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George's Journey circa 1904

Narrator: Many years ago, a young man named Sukeji Morikami lived in the coastal village of Miyazu in the country of Japan.

Sukeji: How am I going to make enough money to buy land? Land is so expensive, but I really want my own orchards to grow all the oranges, peaches, and persimmons that I can. How can I do this?

hhhhmmmmmm ...

I heard from a friend that Sakai-san is looking for families to farm in Florida. Am I brave enough to travel all the way around the world? Could I move away from my family? Could I earn enough money to come back home to buy land?

(SLIGHT PAUSE)

Narrator: During the next couple of weeks, Sukeji met with Sakai-san and learned about a Japanese settlement called Yamato in south Florida, near a town called Delray. Finally, one day ...

(CHANGE TO NEXT CARD)



Cultural Components:

- Miyazu is a city of about 30,000 residents located on the western coast of Honshu on the Sea of Japan. Pictured is the Amanohashidate, the spit of land named "bridge to heaven", the Wisdom Ring, a replica of which can be seen at the Morikami, and an old styled Japanese house, representative of George's childhood home.
- Japan is approximately 70% mountains; consequently, farmland is a scarce and expensive resource.
- Jo Sakai (1874-1923), a Miyazu native, founded Yamato Colony in the Delray Beach/Boca Raton area in 1905. In the years before and after this time, he recruited young men from his hometown.
- Japanese generally address each other using the family name and adding the suffix *-san* onto it.

Discussion Points:

- Why did Sukeji consider leaving Japan? *He wanted to earn enough money to buy land in Japan.* What are other reasons people leave their homelands?

APPLICATION: When did your family (or ancestors) immigrate to the United States? Why? Identify the immigrant groups that live in your community.

- How does land type and climate affect what a farmer grows? How does Sukeji's choice of crops in Japan compare with the crops of Florida?



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George's Journey circa 1905



Sukeji: *Okāsan, otōsan*, I am going to America.

Otōsan (father): What? You're my eldest son. Who will take care of our family?

Sukeji: But *otōsan*, I will be back. I'm only going for three years and when I return I will have enough money to buy my farmland. Then I'll be able to take care of all of you.

Okāsan (mother): Sukeji, are you sure this is what you want to do? Do you know how far away America is?

Sukeji: It'll be alright, *okāsan*. I won't be alone. I will earn my \$500 bonus from my sponsor and then I'll be home again.

Narrator: In the spring of 1906, Sukeji boarded a passenger ship bound for Seattle, Washington. From there he traveled by train to Florida.

Upon arrival in Delray ...

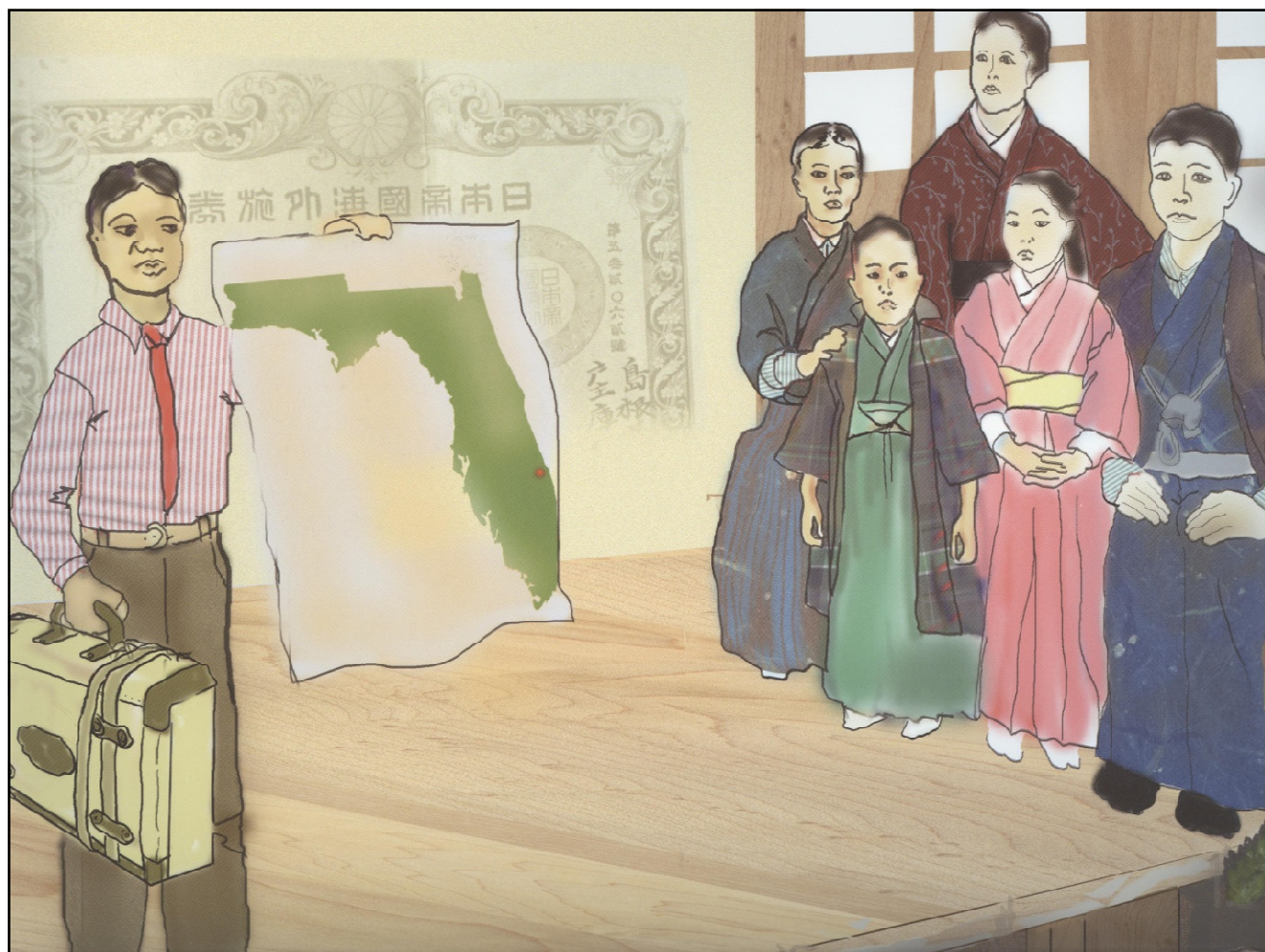
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Cultural Components:

