



PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF OKEI-SAN AND THE WAKAMATSU COLONISTS

AMERICAN RIVER
CONSERVANCY



Preserving Rivers and Land for Life

A NEWSLETTER OF THE *AMERICAN RIVER CONSERVANCY (ARC)*

August 2014

**150th Anniversary of the Wakamatsu Colony will
be celebrated May 18 to June 18, 2019.
SAVE THE DATE**

ARC and the Japanese-American Community will co-host a 150th Anniversary Celebration of the founding of the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony Farm in Gold Hill on June 18, 1869. It is widely accepted that the Wakamatsu Colony was the first Japanese colony established in the continental United States.

ARC along with its many partners including the Japanese-American Citizens League, the City of Aizu Wakamatsu, the Consulate General's office in San Francisco, the California Rice Commission and the residents of El

Dorado County have worked steadily over the past seven years to protect the 272 acre Colony site and re-dedicate this historic farm to the Waka-

matsu Colonists who first introduced many important agricultural products as well as many culinary and cultural arts to the United States. The American people are grateful for the contributions made by Japan and Japanese American citizens.

The 150th Anniversary event will have a national and international audience and will involve government officials, government agencies,

international trade associations, historical societies and art and cultural performance groups.

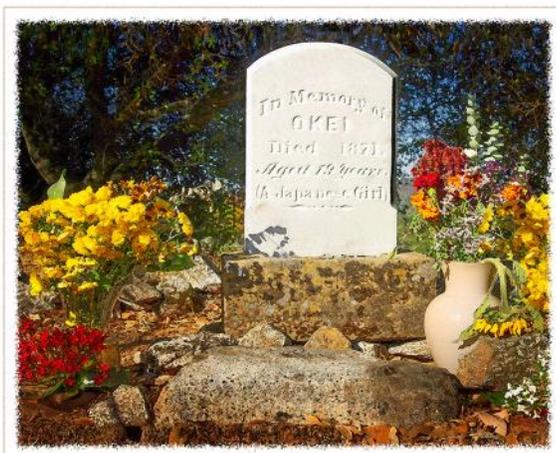
The Wakamatsu Colony site is in a rural area east of Sacramento, California and has limited infrastructure to support an extensive number of visitors. From our experience with the three Wakamatsu festivals in

2011, 2012 and 2013 we believe the site cannot comfortably host more than 2,000 visitors at any given time. Consequently, ARC will extend cultural arts performances, farm and culinary demonstrations and other events over a five week period from May 18, 2019 to June 18, 2019. The farm surroundings are generally green in late May and early June and the climate is still temperate with very little rain.

ARC has begun to plan for this event. Anyone wishing to serve on the planning and development committee for this 150th Anniversary Celebration may contact Alan Ehr Gott, Elena DeLacy or Jennifer Mantei at (530) 295-2190.



Students learning about Okei-san in the Graner House during this year's "El Dorado Reads: Okei-san" event.



Honoring Sally and Henry Takeda



In October, 2013 the American River Conservancy received an extensive collection of Wakamatsu Colony artifacts, articles and research collected over four decades by Sally and Henry Takeda of Sacramento. One item in particular caught our eye. A small doll about 7" high with beautiful silk fabric and a note from Pearl Veerkamp to Sally Takeda, presenting her with a doll from a family trunk containing many of the Wakamatsu Colony artifacts left to the Veerkamp family for safe-keeping. The note from Pearl states that the Veerkamp family believed the doll had been made by Okei. The doll is in remarkable condition and our curators are presently researching the silk cloth and materials to confirm their origin to the 1869-1871 timeframe. The American River Conservancy wishes to recognize the tireless research and record keeping of Sally and Henry Takeda which has kept the history of Okei-San and the Wakamatsu Colony alive for future generations to come.

