

1 **JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE**
2 **48th JAACL National Convention**
3 **National Council Meeting**
4 Washington, D.C.
5 July 7, 2017
6
7

8 **A RESOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN**
9 **CITIZENS LEAGUE RELATING TO THE WAKAMATSU TEA AND SILK COLONY,**
10 **THE FIRST JAPANESE COLONY IN NORTH AMERICA**

11 **WHEREAS**, on May 20, 1869, the steamship China landed in San Francisco carrying the first
12 group of settlers from Japan to the United States. These settlers fled a bloody civil war in Japan,
13 and intended to establish a permanent agricultural colony in California; and
14

15 **WHEREAS**, this group from Aizu Wakamatsu, led by John Henry Schell, traveled upriver by
16 boat to Sacramento and overland by wagon to establish the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm
17 Colony on 640 acres at Gold Hill, near the historic gold rush town of Coloma in El Dorado
18 County on June 8, 1869; and
19

20 **WHEREAS**, the colonists brought thousands of mulberry trees for silk farming, tea plants,
21 bamboo roots, and many other Japanese agricultural products. They prospered at first, and
22 participated in the 1870 San Francisco Horticultural Fair, displaying tea plants and plant oils; and
23

24 **WHEREAS**, in the early 1870's, the colony suffered numerous setbacks. The drought of 1871-
25 72 exacerbated the water shortage and financial help from Japan never arrived. The remaining
26 colonists sold off most of their belongings in order to survive. Some were able to return to
27 Japan, and others moved elsewhere to find more gainful employment; and
28

29 **WHEREAS**, Okei Ito who remained behind, died in the spring of 1871 and is believed to be the
30 first Japanese immigrant to die in this country; and
31

32 **WHEREAS**, in the ensuing years, the Wakamatsu Colony was lost and forgotten until after
33 World War I, when a search was undertaken by several Japanese Americans from the
34 Sacramento and Placer County areas, with the assistance of Henry Veerkamp, the son of the
35 family that had befriended the Japanese settlers; and
36

37 **WHEREAS**, the State of California designated 1969 as the centennial year of Japanese
38 immigration to the United States; and
39

40 **WHEREAS**, on June 7, 1969, then-Governor Ronald Reagan and Japan Consul General Seiichi
41 Shima dedicated a state historical plaque designating the Wakamatsu Colony as California
42 Registered Historical Landmark No. 815; and
43

44 **WHEREAS**, on October 9, 2009, the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony property was listed in the
45 National Register of Historic Places; and

46 **WHEREAS**, efforts to preserve the site of the Wakamatsu Colony are currently underway,
47 thanks to a partnership coordinated by the American River Conservancy, the Japanese American
48 Citizens League, the Veerkamp family, and many others in the neighboring communities; and
49

50 **WHEREAS**, preservation of the colony site will recognize the contributions of Japanese to the
51 development of the agricultural industry of California, will acknowledge the historical
52 achievements of the pioneer Veerkamp family, and will contribute to a better understanding of
53 the legacies of the Native Americans who originally inhabited the Gold Hill region; and
54

55 **WHEREAS**, the State of California recognized May 20, 2007, as the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk
56 Farm Colony Day and encouraged all members of the legislature and the governor to help
57 educate all Californians about the Colony’s history in California; and
58

59 **WHEREAS**, planning is underway for the WakamatsuFest150! to celebrate the 150th
60 anniversary of the founding of the Wakamatsu Silk and Tea Farm Colony on June 6-9, 2019.
61

62 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the National Council of the Japanese**
63 **American Citizens League** that JACL acknowledges the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony
64 as the first Japanese Colony in North America; and
65

66 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that JACL acknowledges the contributions of the Japanese
67 colonists of the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony and their descendants in the development
68 of agricultural industry in California; and
69

70 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that JACL encourages members to support and attend the
71 WakamatsuFest150! event in 2019.
72

73
74 **Sponsored by:** Florin JACL – Sacramento Valley Chapter **Dated:** 5/5/17
75 **(JACL entity)** **Month/Day/Year**
76

77 **Approved by:** Josh Kaizuka **Title:** Co-President
78 **Name (Please Print)**
79

80 **Signed:** /s/
81

82
83 **Sponsored by:** Sacramento Chapter **Dated:** 5/5/17
84 **(JACL entity)** **Month/Day/Year**
85

86 **Approved by:** Janice Yamaoka Luszczak **Title:** President
87 **Name (Please Print)**
88

89 **Signed:** /s/
90 **Signature**
91

92

93 **Please check one:**

94 **Fiscal Impact Statement attached**

95 **No Fiscal Impact** (meaning that the resolution does not call for any action that will be
96 carried out by JACL staff, or incur any costs to JACL)