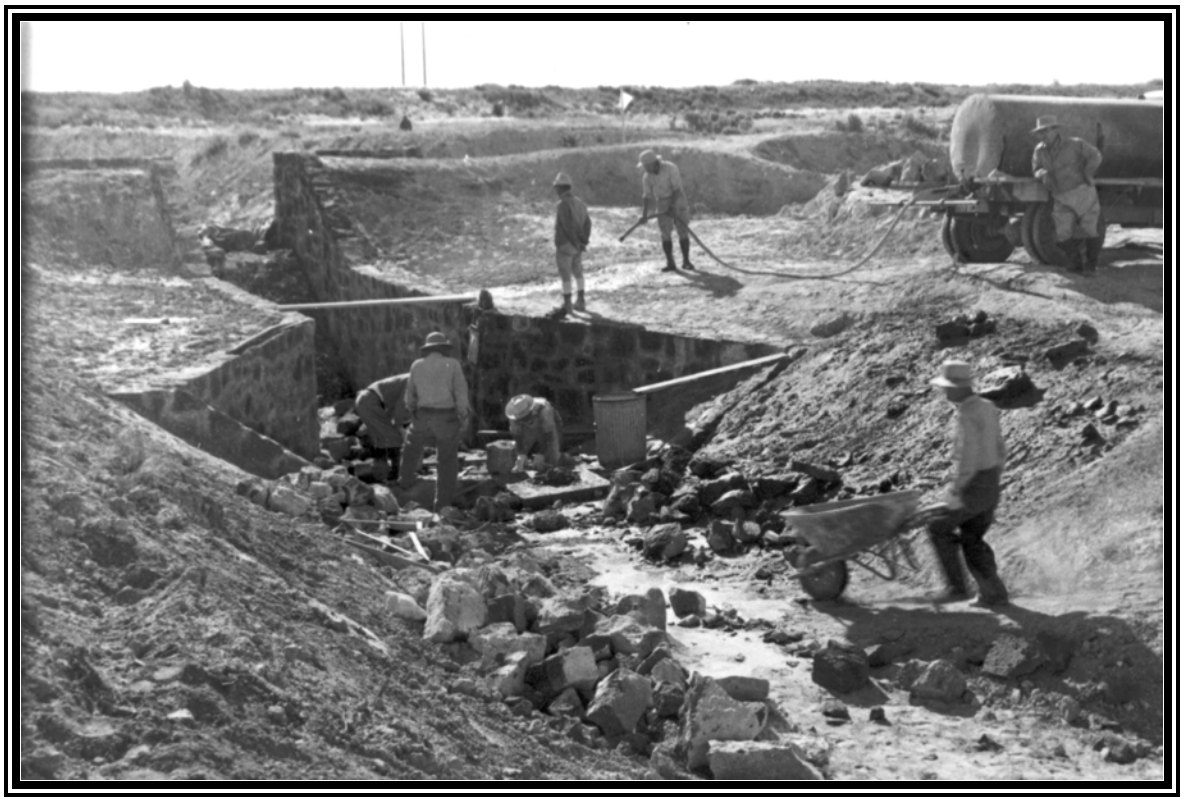
Historic Resource Study

Minidoka Internment National Monument



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National Park Service
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Minidoka Internment National Monument

Historic Resource Study

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Cover: Nikkei working on canal drop at Minidoka, date and photographer unknown, circa 1943. (Minidoka Manuscript Collection, Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument)

Chapter 1

Introduction -

Minidoka Internment National Monument

The Minidoka Internment National Monument became the 385th unit of the National Park System on January 17, 2001. In Proclamation 7395, President Bill Clinton set apart and reserved federal land for the "purpose of protecting the historic structures and objects of historical interest contained therein."[1] According to a planning document, the monument is "to provide opportunities for public education and interpretation of the incarceration of Nikkei (Japanese American citizens and legal resident aliens of Japanese ancestry) during WWII."[2] The 73-acre monument protects and manages resources related to the original 33,000-acre Minidoka Relocation Center where the federal government interned 13,078 Nikkei during the war.

