor continued because of the lack of white laborers willing to do the same work for such small wages and because the railroads could pay Japanese workers less than white workers doing the same job.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ “Smallpox at Nampa,” *Idaho Daily Statesman*. July 26, 1892, “Driving out the Japs,” *Idaho Daily Statesman*, July 26, 1892, “Afraid of Smallpox: Nampa Japanese Sneaking into Boise,” *Idaho Daily Statesman*, July 27, 1892, “The Affairs of the Town,” *Caldwell Tribune*, August 6, 1892.

¹¹⁸ “Japanese Immigration,” *Idaho Daily Statesman*, (Boise, Idaho) May 9, 1891, Newsbank. “Bonds and Japs: Dennis Kearney is on the War Path Again,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, (Sacramento) Volume 83, Number 118, 7 July 1892, California Digital Newspaper Collection.

Frequently, if local men worked for the railroad, they quit at harvest time. The newspapers often reported the willingness of railroad supervisors to replace Japanese with white labor, although there were not enough. In September, local authorities met again with railroad officials. This time the Union Pacific stated it attempted to hire locals, but the numbers of white laborers were not sufficient. The opportunity to employ workers for less money than white laborers received probably created enough incentive for the railroad to increase the demand for Japanese laborers, but it was not the most important reason. For the railroad bosses, the convenience of acquiring workers through a contractor made it even more appealing. Although newspapers affirmed that because they had been "warned", Japanese workers would not return; by early September, all were back at work.¹¹⁹ Japanese consul, Sutemi Chinda, aware of the problems during the summer, traveled to the Treasure Valley in September, during his "annual vacation," to ensure a suitable resolution to the situation.¹²⁰ Opposition to Japanese laborers being recruited to work on the railroad in Idaho also influenced politics that fall. A newspaper reported the platform from the Ada County Democratic convention. One principle of the platform stated, "We are opposed to the importation of foreign contract labor whether white or yellow, and we denounce the wholesale employment of servile Japanese on the Union Pacific Railroad as an outrage upon our laboring classes."¹²¹ Although untrue, the idea of immigration companies recruiting laborers in Japan or Hawaii to work gave the notion that they denied working-class men employment opportunities.

¹¹⁹ "Local Brevities," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, September 6, 1892.

¹²⁰ "Japanese Consul in Nampa," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, September 3, 1892.

¹²¹ "The Ada Democrats," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, September 14, 1892.

In a more realistic observation, the 1911 U.S. Immigration commission reported expediency and economics as motives and listed causes of the increase in Japanese working for railroads: “they were made available through contractors at a time when industries were expanding,” they could not keep enough Caucasians employed, “they were willing to work for a lower wage than the Italians, Greeks, and Slavs, who were being employed in large numbers, and they have generally been regarded as satisfactory laborers.”¹²²

The next spring, the Oregon Short Line was in need of repairs. In addition, the railroad began building the stub line into Boise. Inota Tawa came to Nampa from Portland with a group of newly recruited laborers in May, after arriving from the Okayama prefecture. Japanese railroad laborers including Tawa were among those who built the stub line into Boise that summer. The rest were dispatched in small groups of about six to twelve men throughout Idaho as they built and repaired rail lines. Seventeen-year-old Tawa excitedly left his family’s small farm and came to the United States. Because poverty prevailed in rural areas of Japan, there existed the opportunity of earning much more than if Issei remained in Japan. Economic potential proved the primary reason for leaving, and gave an excuse for seeking adventure. Tawa, thus could provide relief to his family and satisfy his “venturing spirit.” Tawa and others came to Idaho in time to assist in the building of the line connecting downtown Boise with Nampa.¹²³

The stub line from Nampa into downtown Boise is an example of unrecognized labor Japanese performed in Idaho and the surrounding areas at the end of the nineteenth century. The Union Pacific chartered the Boise City Railroad and Terminal Company on

¹²² Wilson and Hosokawa, *East to America*, 74-75.

¹²³ Itō, *Issei*, 27-28.

March 20, 1893. Grading began on the stub line from the Boise Branch at Boise Junction into downtown on April 25th.¹²⁴ The local newspaper, excitedly chronicled the progress for residents. The line required less than four months from start to finish because of the short distance of just over six miles. Tanaka probably put a large crew on the job since it was so close to Nampa. Like other places, employers assigned Japanese laborers the most difficult responsibilities. The most challenging task, building the bridge, demanded about twelve days to complete. The job of bridging the Boise River included not only driving pilings into the bank but also building up the banks with large lava rock boulders to prevent erosion. It took three men working together to move one rock at a time. Two men lifted a stone onto the back of a third man. From his back, the three moved to a flatcar, on which they loaded the rocks and took them to the river's edge. They repeated the process in reverse as they positioned the stones on the bank.¹²⁵

Being a Japanese railroad laborer was more challenging than being a white railroad worker. The Japanese were ordinarily given the most difficult jobs, often with white supervisors. They received less pay than white laborers, regardless of the position. The men typically made \$1.15 per day working on the Oregon Short Line in 1893. Some earned as little as \$1.00 per day. White railroad laborers, often, Irish, Scandinavian, or Italian, made \$1.45 during the same period. Although these wages seem quite low (\$1.15 equals about \$32.00 in 2018), sugar cane plantation workers in Hawaii were making sixty-five to seventy-five cents per day—half of what railroad laborers could make in the Intermountain West or many times more than the twelve to fifteen yen per month an

¹²⁴ Thornton Waite, "On the Main Line at Last" *The Streamliner*, Union Pacific Historical Society, Volume 11, Number 6, 11.

¹²⁵ Hayashi, *Haunted by Waters*, 52-53.

educated, beginning teacher, such as Henry Fujii, made in Japan early in the twentieth century. Even though the take home money ended up much less than the official wage of \$30 a month, railroad work nevertheless paid more than they could make anywhere else. The Oregon Short Line compensated contractors such as Tanaka, then the contractors, in turn, paid the men they employed after subtracting their fees.¹²⁶

In conclusion, as shown, the railroad proved instrumental in introducing Japanese immigrants to Idaho and the Intermountain West. Using contractors who actively recruited Issei who had already immigrated to the West Coast, and eventually recruited directly from offices in Japan, resulted in a more organized straight forward influx of employees for railroad companies in adequate numbers. As a result of the railroads' pull to the Intermountain West, Issei used their invisible baggage to endure the difficult environment and working conditions while toiling in Southern Idaho. At the same time, those Issei in the interior experienced more isolation than those who lived on the West Coast. Because of the sparse and scattered Japanese population, as shown by the experiences of railroad workers along the Oregon Short Line, Issei had to assimilate faster and more completely than those on the West Coast.

¹²⁶ Mercier and Simon-Smolinski, *Idaho's Ethnic*, 59. Simon-Smolinski asserts that since Senate documents list earnings by "race", it must have been a reason for pay differences.; Fujii, Henshall interview, 5; The Inflation calculator, <https://westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>

CHAPTER THREE: GUIDES: THE ROLE OF LABOR CONTRACTORS

Thousands of Chinese built the transcontinental railroad, but the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 effectively ended the supply of laborers on which the railroads depended. The entrance of Japanese immigrants came at an ideal time for railroad companies seeking workers to build and maintain lines.¹²⁷ For the Issei themselves, the timing provided a high demand for their labors and drew many to the West as they were pushed from their homeland by the economic and social conditions in their rural Meiji villages. Issei rail workers would not have made their way to the Intermountain West in such large numbers without the labor contractors who recruited them. Because of their integral role, it is necessary to devote time to understanding how the labor contractors and the contracting system worked, beginning with their use in Japan. The impact of railroad contractors on Issei made it possible for many, with no English-speaking ability or knowledge of American customs, to find work that they otherwise would not have. Looking at the men and system that brought the railroad workers to Idaho and the interior states broadens the perspective of Japanese railroad worker's experiences and helps explain why they reacted as they did. Both the large labor contracting companies on the West Coast and other, but still notable contractors in the Intermountain West who enjoyed a smaller sphere of influence, share responsibility in bringing Issei to Idaho and the surrounding states. Understanding how contract laborers operated allows more in-

¹²⁷ *Hashitani Diaries*, translation, 15.

depth analysis of why Issei in the Interior West used their ability to adapt to American culture faster and integrate into the local communities.

As railroad companies required large numbers of laborers, Japanese immigrants turned to a familiar and convenient means of gathering multitudes of workers. Japan established the practice of recruiting laborers during the Meiji period. New industries, that brought Japan into the modern industrial age, used labor contractors as an efficient way of hiring a large workforce. Cotton spinning factories and mining companies often recruited from rural areas. The national drive to catch up at all costs demanded a large quantity of workers considered expendable, just as peasants had been during the previous era. They were used as a means to an end.¹²⁸

An excellent example from Japan were women who worked in cotton spinning factories. Managers treated their employees like prisoners and worked them an average of 11 hours a day. They surrounded the employee boarding houses with fences, like a prison, to keep them from escaping the horrendous conditions. Inflation drove the value of the yen down, however the average wage remained constant at 17 sen per day for men and 8-9 sen for women. Because women earned about half a man's salary, the demand for female labor remained high. Similarly, in the United States, employers paid Japanese less than white laborers, and therefore Issei were in higher demand. The percentage of men working as spinners dropped from thirty-two percent to less than a quarter from 1889 to 1894.¹²⁹ The race to catch up with the West rendered emigration more appealing for men

¹²⁸ McClain, *Japan*, 238, 248-249.

