

# Kanaye Nagasawa

## ~The Wine King of California~

In October 2017, a number of wildfires broke out across Napa, Sonoma, and other parts of Northern California, devastating numerous business, wineries, and communities all over the region. Paradise Ridge Winery, an indispensable part of the historic relationship between Japan and California, was among those that suffered extensive damage in the fires. This winery's grounds historically housed the vineyards of the Fountaingrove Winery in Sonoma, which was originally operated and later owned by **Kanaye Nagasawa**, a late 19<sup>th</sup> century Japanese winemaker. Upon learning of this history of their property, Paradise Ridge built an exhibit to highlight Nagasawa's life and contributions in their winery building. Unfortunately, this exhibit was lost along with the winery in the wildfire. In honoring his achievements and as a gesture of our solidarity and hope for the speedy recovery of the affected areas, we would like to briefly introduce Nagasawa's story.



(London: 1865)

In 1865, at the end of the Shogunate Period, fifteen young *samurai* left Satsuma, Japan in secret and set sail for London, breaking the law by leaving their country during a time when foreign travel was forbidden. Nagasawa was the youngest of the group at only 13 years old. Their mission was to learn everything they could about Western science and technology in order to help transform feudal Japan into a modern, industrial society. Nagasawa, being too young for university, was sent to Scotland to attend school while living with the family of Thomas Glover, a Scottish merchant, who had come to Japan and helped lay the foundations for such companies now known as Mitsubishi and Kirin Brewery.

When money for schooling ran out in 1867, almost all of them returned to Japan, but Nagasawa and five others remained in the UK. Eventually, they were introduced to Thomas Lake Harris, a religious leader, who paid for their continued education in exchange for their work at his colony in America. Nagasawa and the others arrived in New York State in 1867, and moved to Santa Rosa, California in 1875, where Harris started a new colony that would come to be known as "Fountain Grove." After the Meiji Restoration in Japan in 1868, Nagasawa was the only one who did not return to Japan, while the others went back to become important representatives in the new government, including as diplomatic envoys to the US. In 1900, as

leader of the colony, Nagasawa inherited the Fountaingrove Winery that was originally founded by Harris in 1882.

Nagasawa eventually became the largest winemaker in California. Local residents of Sonoma came to know him as the “Wine King” of California. He was the first to introduce California wine to England and Europe. While producing wine, Nagasawa made every effort to promote wine by inviting guests and celebrities to dinners and extravagant parties at his huge residence in Fountain Grove – even throughout Prohibition in the 1920s and 1930s. Those who visited his winery and residence in Sonoma included Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, and Inazo Nitobe.



(Circa: 1882)

Nagasawa acquired both fame and fortune in America as the most accomplished Japanese man of his time. However, due to discriminatory Alien Land Laws and President F.D. Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066 in 1942, Nagasawa’s heirs were unable to inherit Fountain Grove after his death in 1934.

As a representative figure in US-Japan relations, Nagasawa has been remembered ever since. In 1983, during his visit to Japan, President Ronald Reagan gave a speech (\*) to the Japanese Parliament mentioning Nagasawa and his many accomplishments. It was through this speech that his story became well-known to the Japanese people. In 2007, the land he had once owned was christened “Nagasawa Community Park” and is beloved by the community to this day. What’s more, one portion of that land now belongs to Paradise Ridge Winery and, in honor of Nagasawa’s accomplishments, a small volume of the wine produced there each year bears his name.

(\*) President Ronald Reagan’s remarks to the Japanese Parliament in 1983:

*“... Being a Californian I have seen many miracles hardworking Japanese have brought to our shores. In 1865 a young Samurai student, Kanaye Nagasawa, left Japan to learn what made the West economically strong and technologically advanced. Ten years later he founded a small winery at Santa Rosa, California, called the Fountaingrove Round Barn and Winery. Soon he became known as the grape king of California. Nagasawa came to California to learn and stayed to enrich our lives. Both our countries owe much to this Japanese warrior-turned-businessman.”*

(Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco)