

# **Japanese-American Legacies in the White River Valley**

Historic Context Statement and Inventory

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## Scope of Work

This project is a survey and inventory of historic resources associated with Japanese and Japanese-American settlement in the White River Valley<sup>1</sup> prior to World War II. It was undertaken by Mildred T. Andrews, Cultural Resource Specialist, who entered into a consultant agreement with the King County Office of Cultural Resources.

The project area was defined by staff of the King County Landmarks and Heritage Program, as "the bottomlands and terraces of the lower Green River Valley from the north boundary of Kent south to the 218th Avenue SE bridge and including the White River bottomlands within King County if relevant." In light of budget and time constraints, the consultant was instructed to focus primarily on extant structures in unincorporated King County and in the City of Auburn, which has an Interlocal Agreement with the King County Landmarks and Heritage Commission. The consultant conducted more limited field surveys in the cities of Kent, Algona, and Pacific with the understanding that additional investigation of those areas could be conducted at a future date.

The consultant was responsible for preparing and coordinating the following products and professional services:

- a summary historic context statement identifying significant themes, events, individuals, land use, property types, and extant properties, associated with Japanese-Americans in the White River Valley;
- limited field investigations of extant properties in the survey area, identifying those associated with Japanese-Americans prior to 1942;
- eleven Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) Inventory Forms for eleven sites, identified in the survey and prioritized in cooperation with King County Landmarks and Heritage Program staff;
- an addendum to King County's Historic Resource Inventory of Thomas School;
- a matrix, included in the *Historic Context Statement*, summarizing the eleven inventoried sites and Thomas School;
- a matrix, included in the *Historic Context Statement*, summarizing other previously inventoried and newly identified sites;
- a Master Map of inventoried properties and other identified sites;
- a Master Index, including parcel numbers, addresses, and construction dates of all inventoried sites;
- recommendations, regarding future directions for research, dissemination of information, and management of extant cultural resources.

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<sup>1</sup>For centuries, melting mountain snows tumbled into the raging White River during the spring, following a divided course toward the Duwamish River near Seattle and the Puyallup River near Tacoma. In 1906, a massive log jam near Auburn blocked the White River's northward fork, diverting the full flow southward into the Puyallup River. The Green River, which had previously joined the White River northeast of Auburn, continues to flow through the lowlands still known as the White River Valley.

### **Project Methodology**

The consultant utilized field investigations, archival materials, community histories, newspapers, the King County Historic Resources Inventory, Census records, King County Assessors' records (both historic and contemporary), Kroll maps, scholarly studies, and oral history interviews with Nisei (second generation) and Sansei (third generation) members of Japanese-American families, who lived in the Auburn area prior to World War II.

Mae Iseri Yamada, a Nisei and life-long resident of the valley, accompanied the consultant on at least three driving tours to identify patterns of Japanese-American settlement in the valley and to discuss complex patterns of cultural retention, assimilation, social and economic mobility, nativism, discrimination, and the pre- and post-World War II Japanese-American community. The consultant made additional on-site visitations to talk with other Japanese-Americans associated with specific properties. Another noteworthy source was historian Stan Flewelling who shared information and insights, including a draft of his forthcoming publication, *Japanese Americans in the White River Valley*. Staff members of the King County Landmarks and Heritage Program accompanied the consultant on site visitations to assess the historical and physical integrity of extant structures and to assist with physical descriptions, interpretations and recommendations.

### **Early History and Development of the White River Valley**

The first inhabitants of the once densely forested valley were Native Americans, including the White (Stokh) and Green (Skopkh) River bands. Their winter villages on the river banks featured "longhouses," constructed of cedar plank and peeled bark. In warmer seasons, they traversed the waterways to the mountains and to ocean beaches, where they gathered and dried clams. They burned off areas of forest so that the sun could reach the rich alluvial soil to bring forth meadows, where women dug edible roots and picked berries, while men hunted wild game. At higher elevations, the burned-off clearings were rich in huckleberries. Abundant salmon runs provided a major source of food. On treks to visit relatives east of the Cascades, tribal members carried seashell necklaces, dried clams and other commodities, sometimes going as far as the Rocky Mountains to trade for buffalo robes. Marriages were usually arranged by parents for an agreed upon exchange of goods.

In 1850, Congress enacted the Donation Land Claims Act for the Oregon Territory and then amended it in 1853, so that single men who were American citizens could claim 160 acres of free land and married couples could receive 320 acres. To hold their claim, homesteaders had to "prove up" (make improvements on their property for at least four years). The earliest homesteaders in the White River Valley claimed acreage that had been burned off by the indigenous people. They built rude log cabins for the first winter, then hired friendly Native Americans to help them with the arduous tasks of felling trees, clearing dense underbrush, planting crops, and transporting produce to Seattle and Tacoma by canoe.

Within a short time, the ancient Native lifestyle was changed forever. On his arrival from the nation's capitol, Washington Territory's first governor, Isaac Stevens, negotiated unfathomable treaties that required Native people to send their children to Indian Boarding Schools and move to reservations to make room for settlers and transcontinental railroads.

Unable to accept an end to their traditional lifestyle, the Yakamas and Klickitats began fighting back with some of their relatives extending the hostilities into the White River Valley. On October 28, 1855, Native men attacked isolated settlers in their homes, killing seven adults, along with small children. Risking his own life, a friendly Native rescued three small children whose parents were killed and brought them to safety in Seattle.

Lieutenant William A. Slaughter led his troops from Fort Steilacoom into the valley to quell the uprising. On the evening of December 4 when they made camp near present-day Auburn, he and another officer conferred in the open doorway of an abandoned cabin. Hostile warriors sneaked up and fired a fatal bullet that killed the lieutenant immediately. By the spring of 1856, the King County wars and the bloodshed suffered by both sides came to an end. Although local Native people lost most of their ancestral lands, they gained the Muckleshoot Reservation, which was not included in the original allotments.<sup>2</sup>

For a time, the hostilities brought settlement to a halt. The new federal Homestead Act of 1862 enticed a second wave of pioneers who could claim 160 acres of free land. The first settlers founded a town, naming it in memory of Slaughter, but concerned citizens began to have second thoughts when the station master directed visitors to the local hostelry, called the Slaughter House. In 1893, they changed the name to Auburn.

In the mid 1870s, local homesteaders purchased hop plants from Ezra Meeker in Puyallup, launching a major, highly profitable industry. The city of Kent derived its name from the brewery center in England, where the locally-grown crop was in demand. The "hop craze" flourished for almost two decades, attracting both permanent residents and hundreds of seasonal workers, including Chinese, the first Japanese, and Native Americans who came from as far away as Canada for the festive harvest. When a hop louse infested the crop and the world commodity price plummeted, many farmers turned to dairying. Local farmers also grew and marketed berries and vegetables.

In the late 19th century, the White River Valley entered the railroad era. Western railroad bosses, like their counterparts in the mining and timber industries, exploited immigrants, most notably Chinese, who labored at bedrock wages often under appalling conditions to build the network of transcontinental and local lines that soon crisscrossed and transformed the valley.

In California and later in the Northwest, increasing Euro-American populations in search of opportunities began to view the hard-working Chinese as competition. In response to

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<sup>2</sup>Josie Emmons Vine, *Auburn: a Look Down Main Street* (City of Auburn, 1990), 1-18, 35.

their lobbying efforts, Congress enacted the Naturalization Act of 1870, followed by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The first limited naturalization to "white persons or persons of African descent," rendering Chinese (and ultimately successive groups of Asian immigrants) ineligible for American citizenship. The second was the first significant impediment to free immigration in American history, making working-class Chinese for a time the only people in the world to whom the door to the United States was officially closed.<sup>3</sup>

In 1899 when Euro-Americans drafted the Washington State Constitution, they included a discriminatory statute that prohibited aliens from owning land, unless they declared their intent to become citizens -- an option that according to the federal Naturalization Act was not open to Asians. On a socio-political scale, Euro-American supremacy was entrenched. The earlier exploitation of Native Americans was a pattern, fueled by economics, that had repeated itself against the Chinese, and that would follow with people of Japanese and later Filipino descent.

### **Patterns of Japanese Immigration and Settlement**

Unlike China, Japan did not have a long emigrant tradition. In the 1880s when it began to revise its long-standing tradition of isolationism, labor contractors brought some thirty thousand Japanese to Hawaii to work on plantations. Contractors on the American West Coast began recruiting young Japanese men to replace aging Chinese laborers on railroad and lumber crews and in domestic and agricultural work. Typically, their rate of pay was one dollar for ten hours of work. By the time that significant numbers of Japanese began immigrating to the United States, Japan was a rising imperial power in Asia, claiming victorious invasions of China and Russia.

