



A Japanese Love Story

MANKICHI MURAMOTO, from Yamaguchi-ken, Japan, was the first Japanese settler to move into Pitt Meadows in 1904. He first worked for a Caucasian farmer before he purchased 20 acres on the southwest corner of Hammond and Bonson Roads and began growing strawberries. In 1911 Muramoto married Harnyo Iyemoto in Victoria. Because she didn't have any brothers, Mankichi took her maiden name and from then on was Mankichi Iyemoto.

In 1970 Mankichi and Harnyo's daughter wrote about her parents' arranged marriage:

The marriages in those days were arranged by "go-betweens" as we called them. If a fellow wanted a certain girl for a bride, he had to have a friend or go-between go to her home and speak to her parents and the girl concerned. If she consented, fine, the arrangements were made. I will tell you what Mother often told us and we never tired of hearing from her.

In Japan, where she lived, she used to watch Dad walk by almost daily and from the age of six made up her mind that Dad was the man she'd marry and no one else. He was nineteen years then and intended on leaving for Canada. She said over the years when she was a young teenager, she would view photos of the young men looking for brides that were sent to the folks. They'd show them to her and asked if one would please her, but no. Finally one day, from Canada, came a package that could contain a photo so she dashed off to the barn and in privacy opened it and was almost hysterical with happiness because it was Dad!

She said she still remembered her parents asking whether or not she'd consider looking at other photos but she'd have no part of it. To quote her words, "this is the man I'm going to marry, the only one."

During the Second World War, the older Iyemoto children were sent to work on beet farms near Winnipeg, Manitoba, while Harnyo and Mankichi Iyemoto along with some of their young children were repatriated back to war-torn Japan. Both parents died of malnutrition on the same day.



Harnyo Iyemoto.

Opposite

Mr. and Mrs. Mankichi Iyemoto's wedding portrait taken in Victoria in 1911.