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Yamato and Morikami

The Story of the Japanese Colony and Some of Its Settlers

Yamato Road is the only visible reminder today of the once thriving Japanese colony in Boca Raton. A comprehensive history of the Japanese settlement and its relation to the popular Morikami Museum in Delray Beach has not previously appeared in the Spanish River Papers. The present paper is an attempt to set forth in chronological order what can be gathered from the archives of the Boca Raton Historical Society, publications by the Morikami staff, and the writer's own research in the area.

Although construction of Flagler's railroad made it easy to get from Jacksonville to Miami, settlers were slow to follow. Flagler's agent in Boca Raton, Captain Thomas M. Rickards, came here originally as a surveyor for the canal company. Rickards bought fifty acres in 1884 south of Palmetto Road and east of the Intracoastal. Under the arrangement with the State of Florida, Flagler received 8,000 acres for every mile of railroad he built. The acreage granted to the railroad in this way has been estimated to total between one and two million acres.

James E. Ingraham, one of Flagler's trusted assistants was placed in complete charge of the Florida East Coast's land department. This was incorporated in 1896 as the Model Land Company and controlled the huge tracts of land from Jacksonville to Key West. In James Ingraham, Flagler had a wide-

By Geoffrey Lynfield



OLD CITY HALL, HOME OF BOCA RATON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Jeanne Nixon Baur, Artist

A report to the membership of

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ranging assistant of great energy and enterprise. In 1892 Ingraham made the first topographical reconnaissance of the Everglades and the adjacent coast line. The road leading from Florida City to Flamingo is actually called Ingraham Highway. At Cape Sable there is six-mile-long Lake Ingraham. Many Everglades canals date back to this period as Ingraham tried to drain the land for agricultural use.

The Model Land Company provided agricultural assistance and its experts gave much help to the early settlers in the practical development of the East Coast country. It was in this way that Jo Sakai started to correspond with James Ingraham. The Boca Raton Historical Society recently obtained this correspondence from Tom Rickards' grandson who now lives in North Carolina.

Jo Sakai was born in 1874 in Miyazu, Japan. After graduating from Doshisha University, Kyoto, this enterprising young man came to the United States at the turn of the century. In 1903 Sakai graduated from New York University. He died from tuberculosis in 1923 in Asheville, North Carolina at 51-years of age, and is buried at Woodlawn Cemetery, West Palm Beach. Apart from this not a great deal is known of Jo Sakai's origin or how he first got the idea to establish an agricultural colony for Japanese nationals. He may have come across some of the publications of the State Bureau of Immigration.

Following the Civil War, Florida badly needed settlers to populate countless acres of unused land. Dade County up to 1909 covered no less than 7,200 square miles from the St. Lucie River to the Keys. In 1880, the county had a population of only 275 whites. By the 1890 Census this had increased to 726. In 1900, West Palm Beach had a population of 564. Only half a dozen families had settled in the Boca Raton area.

When Jo Sakai first contacted the Bureau of Immigration in 1903, Tom Rickards was trying to attract growers of oranges and pineapples who would pay \$100 for five acres of raw land which still had to be cleared.

Rickards, Boca Raton's first developer, surveyed and subdivided about 500 acres of land he had bought since his arrival. In 1897 he sent out a flyer advertising the lots in ten-acre-tracts at twenty dollars an acre. There is a map on the back of the flyer showing Lake Wyman and Lake Boca Raton, the pavilion reef, and the Florida East Coast Railroad tracks. The flyer painted an attractive picture of the area to the prospective buyer:

No better location for pineapple culture in the state, considering transportation, quality of soil, and freedom from cold. In sight of the Ocean, 40 minutes by rail from the big hotels with their electric lights, water works, paved streets, bicycle paths and extreme modern improvements.

Captain Rickards had a fine sense for land values and set the scene for later property appreciation in downtown Boca Raton.

Thomas Gregersen and Larry Rosensweig have suggested in a recent paper "Establishment of the Yamato Colony 1903 - July 1905" that James Ingraham of the Model Land Company asked a college friend on the faculty of New York University to put him into contact with a dependable Japanese who might be interested in heading up a Florida colonization project. One such proposal had been made by Professor Warren Clark who had actually been to Japan in the 1870s.

Jo Sakai arrived in Jacksonville towards the end of November 1903 armed with a letter of introduction from the Dean of New York University School of Finance. He met Ingraham and Rickards and within weeks of his

arrival had signed an agreement with the Model Land Company to locate the proposed colony in the Boca Raton area. Frank Cheseboro has a diary entry dated December 25, 1903 "A Jap here at Rickards' looking for a tract of land for colony." On December 27, 1903 Mr. Cheseboro noted "Mr. Curry and the Jap leaving on the train." (Spanish River Papers, October 1977). "Mr. Curry" was George Graham Currie, a Canadian lawyer and developer who settled in West Palm Beach around the time of its incorporation in 1894. Currie later became Mayor of West Palm Beach and was a close friend of the Rickards family.