Japanese gradually gained a presence in the White River Valley, where they lived in camps with bosses sending them out in work gangs. In June 1893 when 96 Japanese and 142 Chinese disembarked from a ship in Tacoma, the *Daily Ledger* was quick to offer comparisons, regarding cultural assimilation: "Polite fellows are these Japs . . . all neat and genteel looking . . . minus the "smell" so noticeable among the Chinese. . . . The Japanese came dressed in American costumes throughout, down to their very shoes. . . . They try to adopt American ways. . . . The Chinese, however, are all dressed in their quaint garb and are as completely Chinese in America as they are in China."

Some of the Japanese who worked on farms entered into independent contracts with farmers during the off season to clear land. They dynamited or dug up giant stumps, tore out tangles of branches and brambles, and dug drainage ditches, sometimes negotiating payment in the form of free use of the land for the first three or four years of their lease.

The economic "Panic of 1893" prompted the inevitable backlash of racism and nativism. In a June 1 editorial entitled "Stop the Japs," the *White River Journal* expounded, "the sight [of them] is distasteful to the working men of this region." Despite the fact that

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<sup>3</sup>For further information, see Roger Daniels, *Coming to America* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1990), 239-250.

Japanese laborers did work that nobody else would do, the writer noted that between four and five hundred of them had jobs, meaning that "Between four and five hundred whites are thus deprived of employment." The valley's first anti-Japanese organization met to elect officers and launch a campaign to urge farmers "to discharge their Japanese labor." As the depression waned, so did the public outburst of xenophobia.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike other foreign governments, the Japanese government was involved in the lives of its emigres, helping them to establish well-organized Japanese Associations in their local communities and to devise strategies to subvert discrimination. The local association built its own hall, which served as a community center in southwest Auburn.<sup>5</sup> As a rising imperial power, Japan was determined to gain prestige in the West. One of its requirements until 1915 was for bachelors to rise above the level of common laborer before they could send for a wife. Businessmen, including men who leased farms, met the qualifications.

The 1900 U.S. Census counted a White River Valley Japanese population of two women and 116 men, a quarter of whom were married. Most of them planned to work for a few years, save their money, and return to Japan with the fruits of their labor.<sup>6</sup> But as they negotiated lease or rental agreements of usually small acreages, the prospect of having their own business enticed them to stay and when they could afford to do so, married men sent for their wives and families.

In a culture where arranged marriages were the norm, bachelors sent photos of themselves and information about their life in America, asking friends or relatives in Japan to find them a suitable bride. According to the "picture-" or "proxy bride" tradition, the man in turn received the woman's photograph and a letter of introduction. Following a wedding ceremony in Japan with the groom in absentia, the young woman would disembark from her homeland with a one-way ticket and the photograph in hand. Occasionally, a man deceived his bride by sending the wrong picture or by claiming to be wealthy when he was poor, but in many cases a good marriage was the result. After a second wedding ceremony on the day of the woman's arrival at an American port, the couple's first stop was a clothing store. Putting away their kimonos, the women adopted western dress, then assumed their new roles as wives, mothers, and workers in family businesses and the community.

Some of the first men to lease farms in the White River Valley were Matajiro Sakagami, Tejiro Otsuji, Zentaro Arima, and Shinya Kosai. Historian Stan Flewelling reports that Kosai sent for his wife and three sons between 1902 and 1908, booking passage as funds became available. (Table B, number 9.) Mrs. Suma Kosai arrived in 1905, accompanied

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<sup>4</sup>Quotations are from Stan Flewelling, *Japanese in the White River Valley* (Unpublished draft, White River Valley Museum, 1996).

<sup>5</sup>Koji Norikane. *A Pictorial Album of the History of Japanese of the White River Valley* (White River Valley Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, 1986) 9.

<sup>6</sup>Frank Shotaro Miyamoto, *Solidarity Among the Japanese in Seattle* (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Washington, 1938).

by her friend Sen Natsuhara, a picture bride, who met and married Chiyokichi Natsuhara before disembarking from the ship in Seattle and moving with him to the small cabin on his White River Valley farm.<sup>7</sup> (Table B, numbers 5 and 6.)

With women and families, the Japanese communities put down roots. Along with the Japanese Associations, they organized Buddhist and Christian churches. While gaining an economic foothold, they placed a high priority on education, sending their children to school. In the White River Valley, Shizuichi ("James") Higashida was a pacesetter. At age 19 while working as a laborer on the Ham farm, he enrolled in First Grade at Thomas Grade School, so that he could learn English. He continued his education, eventually becoming a respected Seattle dentist. (Table B, Number 12)

While many of the Japanese worked in urban occupations, by the turn of the century their major economic focus was agricultural. In *Coming to America*, Roger Daniels observes that they were the only sizable ethnic group to have such a concentration. Beginning in the 1890s, most of those who arrived in Washington state were from the southern prefectures of Japan, which were predominantly farmlands.

### **The Gentleman's Agreement**

Fueled by organized labor, the anti-Japanese movement escalated with the dawning of the twentieth century, most notably in California where new discriminatory legislation against Asians was enacted. The Japanese Press, which had previously attributed the difficulties to labor competition, reinterpreted the source as blatant racism. President Theodore Roosevelt lashed out against Californians, who were already laying the groundwork for Congressional legislation. Newspapers in Kent and Auburn ran scathing editorials, vehemently opposing the president's position that Japanese should be allowed to become citizens. Realizing that Japan had been insulted and fearing its military might, Roosevelt circumvented legislation akin to the Chinese Exclusion Act by negotiating a Gentleman's Agreement with Japan in 1907-1908.

In a series of discussions, the Japanese government took unprecedented steps toward mitigation, agreeing that it would no longer issue passports to laborers. Parents, wives (including picture brides), and children of "settled agriculturalists" (farmers) and businessmen, who had already immigrated to the U.S., could continue to emigrate. Historian Roger Daniels says, "The Gentleman's Agreement forced Japanese immigration into an essentially female mode: Between its adoption and its abrogation by Congress in 1924, some twenty thousand adult Japanese women migrated to the United States." Most were newly married women, who came as "picture brides." While the gender ratio ensured the growth of families, men were typically a decade older than their wives.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>See Sen Natsuhara's story in Kasuo Ito, *Issei: a History of Japanese Immigrants in North America*. Translated by Shinichiro Nakamura and Jean S. Gerard (Seattle: Japanese Community Service, 1973), 192-194.

<sup>8</sup>See Daniels, 250-257.

According to the 1910 U.S. Census, there were 432 residents of Japanese descent in the White River Valley, 222 of whom were living in families, including all of the 71 women. The record lists 77 children, nine of whom had emigrated from Japan. Unlike their parents, the other 68 children were American-born and as such were citizens of the United States. The Census lists 326 farms in Washington State that were owned or leased by people of Japanese descent, a number that more than doubled within the next ten years. King County (notably the White River Valley) comprised approximately 70% of all Japanese farming in the state.<sup>9</sup>

## **Community Organizations**

### *Kenjinkai*

Some of the earliest organizations in Japanese communities were *kenjinkai* -- *kai* (organizations), formed by *jin* (people), from the same *kai* (county). One of the largest in the White River Valley was the *Hiroshima Kenjinkai*, founded in 1901 by farmers who came from the Hiroshima Prefecture in the southern part of Japan. As families and extended families, members shared ancient cultural traditions and spoke the same dialect. Through their *kenjinkai*, they socialized and helped each other to become established in small businesses and on farms.<sup>10</sup>

### *Buddhist and Christian Churches/Japanese Language Schools*

Following establishment of the Northwest's first Buddhist church in Seattle in 1901, the minister conducted a circuit ministry, meeting in homes in the White River Valley. In 1912, the Rev. Kozen Morita founded the *Shirakawa Bukkyokai* (White River Buddhist Church), which was the second Buddhist congregation in King County. The group of about 100 members rented the school building in Thomas for Sunday evening services. Within a year, they organized a *Fujinkai* (Women's Organization). The church sponsored a Japanese Language School, attended by Nisei (second generation) children who, following the regular school day, reconvened to learn the language and culture of their forebears.

In 1917, the congregation, which had grown to more than 300, purchased six acres in Christopher. They also purchased the original two-room Pialschie (earlier name of Thomas) Schoolhouse and moved it to a lot on their property at 37th NW just west of the Northern Pacific Railroad tracks on the north side of the street, where one side served as a church and the other as the language school. In subsequent years, the church constructed several additions to the building, which doubled as a community center for Japanese Americans throughout the valley. In 1929, the Japanese Language School moved into the Yank Hotel building near Thomas School, where enrollment reached as high as 150. (Table A, Number 12 / King Co. HRI #921)

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<sup>9</sup>See Flewelling draft for further details.

<sup>10</sup>ibid.

