WAKAMATSU FARM AND THE BIRTH OF JAPANESE AMERICA

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The large Japanese American population in California has played a major role in the history of the state. Its presence began with the establishment of the Wakamatsu Tea & Silk Farm Colony during 1869 in northern California in an area called Gold Hill, near Coloma, in a town named Placerville. The colony survived for a scant two years, but it served as the harbinger for the immigration of hundreds of thousands of Japanese who began arriving in the 1880s. Today Wakamatsu Farm is owned and preserved by the American River Conservancy (ARC), which bought the property in 2010 as an important historical site and community resource.

Congresswoman Doris Matsui has declared that "To many Japanese Americans, the Wakamatsu Colony is as symbolic as Plymouth Rock was for American colonists." Small numbers of Japanese had visited the United States prior to the opening of the Colony, but the Wakamatsu venture was the first serious attempt to create a large self-sustaining Japanese enclave before the initial large waves of Japanese immigration in the mid-1880s. Today, Wakamatsu Farm is an important center for pilgrimages by Japanese Americans to honor their ancestors and for the study of the huge contributions people of Japanese ancestry have made in North America since the colony was established in 1869.

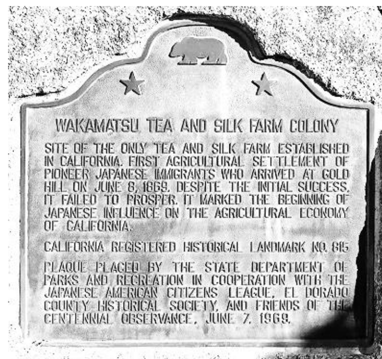

Figure 1. Historical Marker for the Wakamatsu Colony Unveiled by Governor Ronald Reagan in 1969

The Wakamatsu Colony, including at least 22 workers from Japan, is historically important for a number of reasons. First, they established the largest Japanese enclave in the United States before the start of massive Japanese immigration in the mid-1880s. Second, they were the first group of Japanese who planned to settle permanently in North America. Third, they were the vanguard of Issei (first-generation Japanese immigrants) to the United States. Fourth, they set the pattern for Japanese agricultural activity that, by the early 1900s, made the Japanese a dominant force in Californian agriculture.

The Wakamatsu Colony, despite its ultimate failure, demonstrated that Japanese tea could be grown in California. During the Colony's time at the Placerville farm, Jou Schnell, the Japanese wife of the Wakamatsu Colony's founder, John Henry Schnell (born in the early 1840s) gave birth to the first child of Japanese parentage in North America. Okei Ito (1852–1871), a young woman brought over to care for the daughters of the Schnells, became the first Japanese woman and immigrant to die in the United States and be buried on American soil, where she still rests in peace at Wakamatsu Farm.

Research on the history of Wakamatsu Farm is difficult because of the paucity of written records. Neither John Henry Schnell nor any of the Japanese workers left any records of their motivations in coming to California, what they did while there, and what had been their life history before coming to California. We have identified a handful of the workers and can trace the evolution of their lives, but the identity and history of most of the workers remains a mystery. The best source material consists of many articles in contemporary northern California newspapers. American journalists were very curious about the Japanese colonists, and they gave the Wakamatsu Colony Farm considerable coverage. The problem is that the journalists always talked to Schnell and not the Japanese workers.

There is a legend that many of the Japanese workers were from the samurai class. This is impossible to verify because there are insufficient details concerning the identity of the workers, but the U.S. Census of 1870 does provide some clues. It lists 22 Japanese with Schnell in the Gold Hill District of Coloma, including 14 men, six women and two children. Their occupations are listed as carpenters and farm workers, which in most cases is probably accurate. It is entirely possible, however, that one or more of the Japanese were indeed of samurai rank, but we cannot be absolutely sure.

A final group of Japanese, perhaps numbering up to ten, arrived during the summer or autumn of 1870 after the census. Even though the

number of Japanese colonists remained small, this was the largest known group of Japanese in the United States at that time and the first group that came with the intention of making their permanent home in the U.S.