The Minidoka Internment National Monument lies 21 miles southeast of Jerome, Idaho, on state highway 25, in Jerome County. On the Snake River Plain, the site is closer to Twin Falls than to Boise. In south central Idaho, Jerome County is surrounded by Cassia County and Minidoka County to the east, Twin Falls County to the south, Gooding County to the west, and Lincoln County to the north. National Park Service land in nearby counties includes the City of Rocks National Reserve, 80 miles south in

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[1] "Presidential Documents: Proclamation 7395 of January 17, 2001, Establishment of the Minidoka Internment National Monument," *Federal Register* Vol. 66, No. 14. (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 2001).

[2] United States Department of the Interior, *Minidoka Internment National Monument: Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (Seattle, WA: National Park Service, 2005), Abstract.

Cassia County; the Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument, 40 miles west in Twin Falls County; and the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, 60 miles northeast in Butte and Blaine Counties.

Agriculture and irrigation projects near the site provide valuable context for understanding the Minidoka Relocation Center. The monument site is near two irrigation canals historically significant to the internment center. The North Side irrigation canal forms the southern border of the monument and formed the southern border of the center. During the war, the center could not draw water from the North Side Canal without the installation of a costly pumping facility. Consequently, the internees at Minidoka constructed a lateral from the Milner-Gooding Canal, located some five miles northwest of the site, to the internment facility. The Milner-Gooding Canal provided water for the internment center and for the crop fields at Minidoka.

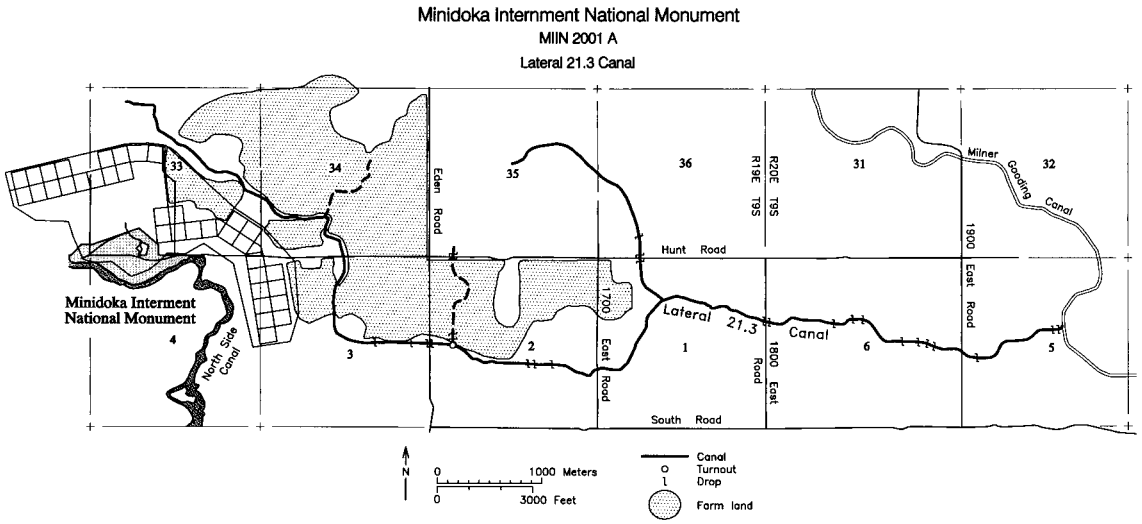

Figure 2. Canal drops and War Relocation Authority farm fields at Minidoka. (Western Archeological and Conservation Center)

This study develops themes to explain the monument's history and to show the center as one of several land uses over time. Organized chronologically, the themes within the study include early Idaho history, prewar settlement and development, racism and discrimination, camp life, and postwar settlement and land use. The role of the federal government is recurring and dominant within these themes. The government created the wartime relocation centers deep in the American interior on federal land. However, Minidoka reaches beyond a federal land use study. Studying the site within a broader agricultural, military, and ethnic history enriches and clarifies the story.

