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*This memorial is dedicated to the Issei (immigrants from Japan) and Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans) whose sacrifices, perseverance and patriotism paved the way for a better life for their families and future generations. May their stories of triumph over adversity serve as an inspiration to all.*



Yoshihei Takahashi tends his farm in Clovis along with faithful friend, "Sammy," in 1937. Three generations of Takahashis perpetuated the family farming tradition and became actively involved in community affairs. Yoshihei's son, Yoshito, was named Clovis "Citizen of the Year" in 1977. Takahashi Family Collection

Japanese started immigrating to the United States in the 1880s and by 1930, there were over 5000 residing in Fresno County. Like other immigrants, Japanese came to America to improve their lot in life. Most of the early Issei were male farm workers. Small businesses developed to cater to the needs of these immigrants and eventually Nihonmachi or Japantowns evolved. Japanese Americans faced discrimination, including laws that prohibited ownership of land, inter-racial marriage, voting and naturalization. The Immigration Act of 1924 denied entry of virtually all Asians to America amid concerns about the increasing "Yellow Peril." Despite these obstacles, Japanese Americans in the San Joaquin Valley optimistically pursued the American Dream.

*"We holds these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776*

The original Fresno Buddhist Church was completed in 1901. The building was replaced after fire destroyed the first structure in 1918. Until 1942, the Christ United Methodist Church (est. 1893), Fresno Buddhist Church (est. 1901), and Japanese Congregational Church (est. 1908) were located within a block of each other and were the center of neighborhood life for Japanese Americans in Fresno. Photo taken May 18, 1902 – just after completion of roof. Fresno Buddhist Church



While on their barnstorming Victory Tour, Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth made a stopover in Fresno on October 29, 1927. After a signing session at the train station, the heroes took to the field at Firemen and Policemen's Base-Ball Park near the Fairgrounds to compete with the Nisei All Stars of the Twilight League. Pictured from left to right - Johnny Nakagawa, Lou Gehrig, Kenichi Zenimura, Babe Ruth, Fred Yoshikawa and Harvey Iwata. Frank Kamiyama, provided by Kerry Yo Nakagawa



Rose Bottling Works, with owners Hisajiro Kimura, wife Yoshimi, and sons Jiro and Robert. The company, started under a different name before 1906 by Tsurikichi Morimoto, was sold in 1920 to Hisajiro Kimura, who ran the business for more than two decades. Fresno County Public Library



Fashionable Japanese families enjoyed many American-style outings and activities, including picnics, drives in the countryside and team games such as tug-of-war - circa 1910. Fresno County Public Library, SG Sakamoto Family Collection

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