- Born in Miyazu, Japan, on November 5, 1886, Sukeji was the oldest child of Takezō and Soyo Morikami. He grew up in a thatched roof farmhouse built by his father.
- On this card, the family is sitting on the *engawa*, an outside porch which is a transitional space between the house and garden. Behind them are *shoji*, wooden-framed and white paper sliding doors.
- During this time, Japanese wore some western-style clothing, most often in combination with traditional clothing (note the shirt underneath *otōsan's kimono*). Shoes are not worn in the house or on the *engawa*, only slippers or socks (note the toed-socks with the *kimono*).
- The eldest son in Japan traditionally follows in the footsteps of his father, eventually taking over the family business and care of the family. This may or may not be the case today.
- The document in the background is a partial reproduction of Sukeji's Japanese passport.
- The "sponsor" system is an avenue many immigrants used to come to the U.S. Sponsors are financial supporters; in Sukeji's case, his sponsor, Oki-san, promised him \$500 after three years of labor. According to the Consumer Price Index, that amount would be worth about \$12,600 today.

Discussion Points:

- What modes of travel were available in the early 1900s?
- How long do you think it took Sukeji to get to Florida? *The common route was from Yokohama to Seattle and it took 15 days (Nikkei Legacy by Toyo Takata). From Seattle, Sukeji probably traveled by steam train to Jacksonville where he transferred to the Florida East Coast Railway.*
- What other ports did immigrants use to enter the U.S.? *Other western ports of entry included San Francisco, CA and Vancouver, BC; in the east it was Ellis Island, NY.*



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Narrator: . . . Sukeji was struck by the flatness of the land, its harshness, and the high humidity.

YC Settler: *Yōkoso!* Welcome to Yamato! Welcome to Florida!

Sukeji: *Arigatō gozaimasu!* Thank you very much.

YC Settler: There are about 30 of us living here. We work in the pineapple fields, build crates and pack produce for shipping. We try very hard to get the most out of this land that is so different from Miyazu. Let me show you where you will be staying.

Sukeji: *Arigatō gozaimasu!*

YC Settler: Morikami-san, most of the colony are still working, but when they get back we'll all eat outside together . . . some fish, vegetables, and of course, rice.

Narrator: Sukeji quickly settled into Yamato Colony life working in the fields or the packing house. Then one day . . .

George's Journey circa 1906



(CHANGE TO NEXT CARD)

Cultural Components:

- Yamato is an ancient name for Japan. Yamato Colony was never large, at its height numbering around 40 in the early 1920s. Most of the colonists were young, unmarried men who returned to Japan; a few did settle in the U.S.
- In the beginning, land had to be drained and the sharp sawgrass cleared by hand. Mosquitoes and flies forced workers to wear head-nets and poisonous snakes were not uncommon. Farmers used hoes, rakes, shovels, and a wheelbarrow or mule-drawn plow when they could afford it.
- Field-hands were generally comprised of African-Americans and Bahamians. The Japanese may have worked the fields in the very beginning.
- The first crops grown were pineapples. Eventually, winter vegetables, such as tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers became the more successful crops; these were shipped all over the U.S.
- The Delray train station pictured still exists in downtown Delray Beach, although not at its original location. It was painted "Kodak yellow" supposedly because George Eastman and Flagler were friends. Florida East Coast Railway had a direct impact on the growth of Florida.
- The staple of the Japanese diet is rice (white, short-grained) with side dishes of vegetables, miso soup, pickles, and possibly a small serving of meat or fish (fresh or dried).
- Leisure activities were limited due to the long hours spent in the fields. On occasion, Yamato pioneers went to the beach or fishing.

Discussion Points:

- What was life like in south Florida in the early 1900s?
- Compare farming techniques of 1910 to those of today.
- How are pineapples grown?
- What are the winter vegetables in Florida? What part of the plant do we eat?



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Settler: *(excitedly)* Sukeji! Sukeji!