While the site is best known as a wartime relocation and internment center, the goal of this study is to develop themes in order to assist managers and interested readers in understanding the Minidoka Internment National Monument within larger historical contexts. Developing both local and regional historical contexts for the site, this study will relate the human history of the lands in the vicinity of the monument. Describing what happened here before, during, and after World War II will help to establish the significance of this place and the people who lived here.

This study synthesizes a variety of primary and secondary sources. These sources, listed in a bibliography at the end of the report, include military and government documents, census records, newspaper articles, oral histories, manuscript collections, and scholarly books and articles. This study uses these sources to develop relevant themes in order to understand the historic human activity on and near the monument as related to the site's short history as a wartime center.

Many people think of southern Idaho as isolated and empty. To a degree, the landscape of the Minidoka Internment National Monument has earned that reputation.

On the once sagebrush-covered land surrounding the monument visitors can see family farms with fields of alfalfa, corn, potatoes, onions, or beets but very little other development. Negligible overt evidence of the Minidoka Relocation Center is visible. The monument will help ensure that the people who lived at Minidoka do not disappear from memory. While this site represents a painful time in American history, the story of Minidoka helps convey aspects of perseverance and resolve within the Nikkei community. Minidoka also communicates a story that fits into the larger military and social history of all Americans during World War II. Studying the human history of the site integrates what happened at the monument into the fabric of the American past.

Chapter 2

Life on the Margins - History of Early Idaho

Introduction

The human history of the sagebrush-covered acres at the Minidoka Internment National Monument first must be told within archeological, regional, and national contexts. The North Side irrigation canal bordering the site epitomizes a recent agricultural past that obscures the human activity along the Snake River Plain dating back more than 12,000 years. Full appreciation of the site requires an understanding not only of the prehistoric geology but also the early historic changes in land use, from the earliest inhabitants to the emigrants and early settlers.

According to an archeological survey of the site completed in 2001, "no features or artifacts predating the relocation center were encountered" during the inspection of the monument with the exception of the North Side irrigation canal built in 1906. [3] This chapter discusses the earliest human history of the region surrounding the monument to provide a context for later land use history, rather than because of evidence of specific ancient human activity found at the site.

Natural History on the Snake River Plain

The ash soil and basaltic rock found at the monument resulted from events in the geologic history of North America. Seventeen million years ago, according to one interpretation of geologic evidence, the impact of a gigantic meteorite broke open the

[3] Jeffrey F. Burton and Mary M. Farrell, *This is Minidoka: An Archeological Survey of Minidoka Internment National Monument, Idaho* (Tucson, AR: Western Archeological and Conservation Center, 2001), 2.

earth's crust on the land that would become the Pacific Northwest. The collision sent molten lava onto the surface. Over time, as the continental crust slowly moved southwest, the "hot spot" shifted northeast to what is now Idaho. Subsequent eruptions of the hotspot created a volcanic trough now called the Snake River Plain. A thick layer of Rhyolite, a volcanic rock, filled the trough. Movements in the crust caused continual fissures that brought basalt to the surface. A 618 square mile basaltic lava field, the largest in the contiguous United States, is some 60 miles northeast of the Minidoka Internment National Monument. Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve, encompassing 83 miles of the field, protects a portion of the field's lava flows, cinder cones, spatter cones, and lava tubes (caves).[4] The volcanic ash, meanwhile, fell to the earth and produced a foundation under the soil that covers Idaho. Layers of wind-blown silt called loess covered the ash. Components blown from older lakebeds to the west produced the soil found at the monument.[5]

Geologists also have documented a flood on the Snake River that occurred 15,000 years ago, approximately one thousand years before evidence of human land use in the region. Lake Bonneville, the precursor to the Great Salt Lake, broke over its banks in a cataclysmic flood, discharging a massive amount of water north over the Red Rock Pass in Idaho and across the Snake River Plain creating the path of the present Snake River. Known as the Bonneville Flood, this event not only exposed fossils at the Hagerman Fossil Beds located only 40 miles west of the monument site, but also created and then

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[4] David Louter, *Craters of the Moon Historic Context Statements* (Seattle, Washington: National Park Service, 1995), 1-4.

