

August 2010 Historical Question

Question: What famous strawberry was developed in Cottonwood Heights?

Answer:

The highly flavored Twentieth Century ever-bearing strawberry was created in 1926 from a cross made by Tijiro Kasuga, who lived in Butlerville.

Kasuga worked on the railroads and then as a cook in a mining camp at Alta. He always believed in luck; that somebody was looking after him. One day, he got into a disagreement with his boss at the mining camp so he quit. A week later, an avalanche buried the mining camp and killed the new cook.

Kasuga and his family began a strawberry farm, but a hard freeze one year killed their crop. He was forced to move out of Butlerville because of the cycle of late frosts and drought in the area. Instead he settled in Murray and tried again, but the soil there was alkaline which burned the strawberries out. Because he could not pay his rent, he was evicted. He then moved to Union (now part of Cottonwood Heights) where the Greers were willing to lease land to him. His strawberries flourished for a while until a drought again destroyed his crop and he relocated to Granite. In Granite, the strawberries really flourished and they had a terrific crop.

The Kasuga family was finally on its way up when World War II started. Sandy City's culinary water came out of Little Cottonwood Creek in an exposed pipe just below the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon, which happened to be the location of the Kasuga farm. During the war, some people worried that Japanese-Americans would become spies or saboteurs on behalf of Japan. The Kasugas became victims of that sentiment, with local residents wondering if the family would sabotage or poison the exposed water pipe. The landlord was pressured to evict them from the farm. They eventually settled in Sandy on land that Tijiro bought in his son's name.