Other Buddhist and Japanese Christian congregations throughout the valley founded language schools, which Nisei children within commuting distance were expected to attend. An Issei parent, Miyoko Tsujikawa of Auburn explained:

I want them to study Japanese language and understand Japanese culture and history, then transmit to other Americans the good points of Japan. I also want them to respect their parents and their seniors. Further, I want them to always feel pride in being Japanese-Americans, who have inherited blood inferior to none.<sup>11</sup>

One of the earliest purchases of the Issei community (exact date unknown) was the Pioneer Cemetery, whose original owner was the Faucett family. The Japanese cared for the graves of white pioneers, while also setting aside two long rows of graves for their own. They erected stone markers, inscribed in Japanese by the local Buddhist priest, and maintained the cemetery until their 1942 forced evacuation from the community.<sup>12</sup> (Table B, Number 2)

While the local papers continued their vitriolic anti-Japanese crusade, some of the Christian congregations in the White River Valley began to extend the hand of fellowship. One was St. James Episcopal Church in Kent, where the Rev. Rodney J. Arney started to work among the Japanese with the establishment of St. Paul's Mission at Taylor just north of Kent on West Valley Highway. J.D. Cameron and "Paul" Shigaya, a converted Christian, were two of the leaders who offered classes and services and helped establish a Japanese Language School.<sup>13</sup> The Community Christian Church on NE 30th in Christopher grew from the Union Sunday School in Thomas, which was organized by both Caucasians and Japanese.

## **Dairies**

In the wake of the hop craze, many White River Valley farmers turned to dairying -- an industry that gained momentum in 1899 when E.B. Stuart founded the Pacific Coast Condensed Milk Company in Kent, followed four years later by the Borden Company's establishment of a condensery in Auburn. Unfamiliar with this type of farming, Japanese learned the skills as employees of other farmers, then began establishing their own dairies in about 1909.

A University of Washington student, John Nishinoiri gave insight into the cooperative spirit that was crucial to the survival and success of the local Japanese agricultural community:

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<sup>11</sup>Information about Buddhists is from Flewelling draft, which includes the quote from Ito, p.589.

<sup>12</sup>Norikane, 58. During and after the war, the cemetery fell into disrepair and was vandalized. The City of Auburn later assumed ownership and maintains the grounds. Maintenance of tombstones and grave markers remain the responsibility of family members.

<sup>13</sup>See Norikane for further information and photos of churches and congregations, 34-40.

The first Japanese worked to gain experience, then two or three would pool their resources to rent a pasture and start an independent dairy. They worked as partners with some hiring out for other income until each of them had his own dairy. In the case of father and son, they remained together.

Japanese-operated dairies in the White River Valley rose from 13 in 1910 to almost 80 within the decade. In 1922, Japanese dairy farmers supplied 50% of Seattle's milk.<sup>14</sup>

In an atypical spirit of cooperation, both Japanese- and Euro-American farmers marketed their dairy products through the Seattle Milk Shippers' Association (a forerunner of Darigold). The founders--one of whom was pioneer dairyman Gentaro Ikeda of Orillia--established their cooperative organization to control prices on behalf of farmer members.

The success of Japanese dairymen fanned the flame of anti-Japanese discrimination with Caucasian employees in the Bordon and Carnation plants complaining about Japanese co-workers, who were taking jobs from white people. To ameliorate the situation, Japanese dairymen organized their own White River Creamery Company in Kent, which initially processed 450 gallons of milk, along with cheese and butter, for shipment to Seattle and Spokane. The grand opening in November 1916 featured speeches by Kent's past and present mayors, one of whom served as a trustee of the new company. Tsuruya Tamaki, acting Japanese Consul in Seattle, appealed for racial harmony, while expressing guarded optimism regarding assimilation and relations between his homeland and the United States.

Dairymen prospered, rallying to unprecedented demand during World War I. However, the return to a peacetime economy drove markets for all kinds of produce into a tailspin. New anti-Japanese legislation created further complications, forcing most of the Japanese dairy farmers out of business. By 1925, only 22 Japanese dairies remained, supplying only 13% of Seattle's milk supply.<sup>15</sup>

### **Alien Land Laws**

Despite the fact that the United States and Japan had been allies during World War I, the armistice unleashed a torrent of anti-Japanese sentiment. At the forefront was the new American Legion, a grassroots organization with chapters in small towns throughout the country that spearheaded a nativist campaign to curb Japanese immigration. Siding with them were the Mutual Business Club (an organization of Seattle businessmen), the Washington State Veterans' Welfare Commission, the Anti-Japanese League of Seattle, and the Auburn Minute Women.

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<sup>14</sup>John Isao Nishinoiri, *Japanese Farms in Washington*. (Unpublished thesis, University of Washington, 1925).

<sup>15</sup>Flewelling draft. See also: Historic American Buildings Survey No. WA-211: Susan Boyle, *The Kosai Farm Site* (National Park Service, 1995).

An outspoken proponent of restrictions on immigration, U.S. Congressman Albert Johnson of Hoquiam became chairman of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization in 1919. Johnson and members of his committee held hearings in California and in Washington state on what the national press called "The Japanese Dilemma." More than 50 Pacific Northwest citizens spoke out on both sides: Washington State Governor Louis Hart and Miller Freeman, the leading developer of Bellevue, led the anti-Japanese coalition; pro-Japanese advocates included Judge Thomas Burke, the Rev. Dr. Mark A. Matthews of Seattle's First Presbyterian Church, Nisei high school students such as George Sakamoto, and Sam Hill who conceived and paid for the Peace Arch at Blaine.

The anti-Japanese coalition argued that Japanese worked for low wages, thereby undermining accepted standards of American workers. They trumpeted the racist claim that immigrant Japanese were unassimilable in American culture, since many spoke only Japanese and were members of Buddhist or Japanese Christian churches and their own social clubs.

When the Rev. U.G. Murphy, a circuit minister employed by the American Bible Society in Seattle, went to Washington D.C., he testified before Johnson's committee, rebuffing anti-Japanese arguments with examples from the White River Valley. Historian Stan Flewelling says:

[Murphy] showed pictures of the Sunday School at Thomas, the White River Gardens Cooperative, where four families worked 40 acres, the Leonard Store in Thomas where Mat Iseri had helped the proprietor build a business of \$250,000 a year with 200 Japanese families. He then presented a photo of the Thomas School, where "five years ago the school total attendance was about 33, just half-and-half -- half Japanese and half white. Now there is 105, and the proportion holds, half-and-half."

The valley's recent wave of anti-Japanese hostility had unleashed a crime wave with robberies of several small businesses and barn burnings, attributed to arson, that in some cases claimed entire dairy herds. But when asked about racial tension in the community, Murphy downplayed it with the reply, "Generally speaking, Japanese have responded to the American appeal as all other aliens have, and there is a continual increase in their standard of living." He ended with a resolution from the Seattle Ministerial Union:

*Resolved*, That we wish to urge upon Congress the necessity of amending the naturalization laws so as to provide for the naturalization of all aliens who qualify on equal footing.<sup>16</sup>

While Johnson's committee returned to the other Washington, anti-Asian coalitions in Washington State launched a campaign to emulate California's stringent Alien Land Act

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<sup>16</sup>ibid. Flewelling draft.

of 1913. In 1921, the Washington State Legislature enacted a law prohibiting non-citizen aliens from sharecropping, leasing or renting land. The law wrecked considerable hardship on Japanese-Americans, forcing several to leave established farms.

During the brief period between enactment and enforcement, many Japanese farmers sought legal loopholes. Some purchased land in the name of their American-born minor children, appointed a trusted citizen as guardian and trustee, and worked under the trustee's legal supervision as their children's employees. Others renewed their leases assuming that they would be valid until expiration. Still others revised their agreements with cooperative landowners, so that they were reclassified as managers of the property, rather than renters. In 1923, the legislature enacted an amendment to the Alien Land Law to restrict American landowners from helping Japanese maintain their farms and to prevent Japanese from purchasing land for their minor, American-born children.

Still, many American landowners preferred to rent to Japanese who paid high rent and also took good care of the property. Some landowners and Japanese appealed to the courts for injunctions on grounds that the law was unconstitutional and in violation of the American-Japanese treaty. It was a risky stance that portended confiscation of the property by the state.<sup>17</sup> In King County several legal battles followed with judgements rendered in favor of both plaintiffs and defendants.

In the State vs. Kosai, the judge found no evidence of fraud and granted an acquittal. Kiichiro and Sumi Kosai had purchased several tracts of land (now the site of the Evergreen Race Track) in the name of their minor son, Frank, and had appointed American guardians until he came of age. Legally, the parents had become Frank's employees, who worked under supervision of his guardians. (Table B, number 9.)

In the State vs. White River Garden, Shoichiro Katsuno was convicted of fraud for putting his majority shares in the name of his Nisei daughter, for whom citizen guardians had been appointed. Following the conviction, the entire 40 acres escheated to the state. When members of the cooperative appealed their case to the State Supreme Court, it upheld the verdict. The Katsunos and the two Hirabayashi families remained on the property as employees, thanks to a friend who subsequently leased it from the state. (Table A, numbers 1-5.)