[5] Bill Hackett and Bill Bonichsen, "Volcanic Crescent, " in *Snake: The Plain and Its People*, ed. Todd Shallat (Boise, ID: Boise State University, 1994), 25-59; David Alt and Donald W. Hyndman, *Northwest Exposures: A Geological Story of the Northwest* (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1995), 267-276, 333-343; Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1999), 13-14.

deposited gravel-lava boulders across the region. Sometimes referred to as melon gravel, these round boulders that range in size from watermelons to compact cars, represent stunning artifacts from a traumatic era.[6]

Climate on the Snake River Plain changed dramatically across thousands of years. At the time of the Bonneville Flood, during the geologic period called the Pleistocene, the climate was cool and moist. Glaciers covered the nearby mountain ranges and water surged in large quantities across the Plain and into the Snake. Then, about 8,000 years ago, in the Holocene period, conditions grew drier and warmer. Snow and rainfall lessened, and glaciers retreated. The Snake River Plain gradually became the arid landscape that it is today.[7]

Native American and Pre-European History in the Region

The climate changes affected flora and fauna on the Snake River Plain and thus influenced the land-use practices of the succession of cultures that inhabited the region. The Big Game Hunters, as archeologists call them, first appeared around 12,500 BC. Using spears tipped with stone points, these people stalked the large animals, including the mammoths, that inhabited the Plain and that flourished on its lush vegetation. In a cave near Dietrich, Idaho, 20 miles north of the present monument site, archeologist Ruth Gruhn and her colleagues discovered the remnants of a Big Game Hunter campsite, including spear points and animal remains. After the Big Game Hunters, the Clovis

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[6] Idaho State University, "The Lake Bonneville Flood," http://imnh.isu.edu/digitalatlas/hydr/lkbflood/lbf.htm/ (accessed May 10, 2005); United States Department of the Interior, "Hagerman Fossil Beds Geologic Formations," http://www.nps.gov/hafo/pphtml/subnaturalfeatures14.html/ (accessed May 25, 2004).

[7] Robert B. Butler, "Prehistory of the Snake and Salmon River Area," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 11, *Great Basin*, ed. Warren L. D'Azevedo (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1986), 127-129; Alan L. Bryan and Donald R. Tuohy, "Prehistory of the Great Basin/Snake River Plain to about 8,500 Years Ago" in *Ice Age People of North America*, eds. Robson Bonnichsen and Karen L. Turnmire (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 1999), 249.

(10,000-9,000 BC), Folsom (9,000-8,000 BC), and Plano (8,600-5,800 BC) cultures inhabited the Plain, each of which used a distinctive spear point shape in its pursuit of the big game. As conditions grew warmer and as the megafauna of the late Pleistocene became extinct, new cultures appeared on the Snake River Plain. From about 6,000 BC to AD 500, Archaic people hunted the smaller mammals that now inhabited the region. These people also took salmon from the Columbia and Snake rivers.

Figure 3. Thousand Springs, on the Snake River, site of salmon fishing for the region's early inhabitants. (Idaho State Historical Society ISHS 69-4.219c)

Thousand Springs, located 40 miles west of the monument, is a site in south central Idaho where an aquifer released water into the Snake through hundreds of cascading waterfalls emanating from the canyon wall. The springs provided an ideal environment

for salmon fishing. The native inhabitants augmented their diet of salmon with nutritious seed, tubers, and roots.[8]

A more recent culture group emerged on the Snake River Plain during the archeological stage called the Late Period, around the sixth century. Ancestors of the Northern Shoshone and Bannock Indians, these people hunted, fished, gathered food, made baskets, and milled flour.[9] These "tribes" or groups lived in communities that blurred traditional social and political barriers. The Northern Shoshone, also known as the Snake River Shoshone, distinguished themselves further into subgroups such as the well-known Lemhi Shoshone. Anthropologists use terms such as Northern Fremont and Shoshonean, Northern Shoshone and Bannock "tribes," and Lemhi Shoshone to distinguish bands of native people based on kinship ties and language. Shoshone and Bannock people find the terms problematic and view the distinctions differently.[10]

