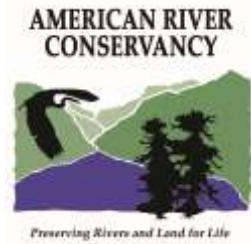




WAKAMATSU FARM NEWS

INFORMATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE

AMERICAN RIVER CONSERVANCY



Spring 2017

And They Crossed the Ocean

By Mariko Nagai

The Aizu clan, led by the Matsudaira family, was one of the most traditional samurai clans in Japan during the Edo period. Bushido, or the code of warriors, was a rigid honor and social code that bound the samurai class to a certain behavioral and ethical system. Loyalty to one's lord was the most important code to live by. On top of the already existing Bushido

code, the Aizu clan had its own ethical rules to live by, called the "15 rules of the clan," of which the first rule was complete obedience and loyalty to the Shogunate family. The other rules touched upon fairness to all, dignity in manner, and reverence toward

the lord and the law. Girls born in the samurai families were taught to fight with spears, and boys learned to fight with swords and to have complete obedience to their lord. This was a martial clan that was completely loyal to the ruling Shogun family during the Edo period.

Commodore Perry's visit in 1853 would ultimately bring this iconic samurai life-style to an end. The Boshin War in 1868 was an all-out war between the clans who supported the old Shogun government and the clans on the side of the new Imperial government. The samurai of the Aizu clan rose up, though outnumbered and lacking the newest rifles and cannons. It did not matter how old they were or whether they were men or women; they were trained from a young age, and they took up arms.

A group of 13-to 17-year-old boys formed the Byakko-tai (the White Tiger unit) to defend the only

path leading to Tsuruga Castle, but they were only armed with ancient rifles and swords. When they saw smoke coming from their castle, they committed suicide rather than having to live in shame and loss. Knowing that their men would not be able to fight if they had to worry about their families, many women killed their children and committed suicide. Probably the most well-known woman warrior was Yae Yamamoto, who fought as a sniper in the besieged castle during the month of bombardment with cannons and

rifles. According to one source, during nearly thirty days of siege, 2,500 cannon balls on average were shot into the castle each day. With people dying, injuries, and food supplies and water running short, Yae ran around eliminating enemies. Whenever cannon balls dropped near

them, other clan women would hug the explosives in their arms with blankets, sometimes blowing themselves up while trying to defuse them.

In the end, nearly 2,560 Aizu warriors, including women, lay dead. Those who survived were labeled traitors and became fugitives hiding out in the mountains. By all accounts, this was one of the bloodiest and most brutal of wars.

The story of Henry Schnell and the Wakamatsu Colony begins nearly two years after the castle's surrender. Also known as Buhei Hiramatsu, he was an arms dealer and advisor to Lord Matsudaira.

(continued on page 2)



The PMSS China that brought the Wakamatsu Colonists to America

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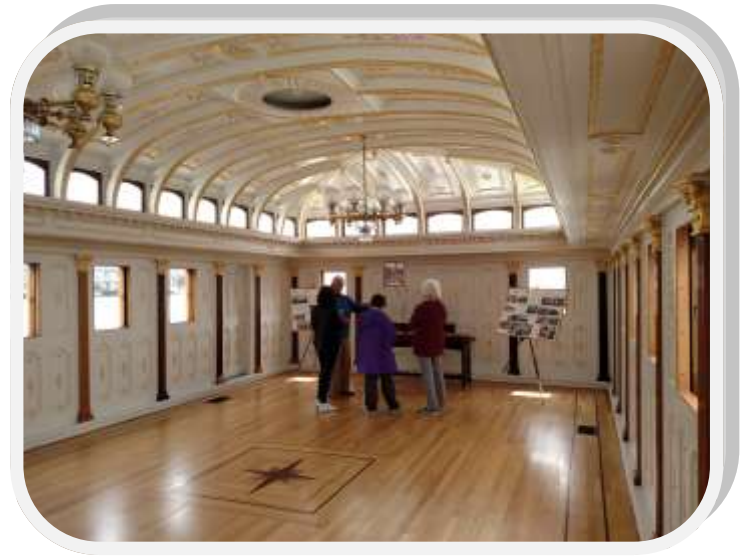
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Schnell managed to secure passages for nearly two dozen people aboard a ship to California, along with several thousand saplings of mulberry and tea trees. His group was one of the many who set out on their own to reclaim the glories for the clan that was no more. Yae Yamamoto, the sniper who fought in the besieged castle, reappeared after several years of silence to start one of the first universities in Japan. Sute-matsu Oyama (nee Yamakawa), who had also been in the besieged castle, was sent by the Emperor as one of five girls to study in America in 1872. She graduated magna cum laude from Vassar College and later became a founder and patron of the Japanese Red Cross and the first college for women in Japan. For many less fortunate clan members, there was no choice but to face exile to Hokkaido to bravely face the brutal northern winter there.

