

YOKOHAMA: EXPLORING COMMODORE PERRY'S PORT OF CHOICE

While I was making plans to attend the Grassroots Summit in Shimane Prefecture, Japan, I received an email message from Mr. Koichi Imazu, a friend of mine since my 2011 trip to Japan. He asked if I could possibly extend my trip so I could speak to the Yokohama Kurofune (Black Ship) Research Society. Although I already had a full trip schedule, I could not turn down the opportunity to speak to this prestigious group, meet Koichi again, and to see sites visited by Commodore Perry. I was met in Tokyo by Koichi and two of his colleagues of the Society, Dr. Hisao Haneda and Mr. Takashi Murakami, and we made the one-hour drive to Yokohama. They had reserved a room for me at the Hotel New Grand with a beautiful view of Yokohama Harbor. I did not realize it initially, but I was looking out at the exact location where Commodore Perry had anchored his ships on March 8, 1854, before his dramatic landing on the shore of Yokohama to sign the Treaty of Peace and Amity (Treaty of Kanagawa). He chose the site due to deep water allowing close contact with shore for his ships. That night we enjoyed a relaxing dinner at a local Chinese restaurant, where we were joined by Dr. Haneda's wife, Kazuko, and Ms. Masae Coomber, who was to be the translator of my talk the next day.



View of Yokohama Harbor from Hotel New Grand looking through ginkgo trees



T. Murakami, K. Imazu, M. Coomber, M. Perry, K. Haneda, H. Haneda at Chinese dinner restaurant



Site marking where Japan-America Treaty of Peace and Amity was concluded

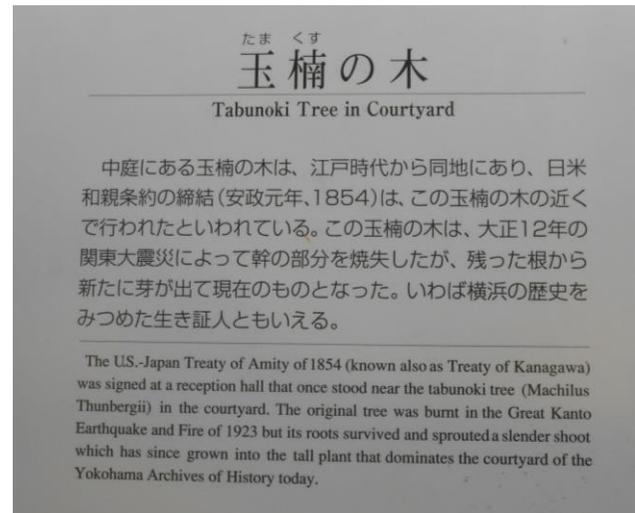


Scene of Comm. Perry's landing in Yokohama - 1854
Painting by Peter Heine

In the morning we made a short walk to the Yokohama Archives Building and viewed the tree that is considered the same tree illustrated in the painting by Peter Heine of the landing. We toured the Museum and saw many other illustrations of the landing and also some of old Yokohama, which became a huge trading port following the Treaty negotiations. Dr. Haneda is an expert on this period of Yokohama history and owns original illustrations of some of the reproductions on display. Several other historic landmarks were visited, including the Yokohama City Port Opening Memorial Hall, but then it was time for a lunch break.



Standing near tree depicted in original landing scene



Tabunoki tree in courtyard of Archives

We enjoyed a very traditional Japanese 9-course lunch at the Shikitei Restaurant of the Sky Lounge on the 70th floor of the Royal Park Hotel. The view of the Harbor was breathtakingly modern, but it was fun to imagine what it looked like in 1854. After lunch we had a brief meeting with the Governor of the Kanagawa Prefecture, Honorable Yuji Kuroiwa. Mr Kuroiwa had been a popular television personality and was very pleasant.



View from 70th floor of the Royal Park Hotel



First course being served to Dr. Haneda



Fourth course – seasonal assorted sashimi (raw fish) and hamo (pike conger soup)



M. Perry, T. Kondo, K. Imazu, Y. Murata, T. Murakami, and H. Haneda - Royal Park Hotel

At 3:00 PM, I gave a powerpoint lecture on Commodore Perry to 93 members and guests of the Kurofune Research Society in an historic building called Bashamichi Jyuban-kan. Ms. Coomber was the translator and speaking perfect English did a great job, being well educated on all aspects of the subject. After the lecture we had a delicious formal western-style Japanese meal in the same building of the lecture. The next morning I went for a short stroll by myself and located a nice coffee shop right near the landing spot that was named *Au Jardin de Perry*. The large cannon on display outside the shop had no connection to Commodore Perry.