Jo Sakai, after inspecting land in various parts of the state, eventually bought one thousand acres from James Ingraham, acting for the Model Land Company. Ingraham had also been active along other parts of the Florida railroad. By 1895 settlements had been established in Linton (later renamed Delray and then Delray Beach) and Boynton. Boynton had as many as seventy settlers by 1897 -- many of Finnish extraction -- and over one hundred acres were being cultivated. Linton had about 170 settlers most of whom owned substantial acreage.

International farming colonies had also been established during this period south of Fort Lauderdale. At Hallandale a group of Swedish Lutherans and some Dutch had settled. The town was originally to be called Hollandale but the first vowel was somehow changed. This community was incorporated in 1927. In present-day Dania, a group called the Danish Brotherhood from Wisconsin started to raise tomatoes in 1896 and named their town Modello, after the Model Land Company. This name was later dropped to avoid confusion with another Modello township near Homestead. The Danes proved to be very successful. By 1908, the community had grown to over a thousand and produced over three hundred train

carloads of tomatoes and fifty cars of pineapples.

The contract between Ingraham and Sakai stipulated that the Japanese were to begin farming not later than August 1904. The colonists would work for a period of about one year under the guidance of Tom Rickards who was to oversee their experimental crop. The Model Land Company was to cover the cost of the equipment and provide housing. This was to be repaid once the Japanese colony began turning a profit.

The beginning of Sakai's project was thus most encouraging as he met a general climate of willingness among business and political circles to establish a Japanese colony in the south of the state. James Ingraham also had received favorable reports of Japanese successes in working the land in California. Generally it was felt that the Japanese were born farmers who would inaugurate new methods of cultivating fruits and vegetables not previously grown in Florida. As it turned out later, the men Sakai brought over from Japan were not trained farmers but inexperienced adventurous young bachelors in their twenties and thirties -- some with University degrees -- who were willing to work hard.

It has been possible to pin-point the exact date on which Sakai departed from Florida. In the issue of December 31, 1903, the Jacksonville Florida Times-Union published an interview just prior to Sakai's departure. In the Morikami Newsletter July 1984 there is a reproduction of the front page of this paper. In the interview Sakai "brimmed with enthusiasm" as he outlined in ambitious terms how he proposed to settle not only the Boca Raton site but all the acreage offered him through the state. Sakai then briefly visited Washington where he met officials of the U.S. Department of Agricul-

ture and the Bureau of Immigration. In January 1904, Jo Sakai was back in New York to begin the next phase of the project, that of gathering colonists to settle the land. He quickly ran into difficulties.

The first two recruits contacted in New York, who were to begin practical farming experience under Capt. Rickards, never arrived in Florida but headed instead for California. However, Sakai found a replacement, Nobuji Inoue, a relative, arrived in February 1904 to work in the tomato fields under Rickards's supervision. He took his meals with the Rickards family and was so taken by the instructions and treatment which he received, that he refused payment of his first wages.

Sakai left for Japan in March 1904 and proceeded to his hometown of Miyazu (now the sister city of Delray Beach) northwest of Kyoto. He immediately got busy with prospective investors and sponsors but ran into red tape as a report had to be submitted to the Japanese Foreign Ministry. Its permission had to be obtained before the group of pioneers could leave Japan.

One influential sponsor interested in Sakai's project was Count Masakuni Okudaira, an American university graduate and younger brother of a provincial Lord. George Sukeji Morikami was sponsored in this way in 1906 by Manzaburo Oki, a silk merchant. The sponsor paid passage to America and living expenses in return for three years of labor in the sponsor's fields. At the end of this period the immigrant received a cash bonus of \$500 which could then be used to acquire land in the colony. As we shall see later, Morikami's sponsor died from typhoid in 1907 and George found that he had worked for nothing.

By April 1904, Sakai was still in Japan running from one place to another. He secured a number of recruits among relatives

and friends in the Miyazu area. Exit permits and passports were required. Sakai found the Foreign Ministry very difficult to deal with, partly as the result of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 (to be won by Japan). This led Sakai to explore other routes.

Rather than dealing himself with the Foreign Ministry and bringing the settlers over as a group, Sakai had the colonists represent themselves as students wishing to study in America. This deception worked as long as each individual obtained his own passport and disguised his true intentions. Thus the first two "students" arrived in Florida by August 1904 as specified in the original contract. A larger body of eight followed in November and another group came two weeks later. Henry Flagler gave these men free passage from California as an inducement to settle here. By the end of December 1904, Sakai had a total of twelve colonists in place. Sakai himself returned with the November group. Ingraham arranged for Capt. Rickards to meet the newcomers in Jacksonville and personally escort them to Boca Raton.

Difficulties soon arose between the colonists and Ingraham. The land west of Boca Raton, which Sakai had inspected on his previous visit, according to Ingraham, was not sufficiently drained and still too wet to cultivate. Rickards, however, was willing to rent the Japanese acreage on favorable terms to raise an experimental crop under his direction, thus obtaining experience while earning a living from the crop. They would thus, at the beginning at least, have been tenant farmers rather than land owners working their own fields.

