



C A L I F O R N I A R I C E C O M M I S S I O N

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PRESERVING HISTORY IN THE GOLD COUNTRY

Bipartisan support in Congress an important link to honoring the Wakamatsu Colony

SACRAMENTO- Thanks to a grassroots effort and bipartisan support in Congress, momentum is growing to preserve the former Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony, a site with tremendous historical importance as the first Japanese settlement in the United States.

The majority of the project financing has come from the private sector and grants acquired by the American River Conservancy. Bills authored by 4th Congressional District Representative Tom McClintock and U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer have been introduced in the House and Senate respectively, that would complete the purchase and management of the 272-acre ranch near Coloma by the U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management.

"As a fourth generation Japanese American, it is truly wonderful to see Senator Boxer and Congressman McClintock noticing the value of preserving the Wakamatsu Colony site and being able to put people ahead of politics," remarked Fred Kochi, Gold Hill Wakamatsu Colony Board President. "Seeing the two parties working together in this manner makes me proud to be an American."

The colony was founded in 1869, in the Gold Hill area near where James Marshall discovered gold. The Japanese immigrants farmed several crops, including rice, during their stay. The property includes the gravesite of Okei Ito, the first Japanese immigrant to die on American soil.

"These 22 Japanese at Gold Hill were the precursors to tens of thousands of Japanese immigrants to land upon California's shore, following their dreams and transforming California agriculture in the process," said Sacramento State University Asian American Studies Professor Wayne Maeda.

(The California Rice Commission represents the entire California rice industry and is a proud supporter of the Wakamatsu Tea & Silk Colony Project.)