The Shoshone and Bannock tribes overlapped geographically and culturally while migrating the some 100,000 square mile Snake River Plain in seasonal cycles to maximize use of the region's resources.[11] Some groups traveled to the Snake River to fish for salmon at Shoshone Falls. Other groups gathered roots and plants in the southeastern Idaho plains. Late in the year, the Native Americans gathered berries and stored dried fruit for the winter months. Historians note that the Shoshone-Bannock enjoyed an enhanced diet compared with other Great Basin Indian groups. Within their seasonal

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[8] Leonard J. Arrington, *History of Idaho*, vol. 1 (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press, 1994), 24-28; Jesse D. Jennings, *Prehistory of North America* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1989), 119, 148.
[9] Butler, "Prehistory of the Snake and Salmon River Area,"131-133.
[10] Robert F. Murphy and Yolanda Murphy, "Northern Shoshone and Bannock," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 11, *Great Basin*, 284-285.
[11] Murphy and Murphy, "Northern Shoshone and Bannock," 284-285.

migration patterns, the Shoshone-Bannock lived lightly on the land, maintaining an average population density of only two people per one hundred square miles.[12]

The Camas Prairie, 70 miles northwest of the present monument, became the trading crossroads for thousands of native people. Native populations traded camas at seasonal "markets" held each year in late May or June. The camas plant (*Camassia quamash*), a member of the lily family, grew a nutritious starchy bulb that the Shoshone-Bannock people pulled up in late spring and early summer. Camas, often eaten raw, could also be baked or dried for later use or for trade.[13]

First Contact Period - Early eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century

Contact with European Americans changed how the Shoshone-Bannock people lived. Around 1700, the introduction of horses from the Spanish settlements of the Southwest increased the Indians' mobility for bison hunting. As the buffalo herds grew fewer in number, the Shoshone-Bannock in southeastern Idaho traveled farther east into the Great Plains.[14] Horse-mounted hunting brought the Shoshone-Bannock into contact with the Blackfeet Indians. The Blackfeet had acquired firearms through trade and they used the weapons to drive the Shoshone-Bannock back to the Snake River Plain. Contact brought other changes in addition to the firearms and horses. Trade spread diseases through casual contact that impacted the Shoshone-Bannock. Horses, firearms, and diseases

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[12] Deward E. Walker Jr., *Indians of Idaho* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1978), 25, 87; Merrill D. Beal and Merle W. Wells, *History of Idaho*, vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1959), 41.

[13] Gregory Smoak, "Broken Promise: The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Unresolved Claim to the Great Camas Prairie," *Idaho Issues Online*. http://www.boisestate.edu/history/issuesonline/fall2004_issues/1f_broken.html/ (accessed December 10, 2004).

[14] Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders' Tales* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 209.

changed human history on the Snake River Plain before European Americans established permanent residence in the region.[15]

Descendants of the Shoshone Indians met the U.S. Army Corps of Discovery - the Lewis and Clark exploration party - in 1805 during its attempt to explore the Missouri River to its source in the Rocky Mountains and the nearest westward passage to the Pacific Ocean. Lewis and three others left the main group on August 9, 1805. On August 12 they reached the Continental Divide and members of the Corps viewed the land that would eventually become Idaho. Lewis planted a United States flag on the land, not officially part of the Louisiana Purchase, thereby "discovering" and claiming ownership of the property on the same day. Today this place is known as Lemhi Pass.[16]

Thomas Jefferson's objectives for the Corps of Discovery included opening trade routes and organizing "proper" land use for American settlement. Shortly after the Northern Shoshone met the Lewis and Clark explorers in the Lemhi Valley, the fur traders began to travel through the Shoshone-Bannock territory. The traders, arriving from the north through Canada, preceded a larger group of European Americans who saw land in need of settlement and cultivation and native people in need of "civilization."[17]

Fur Trade and Missionaries

European American contact with the Shoshone-Bannock increased as trade in south central Idaho evolved over time. The territorial government of Idaho, who witnessed the increased camas trade between Native Americans and fur traders, eventually referred to

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[15] Beal and Wells, *History of Idaho*, I: 50; Murphy and Murphy, "Northern Shoshone and Bannock," 300-322.
[16] Arrington, *History of Idaho*, I: 68.
[17] Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philips's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 84-86, 90; Arrington, *History of Idaho*, I: 68-69.