The Japanese were an educated group and it could not have escaped their attention that this was a disadvantageous arrangement.

Florida law actually made generous provisions for homesteaders who could acquire full title to as much as 160 acres per family, provided they worked the land for five years, built a homestead and filed certain proofs.

The settlers had christened their land "Yamato", an ancient name for Japan. In Japanese this is written with two old Chinese characters meaning "great" and "harmony". The name "Yamato" is a favorite with Japanese immigrants. Two other Japanese colonies with that name were formed in the United States; one at Livingston, California, near San Francisco and the other near Brownsville, Texas. Although the Brownsville settlement failed after World War I. The Californian Yamato colony has been highly successful and exists today as the Livingston Farmers Association (see Hosokawa, Nisei: The Quiet Americans (New York 1969).

Initial farming was slow and difficult. No more than one acre a season could be cleared by even the most hard working settlers using grubbing hoe, rake, and shovel. They had no tractors and all work had to be done by hand. The harsh tropical climate added to the discomfort of the immigrants. Rains flooded the fields and ruined crops. Mosquitoes and flies forced everyone to wear head-nets during the summer months.

Accommodations were simple and consisted of crude shacks built from native pine trees. The settlers had little furniture, plumbing, or other comforts. There was no electricity. Air conditioning, radio and T.V. obviously were not available yet. The roads were poor and work took up most of the men's time. A trip to the store in Boca Ratone or Linton several miles away was a special event.

The Homeseeker (July 1908) reported one occasion when J. Sakai and T. Ishibashi from Yamato came to West Palm Beach on bicycles to transact business at the local stores. The

Delray News would record in its gossip column some of the movements of the Yamato residents and their visits to Delray. Thus the issue for Friday, August 24, 1923, included the following:

YAMATO

Mr. Y. Mory was a visitor to Delray Monday. Mr. Oscar Kobayaski and Mrs. Yoshida drove over to West Palm Beach and brought back Mrs. Kobayaski and baby daughter last Monday.

Mr. Komayai and Mrs. Sakai and two daughters have gone to North Carolina to be with Mr. Sakai who is reported to be improving. This news item turned out to be unduly optimistic as Jo Sakai had died on August 21st at Asheville, N.C.

Mr. D.I. Oeshi was a business visitor to Delray Saturday. Papa Kobayaski was in Delray Tuesday. Messrs. Shiota and Yamauchi were visitors to Delray Tuesday.

Some of the settlers became disgruntled because of these harsh conditions and in 1905 several broke away. The settlement however seemed to prosper and by 1907 the FEC Railway had established a station at Yamato where 51st Street now crosses the tracks.

The Yamato area had had a Post Office since 1902. According to Bradbury's Chronology of Florida Post Offices the name

of the original office was "Wyman," but this was changed to Yamato in August 1907. In June 1919 the "Yamato" office was briefly closed and merged with the "Bocaratone" office which dates back to 1899. The Yamato settlers protested and although their office was reopened in October 1920, it was closed for good on May 23, 1925.

The name "Wyman" of the original office



YAMATO YOUNGSTERS PHOTOGRAPHED BY THEIR TEACHER AT THE YAMATO SCHOOLHOUSE, BLY DAVIS, 1922. Left to right: Rank Kkamiya, Walter Smith, Rokuo Kamiya, Harry Smith.

is a matter of some local curiosity. Very little is known about the origin of Wyman. A map drawn in 1896 by Thomas Richards shows a Lake Wyman, but how this name was derived is unclear. There may be a connection with a Professor Jeffries Wyman, first director of the Peabody Museum at Harvard, who made a number of exploratory visits to Florida in the 1866-1874 period. In 1978 the Peabody Museum issued a number of letters to his son written during this period under the title Dear Jeffie. Professor Wyman mentions places such as Blue Spring near Ocala, Hibernia, Old Town in Dixie County, and Bethlehem. Ralph M. Munroe in The Commodore's Story, p. 137, mentions a "Wyman" as a member of a Coast Survey party whose camp he had seen at Hillsboro on Christmas Eve 1883. It is possible therefore that Lake Wyman was named after Professor Wyman, or he himself might have so named the lake. There is no reference to Wyman in Allen Morris' Florida Place Names (1974) nor does this standard work mention Yamato or Modello.

In 1906 Sada Sakai, Jo Sakai's wife and the colony's first woman, arrived. In 1909 their daughter became the first child born in the colony. The Sakais altogether had five daughters who returned to Japan with their mother in 1924 shortly after Jo Sakai's death. Other settlers sent back to Japan for their wives and began to raise families. As these families grew, the old shacks became inadequate and new and bigger houses were built. The Tropical Sun (November 3, 1906) reported: "There are at present about fifty acres set in pineapple alone, to say nothing of the acreage devoted to other fruits and vegetables Eight houses have been built recently, and last week seven newcomers arrived from far-away Japan."

The situation in which George Morikami found himself has been described in the article by George F. Pozzetta and Harry A.

