

# Memorializing the Father of ‘Sapporo Yellow’

## – Honoring Prof. Brooks’ Onion Cultivation –

A monument to William Penn Brooks (1851-1938), the Sapporo Agricultural College (present day Hokkaido University) professor who first introduced full-scale onion production to Japan, was unveiled in the front garden at the Sapporo Village Memorial Hall (Higashi Ward, Sapporo City).

It has been determined by the Hall’s curator Zenko Hashiba that Sapporo’s local onion variety, Sapporo Yellow originated with onions brought from the USA and cultivated by Brooks.

Brooks came to Sapporo Agricultural College in 1877. The deep involvement of Brooks in the Sapporo Yellow onion’s development was documented in research papers published by Kingo Miyabe, a student at the College.

It was long unclear where the onions originated. And for this reason, six years ago the Sapporo Village Memorial Hall’s curatorial committee began researching the onion’s roots.

Recently, it was found that in Shingo Ousaka’s 1956 Biography of Prof. William S. Clark, there are references to Brooks’ 1882 local teachings on the cultivation of onions, introduced in letters written by the inaugural president of Hokkaido Imperial University, Shousuke Sato. Furthermore, invaluable documents were provided by the Danvers Archival Center.

Thus, Brooks’ selection of the Yellow Globe Danvers onion variety for test plantings at the Agricultural College’s garden and Takei Nursery established the onion’s success.

The new monument was erected alongside another dedicated in 1978 which reads, “Japan’s cultivation of onions began here.” It is 2.2 meters tall, 1.5 meters wide, and honors Brooks as “The Father of Sapporo Yellow,” carrying details of his great contribution and several photographs.

At the unveiling ceremony held on October 4, 2022, Sapporo’s Mayor Katsuhiko Akimoto along with some 70 others were in attendance. Brooks’ great-grandchild joined the event online, delivering a message praising the contributions made to Hokkaido’s agricultural heritage. At the ceremony, Haruhito Yamada, Director of the Sapporo Village Memorial Hall said that their many years of study were done and the stone memorial expresses gratitude to Brooks eternalizing his legacy for future generations.

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\*Translated by DHS member Austin Moore, long-time resident of Japan