¹²⁹ Takano Fusataro, "Labor Problem in Japan," *Taiyo*, vol. II, no. 4 (July 5, 1896). English translations, with minor changes, also published in: *Gunton's Magazine*, XI, no.2 (August,1896):106-112; and in *American Federationist*, III, no.7 (September,1896):133-135, <http://oohara.mt.tama.hosei.ac.jp/nk/English/ftreport-lpj.html>, accessed August 8, 2018. Two sen equaled roughly one American cent at the time.

because industry's leadership viewed workers as replaceable. Expendability combined with the lower demand for men as laborers in the local cotton industry. If poor treatment existed in both places, the men might as well get paid better.¹³⁰

In addition to contractors looking for laborers within Japan, they also recruited men and women to work in Hawaii on sugar cane plantations. Because labor contracting was familiar, it made sense to use the same process in America as demand for rail workers increased. The naivety of rural villagers allowed them to become exploited by "bosses" who were more experienced and spoke English, acting as middle-men for laborers in their section gangs. The first Japanese railroad laborers in Idaho typically earned \$1.15 a day. Section crews worked ten hours a day. Contractors extracted a fee of ten cents a day along with a monthly "translation-office fee" of usually one dollar a month. In 1892, Tanaka built a medical clinic in Nampa to care for the growing number of workers who were ill or injured on the job. He imposed an initial charge of five dollars and then fifty cents per month from each man that went toward the building and maintenance of the clinic. To assist his men who worked to help their families back in Japan, Tanaka also held part of their salary, at their request, and sent it back home to their families. On top of the "fees," they sold their fellow countrymen expensive clothing, food, and even opened gambling halls or brought in prostitutes. Nampa is an example with its 1907 Oriental Alley that included a pool hall, laundry, and restaurant, probably initially run by the Japanese contractor. Japanese contractors were not the only party that exploited Issei workers to their benefit. Railroad executives also used Japanese racial

¹³⁰ Fujii, Henshall interview, 5; Kumagai, Interview, 2.

differences to their advantage.¹³¹



Figure 3: Sanborn map, Nampa, Idaho 1907 (enlarged) Source: Library of Congress (loc.gov)

The labor disputes of the 1890s, including the Pullman Strike of 1894, resulted in railroads altering their hiring policies. The homogenous workforce easily banded together to strike effectively. The main rail companies, like many industries, used the "divide and conquer" strategy to weaken the laborers' ability to join forces to demand better pay and working conditions by hiring Japanese and Eastern Europeans. The differences in race, language, and culture inhibited their ability to work together to improve their situation and negated the local population's support.¹³² The shift in the railroad's labor force resulted in the development of the most important labor companies' formation in the few years following. These labor companies simplified the hiring process for the railroad

¹³¹ Ichioka, *Issei*, 73-74; Nampa, Idaho [map], "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1907, Idaho." Digital Sanborn Maps 1867-1970, Sheet 5.

¹³² White, "Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the Railway Workforce, 273.

since it dealt with the company instead of the workers directly. The competition between railroads, due to the insufficient number of laborers permitted to immigrate, should have enabled labor contractors to negotiate for higher wages for their workers.¹³³

Labor contracting and specifically for this thesis, railroad contracting, flourished from the onset of Tanaka's modest beginnings on the Oregon Short Line through 1907 with the decline of Japanese immigration into the U.S. caused by the Gentleman's Agreement. Historians recognized Tadachishi Tanaka as the first Japanese railroad labor subcontractor. A brief time after Tanaka began contracting laborers, other Japanese labor employment agencies popped up in California, Oregon, and Washington, taking advantage of the increasing need for railroad laborers. Because of their inability to speak English, unskilled workers depended on these labor contractors to negotiate with the railroads for jobs.¹³⁴

One of the men who worked in Tanaka's office in Nampa, Tomizō Katsunuma, was a member of the Patriotic League, an Issei political club based in San Francisco. The Patriotic League created the Nichibei Yōtatsusha immigration company in 1892. Nichibei Yōtatsusha and others like it opened offices in the West Coast cities where a bulk of Issei entered the U.S. and stayed. Large populations in these areas allowed Issei a more Japanese lifestyle than those who moved inland and worked on the railroads. The labor recruiting companies also expanded their efforts to Hawaii, and then on to Japan's southern prefectures where most of the immigrants originated. Many Oregon Short Line workers and Issei laborers, in general, grew up in the Hiroshima, Wakayama, and

¹³³ Yuzo Murayama, "Contractors, Collusion, and Competition: Japanese Immigrant Railroad Laborers in the Pacific Northwest, 1898-1911," *Explorations in Economic History* 21 (1984): 290-305, 292.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 291.

Kumamoto prefectures because labor offices recruited in those areas and the desperate economic situation for so many rural farmers. Railroad companies preferred laborers from Hiroshima and Yamaguchi because of their excellent work ethic. Plantation owners on the Hawaiian Islands favored laborers from these prefectures for the same reasons.¹³⁵

A white recruiter based in Utah, William H. Remington, worked as a contractor for the Union Pacific when Tanaka began subcontracting. Because of his experience working with Tanaka and the subsequent Japanese subcontractors, Remington saw the advantages of hiring Japanese workers for the railroad companies. Remington acquired contracting rights with the Northern Pacific at the end of 1897. Remington, along with the Oregon Short Line Japanese subcontractor in Idaho, Kumamoto Hifumi, launched the Tacoma Construction and Maintenance Company in April of 1898.¹³⁶ Kumamoto took control as the third Issei contractor in Idaho. Tanaka ceded his position to Narita Yasuteru after workers ousted Tanaka in 1894 for embezzling remitted funds from his workers that he should have sent to their families in Japan.¹³⁷ He left another Japanese associate in charge of daily operations in Pocatello when he relocated to Tacoma with Remington. With both the Northern Pacific and the Oregon Short Line contracts, Remington and Kumamoto supplied over two thousand workers by 1901.

Labor contracting companies such as the Tacoma Construction and Maintenance Company created an influx of Issei into the Intermountain West. They generated opportunities for Issei who settled in Idaho and the surrounding states. The more

¹³⁵ Yosaburo Yoshida, "Sources and Causes of Japanese Emigration" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 34, no. 2, 1909: 158, JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1011222>; Ichioka, *The Issei*, 41-42.

¹³⁶ Yuji Ichioka, "Japanese Immigrant Labor Contractors and the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern Railroad Companies, 1898-1907," *Labor History* 21 (3), 1980, 329.

¹³⁷ Thornton Waite, *The Railroad at Pocatello*, (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Pub.) 2012, 7-8.

adventuresome sank roots into the sparsely inhabited areas, comparable to their rural upbringing. Issei planted themselves in their new communities where smaller populations more likely accepted their new neighbors easier than the large West Coast cities. The larger populations made white citizens apprehensive because they looked different and spoke a strange language. Issei in Idaho and other interior states often used their time on the railroad learning English so they could assimilate into the rural community more completely.¹³⁸ Like the Tacoma Construction and Maintenance Company, other companies quickly joined the rush finding workers for the Western railroads.

Takahashi Tetsuo and Yamaoka Ototaka organized the Oriental Trading Company of Seattle in 1898. Although it did not limit recruiting efforts to Intermountain West railroads, it operated as an entirely Japanese run business. Initially, companies opened offices in Japanese West Coast port cities to recruit laborers. The companies sought the help of Japanese hotel and boarding house proprietors in recruiting newly arrived men. They later partnered with emigration companies who had offices in the regions where most of the immigrants originated. These businesses encouraged the continued emigration trends from the southern areas. According to Ichioka, The Oriental Trading Company of Seattle requested 2,500 passports through the Morioka Emigration Company. To thwart their competition, the Tacoma Construction and Maintenance Company prevailed on the Japanese government to cease issuing the passports.¹³⁹ As a result, in August 1900, the Japanese government shut down emigration to the U.S. and Canada. When it refused to grant passports to a large number of laborers attempting to emigrate to work on railroad gangs, James J. Hill, president of the Great Northern

¹³⁸ Koyama, Huntley, Fujii, Abe, Kawai, Shinohara, interview, 23.

¹³⁹ Murayama, "Contractors, Collusion, and Competition," 292.

Railroad, penned a letter to Minister Takahira Kogorō requesting their help in obtaining the workers needed. Hill played on the severe poverty in the southern prefectures as he attempted to persuade Kogorō to loosen labor immigration to the United States. In an effort to alleviate their burdens, he offered employment for three to five thousand men on the Northern Pacific and Great Northern railroads. He stated, “it would be of value to advertise in Japan that the opportunity for permanent employment with these two railroad companies exists.”¹⁴⁰ Because of the high demand, companies recruited laborers from Hawaii as one way to bypass the government’s restrictions.¹⁴¹

Both the Oriental Trading Company and the Tacoma Construction and Maintenance Company began sending agents directly to Hawaii to recruit railroad workers. By 1904, the companies chartered ships and brought men to Seattle from Hawaii. The agents ran ads in the Hawaiian Japanese language newspapers attracting men with higher wages, new clothes, and food supplies. The differences of wages in Hawaii, which averaged about sixty-seven cents a day, compared to about one dollar and twenty-five cents a day enticed men to expand their horizons even farther and make the journey to the Intermountain West. Remington’s company brought about four hundred men in the spring of 1904 on one ship. Additionally, the Oriental Trading Company shipped six hundred that same spring on the *Olympia*. About 35,000 Issei laborers used Hawaii as a stepping stone to come to America between 1900 and 1907.¹⁴²

Likewise, emigration companies produced counterfeit passports as another way of bypassing the government's restrictions. In addition, Issei arrived via Canada or Mexico

¹⁴⁰ Tsurutani, *America-Bound*, 124.

¹⁴¹ Ichioka, “Japanese Immigrant Labor Contractors”, 327.

¹⁴² Ichioka, *The Issei*, 49-50; -----, “Japanese Immigrant Labor, 333-334.

and then crossed the border into America. For instance, Henry Fujii heard immigration regulations were more lax in Canada. He sailed to Vancouver and once there, made his way to Seattle. Kameji Okamura, an Issei who worked for the Union Pacific Railroad when he first arrived in Pocatello, sailed to Hawaii and then to San Francisco within a few months. He was probably recruited in Hawaii and had a job waiting for him, because he left Angel Island Immigration Station immediately after his arrival, missing the San Francisco earthquake by one day.¹⁴³

Like Tanaka, other recruiters worked on a smaller scale and lived locally, drawing other immigrants to the area they had settled in previously. E.D. Hashimoto was one such man. Fifteen-year-old Edward Daigoro Hashimoto left the Wakayama Prefecture in about 1891.¹⁴⁴ He came to the Interior West and worked as a cook for the Great Northern Railroad in Montana. His uncle, Yozo Hashimoto, who lived in Utah and supplied laborers for the Intermountain West, invited the young Daigoro. Daigoro had no experience cooking. His family had servants that cooked, meaning they probably belonged to the lower portion of the samurai class. Hashimoto received a high school education before leaving Japan. He came to America where he heard, that everyone supposedly had the opportunity to succeed if they were “enterprising.” Hashimoto probably, worked in Harve or any one of the many large “Jap gangs” along the Northern Pacific or Great Northern railroads.¹⁴⁵ After escaping from vigilantes who attacked, killed, and ran out the Japanese workers, he walked to Salt Lake City and found his

¹⁴³ “History of Kameji and Miyoshi Okamura,” Paul Okamura personal collection, 1.

¹⁴⁴ The 1910 census reports he immigrated to the U.S. in 1890 while the 1920 census says 1891. He was born 24 Nov. 1875. It is probable he came in 1891 while of the age 15.

