



Early Alameda Pioneers

Kumagoro and Machi Takagi

The temple bell rings out, welcoming all who seek enlightenment. But if you listen carefully, you might instead hear the cries of archers on horseback, stampeding across the Japanese countryside.

As a child, **Kumagoro Takagi** likely watched his father perform the ancient art of Yabusame (shooting arrows at a target while riding a horse). But when Kumagoro arrived in Hawaii in 1893, he left the sound of arrows flying, for a new life, and soon, a second wife in America. His first wife died on the trip from Japan to Hawaii.

Eventually, that church bell would have his name on it, at the Buddhist Temple of Alameda, California.

Machi Sugimoto arrived in Hawaii two years later, met Kumagoro and they were married there. The family entered the United States mainland, establishing their home on Grant Avenue in San Francisco, CA by 1900. Their first child, Henry Makoto, was born there in February 1899 or 1900. His birth certificate was registered as “Takaki” because they interpreted the Japanese writing as *Takaki* instead of *Takagi*. They lived there until the Great Earthquake of 1906 devastated the city.

The family quickly moved across the bay to Alameda. Kumagoro worked for affluent homeowners in Fremont doing gardening. He would go to work on his bicycle, some 24 miles to the south, while Machi raised their children.



A happily married Henry and Mitsuyo, circa 1925.

Henry married Mitsuyo Aihara of Japan. She attended Eiwa Gakko in Yokohama and was advised to come to the U.S. to further her education as she was being considered for a master's position (school principal at Eiwa).

Her advisor, Mrs. Hodgkins, and her parents expected her to return to Japan after completion of her studies. Mitsuyo met Henry and wanted remain in America. Henry was working at Yokohama Bank in San Francisco and likely met her there.

After many letters, Mitsuyo's parents relented.

"They were opposed to the marriage, but they finally consented to Mitsuyo getting married," said June Oto, Henry's daughter, in 2021.

Founding the Buddhist Temple

Kumagoro Takagi was among the key persons who helped build the Buddhist Temple of Alameda. His name is inscribed on the bell displayed at the temple's entrance.

Three Niseis, including Sam Narahara, and Kumagoro's son, Henry, purchased the property that would become the temple grounds. The third man is unknown.

All the children of Henry and Mitsuyo were born at their home, located at 2308 Clement Street. The house still remains there as of 2021.

The children attended Porter School and Alameda High School, and in the evenings, they went to a Japanese school to learn the language of their ancestors.

Kumagoro died in 1936 and would not live to see the war.

World War II

When WWII started, Mitsuyo took daughters Irene, Tokiko and June to a relative's home in Sacramento. Henry stayed back with Mildred and Evelyn at the home of the Iwamasas (in Alameda) so that they could continue attending Alameda High. The family would soon reunite in Sacramento.

From Sacramento, they entered the Walerga Assembly Center and then went to Tule Lake. Machi would not go with them, as she had died on January 6, 1941.



Kumagoro Takagi's family, circa 1920s in Alameda.

When the war ended, Henry and Mitsuyo's family repatriated back to Japan, but quickly saw that the homeland they were expecting was no longer there. Tokyo was an awful place, full of rubble and hunger.

“My mother (Mitsuyo) realized they should not have gone back to Japan,” June Oto said. “She talked to someone she knew (Masashi Fukumoto, who married Mildred Takagi) in the U.S. Army, and Masashi got us back here to America.”

June and Tokiko returned first, followed by Evelyn. Mildred and Irene married in Japan and never came back to California.

Henry had never given up his American citizenship and came back to California sometime after Evelyn did. The family settled in Sacramento and never returned to Alameda. Henry's wife, Mitsuyo, died in Japan in 1946 and never made it back to America.



Henry and Mitsuyo Takagi family

*Walerga

The Sacramento/Walerga Assembly Center was built on the site of the Walerga Advanced Depot, a former migrant workers camp about fourteen miles northeast of Sacramento.

It was open for just fifty-two days, from May 6, to June 26, 1942. Most inmates spending only around a month there—the Sacramento Assembly Center had the shortest lifespan of any "assembly center" other than Mayer, Arizona.