Kersey, Jr. "Yamato Colony: A Japanese Presence in South Florida" published in Tequesta (1976). Pozzetta and Kersey interviewed George Morikami in his trailer parked in a field at the end of Carter Road in west Delray. Morikami described the circumstances under which he came to this country and his first venture into independent farming.

George Morikami, who arrived in 1906 with a three-year contract, had bad luck when Mr. Oki, his sponsor, died in a typhoid epidemic in 1907. Although he was not required to complete his contract, he never received his bonus. Morikami soon left the Yamato colony to strike out on his own with the little money he had saved. He still spoke practically no English.

Morikami soon realized that to survive he had to acquire fluency in English. An advertisement he placed in a local paper brought a response from an Eau Gallie ship-building family which was willing to pay him ten dollars a month plus room and board. However, under this arrangement George was expected to put in long hours of back-breaking work and had actually little opportunity of learning English.

After a month, George went to live with the Ohis, a Japanese family. The senior Ohi had been a member of the Yamato Colony but had left in 1906. George enrolled in fifth grade in the Eau Gallie public school in 1910 (he was then 24 years old) for a year until he became more fluent in reading and writing English.

In Yamato, initially the farmers grew pineapples. But the land was not perfectly suited for that crop. Farmers in Cuba could grow and sell pineapples for less. In 1908, the Japanese pineapple fields were struck by a blight and production that year was badly reduced. So the Yamato group switched most of their efforts to growing winter vegetables, such as tomatoes, beans, and onions.

These vegetables grown at Yamato were shipped all over the United States and as far away as Alaska.

Pineapples had given way to tomatoes as the staple commercial crop when Morikami returned to the Japanese community. A little later, a friend let him have the use of half an acre in Delray's Germantown area. George managed to get groceries and fertilizer on credit from a local store, promising to repay when the crop was ready. In spite of a lot of rain, George harvested eighty-four bushels of tomatoes during that year and when the 1912 season was over, he had \$1,000 profit after paying all expenses.

The Japanese settlers in Yamato were rather isolated and their children had little opportunity to learn English. In 1908, the first school had been started in Boca Raton in Long's packing house near the intersection of South Dixie Highway and South Second Street. The first schoolmaster, Professor Reh binder, used to ride up to Yamato after school to hold private evening classes in English for the Japanese colonists. In a short time, the school was moved to a new schoolhouse where the police station now stands, but this was almost two and a half miles from Yamato.

Frank Cheseboro's diary in the possession of the Boca Raton Historical Society has the following entries: "August 17, 1914: Lawrence Gould began the school." "August 30: Lawrence Gould came here to board." "Sept. 30: Got kids for Lawrence at Yamato in auto." Lawrence M. Gould served as teacher at the Boca Raton Public School from the fall of 1914 to the end of the 1916 school year. There is a cheerful picture in the collection of the Boca Raton Historical Society showing Lawrence Gould with a settler from Yamato. This young man is Mr. Susumu ("Oscar") Kobayashi who died in 1975. In 1922, Susumu returned to Japan to marry and shortly after

returned to his farm at Yamato.

After World War I, Gould obtained a doctor's degree in glacial geology from the University of Michigan. He eventually became second-in-command of the Byrd Antarctica Expedition of 1928-30. His work was rewarded with the Congressional Gold Medal. Gould later became president of Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota. He retired in Tucson, Arizona where he had been professor of geological sciences at the University of Arizona until 1962.

When approached several years ago, Laurence Gould remembered little about his time in Boca Raton. In a letter dated May 10, 1979 to the Morikami Museum he wrote:

I kept no diary or record of any sort of my two years in Boca Raton. I had only one brief contact with Yamato colony. I was approached one summer to see if I could work for the Colony as time keeper, but nothing came of it. I haven't the vaguest idea as to why the colony deteriorated nor do I remember any details of the physical layout.

The Yamato colony later had its own school with an American teacher, a Mrs. Hildreth Gay. The building later became the home of Shobi Kamikama. Imogene Alice Gates, who was born in Boca Raton at the end of World War I, has recorded her childhood memories in The Spanish River Papers October 1975 published by the Boca Raton Historical Society:

My best friend was Masuko Kamiya, a Japanese girl, who lived in Yamato. Her family lived as they had in Japan. At night they slept on pads; they had no beds. They also ate with chop-

sticks. . . . We used to eat rice, seaweed, fish and other items I can't even begin to describe. Masuko . . . had many brothers and sisters and her parents were wonderful to me. I learned much from Masuko that I couldn't have learned from anyone else. Their house was on stilts like all other southern houses. Masuko's father was a farmer. All the Japanese families farmed and they were excellent at it.

Masuko Kamiya went to California and was still living last year in the town of Vista.

Another sister, Mishi Kamiya, the third surviving child to be born in Yamato on April 22, 1911 died as recently as March 1, 1984 at Georgetown University Hospital.