I do not know what Schnell's real intention was before he disappeared from the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony, but I do know this much: at least in the beginning, he cared enough about Lord Matsudaira and the Aizu clan that he gambled everything he had to create a new Aizu-Wakamatsu across the sea. Schnell sheltered, hid, and smuggled refugees out of Japan after the Boshin Civil War. Schnell, Yae Yamamoto, Sute-matsu, the many banished from their Aizu homeland, all continued their journeys after the war's loss. They went to California, to Vassar, and to Hokkaido—as refugees and as immigrants, carrying with them the pride of Aizu-Wakamatsu.

Editor's note: Mariko Nagai is an author and Associate Professor of Japanese Literature and Creative Writing at Temple University, Japan. Her literary credits include *Dust of Eden* and *Irradiated Cities* and currently she is writing a novel about the Wakamatsu Colony.



Wakamatsu docents visit the restored cabin of *PMSS China*, a National Maritime Monument in Tiburon, CA



Save the Date

June 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th in 2019

WakaFest150

Celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Wakamatsu Tea & Silk Farm Colony establishment and Japanese-American heritage.

Featuring Japanese agriculture, cuisine, performing and studio arts, music, dance, and history.

A RC is currently seeking festival sponsors, participants, and volunteer commitments.

Wakamatsu on Camera

by Melissa Lobach



Kuni-san's descendants being photographed

In 2016, Wakamatsu was in the media spotlight covered in three films by three different crews, including two from America and one from Japan. The first crew filmed a small segment about Wakamatsu for the short documentary called "A Neighborhood Lost: Sacramento's Japantown." This 10-minute film summarizes the history of Japanese-American influence in the Sacramento region dating back to its earliest settlers – you guessed it, our own Wakamatsu colonists. Directed by Jeffrey A. Dym, this film premiered during "A Place Called Sacramento" Film Festival in Fall, 2016, and you can find this film now on YouTube.

The second camera crew, led by Rina Nakano of Sacramento's Fox40 News, told a Wakamatsu story focused on colonist Kuninosuke Masumizu and his descendants now living in Northern California.

Titled "Discovering California's Lost Samurai," you can find that exclusive news story on Fox40.com.

The third film crew came all the way from Tokyo to tell Okei-san's American story at Wakamatsu and around El Dorado County. That documentary was released throughout Japan with no English subtitles early in 2017. If you or your friends speak Japanese, maybe you can catch this film and share your thoughts with the ARC.

Authors, film crews, and other promotions frequently contact ARC to share the Wakamatsu story with the world. If 2016 was any indication of future filming at Wakamatsu, more good Wakamatsu news will be filmed and shared leading up to our big 150th Wakamatsu Festival in 2019 and beyond.

Special Note: The Tokyo Broadcasting Service (TBS) filming included a visit to the CA State Parks Statewide Museum Collection Center in Sacramento. The silk banner and tanto sword that John Henry Schnell left behind in 1871 were brought out for display in the cavernous building. Docent Wendy Guglieri lent her expertise by showing astonished reporters the two small blades hidden in the scabbard of the ornate 1354 sword. The young Japanese TV actress reporting for the documentary later said that she was moved to tears when she saw the still beautiful condition of the banner and was allowed to hold the ancient sword that had journeyed from her country's distant past to California with the first Japanese pioneers in North America.



Docent Wendy Guglieri shows the Wakamatsu tanto sword to TBS

El Dorado Arts Council Exhibition

The El Dorado Arts Council unveiled the first exhibition in a new series supported by funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the County of El Dorado, and El Dorado Community Foundation. *TEA/SILK/GOLD: The Enduring Legend of America's First Japanese Colony* opened Friday, March 10 and runs through May 29, at the Fausel House Gallery, showcasing the story of the Wakamatsu Farm. In addition, a special collection of rare Japanese wood block prints, never before seen by the public, has been loaned to the Council by Charles D. Downs, AIA. The exhibition displays 27 works of art, portraits, historic maps and photographs, and other items of interest. The National Endowment for the Arts awarded an Art Works grant of \$20,000 to El Dorado Arts Council for an exhibition series that celebrates the history, heritage, and natural treasures of El Dorado County. The Fausel House Gallery is located at 772 Pacific Street in Placerville, CA.



