



# News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Contact: Ken Simmons  
(530) 622-3027  
Eugene Itogawa  
(916) 653-8936

## STATE PARKS TO BE PRESENTED HISTORIC JAPANESE ARTIFACTS

COLOMA – Descendants of a pioneer California family will present a sword and other artifacts from one of the earliest Japanese immigrant settlements in the state during a special ceremony on Oct. 13 at Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park in Coloma, officials announced today.

The presentation will be made by descendants of Francis Veerkamp, a German pioneer in El Dorado County who befriended members of the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Representatives of the Sacramento and Placer chapters of the Japanese American Citizens League and the Fukushima Kenjin Kai are scheduled to attend the ceremony, as well as students from the local Gold Trail Elementary School.

“We are very thankful to the Veerkamp family for making this possible,” said Ken Simmons, Superintendent of Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park. “We are honored to accept these important historical artifacts. The Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony is another reminder of the wonderful diversity of this state that dates back to its early days in the union.”

The Wakamatsu Colony was formed in 1869 by a group of political refugees who left Japan to escape civil unrest and settled in Gold Hill near Coloma. The colonists brought with them mulberry trees, silkworm cocoons tea plant and bamboo shoots in the hopes of establishing an agricultural settlement. They also brought cooking utensils, swords and a large banner bearing the crest of the Aizu Wakamatsu clan.

The Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony struggled to survive for several years, but was plagued by an insufficient water supply, lack of adequate funding, labor dispute and other economic problems. Only a handful of colonists stayed on in Gold Hill, thanks to the goodwill and friendship of Francis Veerkamp.

(more)

There are still reminders of the colony in the area. The grave of Okei, a 19-year-old girl, is on a nearby hilltop and Matsunosuke Sakurai, a samurai warrior, is believed buried at the Pioneer Cemetery, in the Marshall Gold Discovery State Park in Coloma.

Descendants of the Veerkamp family are presenting the artifacts to California State Parks so they may be preserved at the park.

***PRESS ADVISORY: Members of the media are invited to attend the ceremony in which the artifacts will be presented to State Parks. Following is the pertinent information:***

**WHEN:** 1 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 13, 2001

**WHAT:** Presentation of Japanese sword, historic banner and other artifacts dating back to the Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Colony of the 1870s in El Dorado County.

**WHO:** Descendants of the Veerkamp family, a pioneer family that helped the colonists, will present the artifacts to State Park Superintendent Ken Simmons. The descendants are Ada Veerkamp Rose, Gladys Veerkamp Akin and Muriel Veerkamp Brown. Also on hand will be representatives from the Placer and Sacramento chapters of the Japanese American Citizens League, as well as members of the Fukushima Kenjin.

**WHERE:** Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park, 310 Back Street, Coloma.

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