Mishi (also known as "Missy") Kamiya attended the one-room schoolhouse in Yamato until its closing in 1922. Thereafter she and the other Yamato children attended elementary school in Boca Raton, making the trip each day by car with their former teacher who lived in Delray Beach. In 1937 Mishi Kamiya obtained a bachelor of science degree from Florida State College for Women in Tallahassee and took up teaching as a career.

Frank Kamiya, one of the brothers, who still lives in Lake Worth, was also born at Yamato. He attended Palm Beach Junior College graduating in 1937. Frank then went to Miami where he worked as a cook in an Italian restaurant until his retirement in 1965. Frank Kamiya visited his old school mates in 1981 and was then interviewed by Betty Cruickshank (Spanish River Papers, May 1982). His father had a general store selling shoes, clothing, pots and pans, candy, tobacco, and all kinds of groceries. The store was located on Dixie Highway on the

east side of the railroad about half a mile north of Yamato Road.

Henry Tamemasu Kamiya, the father of Masuko, Mishi, Frank, and three other children, was a brother of Jo Sakai and came to Yamato in 1908 at the age of 28. From 1913 to 1934 he ran the grocery store and gas station on Dixie Highway. In 1920 he succeeded Jo Sakai as leader of the Yamato community. During World War II, the elder Kamiya joined one of his daughters in



STUDIO PORTRAIT OF THE JO SAKAI FAMILY, C.1921. Clockwise from left: Sada, Yoshiko, Chikako, Yomoko, Jo, Itsuko, and Shoko.

California and was interned at Manzanar for the duration.

At the end of the war, Henry Kamiya returned to Yamato but found nothing left. He stayed in south Florida for almost ten years before returning to California. In 1955 he went back to Japan and died there at the age of 85.

Some of the Japanese were cremated at Yamato, probably under somewhat surreptitious circumstances. A newspaper reported that Jo Sakai left for Japan in January 1907 with the ashes of his dead Yamato Colony comrades who had been cremated some days earlier. The typhoid epidemic occurred in 1907 and it is likely that the remains of Mr. Oki, George Morikami's sponsor, were returned to Japan in this manner. It is difficult at this time to obtain confirmation of these secret cremations at Yamato. However, The Tropical Sun of October 1915 carried this item: "Grower A. Ninomaya, Yamato grower dead. Ashes sent to Japan parcel post in two parcels by his friend J. Sakai."

The Morikami Museum has compiled fairly complete records of quite a number of other settlers. Hideo Kobayashi, Kinosaki, Hyogo Prefecture came to Yamato in 1907. He later briefly returned to Japan to marry and brought his wife, Umeko, to Yamato in 1921. Umeko Kobayashi died in Ft. Lauderdale at the age of 85 on March 27, 1984. In 1937 the Kobayashis established a successful landscaping firm in Ft. Lauderdale.

Sumiko Kobayashi, who lived in Yamato during the first two years of her life, in an article published in the September 1918 Morikami Newsletter, has recorded what she remembers about her mother who came to Yamato in 1921 as the young bride of Susumu Kobayashi:

The marriage of Suye Matsumoto and Susumu Kobayashi was arranged between the families with the aid of a marriage broker (baishakunin) as is still the custom in many parts of Japan today. About 1922, although he was thousands of miles away in Florida, Susumu's parents decided it was time for him to marry and settle down. They asked the marriage broker to look around for a suitable bride. He contacted the Matsumoto family which was also looking for a husband for their young daughter. The go-between helped the two families to come to a mutually satisfactory arrangement. It was his task to investigate the family history on both sides to assure a match between a man and woman who were from comparable social backgrounds. Although Susumu's father was a physician and therefore ranked higher than a shonin, or merchant, Suye's father was one of the most affluent men in Iya.

Pictures were exchanged in accordance with established custom, but the couple did not meet until the marriage had been agreed to by both parties. . . . If both bride and groom had been in Japan, the pair would have met in person at some neutral place (such as a restaurant) with their families prior to the final agreement. This however was not possible with the groom thousands of miles away.

When arrangements had been completed Susumu returned to Japan to marry and take his bride back to Yamato.



YAMATO MEN CELEBRATING A GOOD CROP WITH A PICNIC, 1916. In the foreground facing the camera: Susumu Kobayashi.

By the outbreak of World War II, Hideo Kobayashi had acquired more than 500 acres in the Yamato area. In May 1942, U.S. District Judge John W. Holland ordered the land owned by the Japanese settlers to be turned over to the U.S. Government for the site of the Palm Beach Air Corps Technical Training Station. The Yamato lands were part of a vast 5,800 acre tract in northwest Boca Raton acquired by the Army Air Corps. This included most of the present site of Florida Atlantic University and the old Boca Raton Air Field.

The land owned by the Japanese settlers was appraised by the federal government and reparations were made after the confiscation. After the war some of the original owners managed to get back part of their land. According to Tom Gregersen, speaking at a meeting of the Historical Society of Palm Beach

County November 9, 1982, the U.S. Army Air Corps used the former Japanese homes for target practice and the Yamato area became known as "Blitz Village."

