Japanese Doll Festival

The history of the Doll Festival, originally Girls’ Day on the third day of the third month, is not much known by celebrants. Nowadays from mid-February to early March, families with girls customarily display a set of dolls harking back to the classical Heian court.

Pre-War Japan-U.S. Friendship Dolls

Based on this custom, in 1927 Japan-U.S Friendship Dolls were exchanged, such as Miss Kagawa and Anama Julie who were sent to Kagawa Prefecture (animated GIF above, thanks to the Miss Kagawa Homecoming Committee). Miss Kagawa was the only doll to remain displayed throughout World War II, with a sign in a North Carolina museum saying that the Japanese leaders, not the people, were to blame for the insane attack on Pearl Harbor. Miss Kagawa and other dolls returned to Japan for refurbishing and display in the late 1990s, creating quite a sensation and a renewed role for the dolls as peace ambassadors.


by Steve McCarty, September 17, 2019