The Isolationist Policies of the Tokugawa Regime and the Collapse of the Shogunate

To understand the significance of the Wakamatsu colony, it is important to understand political conditions in nineteenth century Japan, as it was a nation in crisis since the mid-1800s. A group of young and highly nationalistic samurai from western Japan successfully challenged the power of the ruling Tokugawa Shogunate (1600–1868) when Western powers led by the United States forced Japan to open its doors to Western influence and commerce in the 1850s and 1860s. The Japanese refugees who came to live and work at the Wakamatsu Colony in America were most likely refugees from the Aizu domain in northern Japan which had fought unsuccessfully against the new imperial government.

While hundreds of thousands of Chinese had been fleeing their strife-torn land for such destinations as Southeast Asia, Hawaii and North America since the early 1800s, Japan's Tokugawa government had successfully isolated Japan from almost all contact with the outside world. The Shogunate forbade the entry of foreigners, and Japanese were not allowed to leave their home islands. This closed-door policy enabled Japan to maintain its independence and domestic peace for well over two centuries.

This isolationist doctrine remained in place until Commodore Matthew Perry and his fleet of American naval ships forced the Japanese to open several ports to U.S. trade in 1853–1854. Growing numbers of Europeans and Americans began entering Japan in the 1850s, 1860s, and beyond, but the prohibition of free Japanese travel abroad remained in force through the mid-1880s. After 1868, the Tokugawa government and its successor, the Meiji government, permitted officials to travel to Europe and North America through to the 1880s, but their numbers remained quite small. Some of the early visiting Japanese in Hawaii and the United States were fishermen whose boats had drifted far out to sea and who were rescued by ships from the West. As one Hawaiian official noted as late as 1881, "The

Japanese are not an emigrating people." That is why an attempt to create a Japanese colony in California in 1869 is so significant.[1]

The reasons for the founding of the Wakamatsu Colony and the later massive emigration from Japan are very different. The forced opening of Japan in the 1850s brought on a profound political crisis for the Tokugawa government. Its inability to fend off the West while allowing foreigners to live and work in Japan caused groups of highly nationalist samurai officials, many from western Japan, to openly challenge the Shogunate. They advocated the creation of a new stronger national government, based on direct rule by the Emperor and his officials, that could withstand the challenge from the West.

The nationalist groups formed a powerful army around the teenage Emperor Meiji and forced the Shogun, his government, and his army to surrender in early 1868 after several years of hard fighting. The new regime inaugurated the Meiji era (1868–1912) that brought about the intensive modernization and transformation of Japan into a powerful military and industrial complex by the early twentieth century. However, despite the Shogun's resignation and collapse of his government and army in early 1868, a coalition of Northern provinces remained loyal to the Tokugawa regime. They opposed the new Meiji government and decided to resist the new imperial army.

The strongest of the Northern provinces resisting the new Meiji government was Aizu. Aizu's governor (*daimyo*) was Katamori Matsudaira (1835–1893) whose base was at Tsuruga Castle in the town of Wakamatsu. Aizu had a proud military tradition. Clan lord Matsudaira and his small samurai army were determined to continue the fight against the Meiji government. Because the Meiji army had access to ample supplies of modern weapons, it had a strong advantage against domains such as Aizu. Since the Aizu samurai lacked modern guns and cannons, they turned to two German arms dealers, John Henry Schnell and his brother Edward (c. 1840-?) who supplied them with a large cache of weaponry, including remnants from the American civil war.

Matsudaira was one of the Schnell's best customers and the brothers also trained the Aizu samurai in the use of these modern guns and cannons.

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[1] For a detailed history of Japanese emigration during this period, see John E. Van Sant, *Pacific Pioneers: Japanese Journeys to America and Hawaii, 1850-80.*

Matsudaira's relationship with John Henry Schnell was close enough that he gave him an honorary Japanese name which included two of the same kanji (Chinese characters) in Matsudaira's name. John Henry married a Japanese samurai class woman (named Jou[2]) with whom he had two daughters by 1870, including Mary Schnell who was born at Wakamatsu Farm in 1870.