Sukeji: What the matter? *Daijyobu?* Are you ok?

Settler: I'm fine, but we must be careful. A terrible sickness has come and many people are dying. And . . . and . . . I hate to tell you this, but your sponsor has died, too.

Sukeji: What? Oki-san is gone? Oh no . . .

Settler: I am so sorry, Sukeji. What will you do now?

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George's Journey circa 1906

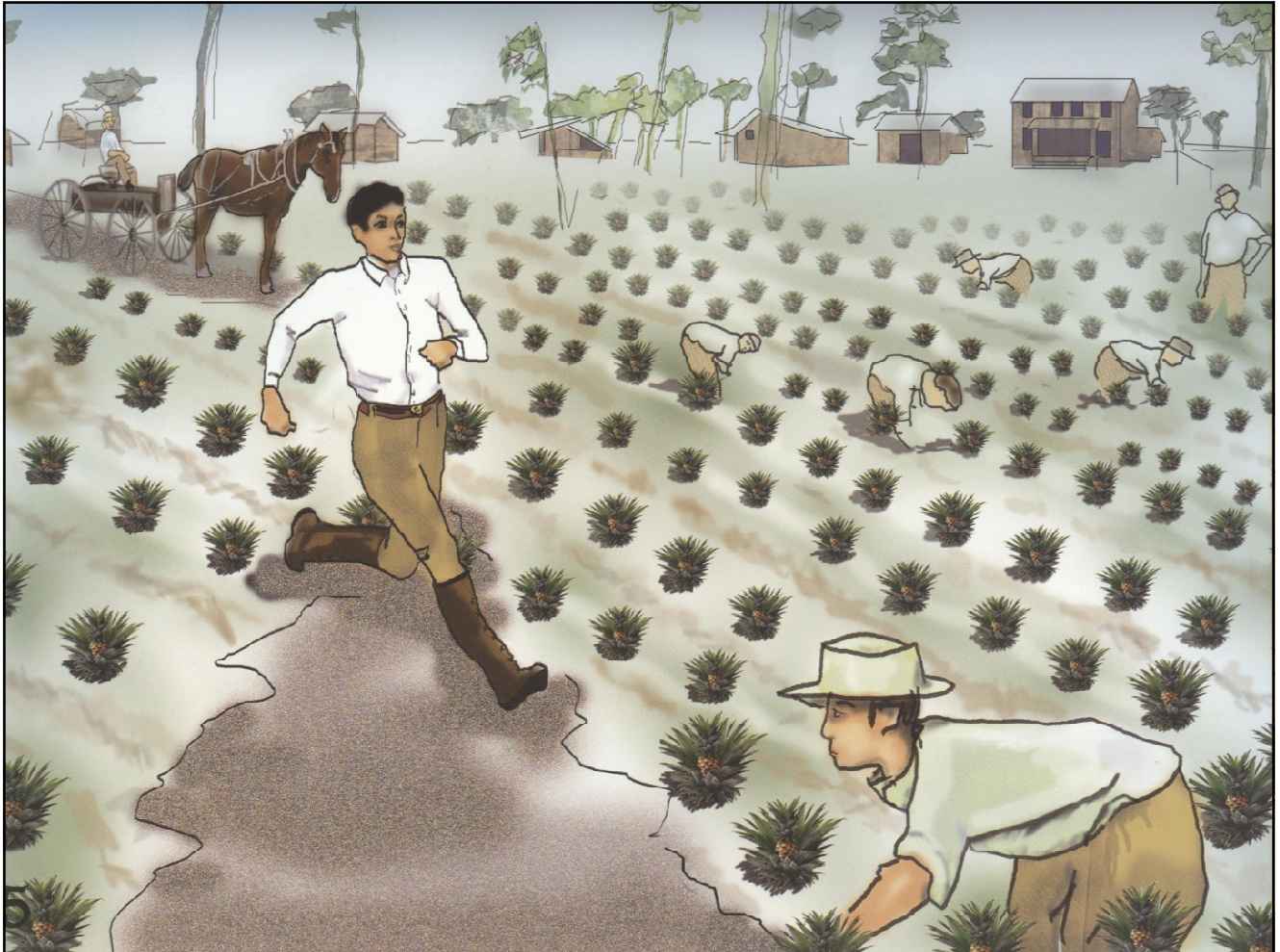


Cultural Components:

- Mitsusaburo Oki (1855 – 1906) was a silk merchant married to the older sister of Jo Sakai. He was a financial supporter of Yamato Colony and George Morikami's sponsor.
- Some of the Japanese immigrants are buried in marked graves at Woodlawn Cemetery in West Palm Beach. Jo Sakai, founder of Yamato Colony, is buried there; Sukeji George Morikami was cremated with half of his ashes remaining on Morikami grounds and the other half taken to Miyazu, Japan. Oki-san's ashes were returned to Japan. In Morikami gardens, there are two memorial stones, one commemorating Morikami and the other honoring Oki and Sakai.
- In Japan, most Japanese have a Buddhist ceremony upon death. Generally after cremation, the family holds the ashes in the home until the 49th day at which time the ashes are interred at a temple or city cemetery. Special memorials are held on the first, third, and seventh anniversaries of the individual's death.

