

A Telling Portrait: William Mohr and his wife, Alfreda



The Mohrs were from the Mt Eden (now Hayward, CA) vicinity of the San Francisco Bay Area. Successful farmers, they employed Japanese Issei to work on their farm well before and after World War II. When the war came, they housed the belongings of some Japanese until they returned.

One Issei man who appears to have worked for the Mohrs early on was **Mataichi Ozeki**, who was a professional photographer on Alameda island.

He photographed the Mohrs in Mt Eden, sometimes posing his first born daughter, Hatsuyo (in 1907-1908) with the Mohrs in the same photo.



What Mataichi did on the Mohr property is not exactly known, but he worked as a cook in Hawaii before coming to America and he can be seen in a photo at a large stove that could have been taken at the Mohrs. If he didn't work for the Mohrs, how did connect with them? The Mohrs could have easily hired a more local photographer. Mataichi lived in Alameda, 13 miles to the north. At the turn of the 20th century, that could be a long drive. Highways did not exist yet.

Did Mataichi make the portraits above in Mt Eden, or did the Mohrs to drive to Alameda? The photos, circa 1907-1910s, are of studio quality with well controlled lighting. All of Mataichi's photos in Mt Eden are more casual and were probably shot with a more portable camera rather than his studio gear. If the Mohrs drove to Alameda, it speaks to the relationship they must have enjoyed with Mataichi.

"I cannot confirm all families who farmed on the property, but Japanese families farmed alongside the Mohr and Fry families for many years and also lived on the ranch," said Alfreda F. Andrews, William and Alfreda Mohr's granddaughter in 2021.

"But not all were residents on the ranch to my knowledge. Families also worked in different capacities as well. There were different circumstances at different times. The property has been in our family since the early 1850's."

"In 1979 when our business incorporated, we adopted the name Mohr-Fry Ranches. This name honors both our mother's and father's heritages and their equal involvement in developing the farm to the present day. The Mohr property is the proper historical name."

The Mohr-Fry Ranches continue to exist, having moved their farm to Lodi, CA.

For more info about the Mohr-Fry Ranches, [click here](#).



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Did Mataichi make these portraits in Mt Eden, or did the the Mohrs to drive some 13 miles north to Alameda? The photos are of studio quality, with well controlled lighting. All of Mataichi's photos in Mt Eden are more casual and were probably shot with a more portable camera rather than his studio gear. If the Mohrs drove to Alameda, it speaks to the relationship they must have enjoyed with Mataichi.

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