PAT MONZO

Docent Spotlight

By Satomi Edelhofer

When walking into Pat Monzo's home, one notices the beautiful Japanese doll and kimono displayed. It's not an ornate kimono, but more sturdy and worn daily.

Pat is one of the original Wakamatsu docents of 2011. She first became aware of Wakamatsu through her involvement with the American River Conservancy and the People to People International program (ptpi.org). She knew that it was important for her to volunteer at Wakamatsu. Her eyes lit up as she told me that what she loves most of all is meeting people through the tours from all walks of life, of all ages, and even from different countries. Unexpected doors opened for her as she found new areas of interest. She works in the gardens around the Graner House (original farm house at Wakamatsu) almost weekly. Pat loves to clean. Let me clarify that she *loves to clean other people's homes*. Wouldn't we all love to invite her to our homes? Currently she is also helping in the ARC office where you can also find her surreptitiously cleaning, which is much appreciated by the staff.



Pat loves knowing that there are so many different things that she can do through her involvement with Wakamatsu and ARC. The highlight of her volunteer work is the Okei-san Experience where touring 4th graders learn about Okei-san and the colony's experience in America.

Pat was a friend of Joan Barsotti (see page 7), and Pat helped establish the memorial site which is located near Okei's gravesite. Pat even dared to remove much of the poison oak, only later experiencing its nasty after-effects. She still regularly cleans the site, pulling weeds and raking gravel. A most dedicated and sturdy volunteer, she was recognized as one of two *Volunteers of the Year* in 2012 by the American River Conservancy.

Through the People to People International program, Pat went to Japan twice in 2000 and 2016. She loved both trips, especially the food. She stayed with Japanese families in Warabi, the sister city to Placerville. She also went to Aizu Wakamatsu where Okei-san and the colonists lived, where there is also a memorial for Okei-san. One of the sons of her Japanese host family came to Placerville and was able to stay in Pat's three-generation household during his visit. Her Japanese host family wants her to visit again soon since Pat left their home so shiny and gleaming. Pat has learned so much about Japan, and has tremendous respect for Japanese customs. She shares her knowledge with others; such as, when you receive a business card from a Japanese person, you must not immediately put it away. You hold and admire the card to display gratitude. Pat is also part of the Friends of the Carey House Hotel, where she dresses in period costumes from the 1800's for special events. Placerville, CA is very fortunate to have such a caring person living in the community.

American River Conservancy welcomes groups and individuals excited to participate in WakaFest150!

June 6, 7, 8, 9, 2019 — Japanese-inspired participation is most welcome!

Examples of WakaFest150 Festival Participants:

food vendors, food trucks, food demonstrations and contests,

beverage producers and vendors (alcoholic and non),

Japanese art, books, writing, film-making, performance arts, dance, music,

informational booths, costumes, contests, pageant/parade, and what else?

ARC welcomes other ideas for WakaFest150. What's *your* WakaFest150 gig?



Preserving and Enhancing Wakamatsu

The Keyaki tree (*Zelkova serrata*, or Japanese elm) beside the Graner House is emblematic of the perseverance and fortitude of the pioneers who made America their new home. It was planted by the Japanese colonists in 1869, probably to evoke fond memories of the homeland they left behind. One of the largest and oldest in America, the massive tree is the only living reminder of the Wakamatsu Colony and an important interpretive feature during Farm tours. Due to concerns about moisture within its bark, arborist John Kipping recently examined the historic tree. John found that the tree is healthy, needs a good trim, and the large limb over the house should be cabled to protect the Graner House (AKA “the target.”) The tree also has a fungus that needs to be controlled with good horticultural practices.

Hard work and steady costs are expected when caring for an iconic 147-year-old tree and historic landmark property. Every day, we are reminded that preservation and restoration requires sacrifice and investment in our future. To this end, a number of enhancement projects are completed, underway, or planned. Our Northern California wet winter brought on the installation of central heating and air conditioning in the 164 year-old Graner House – for the first time in history. The scenic 1.5-mile lake loop trail is nearly ready for its grand opening. A new storage shed has been built to contain furniture for future events. The fence around the Keyaki garden is complete. Near the main parking lot, a new restroom facility is in the design phase.

Wakamatsu maintenance is also ongoing. ARC is grateful for the many dedicated volunteers who manage this hard work. The garden committee gathers each week to beautify the landscape around the Graner House. Volunteers help maintain the native plant nursery, orchard, and Giving Garden. Docent-led tours and tabling events consistently raise funds and community awareness. Author and docent Herb Tanimoto donates all profits from his novel, *Keiko's Kimono*, to the Wakamatsu fund. A volunteer-driven event, the first Wakamatsu Kite Festival will be held during Open Farm Day on Saturday, June 3rd, to raise money needed to care for the Keyaki tree. Most days, volunteers are at the farm or in the community lending their eager helping hands.