Another successful settler was Shobi Kamikama who left Japan around 1904 and then proceeded from Seattle by train to New York state. Kamikama had waited at tables at a military academy in Rochester, New York for some ten years when he heard of Yamato. He arrived here in 1917 and joined the Colony which then included about forty people.

The 1970 Boca Raton Directory lists a Shohbi Kamikama, "retired", as living off 5300 N. Dixie Highway. He had bought the old Yamato school house. Not much is known how Kamikama spent his fifty years in Boca Raton. Living frugally he somehow acquired substantial real estate holdings and ended up perhaps the wealthiest of all the Japanese settlers. In 1972, a reporter from The Miami Herald visited Kamikama who was then 82 years old. After travelling down a seldom used dirt road off North Dixie Highway, the reporter found Kamikama living in a "hoary" cement cottage with a stout Bahamian housekeeper, Catherine Rogers. The cottage inside was piled high with boxes and old newspapers but contained little furniture.

In the Engineering Department at the Boca Raton Town Hall there is a 1942 map of the Boca Raton Air Field drawn at the time the area was confiscated. Shobi Kamikama heads the list of land owners with 225.71 acres. This property was bought in September 1947 by a local realtor for \$1,250,000 and has since become known as the South Congress Industrial Center. The area is located on Clint Moore Road between Military Trail and Congress Avenue and was annexed by the city as recently as January 1985.

Kamikama also owned a block of some thirteen acres near his cottage and extending along Federal Highway between Yamato Road and

Newcastle Street. Shown on some maps as Sands Pines Park, it was appraised at \$642,000 at the time of Kamikama's death. This property has recently been developed and is now known as the Pylon Park office complex.

Life in South Florida involved great physical hardship for the early settlers. Sanitary facilities must have been primitive not only in the Colony but amongst the South Florida population generally. It is not surprising that there was an outbreak of typhoid in the area in 1907 during which Morikami's sponsor, Mr. Oki, died. George Morikami in the interview with Pozzetta and Kersey recalled frequent flooding of the land which destroyed valuable crops. Deadly snakes, disease, and the insufferable heat took their toll amongst the colonists.

Initially the Japanese had been made very welcome by the Floridians. They enjoyed the beach and spent much of their spare time around the rock formation just north of Spanish River Road. This beach area became known as "Yamato Rocks" or "Jap Rocks." A spot marked "Jap Rock" is shown on the Delray Beach sheet of the U.S. Geological Survey map 7.5 minute series (Sheet N. 2622.5). Yamato Road or 51st Street was also known until quite recently as "Jap Road." The term "Jap" is considered offensive to Japanese nationals and Japanese-Americans and its use like other racial and ethnic slurs is to be discouraged.

In 1905, the Japanese celebrated New Year's Day by entertaining a party of American guests with Japanese songs and a demonstration of Japanese wrestling and judo. Miami's fifteenth birthday in 1911 was marked by a special program and festivities arranged by the Board of Trade and sponsored by local merchants. Isidor Cohen in his classic Historical Sketches and Sidelights of Miami, Florida published in 1925, notes (page 82) that Robert R. Taylor promoted some jiu-jitsu

exhibitions and that the performers came from Yamato, an agricultural settlement between Miami and West Palm Beach.

Pozzetta and Kersey record that by 1912 an ugly strain of anti-Japanese sentiment became noticeable. Natives were worried that the Japanese could not acquire U.S. citizenship and would remain an unassimilated group. On October 16, 1913 The Tropical Sun carried an editorial on the anti-Japanese stand of Congressman Frank Clark.

. . . This sounds very well as being along the lines of the old-fashioned Know Nothing party doctrines which the country seems gradually adopting but is not on a line with his F.E.C. Ry. friends who brought a number of Japs to this country and a colony of them are now living at Yamato where they own land.

The Yamato Post Office having been discontinued, the mail was rerouted via Bocaratone (the name of the town was changed to Boca Raton during the Mizner era). Some hardy families however remained and by the 1930s probably between twenty and twenty-five Japanese including at least twelve children were left in Yamato living quiet lives.

George Morikami, working on his own farm in West Delray planting tomatoes, eventually became quite successful and employed five or six black sharecroppers. With the profits from his labors, George started buying up land in West Delray which in the 1930s could be bought for fifteen to seventeen dollars per acre. By 1941, George had to pay as much as thirty-one dollars per acre.

George had an acute business sense and in the 1920s ran a mail order business. He had obtained a customer's list from a local bank and initially sent out 300 double perforated cards with one side quoting prices and the tear-off portion serving as order form. Morikami has recorded in an oral interview that in this way he amassed a



STANDING IN FRONT OF A PORTRAIT OF JO AND SADA SAKAI, TADASHI YAMAGUCHI (LEFT) AND HIROSHI AND TAKAKO SAKAI ADDRESS THE GATHERING FOR YAMATO HERITAGE DAY AT MORIKAMI PARK, 4 MAY 1985. Tadashi Yamaguchi is the son of Tomoko Sakai, who was born in Yamato. The Sakais, brother and sister from Kyoto, Japan, are grand nephew and niece of the Yamato founder.

fortune of \$250,000 during the boom years of the 1920s. However, in the depression his bank deposits evaporated. Also, much of his land was lost for taxes during these bad years.