While the Alien Land Laws posed discouraging and sometimes insurmountable obstacles, the Japanese farming community survived. Census records indicate that 25,320 acres and 699 farms, operated by Japanese in 1920, decreased to 7,030 acres and 246 farms in 1925. While the records are revealing, they are probably somewhat inaccurate, since both Japanese and Caucasians manipulated agreements to avoid prosecution for illegal tenancies.<sup>18</sup> As the Nisei came of age, they purchased property. As a result, Japanese

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<sup>17</sup>Nishinoiri, 63-5.

<sup>18</sup>ibid. 13.

ownership and management of farmlands increased during the 1920s and 1930s, while tenancy (the only option for most of the Issei) showed a corresponding decrease.<sup>19</sup>

In 1924, Representative Albert Johnson played his trump card for nativism when he introduced a bill to set quotas based on 1890 immigration statistics and to prohibit further immigration of "aliens ineligible for citizenship" -- notably Asians. The Immigration Act of 1924 abrogated the Gentleman's Agreement of 1907 and brought an end to Japan's official efforts to promote acculturational strategies. A rising military and world power, Japan took umbrage, as the American gate slammed shut in the face of its citizens. Historians generally concur that the insult perpetrated diplomatic erosion between the two countries and ultimately served as a catalyst for the bombing of Pearl Harbor and World War II.

### **For the Sake of the Children**

Despite severe social and political setbacks, many of the Issei were here to stay and invested their hopes for the future in their children. They placed a high value on education, encouraging them to do well in school. After public school, Issei parents required their children to go to Japanese Language School and often to study classical Japanese dance, Kabuki theater, or karate. Unlike many of their Caucasian classmates, they were also expected to do their part in the family business.

By the late 1920s, almost two-thirds of the children at Thomas School were of Japanese descent. Among the Issei parents was Matahichi "Mat" Iseri, who spoke English. So that non-English-speaking parents could participate in school matters, he organized a Japanese PTA, then served as translator to enable it and the English-speaking PTA to work together. He later learned that he was the first male in the state to serve as a PTA president. The Thomas PTA organized a hot lunch program with members volunteering to help in the school kitchen. Local farmers donated much of the produce for the three-cent lunches.<sup>20</sup> (Table A, Number 12)

In 1929, the Auburn Japanese Association presented a gift of three sets of ornamental lamps to the Auburn Public Schools in appreciation for what the schools were doing for their children. The globes atop bronze columns were surmounted by eagles and were installed at the entrances of the grade school, the junior high, and the high school. Featured speakers at the dedication ceremony and banquet included the host: H.K. Fukuhara, a leading local citizen; Japanese Counsel S. Okamoto from Seattle; and K. Yamada from the local Japanese Association, who spoke in Japanese. Other speakers represented the Chamber of Commerce, the Kiwanis Club, the Auburn Women's Club, and the American Legion. School Superintendent C.E. Beach spoke of the high standards of Japanese-American students and of the support of their Issei parents. He likened the lamps to the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor, noting that each was a gift to

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<sup>19</sup>John Adrian Rademaker, *The Ecological Position of the Japanese Farmers in the State of Washington*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Washington, 1939), 55.

<sup>20</sup>Author Interview with Mae Iseri Yamada, 1993. See also: Mildred Tanner Andrews, *The Auburn School District, the First 100 Years* (Auburn School District, 1996).

demonstrate the friendship of foreign citizens to the American people. The evening program featured the high school orchestra, a salute to the American flag, the Japanese orchestra playing Japan's national anthem, classic Japanese dance, and a jiu-jitsu demonstration.<sup>21</sup> (Table A, Number 9)

In a 1995 group discussion, some Nisei alumni of Auburn High shared recollections. Frank Natsuhara said, "There were lots of kids that went to college and were Phi Beta Kappa and couldn't get a job, because nobody would hire them. . . . Boeing wouldn't hire them -- all the big corporations -- they wouldn't hire Japanese." Tom Hikida spoke of graduates from the University of Washington: "The joke was . . . 'What stall are you going to be working at?' meaning that the only job college graduates could get was at the Pike Street Market." Mae Iseri Yamada talked of graduates who eventually gained prominence and success: ". . . They were lucky that their parents had enough insight to give them that education so that, when the opportunity did present itself, they were able to get that job."<sup>22</sup>

### **Cultural Retention and Assimilation**

In 1930, local Nisei gathered for the organizational meeting of the White River Valley Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, which quickly grew to a membership of more than 350. Under its aegis, they formed the Valley Civic League. The motto of the national organization was "Security Through Unity." While preserving their cultural heritage, the members worked to establish themselves as U.S. citizens with equal rights and responsibilities that were denied their parents' generation.<sup>23</sup>

Japanese organizations and businesses participated actively in community celebrations, such as the Auburn Days Parade and the Kent Lettuce Festival, where they entered prize-winning floats. Born in the depths of the Great Depression, the annual Lettuce Festival attracted more than 25,000 people to downtown Kent, the self-proclaimed "Lettuce Capital of the World." In what is now Kaibara Park (named in honor of Kent's Sister City in Japan), festival goers consumed "the world's largest salad," made of local lettuce and Nalley's Mayonnaise. Royalty included equal numbers of young Caucasian and Nisei women, the former dressed in formal gowns and the latter in kimonos. When Thelma Saito, daughter of the owners of the White River Packing Company (a produce shipping business), was crowned queen, she wore a formal gown. (Table B, number 15)

Japanese-American families throughout the valley built *furobas* (bathhouses) adjacent to their homes. The small sheds housed a wooden tub with a metal bottom, covered by wood slats, that was heated from underneath by fire. They were a direct cultural link to Japan, where the tub is a revered feature in houses, hotels, and on farms. Mary Hori Nakamura explained, "We would wash ourselves outside the tub and rinse ourselves off

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<sup>21</sup>*Auburn Globe Republican* (Nov. 28, 1929)

<sup>22</sup>World War II Focus Group of Japanese-Americans from the Auburn Area. Oral History Interview Conducted by Stan Flewelling and Patricia Cosgrove (Auburn: white River Valley Museum, 1995)

<sup>23</sup>Norikane, 50.

and then get in the tub to soak. The whole family took baths every night. . . ." Typically, people sponge bathed to cleanse their bodies, then entered the bath, a few at a time, to socialize and relax. Mae Yamada recalls that when her father hired Japanese seasonal workers on the farm, he built them a *furo* (tub) under a tent. Larger *furobas* or *ofuros* (an honorific term for more elegant public bathhouses) were important social centers for Japanese in logging and mining towns and in Japantowns in cities.<sup>24</sup> (Table B, number eight.)

During the 1920s and 1930s, the community turned out for fall and winter performances of *Odori* (Japanese dancing) and *Shibai* (classical plays), staged at the Kadoyama Hall (a renovated barn that has been torn down) and the Odd Fellows Hall (Table B, number 18) in Kent. Performers were local Issei and Nisei and their teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Sentaro Tsubota and Mr. and Mrs. Kameo Nakamura.<sup>25</sup> Other traditional arts flourished, including *Bonsai* (the art of miniaturizing plants and trees in small containers), *Ikebana* (flower arranging), and the martial arts, including *Sumo* wrestling and *Judo*.

Japanese Americans were also sports enthusiasts. While some played and starred on Auburn and Kent High School teams, most participated in the Japanese leagues. As publisher of the weekly *Japanese American Courier*, James Sakamoto of Seattle sponsored boys' basketball and baseball and girls' basketball leagues. Teams throughout the Northwest competed in the Courier League with the White River Teams winning many Northwest Japanese Baseball Tournament championships in the 1930s.<sup>26</sup>

### **Vegetable and Berry Farming**

Following the drastic drop in the price of dairy products after World War I, few Japanese farmers remained in the business. Most converted their operations to truck farms, where they grew lettuce, peas and cauliflower for shipment to Eastern markets and a larger variety of vegetables for Seattle markets. Although the dairy industry had been dominant in the valley, Japanese farmers had operated truck and berry farms since the early years of the twentieth century. Many of them came from intensive farming communities in Japan with an understanding of irrigation, drainage, fertilization, and cultivation. Beginning in about 1907, I. Yasamura grew potatoes on a farm in Christopher on land he helped clear. When he later farmed in Pacific City, he gained renown as the "Potato King." In about 1907, the Ito brothers, Fukutaro and Tokisaburo, were two of the valley's pioneer strawberry growers, specializing in the Magon and Marshall varieties on their farm on West Valley Highway in the area known as Logandale. (Table B, Number 11 and Table A, Number 11.)<sup>27</sup>

Japanese farmers also grew blackberries, raspberries, bunch carrots, peas, beans, celery, radishes, lettuce, cabbage, corn, spinach, squash, and hothouse rhubarb. Some built

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<sup>24</sup>Mildred Tanner Andrews, *Hori Furoba King County Landmark Nomination* (King County Office of Cultural Resources, 1996).