Some members of Kurofune Society and guests



Yokohama coffee shop – *Au Jardin de Perry*



Breakfast with Koichi Imazu and Yoshihiko Fujisawa



Sign outside coffee shop, *Au Jardin de Perry*

After my short stroll along the waterfront, I met Koichi Imazu at the Hotel New Grand for a late breakfast at 9 AM. We were joined by Mr. Yoshihiko Fujisawa. Fuji, as he preferred to be called, was a friend of Koichi and had an interesting connection to my family. In the 1960s, while he was a student at Stanford University he had been a guest on a homestay with James Thurber Perry in California. Mr. Perry is my distant cousin and the nephew of Bishop James DeWolf Perry, who was the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the USA.

After breakfast I went to my room to finish packing for departure. When I arrived in the lobby I was greeted by my Black Ships colleagues, who were going to give me more touring of Yokohama. To my astonishment they were talking to the chairman of the Hotel New Grand, Mr. Noriyuki Hara. After introductions he said he had seen my name on the registry that he checks every day and wanted to meet me. When I checked into the hotel the concierge, who briefed me on the room, had mentioned that the basket of fruit and flowers in my room were compliments of the chairman. Now meeting him I quickly thanked him, and then he asked me if I had seen the Admiral Perry Conference Room. I replied with a perplexed negative response and he said he would show me. We took some pictures in the lobby and then proceeded up the escalator to view a huge mural of Commodore Perry's landing in Yokohama.



Koichi Imazu, Matthew Perry, Noriyuki Hara, and Takashi Murakami in lobby with print of landing



M. Perry with Mr. Hara in front of mural of Perry's landing in Yokohama on March 8, 1854



Model of USS Susquehanna – Commodore Perry's Flagship, March 1854 – at Perry Conference Room



Old trumpet vine along lake in Sankeien Garden, donated by the Hara family

It was a hidden treasure to me and to my surprise also to my colleagues, who were well-versed in Yokohama and Perry history. Mr. Hara graciously gave me two prints of the landing,

one a reproduction of the mural and one of Heine's painting. He mentioned that a group of Perry relatives had visited the hotel about 10 years ago. When I returned to the US I checked with some relatives and learned that my cousin Dain Perry had visited Yokohama and the Hotel New Grand in 2005 with 18 relatives including the organizer, Fred Nichols. After offering thanks and farewells to Mr. Hara we visited the Sankeien Garden, which was created and donated to Yokohama by Mr. Hara's grandfather, Mr. Sankei Hara, who built a fortune in the silk business after the city was opened to trade.

Following my return to the United States, I got a surprise email from the translator, Ms. Masae Coomber, telling me that she had recently learned that her good friend, Reiko, was a descendant of Tatsunosuke Hori, who was lead translator used by the Japanese during negotiations with Commodore Perry. I immediately thought that this was a unique coincidence that the good friend of my translator was descended from the translator of Commodore Perry.

By checking my books on Perry, I learned that Tatsunosuke had been the lead translator when Perry first came ashore in Kurihama on July 14, 1853, and delivered the letter from President Fillmore. Tatsunosuke was the man, who after introductions to the two Japanese governors, asked Commodore Perry in Dutch if he was ready to deliver the letters. The letters in English, Dutch, and Chinese were then transferred by "cabin boys" followed by the Black body guards to the Japanese governors with appropriate bowing. Two days later Tatsunosuke was with another translator when they gave presents to the Americans and received some in exchange. The Americans and Tatsunosuke then enjoyed food and liquor and during the repast announced in a low whisper that he felt the Bakufu (shogun government) would have a satisfactory answer to the President's letter. This was indeed good news for the Americans to hear, and the first indication that the negotiations had gone well.

Tatsunosuke was also the interpreter when Perry returned in 1854. After the treaty was signed, Perry took his squadron to Shimoda, which had been designated as one of two ports opened to Americans. Tatsunosuke was annoyed when three American officers tried to sleep in a Buddhist temple after a day of shooting birds. He went to Commodore Perry's ship after midnight to beg the Commodore to make them return to the ship. This incident could have caused a possible problem between the two nations that had just signed a friendship treaty, but no serious repercussions occurred.

The Yokohama trip was memorable for me for many reasons. The friendship established between my Japanese friends and me was undeniably warm and long-lasting. The ability to stand in the same areas where Commodore Perry stood and to imagine the pageantry that he created was unforgettable. To meet Mr. Hara and see the Admiral Perry Conference Room was remarkable. And then finally to learn of a connection with one of Commodore Perry's interpreters, from the person who translated for me, was very coincidental. Together they were overwhelming, serendipitous, and notable occasions that I will never forget. I will be forever grateful to my many friends in Japan, who were responsible for all these great experiences.



Members of Minami Circle and of the Yokohama Kurofune (Black Ship) Research Society after lecture