Discussion Points:

- How was the produce taken to market? *Horse and cart, Florida East Coast Railway, shipped from Biscayne Bay, the most accessible harbor on Florida's east coast*
- What were the diseases in the early 1900s? *typhoid, malaria, and tuberculosis, with the latter being the most common for Japanese immigrants (Nikkei Legacy by Toyo Takata)*



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Sukeji: Why did I come here? How am I going to get back home? Poor Oki-san, I can't believe he's dead. What am I going to do? Without my bonus I may never get back to Japan.

(SLIGHT PAUSE)

Narrator: After Sukeji agonized over his predicament for days, he decided that his future was to work in the United States, at least for now. To do this, he needed to improve his English. He heard of a family he could live with in Eau Gallie, Florida, so with his goal strongly in mind he traveled north and . . .

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George's Journey circa 1906



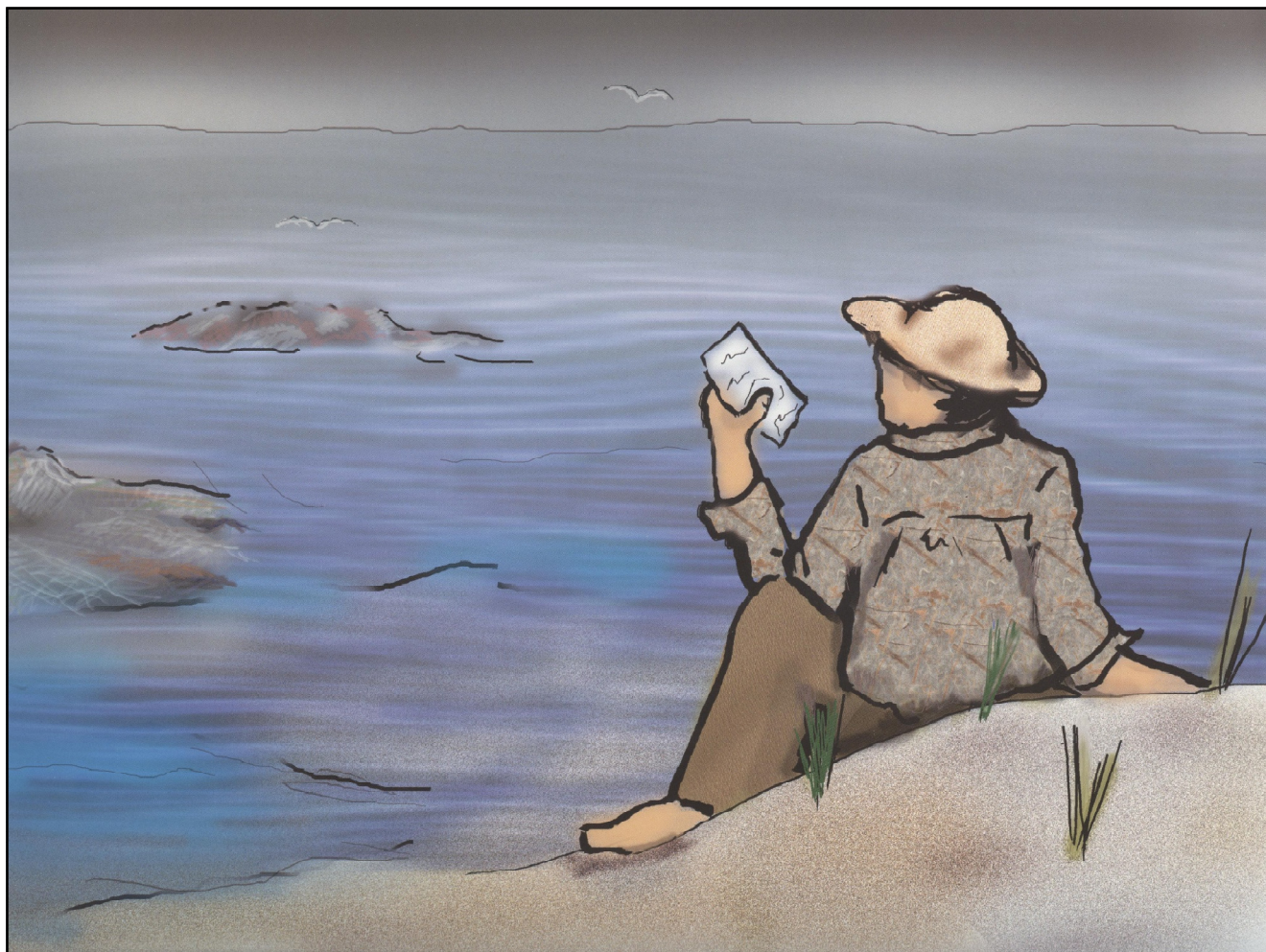
Cultural Components:

- Eau Gallie (French meaning "rocky water") was located in Brevard County. In 1969, it merged with Melbourne and the name Melbourne was chosen by popular vote for this new city. The name lives on in many sections of the area.
- The Japanese currency is yen. The current denominations include the one thousand, five thousand, and ten thousand yen bills, as well as one, five, ten, hundred, and five hundred yen coins. The exchange rate varies from day-to-day (check the internet for the current rate).
- The \$500 bonus would have given Sukeji more than enough money to do what he wanted to do back in Japan.