<sup>25</sup>Norikane, 53.

<sup>26</sup>ibid. 60-62.

<sup>27</sup>ibid. 21.

greenhouses, where they specialized in flowers. Following establishment of Seattle's Pike Place Market in 1907, they had an important local venue for their produce. By the beginning of World War I, Japanese farmers from the White River Valley and other areas occupied 70% of the market's stalls.<sup>28</sup> Farmers also had a ready market in local canneries, notably Libby, McNeill & Libby which operated in Kent from 1917 until the 1960s.

Beginning in the 1920s, many of the local Japanese farmers raised hothouse rhubarb as a winter crop to supplement their income. The unique industry existed in only two other parts of North America, namely Ontario, Canada and Michigan. Farmers built long, low sheds, which they covered with tarpaper and heated with alder fires in 100-gallon oil drums. Mae Iseri Yamada explained that after the rhubarb plants had been outside for two years, farmers dug them up, knocked the dirt off the roots, and hauled the 100 to 150 pound plants into the sheds by hand. They brought the rhubarb inside in December, then harvested it in March and shipped it out. Yamada describes the rhubarb as pink and much sweeter than the outdoor variety. When the harvest was finished, most farmers brought chickens into the sheds and raised them in the spring.<sup>29</sup>(Table A, Number 9) One of the largest growers in the Auburn area was George Yasamura, who had 90,000 square feet in production. Yasamura marketed his rhubarb through his own company. (Table B, Number 10; Table A, Number 12). Other farmers marketed their crop through the Sumner Rhubarb Growers Association.<sup>30</sup>

As they gained a foothold, Japanese Americans opened agricultural businesses, some of which were owned by individuals, such as the C. Natsuhara Company (Table A, #6 and #7 / King Co. HRI# 1363), and the Hikida family's Sunrise Florist (Table A, #8 / King Co. HRI# 1362). Japanese farmers also formed cooperatives to purchase supplies, and to pack and market their produce. Berry farmers formed the White River Berry Growers' Association. The Washington Vegetable Growers Association was a local farmers' cooperative that shipped produce to Eastern markets in the 1930s. In the 1940s, it became Western Producers, which operated under the ownership of Tom Iseri and Harry Kuramoto until 1942. Another large Japanese-American operation was the White River Packing Company, formed by Kent farmers in the 1920s and owned and operated by E.K. Saito. (Table B, #15)

In 1941, the Vegetable Shipping Industry, Western Washington District, reported that Japanese organizations shipped "80% +" of locally grown major commodities, namely lettuce, peas, cauliflower and celery. The 1941 Farm Report of the White River Valley notes that "approximately 95% of the agricultural products in this area are controlled by Japanese." It gives the following demographic statistics:

<i>Number of Farms</i>	<i>Leased</i> 257	<i>Owned</i> 28	<i>Total</i> 285
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<sup>28</sup>David Takami, *Shared Dreams: a History of Asians and Pacific Americans in Washington State* (Olympia: Washington Centennial Commission 1989), 3.

<sup>29</sup>Mae Iseri Yamada. Author interviews, 1992 - 1997.

<sup>30</sup>Norikane, 30.

*People Involved:*                      *Aliens 456    Citizens 685                      Total 1141*<sup>31</sup>

### **Reclassification as a National Security Threat**

The growth and development of the flourishing Japanese-American culture was permanently interrupted with the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. That evening, the FBI arrested men for the crime of being leaders in the valley's Japanese-American community. Hard-working farm families were suddenly reclassified as a national security threat. On February 19, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, permitting the military to remove persons from areas thought to be threatened. The military targeted people of Japanese descent on the West Coast (west of the Columbia River in Washington State), restricting them to a dawn-to-dusk curfew and a three-mile travel limit.

In late March, notices were conspicuously posted throughout the White River Valley, giving anyone who was as much as one-sixteenth Japanese two weeks' notice to prepare to leave. Members of the JACL cooperated by helping the Army with registrations of non-English-speaking Issei. As American citizens, the Nisei initially expected to be left behind and were shocked to learn that they too would be interned. Although they were charged with no crime, hard-working families were suddenly reclassified as undesirable aliens. Suffering incalculable losses, they were dispossessed of farms and businesses and forced to sell personal belongings for a fraction of their value. Some made hasty arrangements to leave their property in the care of friends or sometimes questionable caretakers.

Valley demographics were permanently changed when nearly 2,000 residents from the Auburn, Kent, and Tukwila area boarded special removal trains bound for arid inland internment camps. Those living south of the Green River were evacuated on May 22nd, when they assembled at the railroad siding on the Milwaukee tracks by Yasamura's Shed (a packing company) to board the 18-car train that would take them to the Pinedale Assembly Center near Fresno. (Table A, #12/ King Co. HRI #1364) Auburn's Caucasians found themselves sharply divided, some maintaining that loyal Americans had been forced to leave and others certain that there were potential saboteurs among them. In all, 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry -- two-thirds of them U.S. citizens -- spent part of World War II in the camps.<sup>32</sup>

With the evacuation of Japanese-Americans, White River Valley farmlands were readily available to other valley residents and to a notable influx of Italian-Americans and Filipinos,<sup>33</sup> some of whom were recruited by the government to stabilize agricultural

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<sup>31</sup>ibid. 29

<sup>32</sup>Stan Flewelling, *Farmlands: the Story of Thomas, a Small Agricultural Community in King County, Washington* (Auburn: Erick Sanders Historical Society, 1990).

<sup>33</sup>See Fred Cordova, *Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans* (Seattle: Demonstration Project for Asian Americans, 1983.) Since the Spanish-American War, the United States had controlled the Philippines, recognizing Filipinos as U.S. nationals. In 1924 after the curtailment of Japanese immigration, labor contractors recruited men from the Philippines. In 1934 in response to their growing numbers, Congress

production. Mae Iseri Yamada recalls that after her father's arrest, she, her mother and her brothers, like other farm families, continued working in the fields until the evacuation in May, but were unable to reap the fruits of their labor. She says, "I'm still mad about it! Filipinos got rich. The strawberries, peas and lettuce were within days of harvest." <sup>34</sup> Sometimes Filipino laborers became caretakers in their Japanese-American employer's absence. Others were able to purchase farms at bargain prices. Still others, including some who had returned annually during the harvest season as migrant laborers, were told by the U.S. government to work as farm managers. The upheaval permanently changed valley demographics.

### **The Post-war Era**

In late 1945, Auburn joined in the nation's victory celebration, giving a hero's welcome to returning veterans and mourning others who gave their lives for their country. From the few Japanese-American families (about 20%) who returned, other White River Valley residents learned that their sons, too, had served their country with valor. Mike Iseri was one of Auburn High's graduates who volunteered for the highly-decorated all-Nisei 442nd Regiment and was killed in France.

While some true friends welcomed them home, many valley residents remained openly hostile toward their former neighbors. For example, members of the Remember Pearl Harbor League, which included prominent local business owners, refused to do business with Japanese-Americans and took measures to intimidate others who chose to befriend them. After serving in the Army, Tom Hikida was one of the first Nisei to return to Auburn. When he called to reclaim the family home and business, the Sunrise Florist Shop, he was threatened with death. In retrospect, he attributes the hostility to economics and the widely held "squatters' rights" contention that people could acquire property simply by keeping the former owners away.<sup>35</sup> (Table A, #8 / King Co. HRI #1355 and #0921)

When they returned to school, Nisei children often met with physical and verbal abuse from their classmates. Mae Iseri Yamada, the only one of the large Iseri family to return, remembers a boy at Thomas School who punched her son, hollering "Jap, what are you?" The principal, Myrtle Curry, who had formerly taught most of the Iseri children, intervened and made the boy apologize.<sup>36</sup> (Table A, # 12 / King Co. HRI #0920)

Hiding their hurt and humiliation, the Japanese-Americans who returned to the valley worked to get on with their lives, reestablish themselves, and foster an improved racial climate that would ultimately enable their children and grandchildren to compete in

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changed the status of the Philippines to that of a commonwealth, imposing an immigration quota of fifty Filipinos a year. At the time few women had immigrated from the Philippines. While some men married women of other races, a large bachelor population was dominant. The situation did not change until after World War II when Filipino veterans returned home with an influx of war brides

<sup>34</sup>Mae Iseri Yamada. Author interview, 1997.

<sup>35</sup>Transcript, World War II Focus Group.

<sup>36</sup>Mae Iseri Yamada. Author interview, 1994.

professional occupations, start their own businesses, and get involved in politics. Trying not to draw attention to themselves, they no longer built traditional Japanese bathhouses and instead used western bathing facilities.

During the next two decades, the U.S. government eased its discriminatory stance toward Asians. In 1952, Congress enacted the McCarran-Walters Act, which eliminated race as a principle of immigration law. The Immigration Act of 1965 went further, eliminating national origins as a criterion.

Only two of the Japanese-Americans who had resided in the valley prior to World War II sought redress for wrongs that had been perpetrated against them. Some 15 years after the war and some 30 years after the state confiscated his property, Shoichiro Katsuno once again appealed his case, this time to the State House of Representatives. Historian Stan Flewelling wrote: "This time, the Speaker of the House brought the White River Garden case directly to the assembly for a public hearing. [The Reverend] U.G. Murphy was still at his side, literally, when Katsuno spoke in Olympia in 1960. The House agreed that Katsuno had been unjustly treated by the state and its laws, and they voted to make monetary reparations. It was a bittersweet vindication. Katsuno received a \$12,000 redress for the land that had cost White River Garden \$15,000 in 1919--unimproved."<sup>37</sup> (Table A, Numbers one and two.)

The other lingering legal case was that of Gordon Hirabayashi, the son of members of the White River Garden cooperative, who had challenged the Constitutionality of the pre-internment curfew order. When the government began placing restrictions on Japanese Americans, he was the only one from Washington to openly resist. He disregarded the Army's dawn-to-dusk curfew and the order to register for relocation, then hitchhiked to Arizona, where he turned himself in. In federal court, he was tried and sentenced to three months in prison for violating the curfew. On return, he served another nine months in the King County jail. Affiliated with Quakers and a conscientious objector, he refused to take the army's pre-induction physical exam or to fill out a questionnaire that required anyone of Japanese descent, including American citizens, to disavow allegiance to the emperor of Japan. For this, he served another year in federal prison. After his release, he returned to the University of Washington to finish his B.A. and a graduate degree in sociology, then joined the faculty of the University of British Columbia. In 1986, after years of legal appeals, the U.S. Supreme Court finally overturned his convictions. Congress followed suit with an official apology and an agreement to pay \$20,000 to each living Japanese-American whose life had been disrupted by the internment. *The Seattle Times* wrote of his unwavering faith in the American system and his lasting victory for civil liberties, saying: "Hirabayashi pursued his mission steadfastly, patiently and never with anger. In the end, he said the Constitution never failed him -- only its application."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Flewelling, *Farmlands*, 95-6.

<sup>38</sup>Norikane, 68.

Through the years, the Nisei have reestablished some of their cultural traditions, notably through the White River Buddhist Church which built a beautiful new temple in 1964 at 37th Street and Auburn Way North. Its festive annual Bon Odori celebration draws members of the congregation and visitors alike. In 1995, a 50-year class reunion at Thomas School attracted some 350 former friends and neighbors, who came from as far away as New Jersey and Hawaii. Mae Iseri Yamada pronounced the event "very healing," saying that, "It brought the community together again."<sup>39</sup>

By the 1980s, the history of the Auburn School District's ornamental lamps (described on page 14) had largely been forgotten. When the old high school was scheduled for demolition, members of the Valley Civic League rescued the only remaining pair, then in a state of deterioration. Ever appreciative of the sacrifice and contributions of the older Japanese Association, the White River Valley Civic League Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League raised funds to restore and rededicate the ornamental lamps at Auburn High School's new Performing Arts Center in 1980 on the 51st anniversary of the original dedication. The rededication was "in memory of the pioneer Japanese." (Table A, #9 / King Co. HRI #1365.)

Although many of the Nisei claim to bear no bitterness, they are ever mindful of how politics, war and racism has, and still can, make a mockery of the American belief in freedom and justice for all. After years of keeping silent about the past and quietly moving on with their lives, some are telling their stories so that younger generations can benefit from their experience.

Today, the White River Valley bears scant reminders of the once-thriving Japanese-American agricultural community. Factories, strip malls, and housing developments have supplanted farmlands. Koji Norikane writes:

The decline of farming in the White River Valley was due to a combination of circumstances. When World War II ended and the Japanese were allowed to come back, only about 30 families came back to the White River Valley . . . The Nisei sent their sons and daughters to college but their offspring were not interested in farming as there were better opportunities in other professions. Most of the Nisei when they became of retirement age sold their farms to industry. The caneries left the Valley and moved to other agricultural areas. Before World War II, there were many small grocery stores whereas today we have supermarket chain stores that need a constant supply of vegetables not obtainable from local farmers. The chain stores buy them from California where they can get a steady supply throughout the year.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Mae Iseri Yamada. Author Interview, 1996.

<sup>40</sup>Norikane, 31.

Tables A and B document the few extant cultural resources in the survey area, associated with the pre-World War II Japanese American community. Among them, John Hamakami is the lone remaining strawberry farmer (Table A, #11 / King Co. HRI #1361); the Kawasaki/Yamada Farm is the only vegetable farm (Table A, #7 / HRI #1363); and Ben and Yoshiko Yamada operate the last remaining greenhouse, where he continues to grow flowers (Table A, #6 / King Co. HRI #1565). Only two commercial businesses remain, both of which are run by Nisei, who still reside on the property where they lived and worked with their parents. They are the Sunrise Florist, owned and operated by Pearl Hikida Okura (Table A, #8 / King Co. HRI #1362), and Natsuhara's General Merchandise Store, owned and operated by Frank Natsuhara (Table B, #6).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

On November 8, 1997, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* featured Auburn, past and present, in a special series on local communities. The only reference to Japanese was a 1920s photo of tourists from Japan, whose train stopped in Auburn during a good-will tour. During 1996, this consultant researched and wrote the history of the Auburn School District and was disturbed to talk with high school honors students, who had never heard of the World War II internment of West Coast Japanese and who knew nothing of the once-thriving local agricultural community. Like fading memories, related cultural resources are rapidly disappearing. In 1996, the King County Landmarks and Heritage Commission approved this consultant's nomination of the *Hori Furoba* for landmark status, whereupon funds were made available for its restoration. While this is an excellent beginning, much remains to be done and the need is urgent. The consultant recommends the following:

1. Prepare a King County Landmark Nomination for Thomas School, which prior to World War II had as many as 60% Japanese-American students and both Japanese and Caucasian PTAs. It is also significant for its early association with the Buddhist Church and as a bi-cultural community center. (Table A, #11 / King Co. HRI #1361)
2. Conduct a Historic American Building Survey of the White River Gardens and prepare a related HABS document. Multiple owners and realtors are currently lobbying to have the forty acres rezoned as commercial. They are opposed to having the properties landmarked. One option is to counter their efforts with a campaign for official farmlands protection designation or landmarking of extant buildings. In any case, the HABS document would preserve a record of this important property and its cultural significance. (Table A, #1-5 / King County HRI #s 1355, 0921, 1357, 1356, 1359)
3. Rewrite Neely Mansion landmark designation to provide an inclusive history of its residents and to document and interpret the history of Euro- and Asian immigration in the White River Valley.
4. Work with the schools to develop curricula. The focus on past generations of immigrants not only teaches history, but also provides an approach for discussing the challenges and experiences of today's immigrants, some of whom are students.
5. Promote public education by sponsoring a symposium to bring together many of the parties currently involved in studies of Japanese-American heritage in the White River Valley and in the Puget Sound area. Include Japanese-Americans in all phases of planning, implementation and evaluation. Involve owners of extant historic properties, where possible. The White River Valley Historical Museum would be an excellent venue, because of its permanent exhibit, forthcoming publication, and related projects on Japanese-American heritage and because of its devoted contingent of Nisei volunteers.
6. Create a traveling exhibit to be displayed in schools, businesses, government buildings, and libraries. Include photos of extant cultural resources, paired with historic

photos, quotes from oral histories, etc. to bring to light the heritage of Japanese-Americans in the White River Valley. The White River Valley Historical Museum would be an appropriate sponsor.

7. Extend the survey into other parts of unincorporated south King County, including the Enumclaw and Black Diamond areas and the area between Algona/Pacific and Federal Way, extending north to Star Lake. The cities of Kent, Algona, and Pacific may also warrant more extensive study.

8. Develop a context document and inventory to identify extant structures associated with Filipino heritage in the White River Valley. Filipinos have a long historic tradition as migrant and seasonal workers in the valley. A few operated independently as farmers prior to World War II, but most did not put down roots until the evacuation of the Japanese. There is currently very little documentation of their legacy.