¹⁴⁵ Year: 1900; Census Place: *Havre, Chouteau, Montana*; Page: 16; Enumeration District: 0190; FHL microfilm: 1240910

uncle.¹⁴⁶

Daigoro established The E.D. Hashimoto Company in 1902 after working for the Oriental Trading Company in Seattle. He had supplied the San Pedro-Los Angeles-Salt Lake Railroad with several hundred workers in 1899. Another labor boss, Nishiyama Hajime, who worked for the Japanese-American Labor Contract Company turned his Utah territory over to Hashimoto, allowing him to set up his own company. Through his company, Hashimoto contracted with the Western Pacific, Denver and Rio Grande, and the Great Northern railroads for section gang laborers. He offered the Great Northern lower rates than the Oriental Trading Company in an effort to grab more contracts.¹⁴⁷ Hashimoto expanded, opening a second office in Los Angeles in 1906. Like Henry Fujii, many Issei happily left the densely populated West Coast and traveled inland to work on a railroad section gang. Hashimoto may have acquired up to one thousand laborers at a time for the railroad companies. He taught himself English after arriving in America and prioritized literacy and education like many other educated Issei who grew up in Meiji Japan. Hashimoto spoke and wrote English proficiently and eventually acquired an extensive personal library of American works, including those of Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt.¹⁴⁸ His willingness to persevere in obtaining an education was consistent with Henry Hashitani's diary accounts of his diligence in learning English in

¹⁴⁶ Dr. Edward I. Hashimoto, Salt Lake City, Utah: an interview by Leslie Kellen, April 25, 1984, digitized by J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=801296>, accessed August 17, 2018, 1, 6-7.

¹⁴⁷ Murayama, "Contractors, Collusion, and Competition," 295.

¹⁴⁸ Dr. Edward I. Hashimoto, interview, 1, 6-7. Papanikolas and Kasai, "Japanese Life in Utah, 336. I have found no other research that mentions Yozo Hashimoto as the first labor contractor in the intermountain west other than Dr. Hashimoto's interviews. He jumps around with dates quite often, so I am unsure of how accurate his facts are. Ichioka contends that E.D. Hashimoto worked for the Oriental Trading Company before starting his own business.

his spare time while working for a section gang in Montana.¹⁴⁹ Neither spoke English before arriving in America but taught themselves. When Issei made learning English a priority and sacrificed their free time, their opportunities expanded exponentially. Until they became confident in their English ability, they relied on the contractors and bosses. American culture was so unfamiliar to them, most willingly depended on men such as Tanaka or recruiters who had first-hand experience in America.¹⁵⁰ E.D. Hashimoto's son expressed a positive take on the commission his father charged, like Tanaka; "Each member, for the privilege of coming to work, paid him a dollar a month during the time they worked."¹⁵¹ Not long after he began, Hashimoto made about one to two thousand dollars a month. Both Tanaka and Hashimoto acted as go-betweens for the railroads. They received the payrolls for the men they contracted for, extracted their fees, then paid the workers. Later, rail companies themselves paid Issei contracted by larger companies, as Henry Fujii remembered.¹⁵²

Endo Yoshio provides another example of how Issei recruited railroad workers from Japan. Endo worked in Pocatello, Idaho. He returned to his home town, Miho, in Shizuoka to train and hire men for railroad work. He prepared the men by having them connect thirty-foot-long bamboo poles on the beach as they would rail lines once in the Intermountain West. "This fore knowledge on being a railroad worker was [a] very convenient thing and easily can be adopted to the actual railroad work experience later as they came to this country."¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ *Hashitani Diaries*, translation, 5.

¹⁵⁰ Walz, *Nikkei in the Interior West*, 56.

¹⁵¹ Dr. Edward I. Hashimoto Interview, 6; Koyama, Huntley, Fujii, Abe, Kawai, Shinohara, interview, 2-3.

¹⁵² Miyagishima, Interview, 8; Fujii, Henshall interview, 11.

The large contractors and emigration companies employed "bosses" wherever they had a concentration of railroad workers in an area. Bosses acted as interpreters and mediators between the Issei and their English supervisors. Hashitani often spoke of his "bookman" in Montana, Mr. Inoue.¹⁵⁴ Although Hashitani and the other section members depended on Inoue to pay them and keep track of their hours, he did not use his name in a favorable tone. Inoue was often unreachable when Hashitani attempted joining a different section or a better area. "The bookman Mr. Inoue has not been back yet. He is an irresponsible man. I wonder what he wants to do."¹⁵⁵ Hashitani wrote of how he and his fellow laborers were dissatisfied with Inoue. "The bookman has not come back yet. What an irresponsible man he is!"¹⁵⁶ Because the section gang members did not trust him, they sought to work together to find a solution: "We had a meeting at 7:30 taking up a problem of injustice of the bookman. We established regulations and decided to request for the accurate calculation of foodstuffs and working hours."¹⁵⁷ Inoue often traveled, probably departing to obtain more workers from the West Coast. He did help his workers with medical issues, like Tanaka, as seen by Hashitani's entry detailing a terrible toothache he suffered from. "The bookman Mr. Inoue went to Seattle in the morning. As I returned with pain, I couldn't stand anymore. I took Senkintan, a medicine I got from Mr. Inoue."¹⁵⁸ Similarly to the Japanese consulate and government, the "bosses" helped less than Issei railroad workers had hoped. Due to little or no English-speaking ability, they had few other options. The unsatisfactory assistance by their "bosses" gave Issei

¹⁵⁴ Ichioka, "Japanese Immigrant Labor Contractors," 337.

¹⁵⁵ *Hashitani Diaries*, translation, 7.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 13.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 19.

¹⁵⁸ *Hashitani Diaries*, translation, 19.

another reason to learn English. They also provided the motivation to find better employment, often farming on their own instead of under a boss as with the railroad.

As Issei became more accustomed to American culture and language, they no longer required contractors for daily living. Once vitally important to bringing railroad workers inland, contracting companies became obsolete with the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1907. Because of the resulting end of labor immigration, the labor sources dried up. Consequently, the Japanese population within the interior states peaked in 1906. Many men returned to the West Coast or Japan as railroads began seeking other sources for workers. Those who stayed overcame the initial hardships to further their dreams of success in America, thanks to the labor contractor's role in introducing them to Idaho and the surrounding states. Without labor contractors hiring for the railroads, the Issei would not have come to the Intermountain states in the numbers they did. Japanese railroad contractors encouraged Issei adaptation to American culture through good and bad examples. This included wearing American clothing and eating American food. Through their inferior examples, contractors and bosses gave Issei a stronger determination to learn English and become self-sufficient. They helped strengthen the Issei desire for individual success in America, and in turn, added necessary experiences to their invisible baggage values of hard work and perseverance they carried with them to their new home.

CHAPTER FOUR: INNOVATORS: ENCOUNTERS, ASSIMILATION, AND
ADAPTATION AT THE EDGE OF THE UNIVERSE

By 1906, when men such as Henry Hashitani, Henry Fujii, and Kameji Okamura entered Idaho and the Intermountain West as railroad workers, labor contractors were firmly established. The first Japanese laborers had arrived over a decade earlier. These men immigrated at the height of railroad contracting into areas where Japanese businesses were already established to some degree and catered to the Issei population in larger cities like Missoula, Pocatello, and Nampa. The process of assimilating into the local communities had already begun.¹⁵⁹

The experiences of these men, in addition to the first laborers and the contractors that brought them, reveal the importance of railroads in introducing Issei to the Intermountain West. As a result of their introduction to the area through railroad work and because of the nature of railroads, there was a wider distribution of men in much smaller numbers, thus positively affecting their ability to assimilate into the local communities. Issei depended on their invisible baggage more than those on the West Coast to enable them to persevere as they adapted and integrated once there. The edge of their universe was not only a place to explore temporarily, but became their permanent home as pioneers for the proceeding generations.

¹⁵⁹ *Hashitani Diaries*, 25; Sanborn map, Nampa, ID 1907.

Most historians, including Yuji Ichioka, assume a homogenous Issei population, whether on the West Coast or in the interior. Neither Ichioka nor Eric Walz suggest any Issei intended on remaining in America when they first migrated. To assume that all had the same intention rules out the ability of men and women to choose for themselves, an important reason why they immigrated to begin with. Railroad workers in Idaho and surrounding Intermountain States can be divided into two groups; those who intended on staying in the United States temporarily, and those who considered permanently residing in America from the beginning. Some of the Issei who sunk roots into the Intermountain West soil had a mindset that distinguished them from those who returned home or to the West Coast. They had no intention of returning to Japan, in contrast to what scholars argue about the main group who eventually settled on the West Coast.¹⁶⁰

The small numbers of Issei in Idaho and the surrounding states created communities dissimilar from the larger population of Issei on the West Coast. Separated by language and customs, Issei railroad workers who settled in the Interior West survived and thrived by learning English, and integrating into the community, as seen by the experiences of Henry Hashitani and those of Henry Fujii and Kameji Okamura. Traditional values, including perseverance and hard work, helped them succeed. Historians such as Ichioka illustrate how Issei integrated slowly into the surrounding communities because they congregated in “Japantowns,” retaining their native language and cultural norms longer. Eric Walz argued interior Issei never isolated themselves from the host community, nor acted as a cohesive group as those on the West Coast. Although many Issei who came West through the railroad planned to return to Japan after a few

¹⁶⁰ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 3-4; Walz, *Nikkei in the Interior West*, 44.

years, many of those who settled in Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming intended to stay in America. It is important to note that although they integrated more, the Issei of the Intermountain West kept their “Japanese spirit”, their cultural traditions, which set them apart from the larger community. They continued to view themselves as unique because of their Japanese lineage, which not only set them apart from neighbors because of their features, but also in the ways they interpreted values which were both American and Japanese.¹⁶¹

By 1900, Issei railroad workers had spread throughout the Intermountain West including, Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming. Issei worked hard without complaining as much as local men and at a lower wage. Their superior work habits convinced those in power to employ as many as possible. A local newspaper reported the incentive for hiring Japanese: "J. J. Hill is very fond of the Japs; they work cheaper than the Irishman, or Englishman, or Dutchman, and then besides they will stand all kinds of abuse from their employers."¹⁶² The newspaper article gives the impression of their cooperation working for less pay than other immigrants, when in reality, Japanese railroad laborers did not have the option of demanding higher wages.

¹⁶¹ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 3-4; Walz, *Nikkei in the Interior West*, 44; Koyama, Huntley, Fujii, Abe, Kawai, Shinohara, interview, 46;

¹⁶² White, “Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the Railway Workforce,” 275.



Picture 3: Ogden, Utah, 1910. Utaro Kariya (in white shirt). 400 Japanese people were working for Union Pacific Railroad and Southern Pacific Railroad. Mr. Kariya was the personnel man who provided jobs for the Japanese people. Union Pacific Locomotive in Ogden, Japanese workers on train. Source: Utah State Historical Society

Jûsaborô Sataka, from the Kumamoto Prefecture, was recruited by the Oriental Trading Company in 1900 while still in Japan. That year, very few Issei lived near Glasgow, Montana where he worked. Laborers often moved around the West hoping for steady work. Likewise, instead of staying in one location, he too, hopped from one place to another working for many of the leading railway companies. Jûsaborô eventually settled in Cheyenne, Wyoming, employed by the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy

Railroad.¹⁶³

Along with Cheyenne, towns like Pocatello and Nampa came into being because of their position along the railroad. Hifumi Kumamoto relocated his office from Nampa to Pocatello in 1895, after he succeeded Yasuteru as the Japanese subcontractor for the Oregon Short Line in Idaho. The subcontractor moved where the majority of the workforce resided because of the junction of the Oregon Short Line and Utah and Northern Railroad at Pocatello. The 1900 census includes two hundred Japanese men grouped together in Ada County; all listed as railroad laborers. In Nampa, census records indicate men assembled in sections of ten to twelve, and scattered along the railroad line. At another area, the census taker specified that the men lived in boxcars. Each locality likely had its own subcontractor or "boss" who worked under Kumamoto. The 1900 census also listed Tatusgero Motomari as a labor agent at his Bannock Street address, most likely working for Remington and Kumamoto's Tacoma Construction and Maintenance Company. The company dispersed subcontractors and their men throughout Pocatello, the Treasure Valley, and the rest of Southern Idaho. By 1905, one out of six Japanese immigrants worked on railroads.¹⁶⁴ Idaho's percentage in 1900, was significantly higher, between 60-90 percent, although it is difficult to know exactly.¹⁶⁵ By 1906, 13,000 to 15,000 Japanese were railroad workers in the U.S. with about ten percent

¹⁶³ Jūsaburô, interview by Masaoka and Dr. Wilson, Oct. 26, 1966, Cheyenne, Wyoming, (Japanese Oral History Collection. Special Collections, Box 2 folder 16), J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, 1.

¹⁶⁴ "They Learn Quickly," *The Kalispell Bee*. (Kalispell, Mont.), 03 Aug. 1901, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85053328/1901-08-03/ed-1/seq-4/>; Millis, Harry A. *The Japanese Problem in the United States an Investigation for the Commission on Relations with Japan Appointed by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America*, (New York: Macmillan. 1915). Millis states that by 1909, there were about 10,000 Japanese railroad workers in the U.S.

¹⁶⁵ 1900 Census, *Portneuf, Bannock, Idaho*; Page: 29; Enumeration District: 0140; FHL microfilm: 1240231.

residing in Idaho. In 1907, about 1,500 men were working throughout Idaho, constructing and repairing railroads.¹⁶⁶

In 1900, GN Assistant Superintendent H. A. Kennedy excitedly informed his superiors "Jap section laborers . . . are certainly more reliable than either Greeks, Italians or white labor generally," and they "seem to be peculiarly adapted to section work."¹⁶⁷

His superiors eagerly replaced European laborers with Japanese if their numbers were enough. A newspaper reported, "A number of Japanese are being employed because the contractors can't depend on white men although they prefer to employ white labor."¹⁶⁸ Evidence shows this statement inaccurate. Railroads pacified locals while having no intention of hiring only white labors. Local white men usually worked on farms and supplemented their income with railroad work. They habitually left the railroad to harvest crops without notice. The inability to keep laborers was one motivating factor for hiring Japanese men. For Japanese, seeking harmony through Confucian traditions of group over individual and respect for superiors made Issei stable, trustworthy employees.¹⁶⁹

Even though local citizens viewed Japanese railroad workers negatively during the frontier period, railroad executives had an entirely different view. The Great Northern Railroad employed over 5,000 Japanese at the height of immigration prior to the 1907-08 Gentlemen's Agreement that shut down their labor supply. The informal agreement between Japan and the United States transpired as a result of rising anti-Japanese sentiment in California when San Francisco segregated Japanese children in public schools. In exchange for desegregating the schools, Japan agreed to stop "all immigration

¹⁶⁶ Tsurutani, *America-Bound*, 126-7.

¹⁶⁷ White, "Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the Railway Workforce, 274.

¹⁶⁸ "Driving out the Japs," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, July 26, 1892, Newsbank.

¹⁶⁹ Harry H. L. Kitano, *The Japanese Americans*, (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 2-3.

of Japanese laboring men." Fortunately, a loophole allowed entrance of family members of immigrants already in the U.S. enabling Issei to send for wives, most of which were "picture brides," and allowing for the establishment of families in the Intermountain West.¹⁷⁰

The Japanese were often unhappy with the contractors, but they did not come together to protest effectively because of their scattered work in small groups as section hands. The "Meiji Foreign Office Report on Idaho" related the displeasure of Issei stating, "There has been much discussion among the Japanese laborers about working conditions, antagonism from white workers, safety issues, and the profitability of the companies that they work for."¹⁷¹ The nature of railroad work provided few opportunities to strike or even stand together to demand better conditions or wages.¹⁷² Newspapers reported a strike of Japanese railroad workers in the Pocatello area in August 1897. The Oregon Short Line settled the dispute quickly with the article downplaying its seriousness by saying the Issei wanted time off.¹⁷³

The abundance of jobs, as reported by family members and acquaintances already in America, encouraged an even greater excitement for those with adventurous hearts such as Henry Hashitani. His diary describes not only the difficult life he had thus experienced while in America but also depicted the values he brought with him such as *shinbo* 'perseverance,' determination, and hard work. Hashitani pondered his experiences

¹⁷⁰ Imai Imai, "Gentlemen's Agreement," *Densho Encyclopedia*, accessed Apr 5 2019, <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Gentlemen's%20Agreement/>

¹⁷¹ "Meiji Foreign Office Report on Idaho," *Asian American Comparative Collection Newsletter*, Supplement Vol. 19, No. 1, March 2002, 6. <http://webpages.uidaho.edu/aacc/MeijiReportIdaho.pdf>

¹⁷² Ichioka, *Labor Contractors*, 346.

¹⁷³ "Strike of Japanese Section Men on the Short Line Leave Their Work. Objected to a Reduction." *Idaho Statesman* (Boise, Idaho), August 5, 1897, 6; "Jap Strike at an End Short Line Section Hands Return to Work the Riot Act," *Idaho Statesman* (Boise, Idaho), August 7, 1897, 3. Newsbank.

in America in the last year, he wrote, as he began his diary on Christmas Eve 1906: “All I have done so far is to survive as nothing more than a menial laborer—like pigs and cows.” Determined to recommit to his standards he asked, “Is my youth being wasted? No. I have dreams. I have hopes. I will try to find more time to read, study, and write. Life is nothing if you don’t try to better yourself.” Hashitani contrasted his hardships in America with his friends in Japan concluding, “They are living the lifeless, monotonous life, which is not for me.” In addition, he demonstrated his perseverance, declaring “I will not let these hardships keep me down. I will prove myself to be the man I want to be.... I have been blessed with good health and a strong will. *I will work hard, and study hard.*”¹⁷⁴

Other immigrants, such as the Basques, assimilated into the Idaho agrarian communities because of their rural background and values. “Hard work, perseverance, and endurance” were prerequisites for enduring the harsh Idaho environment.¹⁷⁵ Only the hardiest endured and remained in Idaho. While many groups used some of the same values, Japanese integration required an extra dose of diligence because of their race. European immigrants often had the upper hand when it came to assimilating into the community. In addition, Japanese fought the entrenched Asian prejudice remaining from Chinese immigration. They also exercised their invisible baggage differently than the majority of Issei.¹⁷⁶

Although Walz contends, like the majority of Issei on the West Coast, Japanese who made their way inland did not anticipate staying in America permanently, a number,

¹⁷⁴ *Hashitani Diaries*, 1, 3. Italics added for emphasis.

¹⁷⁵ John P Bieter, and Mark Bieter, *An Enduring Legacy: The Story of Basques in Idaho*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press), 2000, 4.

¹⁷⁶ “Small-Pox Scare” *Idaho Statesman* (Boise, Idaho) 28, July 28, 1892, NewsBank.

including Jûsaborô, entered with the intention of remaining in America. Being the second son of farmers, he had no hope of inheriting even a small piece of land to farm. Issei believed they could be successful in America if they worked hard and persevered, claiming their part of the American dream. This self-help mentality learned in Japan matched the bedrock of American ideals and therefore, helped them to fit into the rural community.¹⁷⁷

Thus, young men such as Hashitani excitedly awaited their adventure as they left their rural farming backgrounds for America. Others, like Hashitani, may have dreamed of farming the expanses of fertile land in the Interior West as their education and experience prepared them to become farmers. The Issei who settled in Idaho were thought of as “enterprising” as they accomplished new and innovative practices. Fujii initiated large scale onion farming in the Nampa area. Similarly, Kameji Okamura was the first to grow celery in the Pocatello area and the earliest to build a drive-through potato cellar.¹⁷⁸

After Hashitani spent a year in Seattle working at a bakery, his classmate, Henry Fujii joined him in Seattle. However, Hashitani and Fujii decided they were not cut out for city life and agreed to broaden their adventures into the Interior West. Initially, they traveled to Billings, Montana thinning sugar beets.¹⁷⁹ Once in Montana, someone working for the Oriental Trading Company likely recruited them. The Northern Pacific granted the Oriental Trading Company the labor contract for 1906.¹⁸⁰ Hashitani may have

¹⁷⁷ Jûsaborô, interview, 2.

¹⁷⁸ Takechi, Kimi, phone interview by author, February 12, 2015.

¹⁷⁹ Alice Hashitani Nishitani, *Henry Katsuji, and Takako Hashitani Retrospective*, Washington State University Libraries Digital Collection, 1, accessed October 17, 2018.

¹⁸⁰ Ichioka, “Japanese Immigrant Labor Contractors,” 342. There is a reference to Tobo company in Itô's compilation of interviews. Tobo could have been referring to the Tacoma Construction and

heard the advice, “If you want to make money quickly, then you’d better work on the railroad.”¹⁸¹ The pair doubtlessly heard much talk in Seattle about the ability to go to Montana, Idaho, or elsewhere in the Mountain States to work for the railroad.

In opposition to knowingly being recruited for railroad work, others were deceived by contractors. To fill the demand for railroad workers, recruiters told the Issei there were mining or farming jobs in Montana or Wyoming. Men with little or no experience in America nor English-speaking ability boarded trains, thinking they were headed to work in the mines. In actuality, fellow Issei sent them off unwittingly to railroad gangs, not realizing until the train stopped that the recruiters duped them into working as section hands. Because of the principles they brought with them as invisible baggage, Issei endured and adapted to the difficulties they encountered in the Intermountain West.¹⁸²

Japanese often brought out the term *shikata ga nai*, ‘it cannot be helped,’ from their invisible baggage during difficulties. This concept influenced many Issei as they adjusted to circumstances beyond their control in Idaho and the Interior West, such as being tricked into working for the railroad, being treated as less than their white fellow workers, or adjusting to the harsh weather conditions. This expression helps explain their willingness to endure hardships as they worked to support their families.¹⁸³ Because of

Maintenance Company or the Oriental Trading Company as I could find no contracting companies called by that name.

¹⁸¹ Itō, *Issei*, 316.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 308-10.