Discussion Points:

- How important is it for immigrants to learn English?

APPLICATION: Imagine living in a foreign country and not being able to return to your homeland. What would you do?



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George's Journey circa 1909-1910

Narrator: . . . at the age of 22, Sukeji Morikami entered the fifth grade of Eau Gallie Elementary School.

Student: You're so big! What grade are you in? Are you the teacher?

Sukeji: No, no, no-no-no . . .

Student: What's your name?

Sukeji: Morikami Sukeji

Student: What kind of name is that?

Sukeji: I am from Japan.

Student: Where's that? Why are you in our class?

Narrator: In the beginning, Sukeji could understand very little English, but with time and hard work, his English improved. He was ready to move back to Yamato Colony after only one year.

(SHOW HALF OF NEXT CARD)

George: Thank you, Sam, for letting me use some of your land. I can't wait to harvest this first crop of tomatoes.

Sam (friend): You're an honest, hard-working man, Sukeji. I trust you will pay me back for the seeds. Best of luck to you.

George: Thank you very much and please call me George now. It's a name I got used to in Eau Gallie and I like it. It seems easier for people to say.

Narrator: After a few short years . . .

(SHOW REST OF CARD)



Cultural Components:

- In Japan, the family name is spoken and written first with the given name following.
- At this time the American flag had 46 stars (www.si.edu/resource/faq/nmah/flag).

Discussion Points:

- What kinds of schools existed in the early 1900s in rural Florida? For lesson plans entitled *One Room Schoolhouses of Florida* contact <http://www.museumoffloridahistory.com/education/outreach/heritageEducation.cfm>.
- Did all ethnic groups go to the same school? Schools were segregated from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s. The children of Yamato Colony went to the "white" school, black students had their own school.



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George's Journey circa 1911



Sam (friend): It's amazing how your tomato fields have grown, George! What's your secret?

George: Secret? I don't have one, but I do raise my plant beds so the heavy rains drain away from the plant roots. Then they don't rot. It works very well.

Sam (friend): Where are you selling your produce?

George: Well, I had this great idea. I'm selling vegetables through a mail order business and shipping them by the Florida East Coast Railway.

Sam (friend): You're a rich man now, George. I hope you're putting all your profits safely away in the bank.

(SLIGHT PAUSE)

Narrator: George's life was not all hard work. He fished, visited with other colonists, enjoyed baseball games, and participated in community events.

(CHANGE TO NEXT CARD)

Cultural Components:

- Pictured is a packing house located conveniently on a spur track, a track diverging from the main line over which regular traffic is not maintained, to facilitate the shipping of produce.
- Raised plant beds are typical of Japanese farming traditions (except for growing rice). With the rainy season, it is important to have the water drain away from the plant roots.

Discussion Points:

- Why did George change his name? *It is not known why he "adopted" the name. Brainstorm possibilities.*

APPLICATION: Why do people want to "fit in"? Is it important to remember/hold on to your roots/heritage? Explain.

- Compare leisure time family activities in the early 1900s to what you like to do today.



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Adult: *(excitedly)* The Fourth of July parade is so much fun.

Child: Here it comes! Here it comes! The parade is coming!

Child: Oh, look at Miss Liberty!

Child: Here comes the band! There's Uncle Joe playing the trombone!

Child: Look, a giant tomato! Mommy, who are those people?

Adult: They're the Japanese settlers from Yamato Colony.

Child: Look what's next!

Narrator: As the years passed, George's business grew and he became well known as a successful farmer and businessman. But all that changed one day in the late 1920s . . .