Following Pearl Harbor, the few residents left at Yamato came under suspicion. However they were not interned as the Japanese in California but restricted to travel within the county. Special permission was needed by the Japanese to withdraw money from their bank accounts.

The Kobayashi's had established their landscaping business in Fort Lauderdale before the outbreak of war. They were living in Delray Beach and the elder Kobayashi had to travel daily to Broward County. After Pearl Harbor, two U.S. Coast Guard seamen moved in with the family and one of them would go with Mr. Kobayashi where ever he went. After six months of this, the family moved to Fort Lauderdale and they were free to move around Broward County without a guard.

George Morikami bought up additional acreage after World War II until his holdings reached over 1,000 acres. In 1967, at the age of eighty-one, he became a U.S. citizen under the liberalized provisions of the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act.

On January 2, 1968, George was honored by the City of Delray Beach and presented with a plaque declaring him Honorary Mayor of Delray Beach. By then the value of his land had increased manifold and George had become a millionaire. However, he continued to live simply and frugally in a small trailer parked in one of his fields and ate the fruits and vegetables which he grew himself. The trailer was perched atop a little hill George had built. He called this "Mt. Fuji."

A mutual acquaintance introduced George Morikami to George Yamaoka, a distinguished

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Lauderdale. Yamaoka was struck by Morikami's warm and amicable relationship with the people of Delray Beach and recognized possibilities for Morikami's land as recreational facility. According to the Morikami Newsletter of April 1982, Yamaoka suggested to Morikami that he should make a gift of his land to the public, since he had no family of his own in this country.

Virginia Snyder of Delray Beach does not agree with this version of the story which Yamaoka gave to the Morikami staff. According to Snyder, George was far too independent in his thinking to be so influenced in such an important decision and it was entirely his idea to dedicate the acreage to the public. Although he may have discussed this with his Japanese friends, the ultimate decision was his and his alone.

Snyder, a former Fort Lauderdale News reporter and now a private investigator, first met George Morikami in 1967 when she did a story on him for her paper. They became close friends and George found in Snyder a person in whom he could trust implicitly.

In 1963 George Morikami donated forty acres of his land to the State of Florida for use as an Agricultural Experimental Station. The authorities were slow in taking action and George offered \$30,000 to get the enterprise going. The City of Delray Beach received a similar offer of acreage for a city park, but at first refused to accept because of lack of funds for development. In 1973 the Commissioners of Palm Beach County accepted a second forty-acre tract for park land. Morikami later donated another 100 acres. The Morikami Museum of Japanese Culture (its full name) thus comes under the jurisdiction of Palm Beach County Department of Parks and Recreation.

George Morikami died on February 29, 1976 at the ripe age of eighty-nine. The

Morikami Museum and Park opened on June 25, 1977, a little over one year after George's death. Morikami Park now includes a total of 155 acres of land upon which George Morikami once grew pineapples and vegetables.