**TABLE A**  
**Historic Properties Associated with Japanese-American Settlement**  
**in the White River Valley Inventoried in this Project**

<b>Historic Property</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Historical Significance</b>
<p><b>1. White River Garden Cooperative</b>            28009-28327 W Valley Hwy            Auburn 98002            (Unincorporated King Co.)            King County HRI #1355</p>	<p>Multiple owners of four parcels. Four houses -- three intact but deteriorating. 40 acres with one 10-acre parcel and house for sale. Lobbying effort to promote rezoning for commercial use.</p>	<p>Former successful Japanese farming cooperative, owned and operated by four families who cleared stump land, built homes and were active in community life. Following enactment of the Alien Land Law of 1921, the property escheated to the state. A friend leased it and hired Katsuno to manage the cooperative until 1942. None of the families returned after the internment.</p>
<p><b>2. Katsuno, Shoichiro House/ White River Gardens/ Joseph Schuler Farm</b>            28009 W Valley Highway            Auburn 98002            (Unincorporated King Co.)            King County HRI #0921</p>	<p>Largest and most intact of the four homes, built in 1918. Large historic shed/garage behind the house. House is occupied.</p>	<p>As the majority share owner, Katsuno put his shares in the name of his American-born daughter. In a landmark legal challenge that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, he argued that she had the right to own the property, but lost. In 1962, he brought the case to the State House of Representatives, which awarded him partial monetary redress.</p>
<p><b>3. Hirabayashi, Shungo and Mitsu House/White River Gardens</b>            28203 W Valley Highway            Auburn 98002            (Unincorporated King Co.)            King County HRI #1357</p>	<p>Built in 1918, the 1-1/2 story house was extensively remodeled in the 1950s and 1960s. Property is currently for sale. House is occupied.</p>	<p>One of the children of this household was Gordon Hirabayashi. In 1942, as a UW student, he was the only person in the state to openly resist governmental restrictions against people of Japanese descent. After serving two years in prison, he quietly pursued his case. In 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned his conviction. Congress followed with an official apology and an agreement to pay \$20,000 to each living Japanese- American who had been interned</p>

<p><b>4. Hirabayashi, Toshiharu and Midori House/ White River Gardens</b> 28225 W Valley Highway Auburn 98002 (Unincorporated King Co.) King County HRI #1356</p>	<p>Built in 1918. Maintains integrity of form and setting. Some alterations, but probability that the original facade remains intact underneath. House is occupied.</p>	<p>The parents and their two children, Martin and Grant (now in Washington D.C.) lived here until WWII. Grant graduated from Kent High School and joined Army just before Pearl Harbor. He was assigned to espionage in Burma.</p>
<p><b>5. Yokoyama/Kamikawa House/ White River Gardens</b> 28327 W Valley Highway Auburn 98002 (Unincorporated King Co.) King County HRI #1359</p>	<p>Built in 1918, this is the smallest of the White River Garden homes. The front facade appears to be intact, but the site is overgrown and difficult to evaluate from the right of way.</p>	<p>The Yokoyama family left the cooperative shortly after it was established. The Kurikawa family replaced them for a time. Later residents were unaffiliated with the cooperative.</p>
<p><b>6. Yamada, Ben and Yoshiko Greenhouses and House/ O'Brien Greenhouse</b> 21231 Frager Road Kent 98031 King County HRI #1565</p>	<p>Built in 1947, the one-story cedar house is 1,255 square feet and substantially unchanged. Three large greenhouses, adjoined at the sides, and an abutting concrete structure with a tall chimney are pre-WWII vintage.</p>	<p>The greenhouses are one of few remaining legacies of a once important valley industry, where families of Japanese descent grew hot-house flowers and vegetables. The pre-war O'Brien Greenhouse was managed by the Ono family. The Yamadas specialize in flowers.</p>
<p><b>7. Kawasaki, George/ Yamada, Alan Farm</b> 28712 E Valley Road Auburn 98002 King County HRI #1363</p>	<p>70-acre working vegetable farm with two houses and two former dairy barns. Kawasaki converted the 1930 barn to a packing shed by removing the lower floor. Former stantions in the adjacent dairy hold obsolete farm equipment. The 1908 farmhouse was remodeled in 1949 and now serves as home for Asian foreign exchange students who work on the farm. The Yamada's two-story, 10-room home was built in 1958-59.</p>	<p>As the last remaining vegetable farm in the Auburn area, it is a legacy of the truck farm industry that prior to WWII was predominant among Japanese-American families. Kawasaki purchased the former dairy farm from the Schuler brothers after the war and converted it to a vegetable farm. His son-in-law, Alan Yamada, has managed the labor- intensive operation since 1983.</p>
<p><b>8. Sunrise Florist–Hikida/ Okura House</b> 702 Auburn Way N Auburn 98002 King County HRI #1362</p>	<p>Operating flower shop with attached small greenhouse, brick clad, two story, Colonial Revival house; and small barn, all constructed in 1940 and intact. Remnants of former Japanese garden.</p>	<p>The flower shop is the only remaining business owned and operated by a member of a pre-WWII Japanese-American family in an area that was predominantly Japanese. Pearl Hikida Okura owns the property and operates the business that was established by her parents.</p>

<p><b>9. Ornamental Lamps</b> Auburn High School/ Performing Arts Center 800 Fourth NE Auburn 98002 King County HRI #1365</p>	<p>The two lamps were moved from their original location in front of the now demolished high school to the plaza of the new Performing Arts Center in 1950. Restoration included new (substantially altered) footings, new globes, and reconstructed eagles.</p>	<p>A marble plaque explains their significance. "Originally presented to the Auburn School District by the Japanese-American Association of Auburn and dedicated on November 25, 1929. Rededicated November 25, 1950, in memory of the pioneer Japanese by their descendants, and the White River Valley Civic League Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League.</p>
<p><b>10. Sumner Packing Co./ Yasamura's Shed</b> 225 H Street NW Auburn 98002 King County HRI #1364</p>	<p>The original wooden packing shed burned down in 1957 and was replaced by a slightly larger concrete structure. The railroad continues to operate adjacent the shed site.</p>	<p>On May 22, 1942, the shed was the assembly site for Auburn-area residents of Japanese descent, who boarded the 18-car train that took them to the Pinedale Assembly Center in California. After processing, most were interned at the arid Tule Lake Camp. As the largest hothouse rhubarb grower in the area, George Yasamura had previously marketed his own crop, along with produce grown by other Japanese farmers, from the shed.</p>
<p><b>11. Hamakami, John Farm</b> 14733 Green River Valley Rd. Auburn 98092 (Unincorporated King Co.) King County HRI #1361</p>	<p>Thirty-three acres protected under Farmlands Preservation Act. The "U-pick" strawberry farm has a 1937, 1-1/2 story, Craftsman-influenced, vernacular house and a 120' by 30' rhubarb shed, constructed in 1958 and now used for storage. Both structures are largely intact.</p>	<p>The Hamakamis purchased their farm in 1939. Today, it is the lone berry farm in the Auburn area still owned and operated by Japanese-Americans, who once were predominant in the industry. As the only extant rhubarb shed in the valley, the structure serves as a reminder of the once thriving hothouse rhubarb industry that flourished in the hands of pre-WWII Japanese-American farmers.</p>
<p><b>12. Thomas School/ St. James of Thomas School</b> 8207 S 280th Kent 98032 (Unincorporated King Co.) King County HRI #0920</p>	<p>Addendum to HRI #0133 Main building intact. In use as private academy.</p>	<p>Up to 60% Japanese-American students prior to 1942. Japanese PTA. First class reunion of pre-WWII students in 1995 -- "very healing for the community." The White River Buddhist Church, founded in 1912, rented the</p>
		<p>Thomas School cont.</p>

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original Thomas School building for Sunday evening services and for the Japanese Language School in 1913. In 1918, the church purchased the building and moved it their newly acquired property on Meredith Road. The building was refitted as a civil defense center during WWII and was later demolished.

**TABLE A**  
**Historic Properties Associated with Japanese-American Settlement**  
**in the White River Valley Inventoried in this Project**

Historic Property	Status	Historical Significance
<b>1. Henry Miyoshi House/ Machine Shop</b> 4501 Auburn Way N Auburn 98002	For sale. House built after WW II and still occupied by the Miyoshis. Shop is closed. Original 100-year-old (?) family home in back is a deteriorating wood farmhouse, now one story with the original first floor removed. Farm acreage no longer in use, but weeds are kept down.	Henry Miyoshi was born across the street and is the only Japanese-American from pre WWII Thomas School who still lives in the neighborhood. The original spartan home is typical of Japanese farmhouses of the era. Setting of former truck farm is preserved. Garden includes winter staples -- rhubarb and Japanese potatoes.
<b>2. Pioneer Cemetery</b> Between Auburn Way N and Eighth Street NE Auburn 98002	Less than an acre of "V"-shaped land. Two sections -- one Japanese and one Anglo with about 200 graves. Angeline Seattle, reportedly a granddaughter of Chief Seattle is also buried here. Surrounded by businesses.	First generation Japanese purchased the cemetery from Auburn pioneers, the Faucett family. Japanese maintained it until their WWII internment. During the war it was vandalized and fell into disrepair. The City assumed ownership and now maintains the grounds.
<b>3. Redington Historic District Lloyd Redington's Farm</b> 925 40th NE Auburn 98002 King County HRI #0067.	Demolished Now site of Kawasaki/ Yamada Farm, inventoried in this project.	In the teens, the Nakai, Nisimoto, Suzuki and Furakawa families built homes and worked as truck farmers for the Redingtons. They remained until 1942. Other farm owners in the area also rented five or ten acre plots to Japanese, typically building a small house.
<b>4. Tsujikawa, Tony House/ Pottery Company</b> 714 Auburn Way N Auburn 98002	Small wood-frame house is extant. Some remodeling. Pottery shop is substantially remodeled and is now Pratt's Electric.	Ben Tsujikawa still lives in the house, built by his grandparents. Tony Tsujikawa, a Nisei, opened the Auburn Pottery Company in 1931, producing clay pots for greenhouses. He was the only potter in the area. (Pearl Hikida Okura interview)
<b>5. Natsuhara Shed and Home</b> 2992 B St. NW Auburn 98002	Small packing shed by railroad track and small pioneer house.	Chiyokichi Natsuhara stored fertilizer and made boxes to ship produce from this shed. The family lived in the small house, was the home of their son Frank and his wife before WW II.
<b>6. Natsuhara's General Merchandise Store</b>	Built in 1914. Remodeled in 1950s and 1960s with "vertical	Chiyokichi Natsuhara opened the store in 1914, specializing in