George's Journey circa 1914



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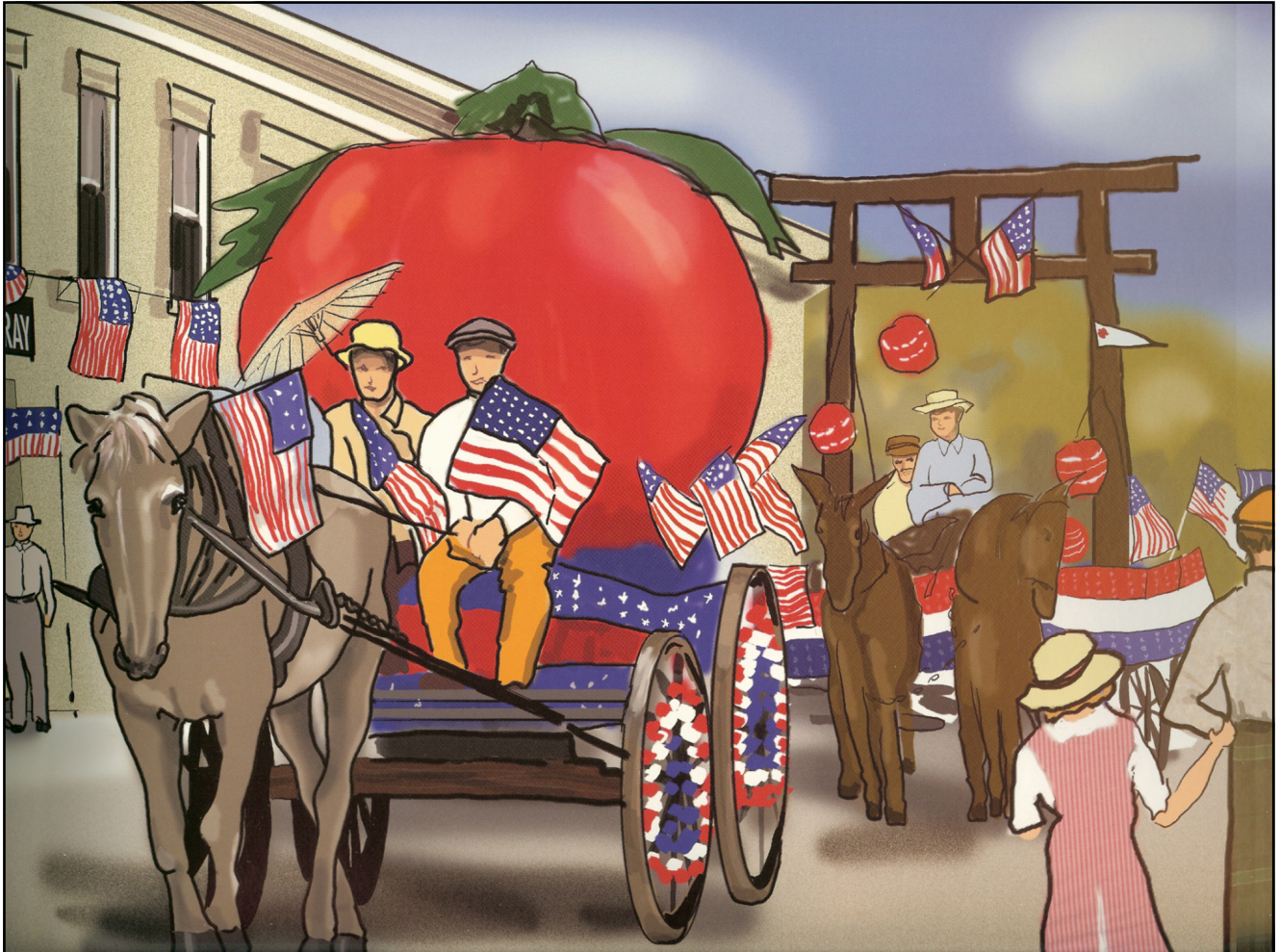
Cultural Components:

- On the back of the wagon is a *torii*, a gate-like structure marking the entrance to a sacred space and a symbol of a Shinto (the indigenous religion of Japan) shrine.
- At this time, the tomato was the main crop of Yamato Colony.

Discussion Points:

- There is evidence that Yamato Colony participated in annual Fourth of July parades. Why do you think they wanted to be a part of this historically significant day?

APPLICATION: In Palm Beach County today we have a wide variety of ethnic groups. Discover when and how they share their heritages with the community.



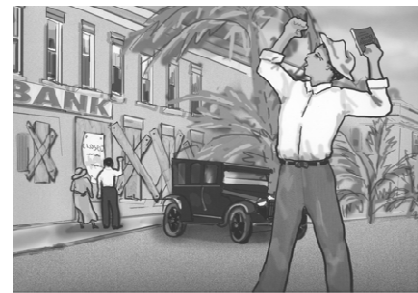
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George: My money! My money! Where's my money!

Narrator: George, like so many people, lost all his money when the Florida banks failed in the late 1920s. With little more than his land and a lot of hard work, George began again to build his dream.

(CHANGE TO NEXT CARD)

George's Journey circa mid-1920s



Cultural Components:

- South Florida real estate had become a popular investment opportunity in the early 1920s. However, due to poor reviews, embargoes placed on everything but food, and anti-Florida propaganda in northern newspapers, land sales began to flounder. Then the blockage of the Miami harbor by an overturned three-masted ship for several weeks followed by a major hurricane all contributed to the 1926 Land Bust. Banks and investors stopped trusting the "paper" millionaires as money and credit ran out. Visit www.historical-museum.org/history/southfla.htm or <http://floridahistory.org/landboom.htm> for more information.

Discussion Points:

- George had a major set-back. Brainstorm his options. Why do you think he made the choice he did?

APPLICATION: Do you save money? Where? What if you lost all of it? Is money important?



11

George's Journey circa 1930

Sam (friend): I haven't seen you in a while, George. What have you been up to?

George: Well, you know my bank failed and I lost everything but my land. I'm truck farming and doing the best I can. I work hard.

Sam (friend): That's good, George. If I can help you in any way, please let me know.

George: Well, I'm putting my money into land these days . . . No more banks for me! If you hear of any good sales, let me know.

Narrator: After years of hard work and living frugally, George became a prosperous landowner. Until . . .

(CHANGE TO NEXT CARD)



Cultural Components:

- Truck farming is the practice of growing one or more vegetable crops on a large scale for local or regional markets. As the use of railroads grew, shipping seasonal crops to markets further away became popular in California, Texas, Florida, and the Great Lakes area.
- Before the banks failed, George was living in downtown Delray in a hotel called the Kentucky House. Upon losing his life's savings, he moved to a trailer park and sometime later, moved a trailer onto his land which is where he lived until he died.