The Boshin civil war of 1868–1869 involved a large well-armed imperial army marching north of Tokyo to attack the Tokugawa regime supporters one by one. The imperial army attacked Matsudaira's forces in October 1868, quickly laying siege to the town of Wakamatsu and firing endless rounds of cannon fire into Tsuruga Castle. Matsudaira gathered approximately 5,000 people in Tsuruga Castle, including 1,000 elderly, women, and children, and continued their resistance as the castle was sieged by the troops of the new imperial government.

Figure 2. Tsuruga Castle in Aizu-Wakamatsu

Casualties were high on both sides, but by early November 1868, it became clear to Matsudaira that he had to surrender. By then much of Aizu lay in ruins, and villages and farms were totally destroyed. The Meiji government forced many Aizu survivors to march north to barren regions, where they had to fend for themselves during a bitter cold winter. The Matsudaira was quickly condemned to death on a charge of treason and held in prison, but the Meiji government soon decided that killing him would make him a martyr. Instead, he was stripped of his wealth and power,

[2] Mrs. Schnell is also referred to as Oyoo.

received a pardon, and spent the rest of his days as a priest at the Toshogu Shrine at Nikko where the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate is interred.

John Henry Schnell's Plan for a Tea and Silk Farm in California

The privileged position of western people in early Meiji Japan may have saved the Schnell brothers from severe punishment for their assistance to domains like Aizu that had resisted the new imperial government. We know little about the life of Edward, except that he was a map maker and may have continued working in Japan. John Henry probably concluded that he had no occupational future in Japan, although his relations with the new government are unclear. It was probably at this point that he decided on a bold move to start a farm in California, staffed by workers from Japan, that would produce tea and silk for the American market.

Although Wakamatsu Farm was the first Japanese colony in North America, it seems that the scheme was directed by John Henry. It is likely that he conceived the idea, recruited the Japanese workers, bought agricultural supplies to bring to California, financed the transport of Japanese, bought the land at Gold Hill, and directed all the operations from June 1869 to June 1871. Indications are that Lord Matsudaira also supported the venture as a potential retreat for himself, although to what extent is not known.

John Henry's plan to create a silk and tea farm in California was most likely a response to widespread interest in creating a vast silk industry in that state. A few years earlier, a French producer of silk came to California preaching the idea that California was better suited than France for the growth of a sericulture industry. The California State Legislature adopted a program in the mid-1860s that would pay a bounty of $250 for every farmer who had a plantation of 5,000 mulberry trees at least two years old and $300 for 100,000 merchantable cocoons produced. These bounties encouraged the planting of trees and the production of cocoons. According to one report in 1869, there were over ten million mulberry trees in various stages of growth in central and southern California, which reportedly put a strain on the finances of the state government. However, a severe drought around 1870 and a lack of any palpable demand for cocoons led to a strong downturn in the silk industry by the early 1870s.

There was also considerable interest in promoting the production of tea in California. Imported Japanese and Chinese teas unloaded in San Francisco then shipped by rail to the East coast suggested the state might benefit from the domestic production of such types of teas. There was also a

bounty offered by the state government to those farmers who would attempt the cultivation of tea plants. However, both the silk and tea bounties were rescinded by the state legislature in 1870, merely a year after the Wakamatsu Colony was established.

Since he left no written record of any kind, we can only speculate what went through Schnell's mind when he developed plans to open a tea and silk farm in California. There is no record of his having visited California before the Spring of 1869, and there is no record of what he read or heard about the geography and state of agriculture there. It may have occurred to Schnell that the growing demand for tea and silk in the United States caused a rise of Japanese exports of those products. Therefore, if he could open a farm producing those goods and could persuade a team of experienced Japanese workers to work on his farm, he could sell his products directly to the American market at prices lower than the imported goods from Japan.

Travel to California

John Henry, his wife Jou, their infant daughter Frances, and six Japanese left Yokohama on the PMSS China and arrived in San Francisco on May 20, 1869. Because the presence of Japanese in the United States was such a rarity at that point in history, and no Japanese had ever come with the intention of settling in the U.S., the first Japanese Colonists' arrival attracted the attention of local newspapers.

