



County of El Dorado

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Legislation Text

File #: 18-1608, **Version:** 1

Supervisor Ranalli recommending the Board receive and file presentation by Alan Ehrgott, Executive Director of the American River Conservancy, providing information on "WakamatsuFest150" a sesquicentennial festival to be hosted on June 6-9, 2019, at Wakamatsu Farm in Placerville to honor the 150th Anniversary of the first Japanese colonists' arrival in America to establish the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm on June 8, 1869, and to celebrate 150 years of Japanese-American heritage, arts and cuisine. (Est. Time: 30 Min.)

WakamatsuFest150 will be a 4-day festival hosted by the American River Conservancy and sponsored by the Japanese-American Citizens League, the cities of Warabi and Aizu, Wakamatsu and the California Rice Commission. This event is scheduled for June 6-9, 2019, and will celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony Farm, established near Placerville on June 8, 1869, and 150 years of Japanese-American culture.

Wakamatsu Farm is widely recognized as the first Japanese Colony in the continental United States. It has become a pilgrimage site for many Japanese Americans wanting to recognize those who came before them, particularly Okei-San, a 17 year-old girl and immigrant who served as the Colony's nanny and who at age 19 passed away and became the first Japanese woman to be buried on American soil. Another Wakamatsu Colonist, Matsunosuke Sakurai, was Okei-San's friend and mentor and is also buried nearby in the Pioneer Cemetery at Coloma. After the disbandment of the Colony in 1871, both Okei-San and "Matsu" were employed by the Veerkamp family.

In 1969, a centennial or 100 year observance was attended by then Governor Ronald Reagan and several dignitaries from Japan. The 4-day festival planned for June 2019 will feature a collaboration of musicians from Japan and the U.S., a theatrical production featuring the history of the Wakamatsu Colonists (performed daily) and other studio artists, historians, academics, dignitaries, exhibitors and masters of Japanese cuisine. An anticipated 4,500 visitors from Japan and throughout the United States are expected to attend over this 4 day festival.

Mr. Alan Ehrgott and the American River Conservancy have worked collaboratively with Consul General Tomochika Uyama (San Francisco Office) on our common history and the recognition of the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony as the vanguard of the Japanese immigration movement and the beginnings of 150 years of Japanese American culture.