A non-profit organization, ARC remains dedicated to preserving and enhancing Wakamatsu Farm. The future of Wakamatsu is a self-sustaining destination farm and event center enjoyed by the community and visitors from around the world. While adapting to the changing demands of the property, ARC continues to seek funding to finance maintenance and restoration projects. ARC looks forward to future contributions from all who appreciate the historical and cultural significance of the land and watershed that sustained the first Japanese colony in America.



Arborist John Kipping, Alan Ehrgott, and Carl Allyn examining the historic keyaki tree



Photo by Betty Sederquist

Wakamatsu Open Farm Days

Visit the Farm at your leisure.

1st Saturdays of Spring & Fall, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Don't miss Wakamatsu's 148th Anniversary Observance on June 3rd, 2017, Open Farm Day, including a Kite Festival!

Kites – Food – Beer – Fun

See ARC's website for schedule of Open Farm Days and Public Tours.

ARC conservancy.org/events or call 530-621-1224 for private tours

Open Farm Day Prices: \$10/car (additional for vans & buses)

Tour Prices: \$10/person, \$5/child 10-17

Honoring Matsunosuke Sakurai

By Herb Tanimoto



Matsunosuke portrait, date and photographer unknown

American River Conservancy plans to honor Matsunosuke Sakurai at the 2019 Wakamatsu Farm Festival. He was a samurai in service to Lord Matsudaira of Aizu, Japan, who came to California with John Henry Schnell to help establish the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony.

After two years, the colony faltered and most of the colonists left, leaving only Matsu and his friend, Okei, at the Veerkamp ranch. When Okei died in 1871, he saved and collected funds for 15 years to purchase an enduring stone marker, ensuring that she, and the Wakamatsu story, would never be forgotten.

Matsu began his next life as a foreman in the Veerkamp family's fruit and produce business. He was a distribution manager responsible for the western part of California to San Francisco, a task he performed with his usual fortitude. In addition, Veerkamp lore says that he managed to find time to become a wonderful gardener around the farmhouse. This was to be his life for 30 years.

Veerkamp family members tended to his needs when he became ill. At his death in 1901, a respectful service and burial at the Coloma Cemetery was arranged. A simple marker was placed on a sturdy oak tree by his grave. Unfortunately, the tree fell down and the location became lost in the intervening years. The samurai who had made sure that Okei's resting place was not forgotten would himself become forgotten.

Then, in 2014, American River Conservancy volunteers were interviewing 94-year-old Pearl Butler, a descendant of Egbert and Mary Veerkamp. Egbert had worked closely with Matsu on the farm. Pearl remembered that her father, Adolph, told her how he had taken bowls of steamed rice up to Matsu's cabin during his illness. Adolph had then been 7 years-old. Pearl then astonished the interviewers by saying that her father had also pointed out the location of Matsunosuke's grave to her. ARC volunteers immediately went to work, acquiring a GPR survey map of the Coloma Cemetery. After two more interviews with Pearl, ARC is now planning to identify and mark Matsunosuke's gravesite for the first time in more than 100 years.

In addition to his resting place in the cemetery, a memorial will be placed on the Wakamatsu Farm where he devoted so many years of his life. ARC reached out to the Okei-san Society in Aizu-Wakamatsu to have appropriate Japanese lettering inscribed on the plaque. A dedication ceremony for the memorial is planned during the 2019 Festival.

ARC wishes to thank Pearl Butler for her unfaltering memory and the Butler family for allowing us to conduct the interviews. Also, thanks to Wendy Guglieri, Alan Ehrgott, and Martha DeHaas for their help. It has been a great privilege for all of us to honor Matsunosuke Sakurai, samurai and pioneer of the Wakamatsu Colony.



Matsunosuke standing in front of the first Veerkamp farmhouse.



New Wakamatsu Novel Released

Keiko's Kimono is a new historic fiction novel written by docent and historian, Herb Tanimoto. He uses information gathered from historical resources, and many hours spent at the historic Wakamatsu Farm, to weave a compelling and heartfelt vision of what life might have been like for the first Japanese settlers in North America. The book is available at the ARC Nature Center, at the Coloma museum gift shop, and will soon be available at Placerville bookstores. Herb is donating all profits to the Wakamatsu Farm project.

The ARC extends a very special thanks to author Herb Tanimoto for his ongoing generosity, and for his editorial and organizational help with this newsletter.