Despite the strong anti-Chinese prejudice that was evident in California since the start of the Gold Rush, the Japanese at the Wakamatsu colony received a warm welcome from journalists and the public in general. The sentiments of a July 1869 writer for the Daily Alta California were widespread:

> The Japanese are as intelligent as we are. They are brave, industrious and economical. They have a sort of cooperative principal which maintains the dignity of labor and takes away its subservience. They will win universal respect by a sort of heathenish habit they have of minding their own business.

An article in the California Alta Daily News of 27 May 1869 stated:

> Arrival of Japanese Immigrants
> Three Japanese Families—Thirty More Coming Soon—Probability That The Defeated Prince Will Follow—Japan No Home For Them Since the Civil War

> A Prussian gentleman, Herr Schnell by name, who for ten years lived in the northern part of Japan, has landed in San Francisco with three Japanese families. These three families form the advance guard of a group of forty families now on its way to this port. Eighty more families are to follow, making a total of 120 families and 400 persons coming to California to establish a permanent colony here.
>
> Most of them are silk producers, while some are cultivators of tea. They have brought with them 50,000 three-year-old kuwa trees, which are used in the production of high-quality silk…Besides these, 500 three-year-old, five feet saplings of the wax tree and six million tea seeds are coming later…These Japanese, far from being serfs, are free people. Should the prince of Aizu come, many more immigrants and their families are due to follow….
>
> The whole Japanese party is dignity incarnate. By their nature they are a people who will put up with no insult or deception; that must always be borne in mind. It is dangerous to treat Japanese in the same fashion as Chinese. With their industry and highly developed skills, they have come with their families to help develop our resources.

Schnell's wife Jou also received considerable adulation in the press. They wrote that she had a "refined delicacy, very pretty forms and features, and a very winning address," and that she was seen as being most "healthy, frugal, industrious and very affectionate."[3] This is the only time we hear of any commentary about Mrs. Schnell and direct communication may have been difficult given the probable language barrier. The newspaper article quoted here promised a large influx of Japanese, including the former daimyo, Matsudaira. We know that six came with the Schnells in May 1869, and that there were 22 when the 1870 census was taken a year later. A few more Japanese arrived in late summer or autumn 1870, but there were never more than 30 or 35 Japanese in the colony. There were no other

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[3] *California Alta Daily News*, May 27, 1869.

concentrations of Japanese as large as the group from Wakamatsu in 1870 elsewhere in the United States.

The Colonists had labor contracts signed in Japan committing them to work for the Schnells for a small monthly wage. We know nothing about these contracts, but one contemporary newspaper stated that the amount paid to each worker was four dollars a month, a wage far below the cost of living in California at that time. The same paper indicated that some of the Japanese workers left Schnell's employ in early 1871 with hopes of finding higher pay elsewhere.

Settling in at Gold Hill

John Henry acted quickly upon arrival in San Francisco to find a permanent home. He negotiated a purchase of a 160-acre farm at Gold Hill near Placerville and Coloma in El Dorado County whose owner, Charles Garner, had placed his land on the market to realize his desire to move to San Francisco. The purchase price was $5,000. Schnell gave a down payment of $500 and signed a promissory for the rest, and then quickly boarded his group on the PMSS China, which took them to San Francisco. They then took a steamer to Sacramento where they procured enough wagons to take them and their goods the last 40 miles to Gold Hill. According to California Registered Historical marker #815, the colonists arrived at Gold Hill on June 8, 1869.

We must rely on contemporary newspaper accounts to trace the history of the Wakamatsu colony from June 1869 to June 1871 when Schnell and his family left Gold Hill never to be heard from again. These journalists focused on the progress that the colonists were making in planting and caring for their crops, but we hear nothing concerning the management, distribution of labor or the day-to-day operation of the colony. We know that they made a quick recovery from their arduous journey from Japan to Gold Hill. They planted extensive areas of tea seedlings and mulberry trees that had been grafted and shipped from Japan.