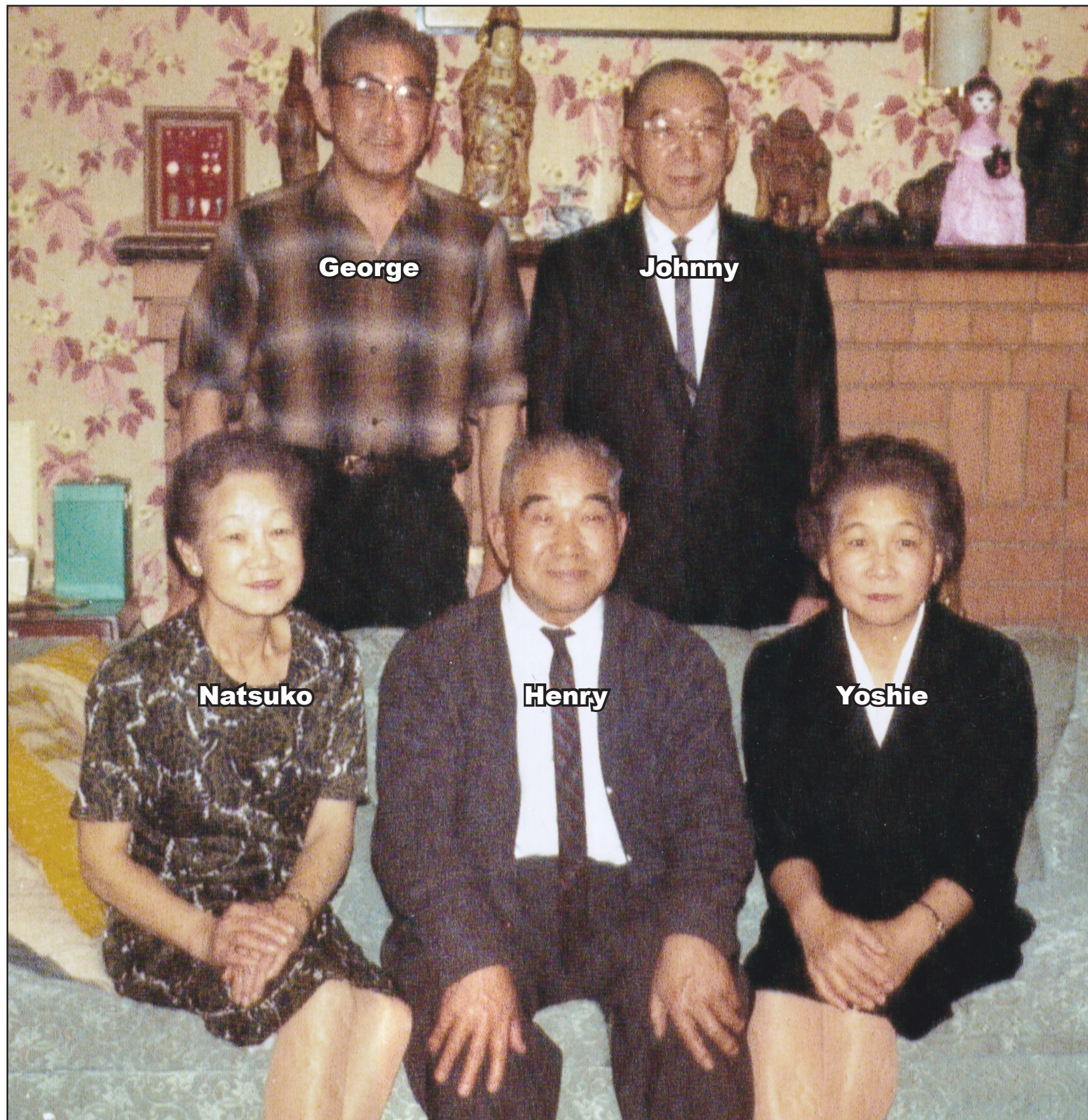
The inmate population that peaked at 4,739 came almost entirely from the Sacramento area, and conflicts and discord within that community came into the camp, where discord between the appointed inmate leadership and the general population emerged.

Inmates also faced particularly poor conditions including pit latrines and buildings that were misshapen due to the uneven ground and poor construction, as well as a camp that was largely unfinished as inmates moved in.

Essentially the entire population of the camp—which was also known as "Walerga"—was transferred to Tule Lake by the end of June 1942.

Courtesy the Densho.org encyclopedia

[https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Sacramento_\(detention_facility\)/](https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Sacramento_(detention_facility)/)



George

Johnny

Natsuko

Henry

Yoshie

Kumagoro Takagi

Born September 27, 1863 Fukuoka, Japan
Died March 3, 1936

Machi Sugimoto Takagi

Born August 3, 1871 Yamaguchi, Japan
Died: January 6, 1941

Children:

Henry Makoto Takagi

Born February 9, 1900 San Francisco, California
Died April 16, 1987

Married Mitsuyo Aihara

DOB: February 20, 1904

Died: May 21, 1946

Natsuko Takagi

Born June 16, 1903

Died April 14, 1992

Married Soichi Nakatani November 7, 1928

Yoshie Takagi

Born April 15, 1909

Died: October 4, 2012

Married Nathan Iwasaki November 12, 1939

Johnny Shigeo Takagi

Born December 5, 1913

Died July 15, 1984

Married Yoshiko Nakamura November 1941

George Noboru Takagi

Born February 20, 1914

Died: August 17, 1996

Married Rose Yaeko Ishimoto 1940