Discussion Points:

- APPLICATION: If you needed to be frugal, how would you and your family change your life style?



12

George's Journey circa 1941

Narrator: . . . A world away, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, thereby drawing the United States into World War II. It was the winter of 1941.

George's assets were frozen and his business seized. Members of the National Guard protected him. When he wanted to travel outside the county, he needed permission from the U.S. Attorney's office. It was a difficult time for all Japanese and Japanese-Americans living in the United States.

Fortunately for George, these restrictions lasted only several months and before long, he returned to his land where crops continued to thrive.

As the years went by, George contemplated another major decision. Finally, in 1967, he was ready. At the age of 80, Sukeji George Morikami became an American citizen.

(CHANGE TO NEXT CARD)



Cultural Components:

- During World War II the U.S. Government interned or put legal restrictions on most Japanese and Japanese-Americans (approximately 110,000) living in the U.S. and its territories. On short notice they were told to sell their homes (if they could), businesses, and belongings before being transported to internment camps for an indefinite period of time.
- Japanese are citizens of Japan; Japanese-Americans are citizens of the U.S. with Japanese ancestry.
- Pictured are many actual documents from this time.

Discussion Points:

- What would you take to an internment camp if all you could take was what you could carry?
- In 1941, was George Japanese or American? How do you think he felt about this war?



13

George's Journey circa 1967

Narrator: A few weeks later George was coaxed by friends to attend a city council meeting where a surprise awaited.

Mr. Avery: And now, as Mayor of Delray Beach, it gives me great pleasure to name George Morikami, "Honorary Mayor of Delray Beach".

George: Thank you, thank you. I'm Japanese, American, and now honorary mayor, too. Thank you very much.

(SLIGHT PAUSE)

Narrator: As the years went by, George continued to work his land.

(SHOW HALF OF NEXT CARD)

Sam (friend): How are you, George? How are those pineapples coming along?

George: Everything is good, but you know I'm still trying to give some of my land to the people of this county. I've tried three times and I'm ready to give up. Do you have any ideas?

Sam (friend): Well, I do know a couple of county commissioners. Let me talk with them.

(SHOW REST OF CARD)