¹⁸³ Storrs, “Like a Bamboo”, 113. “The Japanese phrase *shikata ga nai*, or “it cannot be helped,” indicates cultural norms over which one has little control... This notion of suffering in part stems from *shikata ga nai*: failing to follow cultural norms and social conventions led to a life of little choice but endurance of suffering.” The phrase helps explain why they left Japan and also why they suffered once in America; Sims, Notes on Introductory Meeting and Initial Interviews of George and May Shiozawa and Paul and Sanaye Okamura. Robert C. Sims Collection. Box 45 File 27.

the values of *shinbo*, ‘perseverance,’ and *shikata ga nai*, ‘it cannot be helped,’ Issei have been compared to a stream as they “followed the contours of the land, followed the lines of least resistance, avoided direct confrontations and developed at their own pace, always shaped by the external realities of the larger society.”¹⁸⁴ Japanese generally aimed for harmony with their surroundings and others, as these values accounted for their quiet determination and unwillingness to cause conflict with their fellow workers. As a result, Hashitani penned his feelings of frustration, but did not verbalize them to his superiors.¹⁸⁵

Hashitani joined the Inoue “gang” on December 22, 1906, arriving in Evaro, Montana after working in Bonner.¹⁸⁶ Henry Fujii worked on a different gang somewhere in Montana. Hashitani was one of forty Japanese men working at Evaro, about 15 miles north of Missoula, possibly on a “floating” gang or construction gang that completed larger jobs such as installing new rails, bridges, or ballasting. It was his first experience working on a “gang” since leaving for Montana and becoming a railroad worker. The men did not stay in one place for long. They moved up and down the line as needed along about a fifty-mile section of track for the Northern Pacific Railroad from Plains to Evaro. Gangs were scattered throughout the area working wherever they were needed. In addition to these smaller gangs, a few places, such as Havre in Montana, Carbon County, Utah, and Boise, Idaho boasted one to two hundred men on construction crews at the turn

¹⁸⁴ Harry H. L. Kitano, *The Japanese Americans*, (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), 2-3.

¹⁸⁵ *Hashitani Diaries*, 1.

¹⁸⁶ *Hashitani Diaries*, original translation, 1. The introduction states that he began writing the diary in December 1905. This is incorrect. He stated he had been in the states for a little over a year. He arrived in June 1905, so this must have been December 1906 and into 1907. The Fortieth year of Meiji is 1907. He speaks of writing letters to his friend, Fujii, who may have been working on a different section gang in Montana at the time Hashitani was writing this diary. The Bonner he spoke of was probably east of Missoula, Montana.

of the century when major construction demanded a much larger work force.¹⁸⁷

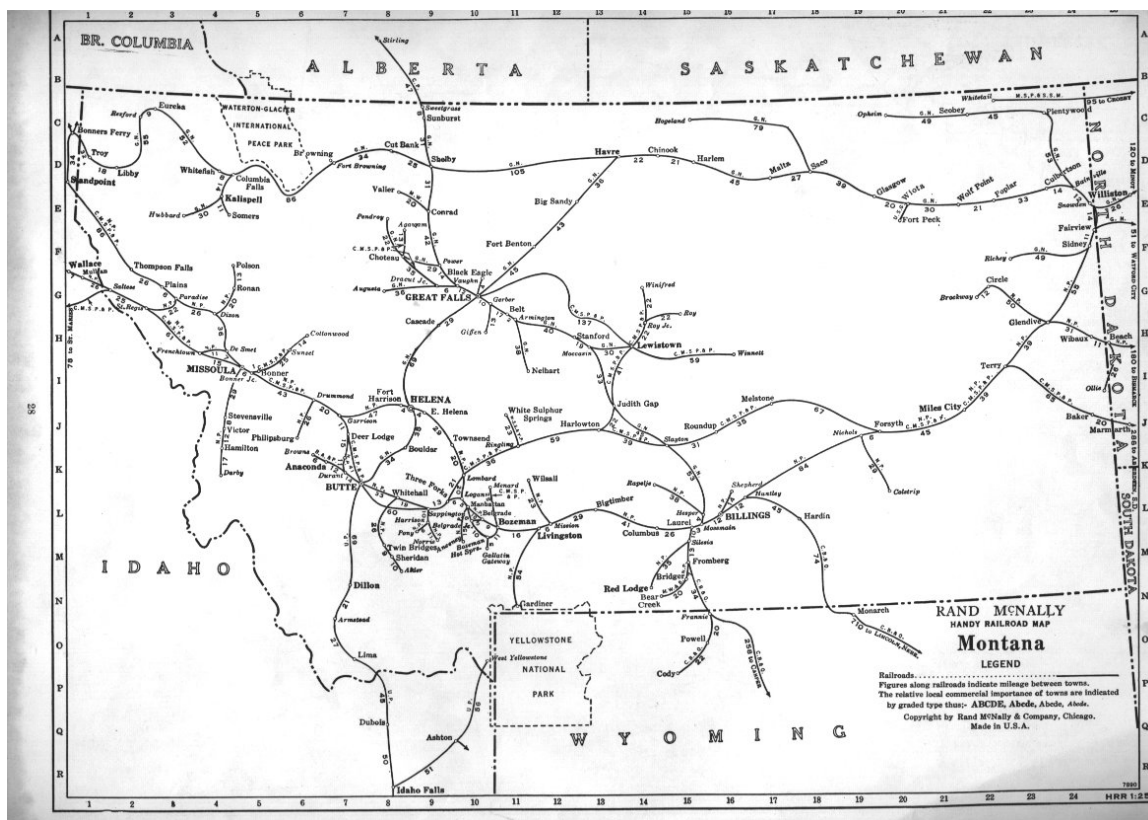


Figure 4: Montana railroad 1943

In contrast, and most commonly, superiors spread Japanese railroad workers along the rail lines as part of section gangs. A "boss" ran section gangs; in 1900, these bosses were Caucasian men. American racial attitudes of the time placed Japanese and Asian immigrants just above Native Americans and Blacks in a racial hierarchy. This provided rationalization for treating Issei as less than human and paying lower wages than their white counterparts. According to Hashitani, the living conditions for railroad gangs were “beyond my imagination, filthy beyond description. Can’t believe any human could live in this condition.” Expressing his disdain, he mused, “No wonder *hakujins*

¹⁸⁷ Year: 1900; Census Place: Boise Ward 1, Ada, Idaho; Page: 16; Enumeration District: 0001; FHL microfilm: 1240231; Year: 1900; Census Place: Havre, Chouteau, Montana; Page: 16; Enumeration District: 0190; FHL microfilm: 1240910.

(Caucasians) don't consider us human beings. And I too have to survive this way so I can move on."¹⁸⁸ Japanese were accustomed to clean and orderly homes in Japan. These conditions were even more appalling to them than the European workers. One railroad worker, Otoichi Nishioto, described the living arrangements in detail

Life in the gangs was almost unbelievably hard. The gang train I was in had ten freight cars, among which one was used for eating, one for storing tools, and one for storing the drinking water. We stayed in the other seven. They were box cars and had no windows, so we cut holes to see out of, and made a vent for the stove pipe. Inside the cars were racks of double-deck bunks--merely enough for sleeping purposes--and the meals were barely enough to support life. . .¹⁸⁹

Japanese standards of cleanliness included cleanliness of self, home, environment, and Shinto shrines. Purity and cleanliness were deeply embedded in the Shinto religion. Entering a Shinto shrine required washing hands, feet, and mouth. Purity in this sense combined to symbolize physical and spiritual cleanliness. The standards seeped into all aspects of life, including regard for home, and person. Rituals, such as removing shoes before entering a home and the routine of daily baths were inherent in Japanese culture. The unsanitary conditions Issei dealt with while working for the railroad is one example of how they adapted using their invisible baggage. The values of *shinbo* and *shikata ga nai* are apparent throughout Hashitani's diary as he worked and assisted his family in Japan. He used these ideals to justify his reaction for enduring poor living conditions and racial biases as part of the struggle for success.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ *Hashitani Diaries*, original translation, 1.

¹⁸⁹ Itō, *Issei*, 318, quote from Otoichi Nishioto. Census records often indicate boxcars as living quarters for the railroad workers. The "Meiji Foreign Office Report on Idaho" states these living quarters are a wood barracks building, 12x20 feet, with 5-12 people living together." "Meiji Foreign Office Report on Idaho", 6.

¹⁹⁰ Mary S. Henshall, "Pioneer Portraits: Henry and Fumiko Fujii," *Idaho Yesterdays*, 19 (Spring 1975): 22-26.



Picture 4: Four men on a handcar, near Butte, Montana. Circa. 1905

Periodically, Issei experienced hostility from locals or even fellow Caucasian workers. In one episode of violence against Japanese railroad workers, E. D. Hashimoto and others escaped with their lives as they were driven out of Montana by locals. He

walked to Utah at night, hiding during the day to keep from being discovered.¹⁹¹ Such incidents resulted from perceived economic competition. As a result, many newspaper articles lamented the Issei overtaking white jobs.¹⁹² At times, the railroads replaced Japanese crews with European workers to pacify the local farmers as shown in Hashitani's experiences. He lamented, "9 Italians came here.... No matter how diligently we work each and every day, the number of men to be able to work here is limited. We had to leave here, holding back our frustrations."¹⁹³

A song sung by Issei railroad workers illustrates how they felt about their treatment in America. The lack of consideration by whites went against all they believed about Japanese culture and their perceived equality with Western nations.

If a railroad worker was a human being,
Then dragonflies and butterflies would be birds.¹⁹⁴

Still, Hashitani endured, working diligently to improve his position and continue his English study. Otoichi Nishimoto, of Spokane, described the difficulty Issei had while trying to save as much as possible each month to send home to their families in Japan. "They had a plan to save money either to go back to Japan or to go into town and open a restaurant at the earliest possible moment." He remembered the pay was about forty dollars a month with food expenses varying between four and seven dollars. "If it got as high as \$7, people started complaining that it was too costly, and the cooks had to work

¹⁹¹ Itō, 306; Dr. Edward I. Hashimoto interview, Dr. Hashimoto tells of his father and other railroad workers driven out of Montana.

¹⁹² "Displaced by Japanese," *Deseret Evening News*, (Great Salt Lake City, Utah), 13 April 1900, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045555/1900-04-13/ed-1/seq-7/>; "They Learn Quickly," *The Kalispell Bee*, (Kalispell, Mont.), 03 Aug. 1901, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Lib. of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85053328/1901-08-03/ed-1/seq-4/>

¹⁹³ *Hashitani Diaries*, translation, 24, 26.

