

VOICES From THE NEW YORKERS

Get to Know Kanagawa at Japan Society

by Susan McCormac

Kanagawa Prefecture is home to several of Japan's gems: the country's largest Chinatown, located in the capital city of Yokohama; the Daibutsu, or Great Buddha, in Kamakura, a towering bronzed icon with a history of more than 700 years; and the views of Mt. Fuji from Hakone, a resort town prized for its many hot springs.



Japan Society invites you to "Get to Know Kanagawa," an event about the historic and natural wonders



of the prefecture on Thursday, January 23 at 6:30 p.m. I am honored to serve as the moderator for this program, which will feature an in-depth discussion about this unique region.

Kanagawa experts Hitoshi Suzuki, Director, JETRO NY, Kanagawa Division; Nanako Sadasue, Director, Maker's Shirt Kamakura Co., Ltd.; and Kenichi Noda of Odakyu Electric Railway Co., Ltd. will cover all that Kanagawa has to offer.

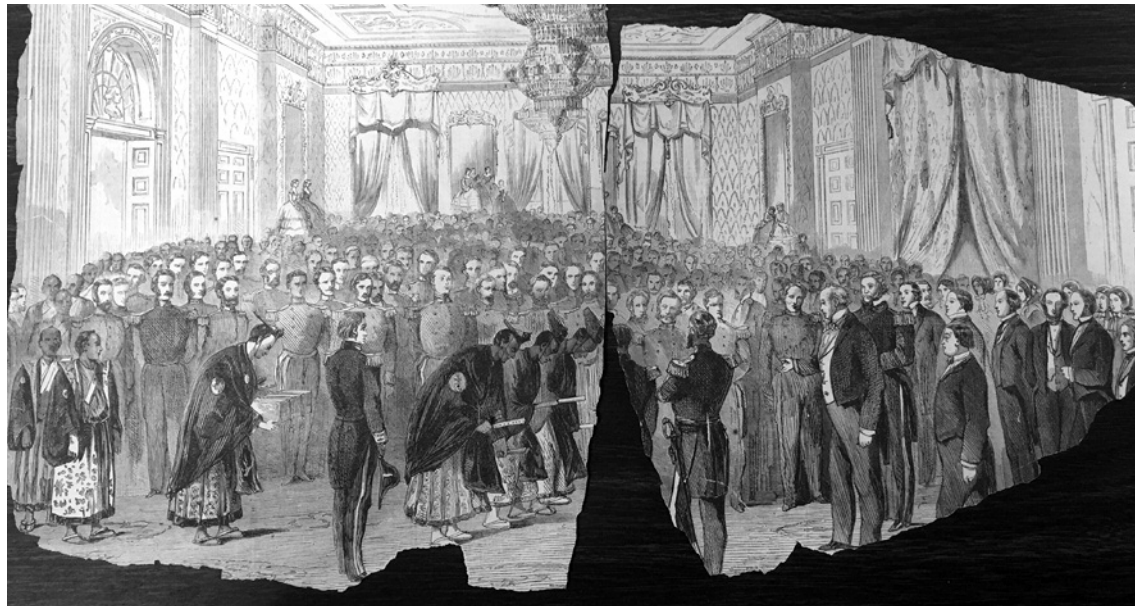
A tasting reception featuring maguro donburi from Misaki Port and sake from Kanagawa will follow the discussion.

All guests will receive a Bokksu set, an assortment of snacks from Kanagawa called "New Year in Kanagawa," and a sensu (folding fan) from Kamakura Shirts. Go to www.japansociety.org to purchase your tickets. See you on January 23!

(Susan is the founder of JapanCultureNYC, an English-language website for all things Japanese in New York, and the co-host of The Big Root Podcast.)

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



Samurai from Japan officially met 15th president James Buchanan on March 28, 1860.

SAMURAI GO ABROAD TO UNITED STATES 160 YEARS AGO; 80 PARADE ON BROADWAY

A new era has begun with the reign of the new Reiwa emperor and Japan's new era name, Reiwa, following the end of the Heisei Era. This year is the 160th anniversary of the historic visit to Washington, D.C. by the Japanese Embassy of the Tokugawa shogunate to ratify the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation.

According to some newspapers from that time, Americans paid respect to the elegant and polite behavior of the samurai who had been sent from the land of the Far East and warmly welcomed the samurai wherever they visited. A parade was held on Broadway in N.Y. for them. Now, we look back at the path of the first samurai delegation with an inspiring mission.

Including Ambassador Masaoki

Shinmi, Vice-envoy Norimasa Muragaki and Tadamasu Oguri, who were all foreign retainers of the shogunate, about 80 samurai boarded the U.S.S. Pohatan from Shinagawa setting off in January 1860. Due to a storm, they made a stopover at a harbor in Honolulu. At that time they had a chance to meet King Kamehameha of Hawaii. On March 8, when they reached San Francisco, they received a courteous welcome. After their nine-day stay, they headed to Washington, D.C. via Panama and Cuba. There was no Panama Canal back then, so they experienced the first railway journey toward the Atlantic Ocean.

At the end of March, the embassy



Ambassador Masaoki Shinmi (center), Vice-envoy Norimasa Muragaki (left) and Tadamasu Oguri (right).

arrived at Washington, D.C. and received huge praise there as well. They then got on a carriage and arrived at the Washington Willard Hotel led by a cavalry and marching band. The audience on the sidewalk threw bouquets and rang bells. The Washington Willard Hotel still stands to this day. They had ice cream at the hotel, and per an embassy member's diary entry, they were told it was a "sweet treat that melts in your mouth." They are

thought to be the first Japanese to eat ice cream. It probably tasted great and surprised them since it was recorded in the diary.

The United States government spent \$50,000 (which in today's money would be \$1,500,000) to welcome the embassy. They even held a party in the White House for the embassy. They officially met the 15th president John Buchanan on March 28. At the time, the embassy members were wearing traditional and official clothes of samurai called kariginu and wore a hat, also traditional, called eboshi. They had katana (Japanese swords), too.

The embassy stayed in Washington, D.C. for three weeks, visiting the Smithsonian, the State Capital and the Marine Shipyard. Then they visited Baltimore and the United States Mint in Philadelphia before going to New York.

Samurai Parade in New York

The samurai diplomats arrived in New York on June 16. They were very much welcomed by civilians, and the sword-bearing samurai parade was held on Broadway. The parade was held from Downtown to Union Square. The Army also held a military parade. Japanese and American flags were put up everywhere alongside the road. About half a million people showed up to see the parade. There were people watching from the windows of buildings, and others climbed up a telephone pole. The New York Times called it "the most sparkling event in the history of this city." Hearing that makes me wish I could go back to 1860 to see the parade.

In the evening, the city hosted a grand civic ball at the Metropolitan Hotel in Soho. The samurai had a talk with the New York State Governor and the New York Mayor, and then they visited Central Park and schools in the city. About 70 samurai's full names, their titles and their characteristics were introduced in the New York Tribune which was issued on June 19, 1860.

There was a performance made honor the delegation; souvenirs were made; and "Japanese" cocktails became famous. The summer of 1860 in New York was full of "Japan." (Kaoru Ishiguro/Translated by Etsuko Noda, Kanta Hakamata and Chikako Iwasaki)

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