Introducing the Wakamatsu Curatorial Team

There are two ARC volunteers that deserve a huge pat-on-the-back for the hundreds of hours they have spent researching and cataloging over 1,000 historical artifacts, photos, articles and display items that have been donated to the Wakamatsu Collection. Wendy Guglieri is a genealogist extraordinaire that has spent many hundreds of hours researching Charles Graner, John Henry Schnell, his wife Oyoo, Okei Ito, individual Wakamatsu colonists and the members of the Veerkamp Family. Herb Tanimoto has been very active in leading Wakamatsu Farm Tours. Herb is a retired pharmacist and has both the attention to detail and the patience to conduct detailed historical research on the many hundreds of artifacts entrusted to ARC. Everyone who has an interest in understanding the unique story of the Wakamatsu Colony, from its beginnings in Japan with the Meiji Restoration to the living ancestors of the original Wakamatsu Colonists, we all owe Wendy and Herb a deep sense of gratitude. Thank you Herb and Wendy!





Aizu Clan Banner and Short Sword (c.1930)
Members of the Veerkamp Family and
Sacramento Japanese American Citizen's League (JACL)

ARC Seeks Donations to Match a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Grant

The American River Conservancy recently submitted an NEH grant for a \$1.2 million project to complete the purchase of the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony Farm, install additional restrooms, build a cultural arts stage and complete the restoration of the Graner House to accommodate museum collections and serve as an event center for Wakamatsu Colony visitors. The NEH grant will provide \$300,000 in

grant funding but must be matched with \$900,000 in non-federal funding. All Wakamatsu Colony project supporters are encouraged to make a donation to the American River Conservancy – Wakamatsu Project with as large of an amount as they can comfortably afford. One hundred percent of these donations will be used to complete the purchase of the 272 acre Colony site, and to support the development of needed infrastructure for the 150th Anniversary Celebration in 2019. Thank so very much to all of you who support the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony Farm project!



Graner House restoration, before and after.



Pond on the Wakamatsu property.



Cold Soba Noodles Recipe



This is a local dish of the Wakamatsu region in Japan. "Negi-soba" which are buckwheat noodles, along with leek, grated radish and dried bonito flakes for garnish, is eaten with a thick leek instead of chopsticks.

Ingredients:

- 4 Scallions, thinly sliced
- 5 Medium shallots, peeled and finely sliced
- 2 Tbs. grated, peeled ginger
- 1 Tsp. fine grain sea salt
- 7 Tbs. good sunflower or olive oil
- 12 Oz. extra-firm tofu
- 12 Oz. dried soba noodles
- 1 Radish, peeled, cut into matchsticks
- 1/3 C. toasted pine nuts
- 1 Bunch of chives, minced

Directions: Bring a large pot of water to boil. While you're waiting, place scallions, shallots, and ginger in a mortar and pestle. Sprinkle with salt, pound until everything is quite bruised but not paste-like. Gently heat the oil in a small saucepan. Add the scallion mixture to the oil, remove from heat, and transfer to a jar or bowl to cool.

Drain the tofu, pat it dry, and cut it into matchsticks or 1/2-inch cubes. Cook the tofu, along with a pinch or two of salt, in a well-seasoned skillet over medium-high heat for a few minutes, until the pieces are browned on one side. Add a tiny splash of oil if needed to prevent sticking. Toss gently once or twice, then continue cooking for another minute or so until the tofu is firm, golden, and bouncy.

Salt the boiling water, and cook the soba noodles per package instructions. Drain, rinse under cold water to stop the cooking, and shake off as much water as possible. Toss the noodles with a bit of the oil of the top of the scallion ginger paste at this point so the noodles don't stick down the line.

Serve the soba along with the scallion-ginger paste (you can either toss it with the noodles or serve on the side), top with radish, pine nuts and lots of chives.



Wakamatsu
Colony
Project

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By donating to the Conservancy you have joined in a vision of tomorrow which so many people share: a healthy, vital environment that supports protecting, preserving and reconstructing a historical area with impact to Japan and California. Your support also continues our work in promoting sustainable agriculture at the site of the historic farm.

THIS NEWSLETTER

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