



PROCLAMATION

OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF EL DORADO TO CELEBRATE THE SESQUICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE WAKAMATSU TEA AND SILK COLONY FARM

WHEREAS, in April 1869, Prussian diplomat and weapons merchant, John Henry Schnell left Japan on a California-bound boat with 22 Wakamatsu residents including his daughter's nursemaid, Okei Ito and agricultural items including; 50,000 three-year old kuwa (mulberry) trees used for the cultivation of silk worms and six million tea seeds; and

WHEREAS, in June of 1869, John Henry Schnell purchased approximately 200 acres, a farmhouse and farm outbuildings from Charles Graner, who had settled the Gold Hill Ranch during the early 1850's where he made wine and whisky to sell to the miners; and,

WHEREAS, even though the original farm was short-lived due to drought and an unsuccessful attempt at irrigation from a mining ditch contaminated with iron sulfate, the Wakamatsu Tea & Silk Colony represents the beginning of permanent Issei migration to the United States; and,

WHEREAS, the Francis Veerkamp family owned adjacent properties and purchased the Schnell-Graner property in 1873. Colonist Matsunosuki Sakuri (Matsu), a samurai, worked for the remainder of his life for the Veerkamp family. The Schnell's nursemaid, Colonist Okei Ito also remained with the Veerkamps until her untimely death at the age of 19 in 1871. Okei-san is recognized as the first Japanese woman and immigrant buried on American soil, where she still rests in peace today at Wakamatsu Farm; and,

WHEREAS, for approximately 140 years, the Veerkamp family was principally responsible for maintaining the agricultural nature of the property and preserving its cultural heritage. In late 2007, the Veerkamp Farm heirs approached American River Conservancy (ARC) seeking to sell the property at fair market value while ensuring public access to its historical features and restoration of the old farmhouse; and,

WHEREAS, the property was purchased in 2007 by ARC and under their supervision, the farm supports organic projects and farming operations while preserving the historical elements of the property; and,

WHEREAS, in 1969, a centennial or 100 year observance was attended by then Governor Ronald Reagan and several dignitaries from Japan. During this celebratory event, the Wakamatsu Farm property received official designation as California Registered Historical Landmark No. 815; and,

WHEREAS, from June 6th through June 9th the American River Conservancy will sponsor WakamatsuFest150, a celebration of Wakamatsu Farm's sesquicentennial and Japanese-American heritage, arts, culture, and cuisine. Highlighting Wakamatsu Farm's singular contributions to the history of agriculture in El Dorado County.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT PROCLAIMED that the Board of Supervisors of the County of El Dorado do hereby join all citizens and visitors to El Dorado County in celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony Farm.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of El Dorado at a regular meeting held the 4th of June, 2019.

Attest:

James S. Mitrison

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

by:

Deputy Clerk

Sue Novasel, Chair, Board of Supervisors
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