the Shoshone-Bannock as "Camas" Indians.[18] The fur trade brought increased numbers of European American, Indian, and mixed blood men to Idaho and altered the land and the native people. The fur trappers not only traded with the Native Americans, but they also supplied early geographic surveys, documentation and description of the landscapes, and maps of the West and the Snake River Plain.[19]

Fur traders successfully trapped beaver north and east of the Snake River Plain. David Thompson, an Englishman sent to Canada to apprentice at the Hudson's Bay Company, played an important role in the early fur trade in the West. Some 300 miles north of the present monument site, Thompson established fur-trading posts in northern Idaho for a competitor of the Hudson's Bay Company, the North West Company. In 1810, Andrew Henry of the Missouri Fur Company built a fur trade outpost along the North Fork of the Snake River in eastern Idaho near present day Rexburg, some 130 miles northeast of the monument. Fur traders mingled with the native populations, created wealth, established settlements, and competed in the international rivalry for furs in the land that was becoming the American West.[20]

Reports from the Lewis and Clark expedition eventually encouraged other exploring and trading parties, some of which did not fare well. John Jacob Astor sent two parties to the West based on the Corps of Discovery's success. One, led by Astor, sailed from New York and landed in Astoria, Oregon. Twenty-eight-year-old Wilson Price Hunt led another group that traveled by land. Hunt's party suffered many hardships during the

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[18] Smoak, "Broken Promise."
[19] John S. Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 78-110.
[20] Robert V. Hine, *The American West: An Interpretive History* (Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman and Company, 1984), 67-72; Carlos Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 25-33.

journey. Author Washington Irving retold the story of Hunt's travel along the Snake River in his 1836 book, *Astoria*. After abandoning horses at Fort Henry, Hunt's party lost one man in a canoe accident several miles west of the present Milner dam. The party also lost supplies during other canoe accidents on the Snake River at Cauldron Linn, near present day Murtaugh, some 30 miles southeast of the monument site. Frustrated with the inability to navigate the Snake River, the party divided into three overland groups. Hunt eventually led a subgroup on a journey filled with abject cold and hunger. Hunt's party slept one night in what would later be named the Hagerman Valley, another at the future Glenn's Ferry, and another at Canyon Creek. If not for a rainstorm, many in the party would have died of thirst on the sagebrush plain of southern Idaho. Hunt traveled within twenty miles of the present day Minidoka Internment National Monument site.[21]

While some people came west for the fur trade, others came as missionaries. The interaction between native populations and missionaries helps to convey the story of early Idaho and the greater story of westward expansion by European Americans. While these missionary efforts were far removed from the site that would later become Minidoka, the missionaries represent one point on a long line of the human history of Idaho and the beginning of the agricultural development of irrigated farming at their missions. The missionaries sought to baptize Indians and assimilate them into European American life by teaching them farming techniques and English. Although most of the missionaries considered the south central portion of Idaho an uninhabitable desert, their efforts in the

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[21] Arrington, *History of Idaho*, I: 901-92, II: 86. Dr. Lalia Boone made the following assertion in her book *Idaho Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary* (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1988), 189; "Hunt: A post office name for the Minidoka Relocation Center, where 9400 [sic] Japanese Americans were held prisoner during World War II. Named in honor of Wilson Price Hunt, the Astorian explorer of 1811."

northern part of the state and farther west resulted in greater contact and conflict between native populations and European Americans.[22]

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Mormons, represented another kind of mission. The Mormons came to the West to establish settlements in which they could practice their own religion. Church members came to southern Idaho to establish additional agricultural settlements beyond their Salt Lake City base. They mistakenly thought that their settlement at Franklin, Idaho, was in Utah. A new survey conducted in 1872 confirmed that they were actually one mile north of the Utah state line, forcing Utah to give Idaho all records and deeds from the settlement.[23]