¹⁹⁴ Itō, *Issei*, 316. Author unknown.

pretty hard to reduce the contents of the meal any further, in order to keep the expense within \$4.”¹⁹⁵

The challenge of making enough to survive on while saving money to send home weighed on many immigrants. Taisuke (Tom) Nishioka and his father arrived from Hawaii in December 1903. In 1910, they worked for the Oregon Short Line in Nampa, Idaho and lived in boxcars. Even after Nishioka sent for his wife in 1912, he continued working for the railroad. His wife gave birth to their first daughter while living in a boxcar in Parma. Taking into consideration the abject poverty of their situation, they decided their only option was sending the child back to Japan with his father when he returned home, no doubt using the principle of *shikata ga nai* to accept their separation from the child. The “Meiji Foreign Office Report on Idaho,” written by the Japanese consul in about 1896, detailed the challenges of Japanese railroad workers: “Their duties are mostly repair work and the foreman in charge of the Japanese is always white. Our laborers are overworked and the unequal working conditions cause resentment.”¹⁹⁶

Hashitani planned on learning to speak English upon arrival in the states. He obtained English readers from an acquaintance either before or shortly upon arrival in the U.S., which he carried to Montana. Hashitani often spoken of his desire to persevere in learning English. His diaries are written in Japanese but sprinkled with English, often with quotes from the "Golden Text" or Bible, names of Montana towns, or proper names, showing how he studied and practiced often.¹⁹⁷ Hashitani and Fujii were both Christians. Because Hashitani referenced his Christian beliefs throughout his diary, it is likely they

¹⁹⁵ Itō *Issei*, 318.

¹⁹⁶ “Meiji Foreign Office Report on Idaho,” 6.

¹⁹⁷ *Hashitani Diaries*, original diary.

entered the United States as Christians. Fujii had a bible in his luggage which facilitated his quick path through customs when entering Washington from Canada. He was quickly waved through when he mentioned his bible along with other books when asked about the contents of his case. Many Christian Japanese migrated to America with encouragement from missionaries in Japan.¹⁹⁸ The ability to live their religion as the mainstream may have also been a motivating factor in their decision to immigrate to America. Although a minority of Issei, Japanese traditions were deeply entrenched in them just as much as others. Their Christian religion gave them another way of assimilating into the community. Worshiping alongside their Caucasian neighbors created connections that helped them find acceptance and support from some even after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Hashitani understood the only way to improve his chances for success in America was his ability to communicate effectively in English. He found it frustrating when misunderstood, ridiculed, and treated disrespectfully by Americans. Writing after returning from Weeksville, Montana to apply for another gang job Hashitani lamented;

Flecker came and asked the conductor to let me get on, but was denied. If he knew the language, culture, and mind of Japanese, he would never mock me like this. All I could do was keep silent. I spoke to a person at the department, only to find rashness; I was hoping to move to a better job and place...¹⁹⁹

In contrast to those in the Intermountain West, the larger populations of Issei on the West Coast in cities such as Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles followed a pattern of keeping a tight-knit community. These communities formed from a

¹⁹⁸ Fujii, Henshall interview, 8. "Japanese-American Religions," Contemporary American Religion, *Encyclopedia.com*, accessed February 17, 2019. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/legal-and-political-magazines/japanese-american-religions>

¹⁹⁹ *Hashitani Diaries*, translation, 2.

mix of the host community's intentions of keeping the immigrants concentrated in one area, and at the same time, an Issei desire to gather with those of similar cultural traditions including language and customs. Because of these cultural enclaves, the Issei were able to work together to meet their needs and help other immigrants. In contrast, those living in Idaho and the surrounding Intermountain States had a much smaller ethnic group on which to depend. In addition to the smaller numbers, Issei populations of Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming were widely scattered across the states because the vast majority of men worked as railroad laborers. The Interior Issei demographic developed as a direct result of railroad lines. In 1900, with a population of about 1,300 Issei in Idaho, 1,800 in Montana, and only 430 in Utah, the rail workers were most often divided into small groups working as section hands repairing track. Any larger interior populations were scanty by California, Oregon, and Washington numbers.²⁰⁰ Because of the modest populations, those who stayed found it economically and socially necessary to integrate into the larger population at a much faster pace than those on the coast. Due to their experiences as railroad workers, Hashitani, Fujii, Okamura, and other Issei were fully aware of their differences and labored endlessly to bring understanding to the larger community in an effort to accomplish their initial economic goals and later, their assimilation into their permanent communities. Learning English became a significant component of integrating as Hashitani realized effective communication was of the utmost importance.

²⁰⁰ 1900, U.S. Census. Ancestry.com *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010, Images reproduced by FamilySearch.



Picture 5: Japanese railroad workers in Utah. Source: Utah State Historical Society

Henry Hashitani spent his free time studying English. Because of the experiences he had with railroad bosses, he knew he needed to learn English to have any prospect of improving his situation. The inability to communicate with those in leadership positions in hopes of moving to another place along the rail line often hindered their chances. Hashitani lamented, “My English study is not making much progress, but I must not give up. It requires patience. I must not give in to the circumstances.”²⁰¹ The vast majority of Issei arrived in the United States without the ability to speak English. Those that could had a tremendous advantage over their fellow immigrants. As a result, the only jobs available to those who did not speak English involved menial labor. The high demand for cheap railroad laborers created an enormous opportunity for Issei as they worked hard and saved money to help their families in Japan, at least in theory. One gentleman

²⁰¹ *Hashitani Diaries*, translation, 5.

lamented, “But the seed of our pain was really that we didn’t know English.”²⁰² With the ability to speak English, an Issei working as an interpreter for the railroad earned a wage of seventy-five dollars a month. Fully aware of the increased economic possibilities, many Issei made learning English a priority. Equally important to economic motives, English language acquisition made integration much more likely.

Ben Sadao Yamamoto provides another example of the Issei focus on learning English. Yamamoto immigrated from the Wakayama Prefecture in 1906. His first stop in America was Seattle, like many other Issei. Just as Hashitani and Fujii had, Yamamoto went to Montana to work for the railroad. While in Montana, Yamamoto enrolled in the local grade school. He attended the third grade to hasten his English learning. Because of his diligence and perseverance, his English proficiency opened doors to better jobs. By 1910, he worked as a cook in the state capital, Helena. From there, he moved to Woodville, Idaho and farmed with his brother-in-law. Ben and his wife Aiko eventually settled in Nampa, Idaho.

A majority of Issei in Idaho and neighboring states transitioned into farming after leaving the railroads. As noted earlier, they entered farming because most came from a rural background. Because of alien land laws, targeted at Japanese, passed between 1913 and 1923, Issei could not buy land. Prior to this, Issei rarely bought land because they had little capital. Walz states that Issei obtained land because the Japanese in the Interior worked together and formed partnerships, thus by pooling their resources and talents, bought land sooner than they otherwise might have. After land laws passed, denying land ownership to aliens ineligible for citizenship, immigrants used a loophole and bought

²⁰² Itō, *Issei*, 343.

land under a child's name. The children, born in America, were automatically U.S. citizens. Most Issei rented or leased land they farmed, like Hashitani, and Yamamoto. Railroad work and farming alike required a strong work ethic. Those who stayed and moved to farming labored diligently at any job they had.²⁰³

Hashitani's diary provides an excellent account of the value of hard work that Issei brought with them to America. "I worked as hard as I could but it felt invigorating."²⁰⁴ At times, his exhaustion from the backbreaking work resulted in his falling asleep in the evening as he attempted to read and study English. Occasionally, he criticized his fellow Issei who were not willing to put in a full day's work for a day's wage however meager it was, even feeling that he had not worked hard enough for his daily wage. "It is interesting that somebody said the life at the railroad is difficult. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today."²⁰⁵ Hashitani believed "my diligence and my heavy physical work will be useful for something for my future."²⁰⁶ He knew railroad work was temporary and desired to be a stock farmer eventually. The majority, like Hashitani, viewed railroad work as short-term and anticipated moving on to farming or becoming a small business owner that involved better money-making opportunities. Idaho's sparse population and ample land, along with the assistance of some Caucasian neighbors and sugar companies, as explained by Walz, enabled Issei movement into farming. The companies hired Issei initially as laborers, and later "rented them land, provided seed, fertilizer, and capital for growing the beets."²⁰⁷ Known as hard workers,

²⁰³ Archie Yamamoto, interview by author;

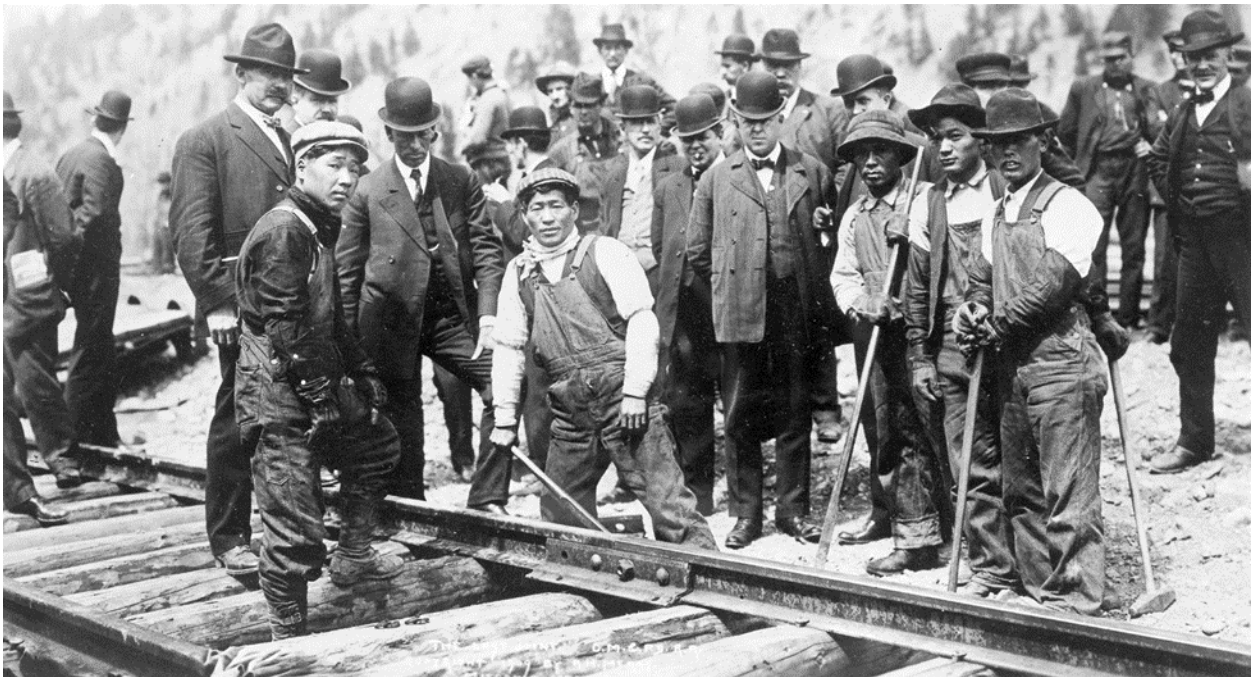
²⁰⁴ *Hashitani Diaries*, original translation, 2.

²⁰⁵ *Hashitani Diaries*, original, 76. The last part "Never put off til tomorrow that which you can do today" is written in English in his diary.