622 W Main Street Auburn 98002 King Co. HRI #0582.	board and heavy dark beams,emphasizing Japanese Influence." (11/90 Inventory). Much of the equipment is original.	Japanese food items and later adding Japanese gifts. He, his wife, and their 11 children lived in family quarters on the east side of the building. In back is a row of tiny rental units for farm laborers. Today, Frank Natsuhara follows in his father's footsteps with the inventory much the same.
<b>7. Nishimoto Farm</b> 17807 Green Valley Road Auburn 98092 (Unincorporated King Co.)	Property for sale.	Until recently, Joe and Yosh Nishimoto and their families grew 25 acres of raspberries and 50 acres of strawberries on the farm that they purchased in 1966. (Norikane, 31 and Mae Yamada interview)
<b>8. Neely Mansion/ Hori Furoba (Bathhouse)</b> 12303 SE Auburn-Black Diamond Road Auburn 98002 (Unincorporated King Co.)	The Mansion is on the National and State Registers and a King Co. Landmark. The Furoba is a King Co. Landmark. It is currently undergoing restoration.	As the only remaining <i>furoba</i> in the valley, the bathhouse is a reminder of a cultural tradition linked to Japan. Similar structures were commonplace wherever pre-WWII Japanese lived and worked. The Matasuke Fukuda family leased the farm from 1912 to 1930, managing a large dairy and growing hothouse rhubarb and corn. The Shigeichi Hori family took over the lease from 1930 to 1936, maintaining a small dairy, but making fruits and vegetables their major operation.
<b>9. Kosai, Kiichiro Farm</b> Site of Emerald Downs Racetrack HABS #WA-211	72-acres. House and dairy barns demolished.	Farm associated with three generations of the Kosai family. Much larger than the average Japanese dairy. K. Kosai put the property in the name of his American-born child, Frank. When the state brought the family to court accusing them of violating the Alien Land Law, the judge ruled in favor of Kosai, finding that his minor child could hold title.

<p><b>10. Yasamura, George House/ Farm</b> Pike Street NW (west above W Valley Highway and 11th NW) Auburn 98002</p>	<p>Large, modern, one story house, clad in field stone Built before WW II. Setting on high knoll with long, curved driveway and rockery that insures privacy. Large collapsed dairy barn and silo on east side of W Valley Highway at 11th NW.</p>	<p>The house overlooks the fields where George Yasamura and his family had 90,000 square feet of hothouse rhubarb in production. He marketed the crop through his own Sumner Packing Company. (Interview with Frank Natsuhara; Norikane, p. 30)</p>
<p><b>11. Ito House/ Logandale/ Copenhagen place</b> S 287th &amp; W Valley Hwy (just N of Meredith) Auburn 98002</p>	<p>House is occupied.</p>	<p>The Ito brothers, Fukutaro and Tokisaburo, were two of theearliest strawberry growers. (Norikane, p. 21)</p>
<p><b>12. Ham House and Farm</b> _____ 86th Ave. S (Unincorporated King Co.)</p>	<p>House is occupied.</p>	<p>James "Shizuichi" Higashida was the first Japanese student at Thomas School. He worked on the Ham farm, where he lived in a shed. In 1904 at age 18, he enrolled in first grade to learn English. He continued his education to become a respected Seattle dentist. (Flewelling, 91)</p>
<p><b>13. Charlie Nagata House</b> East side of railroad track, north of Merideth Rd.</p>	<p>Demolished. Area is now dominated by warehouses.</p>	<p>One of the oldest Nisei and son of one of the valley's eldest Issei. A teletype operator before the war, he gave messages from Japan to a Seattle newspaper. Much to the surprise of other Nisei, the FBI left Nagata alone, when agents arrested Nisei community leaders on suspicion that they might have ties to Japan. He married a Caucasian who later divorced him and married a Filipino.</p>
<p><b>14. Toyoshima Farm</b> S 277th St. and W Valley Highway Kent 98031</p>	<p>Partly protected by the Farmlands Preservation Act. Pre-WWII wood buildings. No longer a working farm.</p>	<p>Truck farm operated by the Korekiyo family prior to WWII and by the Toyoshima family since. (Mae Yamada interview)</p>
<p><b>15. E. W. Bereiter House/ Keck House</b> 855 E Smith Kent 98031</p>	<p>Two- story wood frame house, once dubbed the showplace of Kent. Structure is altered. HRI # JW-10. Kent Heritage Site.</p>	<p>Residence of E. K. Saito family, 1920s and 30s until 1942. Saito owned the White River Packing Co., which in 1941 employed 95 workers. The company shipped Japanese farmers' lettuce, cauliflower and peas to eastern markets.</p>
<p><b>16. Cruz/Johnson Farm</b> 22243 Frager Road</p>	<p>Vegetable and small fruit farm with produce stand and</p>	<p>Prior to World War II, the Takahara family leased it from</p>

Kent 98032	greenhouse, built in 1951. House and some outbuildings.	the Rusts and the Mullens. The Cruz family are Filipinos, who took over in May 1942. The Japanese left when their peas, lettuce, and strawberries were within days of harvest. (Terry Cruz Johnson and Mae Yamada interviews)
<b>17. Kaibara Park</b> W Meeker St. First Ave. N. Kent 98031	Designated in honor of Kent's and sister city in Japan. Designed with Japanese elements.	In the depths of the Great Depression, Kent bolstered local spirits with the Lettuce Festival, proclaiming itself "The Lettuce Capital of the World." In what is now Kaibara Park, 25,000 people consumed "the world's largest salad," made of local lettuce and Nalley's mayonnaise. In 1935, Thelma Saito was queen with a court of three other Japanese-American and three Caucasian princesses. (Rae Reitan interview)
<b>18. International Order of Odd Fellows Hall</b> 316 W Meeker Kent 98031	Built in 1904. Guttled by fire in 1930s and refurbished.	Late 1920s and 1930s venue for fall and winter performances of <i>Odori</i> (Japanese dance) and <i>Shibai</i> (Japanese classical plays). Mr. and Mrs. Sentaro Tsubota and Mr. And Mrs. Kameo Nakamura taught the classical arts to local Issei and Nisei.

## MASTER INDEX OF INVENTORIED PROPERTIES

HRI #	Name	Address	Parcel Numbers
1355	White River Garden Cooperative	28009-28327 W Valley Hwy Auburn 98002	3522049051 3522049052 3522049054 3522049073
0921	Katsuno, Shoichiro House/ Farm White River Garden	28009 W Valley Highway Auburn 98002	3522049054
1357	Hirabayashi, Shungo and Mitsu House/Farm White River Garden	28203 W Valley Highway Auburn 98002	3522049052
1356	Hirabayashi, Toshiharu and Midori House/Farm White River Garden	28225 W Valley Highway Auburn 98002	3522049051
1359	Yokoyama/Kamikawa House/Farm White River Garden	28327 W Valley Highway Auburn 98002	3522049073
1565	Yamada, Ben House/Greenhouse	21243 Frager Rd Kent 98031	1122049010
1363	Kawasaki, George/ Yamada, Alan Farm	21712 E. Valley Rd. Auburn 98002	00420-004
1362	Sunrise Florist/ Hikida Okura House	702 Auburn Way N Auburn 98002	1821059015
1365	Ornamental Lamps at Auburn High School Performing Arts Center	800 4th St. NE Auburn 98002	
1364	Yasamura's Shed/Sumner Packing Company	225 H St. NW Auburn 98002	446340-0110
1361	Hamakami, John Farm	14733 Green River Valley Rd Auburn, WA 98092	2621059006 2721059001
0920	Thomas School/ St. James of Thomas School	8207 S 280th Kent 98032	936000-01460

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