Mormons interacted with Native Americans living in southern Idaho during their development of irrigated farm settlements. Latter-day Saints settled in remote regions and developed self-sustaining communities free from religious persecution by mainstream America. Settlement rather than conversion was the primary goal. Mormon theology contained a complex mixture of sympathy and missionary zeal that is often best understood as a desire to get along with or to pay the Indians rather than to fight them.[24] According to recent historiography, the Indians acknowledged a difference between Mormons and other settlers. Historian Sondra Jones wrote that although not all Mormons were kind, and not all gentiles were abusive, a significant difference existed. Indians "drew strong lines of demarcation between the two in favor of the Mormons." However, she argues, Mormon settlers eventually became increasingly abusive to the Native Americans. "As a second generation of Mormons grew less vulnerable, became

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[22] Rodman Paul, *The Far West and the Great Plains in Transition, 1859-1900* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 135.
[23] Arrington, *History of Idaho*, I: 260.
[24] Howard A. Christy, "Open Hand and Mailed Fist: Mormon-Indian Relations in Utah, 1847-1852," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46 (1978): 232.

increasingly 'Americanized,' and turned to federal or judicial solutions, their particular standing with Indians dissipated."[25]

Overland Trails Bring Settlers

After the fur trade and missionary eras of the early nineteenth century, the region that became Idaho experienced a more lasting change from migration and settlement. National overland migration from the East began in the 1840s. Emigrants followed the Snake River along routes established earlier by the fur traders and trappers. Tens of thousands of pioneers traveled west along the Oregon Trail in search of new homes and opportunities. The trail entered Idaho at the southeast corner and crossed the southern part of the state.[26] Fort Hall was one stop along the trail. Established in 1834 as a trading post, the fort fell into disuse as the fur trade diminished. After 1849, travelers on the Oregon Trail revived business at the site and Fort Hall served those making the overland journey.[27]

In the minds of many early Americans, Idaho was a harsh, desolate territory to be crossed before getting to the more lush landscapes of the far West. To the travelers along the Oregon Trail, accustomed to the humid landscapes of the land east of the Mississippi, the Great Plains appeared vacuous beyond imagination. The terrain beyond the Great Plains, like the Snake River country of southern Idaho, seemed even more desolate. Idaho was an ordeal to be endured, not a land to be settled. Travelers on the Oregon Trail passed close to the land that is now called the Minidoka Internment National Monument

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[25] Sondra Jones, "Saints or Sinners? The Evolving Perceptions of Mormon-Indian Relations in Utah Historiography," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (2004): 19-46. Quotes from 46.
[26] Oregon Trail Foundation, www.ohwy.com/id/o/oregontr.htm/ (accessed June 8, 2004).
[27] Beal and Wells, *History of Idaho*, I: 222; Arrington, *History of Idaho*, I: 110-111.

and carved their names into the rocks along the trail.[28] Fording the Snake at Three Island Crossing, the travelers avoided the mountains north of the river and headed toward Fort Boise. Part of the Oregon Trail is located in the southern part of the nearby Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument. The Hagerman Valley was one of the few places where emigrants could trade for fish with Native Americans.[29]

Miners also traveled west on the overland trails. Mining and other boom and bust economies, so much a part of the story of the West, left an altered environment in their wake. While Native Americans enjoyed the temporary trade with the miners, the land suffered damage from the mining. Even though the Indians who farmed along the fertile bottomlands of the riverbeds provided eggs, corn, and cattle to the miners during the 1860 Clearwater River rush, the Native Americans realized quickly that the trade evaporated when the prospectors realized the difficulty of successful mining in area and left the region.[30] The opinion of a disheartened miner told the story of gold mining near Twin Falls, some 20 miles from the monument, when he stated, "The view of Shoshone Falls was far more rewarding than the gold prospects."[31] Miners came to south central Idaho in search of a promising gold find. Begun in 1870, gold mining near Shoshone Falls lasted through 1882 and brought the first significant number of European Americans to the area.[32]

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[28] Idaho Department of Tourism, *Overland Trail*, http:// www.over-land.com/trorsites.html#idaho/ (accessed June 8, 2004).
[29] Department of the Interior, Hagerman Fossil Beds, http:// www.north-america.de/index1.htm?hagerman.htm&2, (accessed May 25, 2004); and Arrington, *History of Idaho*, I: 92.
[30] Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows, A History of Idaho*, 52-53.
[31] James F. Varley, *Tales of the Tract: The Beginnings of Twin Falls, Idaho and the "Magic Valley"* (Twin Falls, ID:Big Lost River Press, 2004), 6.
[32] Varley, *Tales of the Tract*, 8.