Initial newspaper reports of the colony's progress were quite positive. Six weeks after the tea seedlings were planted, they were "up to a finger's height." Three months later Schnell displayed some of their agricultural products, including tea, other plants, and fine cocoons at the California State Agricultural Fair in Sacramento. That summer, a reporter from the Placerville Mountain Democrat visited the colony at nearby Gold Hill and wrote that he saw tea plants that were in "vigorous health." Later visits generated a report that the colony's mulberry trees appeared to be in good health, that tea plants had adapted well to the soil and climate, and that

the silk worms were larger and had a brighter color than similar worms elsewhere.

A reporter for the Daily Morning Call who visited the Farm in January 1870 wrote:

> Here I saw, for the first time in my life, the tea-plant in growth. From the experiments thus far made, Mr. Schnell is convinced that the problem of tea culture in California is solved, and there is no longer doubt but as we can raise as good teas here as are produced in China and Japan. The few plants which I saw were only an experimental crop, planted in July [1869], when the ground was dry, hard and parched, raised under the most dis-advantageous circumstances, in one of the driest seasons ever known, but show all the signs of a healthy and vigorous condition.

Schnell and two unnamed colonists attended the 1870 Horticultural Fair in San Francisco and entered some of their products in the prize competition. An article in the June 1870 issue of the San Francisco Call took note:

> Herr Schnell of the Japanese Colony in Gold Hill, El Dorado County makes a fine display of Japanese plants, grown from imported shrubs and seeds. Among his articles are fine healthy tea plants, which were planted on March 14, 1870 last. These plants are about four inches high and are vigorous and healthy. He also exhibited samples of rice plants and a specimen of the Japanese pepper tree.

Additional news articles reported good progress in the production of tea plants and other crops, but there were occasional comments concerning the many tea plants that had perished due to the prolonged drought that affected the region. It is apparent that Schnell was able to grow a few "experimental" tea plants and the like but was unable to produce these crops on a large scale – a factor that would lead to the dissolution of the colony in June 1871.

Figure 3. The farm house at Gold Hill used by the Wakamatsu Colony from 1869 to 1871

The End of the Colony

The Wakamatsu Tea & Silk Farm Colony ceased operations in June 1871, just two years after it began. There were numerous reasons for the unsuccessful end of this venture including a prolonged drought, a lack of funding to keep the project afloat, contaminated water that killed the young plants, and perhaps too small a workforce to work the land.

Contemporary journalists visiting the farm in 1870 and 1871 viewed first-hand the awful effects of a prolonged California drought. Schnell and his Japanese workers were accustomed to a moist Japanese climate in Aizu with cold winters filled with snow and rainy humid summers. The climate in California is much different, with moist winters and long, hot, dry summers. The reporters described how most of the tea plants simply withered away in the intense summer heat and that few plants ultimately survived. While Schnell had initially resisted irrigating crops, the drought made it necessary for him to purchase water from a local mining ditch. This water contained

large amounts of the contaminant iron sulfate, which coated and ultimately killed many of the remaining plants.

Financial difficulties also helped to doom the colony. The fact that Schnell purchased the land with a down payment of only $500 and signed a promissory note for the rest of the $5,000 is an indication that his finances may have been stretched. He may have hoped to get some bounty money for his tea and silk operations from the state, but those payments dried up by 1870. Another severe blow probably came when the former daimyo Matsudaira was released from captivity by the Meiji government with the condition that he surrender all his wealth.

There was also the question of payments to Schnell's Japanese workers. The farm would have been a severe drain on funding with little immediate return on the investment. Newspapers reported a drain of workers who, by spring 1871, were leaving the colony in search of better paying work elsewhere in California. When Schnell made his departure, many of the Japanese workers had probably already left. We know very little about the Japanese workers and how they felt about Schnell and working on the farm. After leaving, some found employment elsewhere in America and others returned to Japan.

Two of the Japanese, Okei Ito (Okei-san; c. 1852–1871) and Matsunosuke Sakurai (c. 1834–1901) remained at the farm site and were soon taken in by the nearby large Veerkamp family, who acquired the Wakamatsu Farm property by 1873. The Veerkamps were fond of their Japanese friends, regarding them as family. Shortly after joining them, Okei-san, whom they treated like a daughter, developed a fever and died at age nineteen. Matsunosuke, however, lived with the Veerkamps until his death in 1901. He became their valued employee as a gardener and produce marketer in San Francisco.

