



Street Stories

Hashizume Terrace

GPS: [49.152212,-122.32575](https://www.google.com/maps/place/49.152212,-122.32575)



Tashiro and Etsu with their first born child, Eiichi (John) who was born in 1913 in Mission. In addition to managing the family farm, Tashiro was also actively involved in establishing the Mission Japanese Fruit Growers Association, the Japanese Language School, the Buddhist Church, and later the Japanese United Church.

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“I was a stranger and you took me in,” wrote St. Benedict 1,500 years ago in his book of rules for monks. Read this story and you shall see how one stranger to this land came and found a home.

Tashiro Hashizume was born in Keinan City, Japan on September 11, 1879. Hoping to strike it rich in the new world, he sailed to Victoria in 1903. For the next seven years, he toiled at various jobs and ventures. He fished salmon on the West Coast, worked as a farm laborer, and tried his hand in the import business.

Eventually, Tashiro saved enough money to buy a farm in Alberta. However, this first attempt at farming proved unsuccessful when his crop was destroyed by an early frost. In 1910, not understanding the word ‘quit,’ Hashizume bought an 11-hectare tract of dense bush in Mission at the foot of Mt. Mary Ann. He painstakingly cleared the land and planted strawberries, potatoes, rhubarb, and various fruit trees.

However, Tashiro did not build his farm alone. In 1911 he went back to Japan for a short visit. While there, he met Etsu Yoshitaro, who he married the following year. The couple came to live in Mission, and together they had eight children.

Life in Mission was hard in the begin-

ning for the Hashizume family. Their first home was a mere wooden shack, without electricity, gas, or a phone. When their first child was born in 1913, Tashiro had to deliver it himself, while his wife gave instructions!

He was a progressive thinker who constantly tried new ways to improve his income. Eventually the farm was successful, employing 32 laborers and growing in size. By the time he died in 1938, the farm was 32 hectares.

Yet our tale is not finished. During the Second World War, the Hashizume farm was expropriated by the government and eventually bought by the Catholic Church. On the land that Hashizume had cleared, the Benedictine monastery of Westminster Abbey was built.

Mindful of his family’s roots here, one of Tashiro’s sons—Bill, who lived in Ontario—made regular visits to Mission and played an invaluable role in the preservation of Mission’s Japanese pioneer community. Among his many contributions was the researching and writing of a book titled: *Japanese Community in Mission: A Brief History 1904-1942* which was published in 2003 and may be purchased at the archives.

Street Stories is provided by the Mission Community Archives, which is operated by the Mission Historical Society.

By David Buss; edited with additions by Val Billesberger