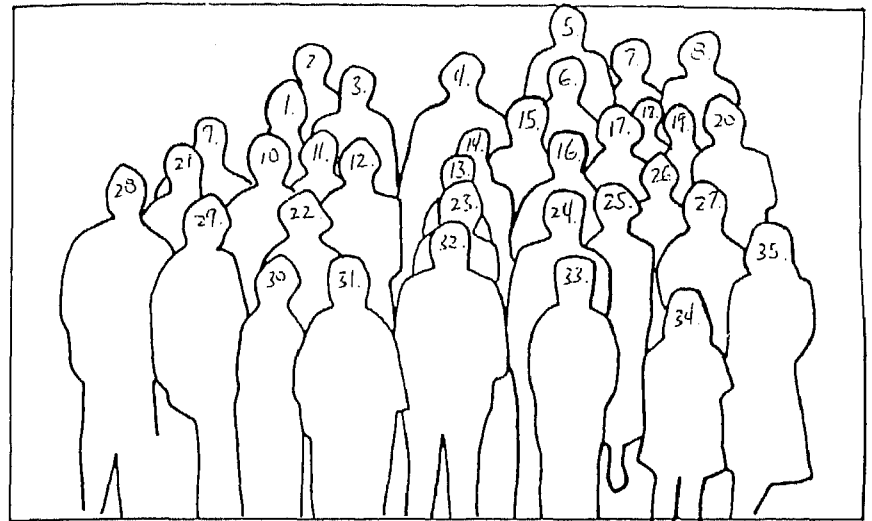
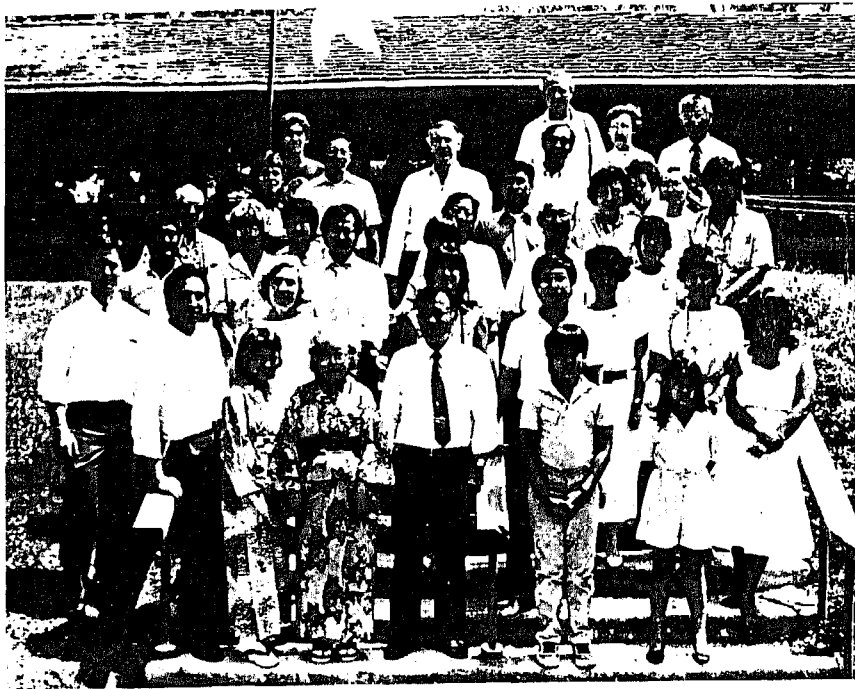
It is impossible within the scope of this paper to tell the full story of George Morikami. This was a self-educated man who had only a year or two of formal schooling in this country. But he surrounded himself with books on philosophy and archeology and was widely read. George Morikami was more fortunate in his advisers than his friend Shobi Kamikama who had also, almost accidentally, become a millionaire land owner. Both lived frugally. Kamikami's estate was largely eaten up by legal fees including an exorbitant charge from a genealogical service to trace his relatives in Japan. The Morikami estate has remained intact. As western Delray is being developed, the acreage is getting immensely valuable.

An attempt to explain the ultimate failure of the Yamato Colony has been made in a study by the Morikami Museum sponsored by the Ethnic Heritage Studies Program, U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Yamato, Florida: A Colony of Japanese Farmers in Florida.

Despite a spate of encouraging reports and some moderate successes in its early years (1905-1910) Yamato seems never to have fulfilled its expectations. No one reason adequately explains the slow disintegration of the small colony whose population probably did not exceed 100 at its peak. Several factors contributed:

1. Extremely harsh climatic and environmental conditions may have discouraged the farmers.
2. The pineapple industry failed due to disease and Cuban competition, wiping out hopes of prosperity for some.
3. Yamato was largely a bachelor colony. Immigration laws and distance meant that few of the men could get wives. For a community to endure, women and children--families--are necessary.
4. Illness and death of Jo Sakai deprived the community of its leader.
5. Some individuals may have met their goals, sold their property and returned to Japan.
6. Dissension and disagreement over management of the colony apparently led to the departure of several individuals.



Yamato descendants attending ceremonies in conjunction with Yamato Heritage Day at Morikami Park, May 4, 1985.

(names in parentheses identify family affiliations when descendants' names differ)

1. Dorothy Oishi (spouse)
2. Jeffrey Oishi
3. Roy Oishi
4. Douglas Grimm (spouse, Kamiya)
5. William Hughes (spouse, Kamiya)
6. Tadashi Yamaguchi (Sakai)
7. Maizel Kobayashi (spouse, Hideo Kobayashi)
8. Tamotsu ("Tom") Kobayashi (Hideo Kobayashi)*
9. Herbert Suga (spouse, Kamiya)
10. Mary Kamiya (spouse)
11. Masuko Kamiya Suga*
12. Ronald Suga (Kamiya)
13. John Kinkead (Kamiya)
14. Yuri Long (Kamiya)
15. Hiroshi Sakai
16. Frank Kamiya*
17. Takako Sakai
18. Kim Kobayashi (Hideo Kobayashi)
19. Tomiko Kobayashi (Hideo Kobayashi)*
20. Tim Morimoto (Kamiya)
21. Henry Kamiya
22. Anne Kobayashi (spouse, Susumu Kobayashi)
23. Sandra Kinkead (Kamiya)
24. Ken Kamiya
25. Bobbie Grimm (Kamiya)
26. Toriko Kamiya (spouse)
27. Sumi Hughes (Kamiya)
28. Jay Kobayashi (Susumu Kobayashi)
29. Ken Kobayashi (Susumu Kobayashi)
30. Sumiko Kobayashi (Susumu Kobayashi)*
31. Suye Kobayashi (Susumu Kobayashi)*+
32. Noboru Kobayashi (Susumu Kobayashi)
33. Sage Kamiya
34. Leia Nami Kamiya
35. Tammy Kinkead (Kamiya)

*lived at Yamato
+only surviving first
generation member

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