

August Historical Question:

Cottonwood Heights has a rich Japanese-American heritage. Which Japanese families built and lived in the white frame houses next to Brighton High School?

Answer:

The Mori and Tashiro families. Tsunetaro Mori left Japan when he was eighteen years old. He worked for the railroad in California and nearly lost his life there. He then moved to Idaho where he worked on a sugar beet farm. Tsunetaro saved money to buy land and build a home so he could bring his wife and daughter, left in the care of relatives in Japan, to America. In 1910, he purchased a considerable amount of land in Butlerville and built his house. He and his wife, Tsune, had six children.

The Mori farm in Butlerville produced several varieties of apples, beans, strawberries, onions, garlic, and cherries, which Tsunetaro would take to town in a wagon. When World War II broke out, neighbors were interviewed about the Moris and a rifle and radio were confiscated from them by the government. The Mori family continued to work the land throughout the remainder of the war.

Their daughter, Kiyo Mori, married Akira "Korky" Tashiro who built a house adjacent to the Mori home in Butlerville. As boys, Dean Smart and his cousin Verl "Buck" Buxton worked with Korky Tashiro in the strawberry fields. In 1950, a tragedy occurred when the Tashiros' two-year-old baby daughter, Nancy Tashiro, was killed after being run over twice by a man who drove on their property.

The Mori farm included land that is now occupied by Brighton High School and the Pinnacle Apartments. Two of the Mori granddaughters still reside in Cottonwood Heights -- Connie Tashiro Reece and Dorothy Hadley.