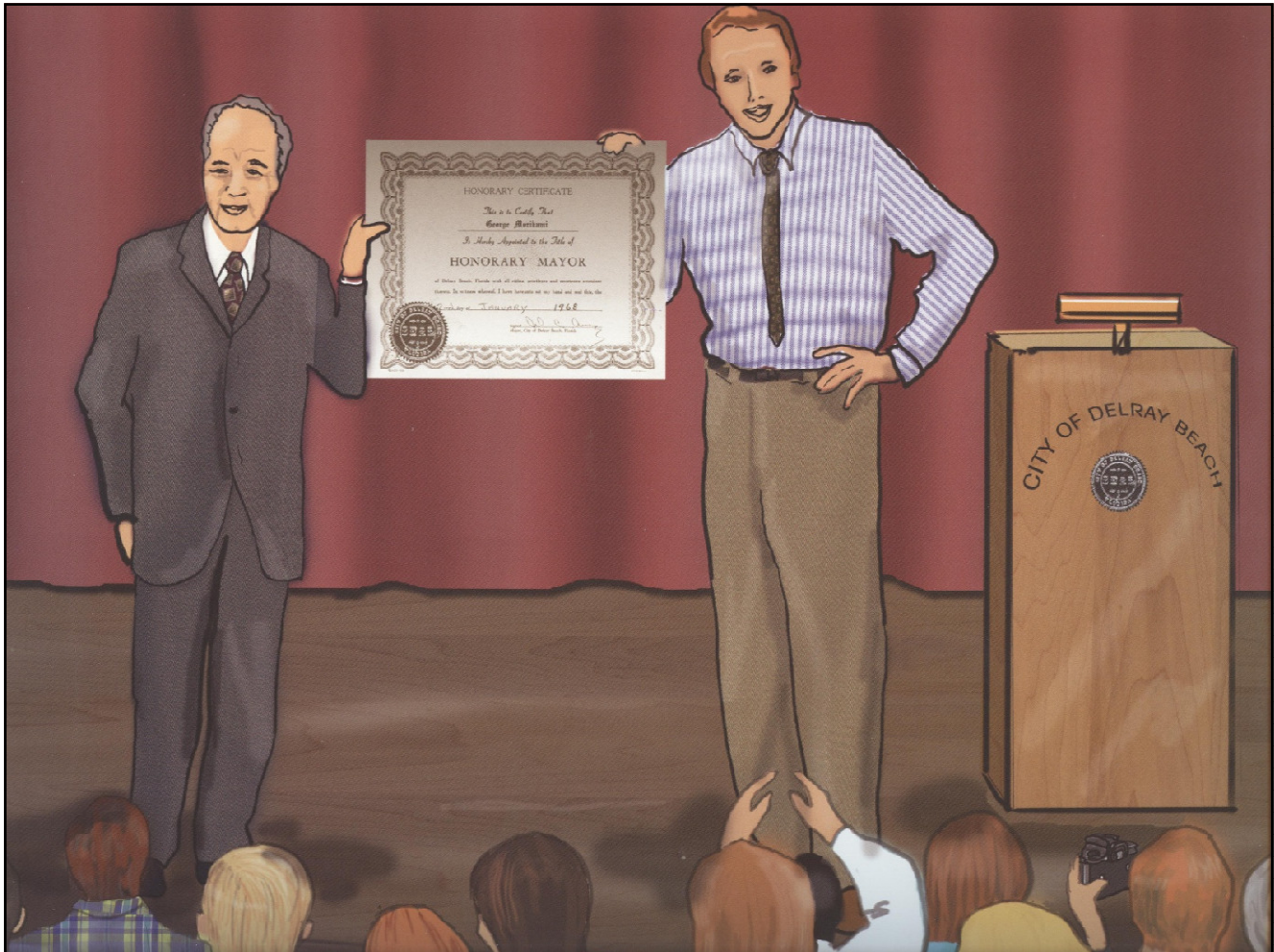


Cultural Components:

- To become an American citizen one must be at least 18 years old, have lived in the U.S. for at least 5 years, be of good moral character, and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of U.S. history and government.
- Japanese immigrants were prohibited from becoming U.S. citizens until the 1950s. They were also not allowed to own or lease land to farm from the early 1900s to the 1950s. This law is still on the books in Florida, but has not been enforced. (see <http://goaaba.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/alien-land-law-flyer-goaaba-2011.pdf> for more information)
- Mr. Al C. Avery was mayor of Delray Beach, FL from 1964 – 1967.

Discussion Points:

- Why do you think George wanted to become an American citizen? Do you think it was a difficult decision to make?



14

George's Journey circa 1974

Narrator: Finally, in 1974, the county accepted George's offer. Little did he know that his dream of a community park where people could learn a little bit about his native land of Japan would eventually develop into the entire Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens.

(CHANGE TO NEXT CARD)



Cultural Components:

- Museums collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret objects.
- The Yamato-kan was built in 1977, the Morikami Museum in 1993, and the garden expansion and renovation in 1999. The property is owned and operated by Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation.

Discussion Points:

- Why did George share his heritage with the people of Palm Beach County?

APPLICATION: What would you like to share with your community?



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George's Journey circa 1976

Narrator: George Sukeji Morikami died on February 29, 1976 at the age of 89. He is remembered every day at the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens, but especially in mid-August when the Japanese celebrate Obon. Obon is the time when Japanese welcome their ancestors' spirits as they return to earth for several days each year. Grave sites are visited and the joyous celebration is marked by folk dancers, drummers, food, fun and games. At the end of the event, lanterns commemorating the deceased are lit and floated on water, lighting the spirits' way back to their world.

George Sukeji Morikami's dream of orchards in Japan never came true, but his dream of farming and his dream of giving a gift to the people of his adopted country did.



Cultural Components:

- Morikami Museum also honors George Sukeji Morikami in mid-October during its Lantern Festival (which began in 2013 to share the obon traditions with the community without the dangers of south Florida's summer thunderstorms).

Discussion Points:

APPLICATION: What traditions do you have for honoring your ancestors?



1

Pronunciation of Key Words

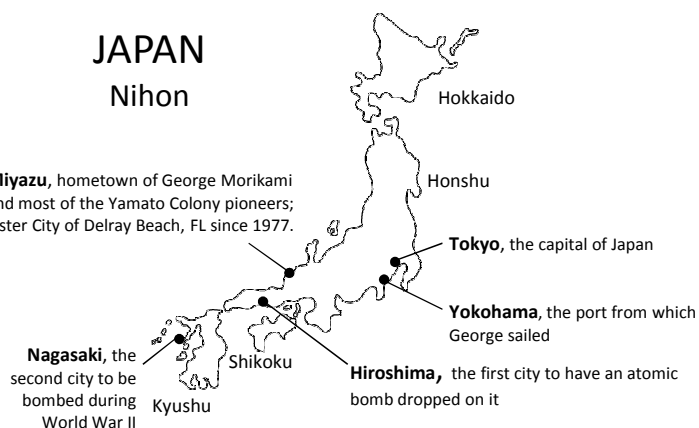
Benefactor	Sukeji <i>sue kay gee</i> Morikami <i>moh ree kah me</i>
Founder	Jo Sakai <i>sah kah ee</i>
Sponsor	Oki <i>oh key</i>
City Name	Miyazu <i>me yah zoo</i>
Colony Name	Yamato <i>yah mah toe</i>
Mother	Okāsan <i>oh kah sahn</i>
Father	Otōsan <i>oh toe sahn</i>
Welcome	yōkoso <i>yoh kah so</i>
Thank you	arigatō gozaimasu <i>ah ree gah toe goh za ee mas</i>
Are you ok?	daijyobu <i>die joe boo</i>



JAPAN

Nihon

Miyazu, hometown of George Morikami and most of the Yamato Colony pioneers; Sister City of Delray Beach, FL since 1977.



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4000 Morikami Park Road, Delray Beach, FL

ISBN 1-882865-03-0

Written by Beth Kawazura with the assistance of Sharon Friedheim, Reiko Nishioka, Larry Rosensweig, and Tom Gregersen of the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens. Additional informational support given by the Delray Beach Historical Society.

Artwork by Caren Hackman © 2002

Funded in part by grants from:

MetLife Foundation

