

日米の架け橋となってきた桜

日米首脳会談のためワシントン D.C.を訪れた高市首相は、3月19日（日本時間20日）ホワイトハウスでトランプ大統領と、日本が寄贈した桜の苗木を挟み記念撮影に臨みました。日本政府は、今年建国250年を迎える米国に250本の桜を贈る計画を進めているとのこと。

憲政だより『時計塔』（令和8年春季号）でもご紹介しましたが、日本と合衆国には、桜が体現してきた長い友好の歴史があります。



写真：内閣広報室



写真：政府広報オンライン（海外広報）

首都ワシントン D.C.の国立公園ポトマック河畔では、春の訪れとともに日本から贈られた桜がワシントン記念塔を背景に水面に映え、美しく華やかな春を演出します。

この桜は、「憲政の神様」と称される尾崎行雄が、日米の平和と親善の象徴として1912（明治45）年に寄贈したものです。当初、1909（明治42）年に送られた2,000本の苗木は害虫被害により全て焼却処分となってしまいましたが、当時東京市長だった尾崎行雄、紀行作家で親日家のエリザ・シドモア、ウィリアム・タフト第27代合衆国大統領の夫人ヘレン・タフトなど、日米双方の多くの人々の尽力により、染井吉野など3,000本の苗木が植樹されたのです。

これらの桜は現在まで受け継がれ、ワシントンに春を告げる一大イベント National Cherry Blossom Festival（全米桜祭り）では、毎年150万人以上がポトマック河畔を訪れるなど、世代を超えて愛され続けています。

尾崎行雄は、議会制民主主義と平和の重要性を一貫して説き、演説の名手としても知られる政治家です。衆議院議員を60年7カ月務め、衆議院より初めて名誉議員の称号を贈られました。

1915（大正4）年タフト大統領より、尾崎がワシントンD.C.に贈った桜の返礼としてハナミズキ40本が東京市に贈られました。「衆議院憲政記念館」（1972（昭和47）年開館）の前身である「尾崎記念会館」は、尾崎の功績を記念し1960（昭和35）年に設立されましたが、建設が決まった際に再び米国からハナミズキが贈られ、国会北庭で毎年花を咲かせています。

2015（平成27）年には、米国からのハナミズキ寄贈100周年を記念し、日米友好の証である桜とハナミズキの記念切手が発行されています。



写真：「お札と切手の博物館」ウェブサイト

The History of the Cherry Blossom: A Bridge Between Japan and the United States

Japanese Prime Minister Takaichi, who was visiting Washington D.C. for the Japan-US summit, posed for a commemorative photograph with United States President Trump at the White House on March 19, standing on either side of a cherry tree sapling donated by Japan. The Japanese government is proceeding with plans to present 250 cherry trees to the United States, which is celebrating its 250th anniversary this year.



Japan and the United States share a long history of friendship, symbolized by the cherry blossom. In the national park along the banks of the Potomac River in the capital, Washington D.C., as spring arrives, the cherry blossoms gifted by Japan are reflected on the water's surface against the backdrop of the Washington Monument, creating a beautiful and vibrant spring scene.

This cherry tree was donated in 1912 by Yukio Ozaki, known as the 'God of Constitutional Government', as a symbol of peace and friendship between Japan and the United States. Initially, the 2,000 saplings sent in 1909 had to be incinerated due to pest damage; however, through the dedicated efforts of Yukio Ozaki—who was Mayor of Tokyo at the time—, Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, a travel writer and Japanophile, and Helen Herron Taft, wife of William Taft, the 27th President of the United States, 3,000 saplings, including Somei-Yoshino, were planted. These cherry trees have been passed down to the present day and continue to be cherished across generations; indeed, the National Cherry Blossom Festival—a major event heralding the arrival of spring in Washington— attracts over 1.5 million visitors to the banks of the Potomac River every year.

Yukio Ozaki was a politician who consistently championed the importance of parliamentary democracy and peace and was also renowned as a master orator. He served as a Member of the House of Representatives for 60 years and 7 months and was the first person to be awarded the title of Honorary Member of the House of Representatives.

In 1915, 40 dogwood trees were presented by President Taft in return for the cherry trees that Ozaki had gifted to Washington, D.C. The 'Ozaki Memorial Hall, the predecessor to the 'Parliamentary Museum of the House of Representatives (opened in 1972), was established in 1960 to commemorate Ozaki's achievements. When the decision was made to construct the building, dogwoods were once again gifted by the United States and planted in the North Garden in front of the National Diet.

In 2015, to mark the 100th anniversary of the donation of dogwoods from the United States, commemorative stamps featuring cherry blossoms and dogwoods—symbols of Japan-US friendship—were issued.

