



Samurai, Silk, and Tea: Celebrating 150 Years of Japanese American Heritage at Wakamatsu Farm

PLACERVILLE, CA. (May 22, 2019) This year is the Japanese American sesquicentennial, and a four-day festival will honor the 150th anniversary of the first Japanese colony in America at the site of their historic farm. From June 6th to 9th, [WakamatsuFest150](#) will commemorate the establishment of the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony 150 years ago. Hosted by American River Conservancy, the family-friendly festival celebrates 150 years of Japanese American heritage, arts, and cuisine. The festival will be held at landmark Wakamatsu Farm in Placerville, California, where the colony was established on June 8, 1869.

Only once in history has a similar event occurred. Fifty years ago, 1969 was declared the Japanese American centennial in recognition of the Wakamatsu colonists' historic arrival date. For the unveiling of the Wakamatsu landmark monument on June 7th, then Governor Ronald Reagan arrived at the Farm by helicopter where he met other distinguished visitors from America and Japan. As the landowners of Wakamatsu Farm, American River Conservancy rises to the occasion this year by preparing to host at least 4,000 visitors. The Conservancy welcomes the public to join very special guests during WakamatsuFest150 when all can learn more about the Wakamatsu Farm story and become part of American history to remember.

During all four festival days, three simultaneous stages will offer captivating entertainment. Music will include taiko drumming, flute, and koto. Groups will perform Japanese folk dancing, swordsmanship, and martial arts. Demonstrators will share archery, ikebana, bonsai, wood block printing, ink painting, haiku, origami, and calligraphy. The cultivation of silk worms, silk spinning, and silk weaving will be artfully demonstrated. Japanese tea masters will perform traditional tea services at the new Wakamatsu Farm tea house. Lecturers will discuss Wakamatsu Colony history, ancestry, and Japanese culture. Trained docents will share the Farm's history from ancient to modern times. Every festival day, the full-length world premiere play, *Gold Hill Samurai*, will bring to life the Wakamatsu Colony story from 1868 to 1871.

Booths and food trucks will offer Japanese American and traditional festival foods. Vendors will sell Japanese and Japan-inspired art, books, collectibles, and merchandise. California State Parks and community non-profits will share Japanese American history. The marvelous Wakamatsu banner and tanto dagger will be on display during the entire festival, along with Okei-san's original headstone and other fascinating Wakamatsu Farm artifacts.

Special visitors from Japan will join WakamatsuFest150, including over 50 people from Aizu Wakamatsu and the El Dorado County – Warabi Sister City Association. Honored guests will include the heir of the Tokugawa Shogunate, Mr. Iehiro Tokugawa, whose ancestors ruled Japan for over 260 years; also Mr. Chikamori Matsudaira, heir of Samurai Clan Lord Katamori Matsudaira of Aizu Wakamatsu, who sent the Colonists to America; and Parliament member, Mr. Shinji Oguma, who represents the region including Aizu Wakamatsu today. The Conservancy's valued friends from the Japanese Consulate in San Francisco, including Mr. and Mrs. Tomochika Uyama, will join the historic occasion. These guests will meet actual Wakamatsu Colony descendants who live in Japan and America. Their "full circle" historic introductions facilitated by Mrs. Nabuko Saito Cleary will happen Saturday, June 8, exactly 150 years after the Colonists arrived at Wakamatsu Farm.

The Conservancy formally invited hundreds of American elected officials, including senators and governors. Confirmed to join WakamatsuFest150 will be Placerville Mayor Mark Acuna, and El Dorado County Supervisors Lori Parlin and Brian Veerkamp. Local Assembly Members, including Ken Cooley and Kevin Kiley, will present American River Conservancy with a Commemorative Resolution recognizing the significance of the 150th anniversary and the Conservancy's work to preserve the historic site. The San Francisco Cherry Blossom Festival queen and court will also join the festivities.



During the evening of Saturday, June 8th, the after-hours VIP event will include live music performed by *The International Brothers*, featuring Keith Little and Kazuhiro Inaba. Beautiful food and drinks will be served from Aji Bistro, Gekkeikan Sake, Sapporo, and local wines. Tickets to the VIP event are available while quantities last.

Highlights are found on the festival website at ARConservancy.org/wakafest150 where the daily schedule is posted. Public tickets are available for all festival days, plus multi-day passes. Visitor information is described on the website, including off-site parking details at Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park two miles from the festival grounds. Viewing the website in advance will help visitors prepare to enjoy rugged outdoor leisure and fun at Wakamatsu Farm for this one-time-only historic celebration.

Discover more about Wakamatsu Farm at ARConservancy.org/wakamatsu.

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