



Oak St, Hood River, OR

Ca. 1906-08

Homer & Miyuki Yasui
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Apt 337
Seattle, WA 98178

Homer
Sunday, June 16, 1991

This photo was given to me by Maija (my niece) around April, 1991. I believe that she made this copy from a picture postcard which is owned by a Mrs. Ruth Guppy of Hood River. This reproduction was made by a laser copy machine.

According to Maija, Mrs. Guppy thought that this picture was taken around 1905, and that the sidewalks, which appear to be made of concrete, were in reality boardwalks. I wouldn't argue about the date of the photograph, but I surely do take exception to those walks being made out of boards—they're concrete.

Since the caption says "Oak Street—Hood River, OR", it has to be a view looking due west. This picture appears to have been taken from just a little west of the curve in the street, where Oak Street bends around to join State Street. The photograph is undated, and the name of the photographer is unknown.

The first building on the right—where the team of horses and a wagon are standing—has a sign on its side, which says "Japanese Store". If Mrs. Guppy is correct in her estimation that this photograph was taken in 1905, and if her story about the Hood River Japanese is accepted, then that store must have been operated by a Taiki Kuma. In her article, which appeared in the "*Panorama '78*" of the *Hood River News*, April 20, 1978, pp. 2,3,4, Guppy said that the first Japanese owner of that store was Kuma, who ran the *Niguma Variety Store*.

I believe that there are some arguable points who ran the store, and when it was opened. The name *Niguma* is well documented in Hood River. There were, in fact, two Nigumas—Chotaro and Motoji—who were brothers. Also in fact, Motoji Niguma's daughter died in Hood River, and was buried in Idlewild Cemetery in 1911. Her headstone is still there.

I wouldn't argue that there was no such person as Taiki Kuma, and that he did work for the Nigumas. But if he did, nobody that I know has ever known of, or has even heard of him. And besides that, Taiki Kuma is a strange-sounding Japanese name, which of course proves nothing.

One of Motoji Niguma's daughters still lives in Portland. She told me last year that her father didn't even come to Oregon until after the San Francisco earthquake—which he personally experienced. If that is so, then at least Motoji Niguma couldn't possibly have arrived in Hood River before 1906. So that leaves the other Niguma—Chotaro. Maybe he was in Hood River in 1905, and maybe Kuma ran that store for him. Also, maybe we'll never know.

In any event, that store which is pictured on the northeast corner of First and Oak Streets, is the *second* store that the Yasui Brothers operated in Hood River. When they bought this depicted store around 1913-1914 from Motoji Niguma, their first store, located between State Street and Oak Street on the west side of Third Street, was relegated to branch status.