

Japanese Immigrants

by Scott Ingram

Excerpt from the chapter titled, “Early Immigrants in the United States”

Although many Japanese immigrants found work in city factories and in construction, many others chose to work on farms. Most had grown up as farmers in Japan or Hawaii, and western states, especially California, offered great farming opportunities. Since many of these immigrants had come from a tradition of working on land owned by others, the possibility of owning and farming land of their own was extremely attractive. The fertile valleys of California offered an almost limitless supply of land and work to eager immigrants.

Many Japanese farmworkers soon became landowners themselves. Japanese workers pooled their money to buy farmland. Japanese immigrants were one of the most successful immigrant groups to combine their individual resources for the benefit of all. Using these resources allowed Japanese immigrants to establish farms on more than 50,000 acres in California by 1904. By 1909, that figure had grown to more than 150,000 acres.

Japanese farmers were extremely efficient and resourceful, using traditional farming techniques that had been successful over the course of many centuries. In the semi-desert area of Florin, California, for example, Japanese Americans found sandy soil ideal for growing grapes and strawberries. They planted strawberries between rows of grapevines. Within the first decades of the 20th century, Japanese farmers became the leading producers of strawberries and grapes.

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