²⁰⁶ *Hashitani Diaries*, 48.

²⁰⁷ Walz, *Nikkei in the Interior West*, 70.

Issei worked for every major, and even smaller railroads by the turn of the century throughout the Intermountain West as Northern Idaho provided access through the mountains connecting Montana and Washington as transcontinental lines traversed the Northwest.



Picture 6: The Last Spike of the Railroad Extension of the Milwaukee Road, near Garrison Montana. May, 19, 1909

Northern Idaho

As Issei began working in Idaho and the broader Intermountain West, they migrated into Northern Idaho by 1900. Japanese railroad workers spread throughout the area working on the Northern Pacific, Great Northern, the Milwaukee Road, and the Spokane International railways. Japanese workers contributed to the development of Northern Idaho as they helped the railways expand and keep the already busy lines open for transporting goods from the West Coast to the Eastern United States. Without the availability of Japanese laborers, the railroads would have expanded at a slower pace and

with added expense. Issei in Northern Idaho followed the same patterns as in the southern half of the state. Similarly, Issei were introduced to the area through railroad work and a minority settled and integrated into the larger community. Those who stayed depended on their fundamental values and education as they worked diligently to find acceptance.²⁰⁸

The Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Puget Sound Railway (CMSPR), known as the Milwaukee Road, took a slightly more southerly route across the panhandle than the other two long haul railroads. The company sought the shortest route through the Idaho mountains as it wound along the meandering St. Joe River through Avery, Idaho, although it had followed the NP line through western Montana. Issei lived and worked along these lines during the first decades of the twentieth century. The Milwaukee Road became the third long transport train built through Northern Idaho. By 1910, the population of Japanese in Northern Idaho had grown with the expansion of rail lines. Avery historians included their Japanese citizens proudly in the small village's story, sharing vignettes of the Issei and suggesting their acceptance within the community. Fifteen Japanese worked in the Milwaukee Road roundhouse in Avery in addition to twenty-five more section hands scattered along the line.²⁰⁹

Although a dispersed and relatively small population of Issei, pushback came from the locals just as in other Intermountain areas. To illustrate, in April 1900, *The Kootenai Herald*, laid blame on Japanese laborers for three wrecks along the Great

²⁰⁸ 1900 Census, John V. Wood, *Railroads Through the Coeur d'Alenes*, (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1983), .

²⁰⁹ Sandra A. Crowell, and David O. Asleson, *Up the Swiftwater: A Pictorial History of the Colorful Upper St. Joe River Country*, (Coeur d'Alene, ID: Museum of North Idaho, 1995), 88-91; John V Wood, *Railroads Through the Coeur d'Alenes*, ; Department of Commerce. *Chinese and Japanese in the United States 1910*. Bureau of the Census. Bulletin 127. GPO. 1914. <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/03322287%20no121-130ch08.pdf>; Department of Commerce and Labor. *Statistics for Idaho, 1910*. Bureau of the Census. GPO. 1913. <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/abstract/supplement-id.pdf>

Northern near Bonners Ferry, stating, “it is hoped that the company will find it unprofitable to employ Japanese labor.”²¹⁰ Undoubtedly, these men endured harassment at the hands of locals. Drawing on their invisible baggage, they persevered and looked forward to better days ahead.

In the summer of 1910, what was known as, the Big Burn, the Big Blowup, or the Devil’s Broom Fire, turned 3 million acres of northern Idaho's forest to ash. With only about 2500 firefighters working for the newly created Forest Service, many railroad laborers joined their efforts and fought fires, including Japanese workers. Fire raged through the middle of the Northern Pacific and CMPSR lines from Big Creek to Taft, Montana. Although most men survived the fires, many sustained severe burns. Ten Issei were among those who perished in their attempts to save towns and homesteads. The *Elmore County Republican* ran an article about the fire that included mention of Japanese casualties: “Two burned Japanese dragged themselves to Avery, Idaho Wednesday night and told of the death of ten of their comrades.”²¹¹ Although not listed among the official death toll of 85, they gave their lives for their new home. Most of the uncounted deaths were Japanese and other immigrants that did not speak English. Many men remained listed as missing or not listed at all because of poor record keeping. Remains were found intermittently through the years.²¹² Though often dismissed as insignificant, the Issei who

²¹⁰ *The Kootenai Herald*. (Kootenai, Idaho), 14 April 1900. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86091083/1900-04-14/ed-1/seq-4/>

²¹¹ “Brighter Outlook in the Fire Zone,” *Elmore County Republican*, (Mountain Home, Idaho), 27 Aug. 1910. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86091062/1910-08-27/ed-1/seq-2/>

²¹² Crowell, and Asleson, *Up the Swiftwater*, 88, 91. The book notes as many as eighty Japanese working in the Avery roundhouse. Some with wives who worked as cooks at the local hotel. The most found on census reports is forty. It states the railroad agreed to hire Japanese men in exchange for the Japanese silk trade. All three main railways carried silk from the West Coast to the East.

remained in Northern Idaho used core values of hard work and perseverance to learn English and adapt—like those in Southern Idaho—to become accepted members of their communities.

Later Years

By 1910, Japanese were becoming more proficient at English. They also proved their worth as dependable employees, with an excellent work ethic. Those who stayed with the railroad frequently moved up to become section bosses themselves; this time, often over European immigrant laborers. The Issei men were still dispersed throughout the Northwest in limited numbers except for a few places with a concentration of railroad workers such as Pocatello, Idaho. Some men returned to Japan to fight in the Russo-Japan War of 1904-05. A few returned home with their fortunes, but many stayed in the U.S. Frugal living, while simultaneously, sending money home to their families, allowed them to accrue a small amount of savings for themselves. The values of self-help and perseverance aided them as Issei worked to reach their goals of farming or owning their own business. Usually, after a few years, these men saved enough money to move away from grueling railroad work and began working on the sugar beet farms as laborers. Shortly thereafter, Issei began renting land and farming on their own.

Because men continually left the railroad and construction continued, the demand for workers persisted until the Gentleman's Agreement in 1907 effectively stopped the immigration of Japanese laborers. Montana's Issei population dwindled to a little over 1,000 by 1920 with few other occupations keeping them there.²¹³ In Idaho and Utah, many shifted into new jobs with an opportunity to make a better income. As Issei moved

²¹³ Department of Commerce, *1940 Census of Population: Volume 2. Characteristics of the Population*, 478, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1943/dec/population-vol-2.html>

from railroad labor into farming or owning their own businesses, it also heightened their need to integrate into the surrounding community. Even though they were constantly aware of their ethnicity, their English-speaking ability enabled the Issei to assimilate into the larger population by conducting business with and working alongside their Caucasian neighbors.

Table 1: Population of Japanese in Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming

United States	1890	1900	1910	1920	1940
Total U.S. population	2,039	24,326	72,157	111,010	126,947
male	1,780	23,314	63,070	72,707	71,967
female	259	985	9,087	38,303	54,980
State	1890	1900	1910	1920	1940
Idaho	0	1,291	1,363	1,550	1,191
male	-	1,291	1,298	1,068	730
female	-	-	70	511	461
Montana	6	2,441	1,585	1,074	508
male	2	2,434	1,559	842	328
female	4	7	26	232	180
Utah	4	417	2,110	2,963	2,210
male	4	406	2,021	2,174	1,263
female	-	11	89	752	947
Wyoming	0	393	1,596	1,194	643
male	-	393	1,549	952	381
female	-	-	47	242	262
Total	10	4,542	6,654	5,701	4,622

Source: Department of Commerce. *Chinese and Japanese in the United States 1910*. Bureau of the Census. Bulletin 127. GPO. 1914, 7-8, Table 4,6,7; 13, Table 24.

<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/03322287%20no121-130ch08.pdf>; 2010; Department of Commerce *1940 Census of Population: Volume 2. Characteristics of the Population*, 14, 398, 478, 698.

<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1943/dec/population-vol-2.html> 1920 and 1940 records include children born in the US.

Integrating into the Community

Although many Issei railroad workers returned to the West Coast, there were some who made Idaho, and the surrounding states, their permanent homes. In 1908 Hashitani and Fujii, along with George Shigeya Takeuchi, ended their gang work, moved

to Emmett, Idaho, and leased an eighty-acre farm. By pooling their resources, they improved their earnings also. They grew fruits and vegetables, selling them around Emmett and eventually expanding to much of southern Idaho, including Idaho City. Fujii, at least, supplemented his income by working for the Oregon Short Line during the winters. By 1920, they had each saved enough money and moved their families to farm independently. As evidence of the difference between the West Coast Issei and those inland, Hashitani relocated to Nyssa, Oregon; Fujii to Nampa, Idaho; and Takeuchi to Cascade, Idaho.²¹⁴ The former partners spread across the fertile valleys of Southern Idaho and Eastern Oregon. As they settled into farming permanently, they also sought to bridge relations with the greater population and assist nearby Issei families.

²¹⁴ Fujii, interview by Alexander, 22; 1920 census.



Picture 7: Henry Katsuji Hashitani and farming partners (Courtesy of University of Montana--Missoula. Mansfield Library). Left to right: George Takeuchi, Henry Fujii, Henry Hashitani

Any area with a larger assemblage of Japanese had a Japanese association. These groups consisted of leaders in the Issei community. The associations, like on the West Coast, were created as an intermediary organization for those in the U.S. to work together and stay connected with the Japanese government. Japanese associations were originally organized under the Japanese government to allow registration of all immigrants, assist those in need, and protect the Japanese national image.²¹⁵ Men such as Kameji Okamura in Pocatello and Henry Fujii in Nampa were leaders of these all-male groups that

²¹⁵ Ichioka, *Issei*, 157-161.

included most of the men in the community.²¹⁶ It was a way they could connect with other Issei when often miles apart. In Idaho at least, Issei also used the groups to reach out to the broader community. Because of the discrimination they faced, these small groups of Issei worked to help each other and newly arrived immigrants. The associations provided interpreters when needed, helped find legal or other services, and even policed within the Japanese community to ensure there was nothing that would give the Japanese a bad name. Issei highly valued family and were taught to do nothing that would bring shame to the family. This idea of family included the Japanese community as a whole. The time for *tabi no haji wa kakisute*, ‘there is no shame in the lands where nobody knows you,’ had passed as the Issei settled into Idaho for good.²¹⁷

With the growing anti-Japanese sentiment came the introduction of Anti-Alien land laws aimed at keeping the Issei from owning land and settling permanently. The Gentlemen’s Agreement failed to put an end to the discrimination Issei faced on the Pacific Coast and Intermountain West. Beginning in California, these laws made their way into the Interior states. The laws, targeted at Japanese specifically, prevented “aliens ineligible for citizenship” from owning land and entering into long-term leases. Anti-Japanese groups, politicians, labor unions, and even granges, pressured state legislatures to develop the laws in an effort to dissuade Issei from settling permanently. With the help of Japanese associations and community, farmers found ways to circumvent the laws. In California, they created corporations to purchase land, used a white agent, or bought land

²¹⁶ Photo of Pocatello Japanese Association with Kameji Okamura, Bannock County Historical Society, Bannock County Images Project, BCHS_2005_26_8.jpg; Fujii, Henshall interview, 12.