Another colonist, Masumizu Kuninosuke (also known as "Kuni") moved to Coloma and became a farmer and miner. He married Carrie Wilson, a woman of African and American Indian descent in 1877, and they moved to Sacramento to raise a family. Kuni died at age 66 in 1915 and was buried in a cemetery in Colusa, California. Kuni's family is the first Japanese, African American, and Native American family in world history, and some of his descendants still visit Wakamatsu Farm on occasion.

Okei-san, who as a youth had lived in Aizu, had spent her time looking after the two small Schnell daughters until the Schnells departed and left her behind. She is said to have spent many evenings walking to a nearby knoll north of the main farm house to watch the sun setting in the direction

of her homeland, Japan. When she died, the Veerkamp family buried her on the knoll she loved to visit. Matsunosuke saved enough money to eventually purchase a headstone to honor her grave. The original headstone cracked with age and has been replaced by an exact replica that remains on her grave site today.

Okei-san's grave is the first burial site of a Japanese woman and immigrant on American soil. To this day, Japanese, Japanese-Americans and other visitors travel to Okei-san's grave to pay respects to the girl from Japan who was never able to see her family and homeland again. As a tribute to her life and loss, an exact replica of Okei-san's headstone sits at the top of Mount Seaburi in Aizu Wakamatsu, where it is visited by travelers in Japan.

Okei-san and the Symbolic Importance of Wakamatsu Farm

Anthropologist Margaret Mead[4] stressed that every defined culture has its own creation myth and heroic personages who played key roles in the founding of the cultural group. The Bible has its Genesis, and Japan has its Izanagi-no-Okami. Japanese-Americans were the largest Asian cultural group in the United States for much of the twentieth century. Many of the Japanese-Americans feel that Wakamatsu Farm is the symbolic point of origin for Japanese America and that Okei-san is a symbol of the early pioneer spirit that allowed for the creation of Japanese America.

There is little connection between the Japanese who worked at Wakamatsu Farm between 1869–1871 and the tens of thousands of Japanese who began immigrating to North America every year starting in the mid-1800s. But when the original Issei population attained old age in the early 1920s, a number of Issei historians researched and later wrote comprehensive histories of the Japanese presence in North America. Some California Issei heard rumors of the Wakamatsu Tea & Silk Farm Colony, so they went to Gold Hill to investigate. It was there that they learned of the history of the ill-fated colony and discovered the grave of Okei-san.

These Issei histories, some published in the late 1920s and early 1930s, designated the Wakamatsu Colony as the point of origin for Japanese America. Okei-san became a symbol of the early settlers, a virtuous young woman who led the way for other Japanese pioneers whose hard work and dedication won them the admiration of later immigrants from Japan. These historians created their own version of Okei-san. She became a romantic hero

[4] Interview with Margaret Mead, November 1971.

in their eyes. As the first Japanese woman to die in North America, her pure young virginal state, short life and early death enhanced her status as a pioneer hero. Later ethnic Japanese began to monumentalize her gravesite as a key element of Japanese in America. Groups of ethnic Japanese started to clear away the brush around the grave and made the fading inscription more legible by adding black ink. At the biannual convention of the Japanese American Citizens League in 1934 near San Francisco, representatives voted to "beautify the grave of Miss Okei, the first Japanese woman pioneer." Setting up a special fund, they proclaimed, "Miss Okei has carved a niche in the memory of her contemporaries and her posterity. Her name is now tradition, an inspiration that has guided others to pioneer along the same lines."

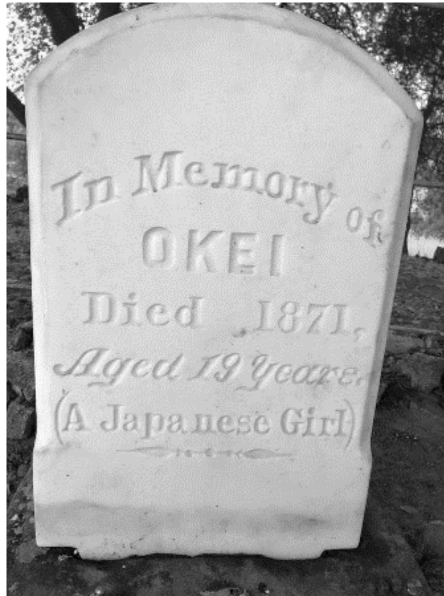

Figure 4. Grave Stone of Okei Ito (1852–1871) at Gold Hill

It is in this way that Wakamatsu Farm and Okei-san have become symbols of the founding of Japanese America and the site of frequent pilgrimages by ethnic Japanese and Japanese Americans.