Behind The Story of Okei-san And The El Dorado Reads Okei-san Project

By Cathy Barsotti

Our mom finished the second edition of her book *Okei-san, A Girl's Journey, Japan to California, 1869-1871* in August of 2010. While she loved doing the additional research, she was even more excited to have finished it. The book, technically historical fiction, was inspired by true events that happened here, in our own El Dorado County. But then the most unexpected thing happened. She passed away and never saw the printed version. It took some time, but we finally had the book typeset and printed. We thought she would have liked that, so it could be shared with the children of El Dorado County.

With the help of Myrna Hanses and Emogene Haller, *El Dorado Reads Okei-san* and *The Okei-san Experience Field Trip* were born. Today, with help from Mindy Barsotti, Carol and Pat Nordquist, and over 55 other volunteers, this field trip has grown into something quite special. We coordinate the program through four local organizations, including the El Dorado County Office of Education, El Dorado Community Foundation, People To People International, and the American River Conservancy.

Initially in 2012, the experience was a "book club style" read offered to 83 fourth grade classrooms in El Dorado County. The County Office of Education helped create the Reader's Guide, making it possible to send both a guide and 1,088 books to the schools. The second year we decided to include a field trip at the Wakamatsu site, called "The Okei-san Experience."

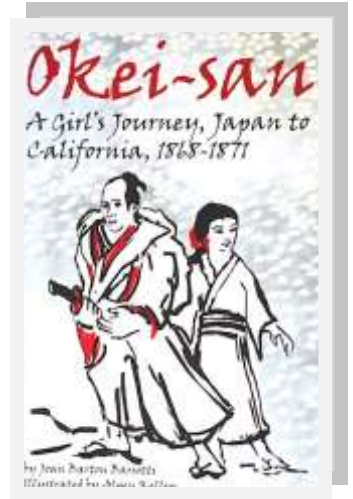
We work closely with ARC to prepare the farm for the field trip and provide a donation to cover the cost of necessary maintenance and site improvements that are needed each year. Eight learning stations, hosted by experts, are positioned in key areas around the property beginning at the Graner House and extending to Okei's gravesite on top of the knoll.

In 2013, we hosted 147 students on the site. Since then, 835 students from 14 schools have experienced the field trip. Currently, we are planning the fifth annual field trip and expecting 223 students from four schools. In addition to the eight learning stations, the students, parents, teachers, and all volunteers will experience a Japanese O-bento lunch while enjoying performances of Japanese taiko drummers and a demonstration of Japanese martial arts.

To provide students with the best possible experience, we now limit the number of students to approximately 200 within two overlapping presentations. Each year, we invite all teachers to apply for a grant to cover all expenses. The grant will reimburse schools for the transportation and any other expenses associated with the field trip.

The specific grant for the field trip is provided by the Joan Barsotti Memorial Fund. Our family had arranged a fund through the El Dorado Community Foundation in our mom's name that we intended to use for things that might make a positive impact on the lives of kids in our county. The fund grew from community donations, along with a generous donation from the California Retired Teachers Association El Dorado Chapter – Division 73 in 2015. This has enabled us to keep improving on the experience for the students, and continue to offer it each year.

This program is successful only because of the help of the many volunteers, most of which are active members in our local People to People Chapter, who assist as station presenters, student group leaders, parking attendants, set up, clean up and the chuck wagon crew. Thankfully, these events have been recorded by photographer, Laurie Edwards, who has spent hours hauling equipment up and down the hills trying to capture every smile, laugh, gasp and giggle expressed by the students and adult volunteers throughout the day. We think our mom would have been smiling too.



MEET THE FARMERS



Leased from ARC at Wakamatsu Farm, Free Hand Farm is run by Spencer and Melissa Tregilgas, with help from daughters Molly, Adele, and Maxine. They use planned animal impact to increase soil biology and begin the cycle of nutrient uptake and exchange between plants, soil life, and animals. They offer raw milk, 100% grass-fed lamb and beef, pastured eggs, and pastured pork. Meat is available by the cut on-farm, as well as eggs. Raw milk is available through a cooperative program called a "herdshare." They also sell wool and wool products from their sheep. Please email or call for more information: freehandfarm@gmail.com or 530-295-9458.

Also located at Wakamatsu Farm, the Bear & The Bee is a certified organic farm that produces a wide variety of seasonal vegetables. We have an on-site, self-serve farm stand where we sell our produce, as well as other locally produced food items. Our farm stand will be open Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 10:00am - 5:00pm starting in June, 2017. Check our website, thebearandthebeefarm.com, as well as our social media accounts, for up-to-date farm happenings and veggie offerings.



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