²¹⁷ Walz, *Nikkei in the Interior West*, 118-119; Fujii, Henshall interview, 13; Alexander Fedorovich Prasol, *Modern Japan Origins of the Mind: Japanese Traditions and Approaches to Contemporary Life*, (Singapore: World Scientific Pub., 2010), 233.

in their American-born children's names. After California's success in passing the bill, states throughout the West, and even as far as Louisiana and Florida passed similar laws banning Japanese land ownership and long-term leasing. California amended the law in 1920 and 1923 aimed at closing the loopholes Issei used. It is important to remember non-citizen Issei had limited means to fight the laws. Because they were banned from becoming citizens, Issei filed law-suits and sought to work with the legislatures.²¹⁸

In Idaho, the Japanese Association of Western Idaho fought the discriminating laws. The legislature introduced an alien land bill for the first time in 1917 and reintroduced one every two years, as Fujii and his fellow Issei successfully delayed its passage. In 1923, the association proposed a new bill that allowed renewable leases of up to five years. The Idaho law became the most lenient of the western states by allowing longer leases, and was considered a victory by the Issei population.²¹⁹ Fortunately, in Idaho, other members of the community supported the Japanese in opposition to those that sought to exclude Issei. A January 1921 meeting was organized to counter the anti-Japanese legislation and inform Boise citizens of the unscrupulous strategies and fabricated facts used in California to promote passage of the land laws. The speaker, Colonel John P. Irish, Chairman of the American Committee of Justice of California, apprised the audience that the bill before the legislature was "not based nor demanded because of any condition existing in Idaho." The bill arose from invented circumstances in California. Japanese comprised only two percent of California's population, and

²¹⁸ Cherstin Lyon, "Alien land laws" *Densho Encyclopedia*, accessed Feb 8 2019. <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Alien%20land%20laws/>

²¹⁹ Idaho Laws 1923, p. 160; IDAHO CODE (1932) §§ 23.101-23.1r2; Cherstin Lyon, "Alien land laws," *Densho Encyclopedia*. <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Alien%20land%20laws/>

farmed 1.6 percent of the farmland. In comparison, Idaho's Japanese comprised a miniscule four tenths of a percent of the total population.²²⁰

Because they depended on the community economically and dealt regularly with their white neighbors, Issei did not have the luxury to isolate themselves ethnically. Henry Fujii is an excellent example of how Issei in Idaho and the Intermountain West had a different experience than those on the West Coast with much larger Japanese populations. With greater numbers, Issei in California were able to work closely in their farming endeavors, as well as support Japanese businesses without relying on the white community members. Idaho Issei did continue assisting each other especially at harvest time, as Walz described. Those who settled in Idaho, like Fujii, also worked tirelessly “trying to [get] a better understanding between Japanese and Americans. And try to become good citizens of the United States.”²²¹ Fujii joined the Rotary Club as he desired to integrate fully into the community. In addition, Fujii formed the Japanese Onion Grower's Association in 1930. He toiled to help not only his fellow Issei, but all of his neighbors as well.²²²

Kameji Okamura, a well-respected Issei in the Pocatello area, worked hard as he became part of the larger community. His integration into the larger populace is evident through many of his accomplishments. Okamura's truck farming business depended on the entire Pocatello and surrounding towns' patronage. He carved a niche in the produce

²²⁰ Irish, John Powell. 1921. *Shall Japanese-Americans in Idaho be treated with fairness and justice or not Addresses and proceedings at mass meeting citizens of Idaho ... Boise, Idaho ... January 23, 1921*, <http://www.archive.org/details/shalljapaneseame00irisrich>; Department of Commerce, *Population: Idaho, Number of Inhabitants, by Counties and Minor Civil Divisions*. Bureau of the Census. Bulletin. 1920. <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/bulletins/demographics/population-id-number-of-inhabitants.pdf>

²²¹ Fujii, Henshall interview, 13.

²²² Walz, *Nikkei in the Interior West*, 77; Fujii, Henshall interview, 13.

market, as the first farmer, Issei or otherwise, to grow celery in the area, and gained customers with his excellent produce. Because of his industriousness and success, the Pocatello chamber of commerce invited Okamura to become a member, indicating his well-earned respect by many in the community. He understood the importance of assimilating into the larger English-speaking community. Speaking English played an integral role.²²³

After marrying Miyoshi in 1914, Kameji hired a gentleman to teach his wife English and a woman to help her learn to cook American foods. Caucasian friends helped can fruits and vegetables for the family. One neighbor even baked cookies for the children, a skill Miyoshi never learned. Her husband integrated well into the American way of life and the surrounding community, even celebrating American holidays. He brought Miyoshi a rose for Valentine's Day each year. Sadly, Kameji was killed in a truck accident in 1930 leaving Miyoshi to run the family truck farm and raise five children on her own. Miyoshi succeeded in part because her husband helped her assimilate. Many Pocatello youngsters earned their first wages weeding rows of vegetables for Mrs. Okamura. Kameji's integration into the community was manifest as the high school band played in his funeral procession and people came from all around the area to pay their respects. This included men from the Fort Hall Indian Reservation where he leased farmland. Because of Kameji's diligence in assimilating into the community, families and former business associates outside of the Issei population watched over his family even after his death. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the sheriff, who had been a friend of

²²³ Kimi Takechi, phone interview by author, February 12, 2015; Paul Okamura, Jr. Personal Collection.

Kameji's came to check on Miyoshi and her family. He told her to notify him if she had any trouble from her neighbors.²²⁴

As with others in Idaho and the Intermountain States, Avery roundhouse workers and their families integrated into the community more fully than those on the West Coast. On the West Coast, for example, Japanese community leaders encouraged assimilation by adopting and observing American holidays instead of Japanese celebrations.²²⁵ By inviting all the citizens of the small town to join them in celebrating the Emperor's birthday each year, they encouraged their neighbors to get to know them not only as foreign workers but as men and women who wanted to be a part of the community. Their celebration influenced Avery's community significantly more than any similar cultural celebrations could have in California, simply because a much greater percentage of the Avery community participated in the event. Issei wives worked as cooks in town and also helped their families to assimilate. In addition, after Issei were asked to leave the West Coast voluntarily, a few relocated to Avery, no doubt due to connections with family or friends already living there. It is important to note that historians focus on the positive view of Japanese in their town without mentioning the shanties along the railroad line where Issei lived. The white population did not allow integration into the homes, except to hire Issei wives as cooks or housekeepers. Issei in Idaho not only wanted to integrate into their host communities, they also introduced their neighbors and co-workers to Japanese culture. By so doing, Issei built bridges of understanding in both directions. Issei not only ventured to the edge of their universe, their efforts shrunk the cosmos.²²⁶

²²⁴ Paul Okamura, Jr. Personal Collection, Kameji and Miyoshi Okamura, family papers; Kimi Takechi, phone interview by author.

²²⁵ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 186.

²²⁶ Crowell, and Asleson, *Up the Swiftwater*, 88, 91.

At the beginning of World War II, Issei railroad worker numbers had dwindled from almost eight thousand in 1910, to less than one hundred throughout the Intermountain area. A significant decrease when compared to those working for the railroads in 1905. The few remaining climbed from section gang labor to working in roundhouses or other better-paying railroad jobs. With the bombing of Pearl Harbor, most Issei employed by the railroads in any position lost their jobs, even in Idaho and Utah. The Union Pacific and others cited national safety as the reason for their termination. Mr. Jûsaborô of Cheyenne, Wyoming was one of the few not fired. He worked for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincey Railroad as opposed to those working for the Union Pacific and Northern Pacific. Some of these men had been employed by the same company for over twenty years.²²⁷

Conclusion

Pondering his life thus far as he stood at the brink of a new year in the frigid Montana winter, twenty-two-year-old Henry Hashitani found beauty and hope: The majesty of the sun on the snow-covered Rocky Mountains humbled him. He stood in awe of a 226-foot-high bridge he viewed as “a wonder of human civilization, [and] the manifestation of American wealth!” A sober and studious young man, Hashitani felt out of place even on a gang of fellow countrymen who were all “3,000 miles from home.” “No friend to talk to, no food to really enjoy, hard labor in the snow day after day—all of this for what?” he questioned. “Money?” Hashitani instead expressed his innermost hopes for bettering himself; “No. I am trying to achieve satisfaction, confidence, peace of mind,[-] attributes which must come from within.” Hashitani renewed his goal of

²²⁷ Hickman, “Japanese Railroad Workers in Wyoming,” 62-65; Jûsaborô, interview, 1-2.

learning English. And, although he expressed his feelings of homesickness at times, Hashitani never spoke of earning money to return to Japan. Instead, he recorded, “I must live this way so I can earn enough money to move on.” Hashitani conveyed the deep-rooted values of his upbringing and education in his goal to “persevere through everyday hardship, and face the difficult future with more courage and integrity,” all while working on some of the most difficult tracks of the Northern Pacific Railroad.²²⁸

Through an analysis of Hashitani’s diary and other sources, it is clear that railroads played a key role in introducing Issei into Idaho and the Intermountain West. Without railroad jobs, the population of Issei would have been greatly reduced. In addition, because of the smaller population in the interior states, influenced by railroad lines, the Issei who settled in Idaho and the larger Intermountain West had a different experience than those who lived in the West Coast states. Intermountain Issei interacted with the greater community and adapted to American culture as seen through the experiences of Henry Hashitani, Henry Fujii, Kameji Okamura, and Ben Yamamoto, who settled in Idaho after initially working for the railroad. Instead of keeping a tight-knit ethnic enclave as many did in California and the other West Coast states, they worked and assimilated into the larger population. Issei benefited from their invisible baggage which included Japanese values of perseverance, hard work, the concept of *shikata ga nai*, ‘it cannot be helped,’ and the self-help philosophy, engendered during their education in Meiji Japan. These core beliefs gave them the fortitude to stay in the Intermountain West even with such a small Issei population. As asserted, the Japanese in the Intermountain West largely differed from those on the West Coast because they did

²²⁸ *Hashitani Diaries*, translation, 1987, 1, 3, 4.

not think about going back to Japan.²²⁹ A portion of Issei who ventured into the interior, including Henry Hashitani, were seeking, not just a temporary escapade, but a fresh start. They carved out a new life, viewing themselves as pioneers, just as the Caucasian settlers; and they truly were. The Intermountain Issei applied the Japanese spirit of adapting and conforming as they settled into their new homes at the edge of the universe.

²²⁹ Koyama, Huntley, Fujii, Abe, Kawai, Shinohara, interview, 46.

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