Wakamatsu Farm Since 1871

After the neighboring Veerkamp family acquired the Wakamatsu Farm property, Francis Veerkamp and his six surviving sons abandoned any type of tea and silk cocoon cultivation. Instead, the Veerkamps grew fruit, grains, nuts, cattle, swine and poultry. Their descendants maintained successful farming operations on the property for over 130 years. They used the land to support a dairy for many decades. Maintained as their own private property, few knew the significant history of the Veerkamp's beautiful, rolling farm land in the heart of Gold Hill. Fortunately, the Veerkamp family preserved Okei-san's grave marker and a few precious artifacts, thus ensuring the Wakamatsu Colony story would survive.

During the year of the Japanese American centennial in 1969, then-Governor Ronald Reagan flew to Gold Hill by helicopter to dedicate the historic landmark for the Wakamatsu Tea & Silk Farm Colony. The plaque and memorial garden remain on the Gold Trail School property just below the knoll where Okei-san is buried. Nearly 50 years later, the land and buildings became mainly unused and dilapidated. In 2007, the Veerkamp family decided to sell their run-down farm.

In 2010, a non-profit land trust called the American River Conservancy (ARC) purchased the 272-acre historic farmland from the Veerkamp family for fair market value. Shortly before the purchase, the Conservancy worked with the National Park Service to place the property on the National Register of Historic Places at a level of "National Significance." Since then, the Conservancy continues to raise funds and work diligently to preserve and share the impressive Wakamatsu Farm resources with the world. No longer is the history of the Farm one of El Dorado County's best kept secrets. Now the Conservancy offers Wakamatsu Farm to the world as a community place to experience natural resources, sustainable agriculture, and cultural history.

The heart of the Conservancy's mission at Wakamatsu Farm is connecting people with the land, in all its abundance. Simultaneously, a charming and magnificent place, with a wealth of resources and stories, visitors and volunteers of all ages are inspired to learn, work, and enjoy a thriving natural playground at Wakamatsu Farm. Each year, hundreds of school children experience field trips on the property where they learn about science, farming and history. The Conservancy supports organic and sustainable farming operations that grow and sell produce, animals, and other products to benefit the community. The public enjoys scheduled events, tours, and various programs throughout the year. One major ongoing project

is the restoration of the old white farm house where the Japanese colonists lived, including a new commercial kitchen to support farm meals and events.

Since the Conservancy acquired the property, tremendous progress is being made at Wakamatsu Farm. Each year, more and more people benefit from a unique community resource, which is becoming a destination farm for tourists. To support the future of the farm, ARC continuously welcomes donors, volunteers, and other supporters eager to contribute to the future of a heritage site that honors Japan and Japanese Americans unlike any other place in the world.[5]

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[5] The public can discover more about landmark Wakamatsu Farm, including ways to support its mission and visit this private property at www.ARConservancy.org/wakamatsu. For further reading, there are several books, pamphlets and articles which give a broader coverage to this topic: See Daniel A. Métraux, *The Wakamatsu Tea & Silk Colony Farm and the Creation of Japanese America* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019); and John E. Van Sant, *Pacific Pioneers: Japanese Journeys to America and Hawaii*, *1850–80* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000). Eichiro Azuma also gives a broad explanation of the legend and symbolic importance of Okei Ito in *Between Two Empires: Race. History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Erika Lee provides a broad history of Japanese immigration to the United States in her *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015). The American River Conservancy has published a pamphlet ("The Wakamatsu Tea & Silk Colony Farm: America's First Issei—The Original Japanese Settlers") on the history of the Farm as well as many articles in its various newsletters.