Federal Land Use

After the 1860s, the federal government took an increasingly active role in setting territorial boundaries, influencing land use, and fostering settlement in Idaho and the Pacific Northwest. As settlement increased, contact and disputes over land and resources produced several conflicts, wars, or battles between white settlers and Native Americans. The Shoshone and Bannock, who realized that settlement threatened their land, food, and culture, retaliated. Eventually, the territorial and federal governments removed Native Americans to reservations. By 1867, the federal government negotiated a treaty with the Shoshone-Bannock establishing the Fort Hall Reservation. The Shoshone-Bannock maintained some aspects of their earlier way of life by seasonally leaving the reservation to hunt.[33]

After missionaries, fur traders, and miners moved across the region and began to displace native peoples, settlers came to south central Idaho. In order to facilitate settlement and as part of the ongoing exploration and conquest of the West, federal representatives conducted official surveys of the land around what is now the monument site. In the 1860s, Clarence King, author, adventurer, and first director of the U.S. Geological Survey traveled over the sagebrush lands that would become the state of Idaho. In "The Falls of the Shoshone," King documented his impression of the area. "A gray, opaque haze hung close to the ground and shut out the distance," King recalled. Echoing remarks about the land made years later by people in the region, King wrote, "The monotony of the sage-desert was overpowering."[34]

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[33] David L. Crowder, "Nineteenth-Century Indian-White Conflict in Southern Idaho," *Idaho Yesterdays* 23 (Summer 1979): 13-18.
[34] Clarence King, "The Falls of Shoshone," *Overland Monthly* 5 (October 1870): 380-81.

Exploration, overland travelers, and mining in the region gradually brought national attention to the area. On March 4, 1863, an Act of Congress, signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln, officially organized the Idaho Territory. Congress created the territory by combining land formerly part of Washington and Dakota territories. During the creation of the territory, legislators in the United States House of Representatives debated its name. The original bill carried the name Montana but Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts said, "Montana is no name at all." Wilson moved that Idaho replace Montana. "Idaho, in English, signifies, 'Gem of the Mountains,'" argued Wilson. Lewiston, a town on the border between Idaho and Washington, became the territorial capital. Only one year later, in 1864, Montana Territory was organized out of the northeastern section of Idaho Territory. In 1868, the land east of the 111th meridian formed part of the newly created Wyoming Territory. On July 3, 1890, Idaho became the forty-third state admitted to the Union.[35]

An influx of settler farmers increased the population of Idaho. In the 1860s, newcomers settled along the Boise, Payette, Owyhee, and Weiser rivers, tributaries of the Snake. These settlers soon diverted water to their fields, harvested crops, and sold food to nearby mining camps. This agricultural development boosted the territorial population to some 15,000 by 1870. In the late 1870s and early 1880s, more settlers came to the Snake River Plain on the Oregon Short Line and the Utah Northern railroads, subsidiaries of the Union Pacific. Drawn by the railroads' advertisement of the region's soil and climate, the settlers increased the population to about 88,000 in 1890, the year Idaho

[35] Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho*, 59.

became a state. Agricultural expansion continued through the 1890s. By 1900, the population had nearly doubled, to some 162,000. [36]

Conclusion

From prehistory to 1900, Idaho's human history was a story of many transitions. The land that we now call Idaho fed native populations for thousands of years. Soon after the native people made contact with the Lewis and Clark expedition, fur traders, miners, missionaries, and settlers arrived. Once railroads connected the state to national markets, thousands of farmers worked the land. Of the 162,000 people who lived in Idaho in 1900, some 152,000, or about 94 percent, were rural inhabitants.[37]

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[36] Arrington, *History of Idaho*, I: 255-291; United States Census Bureau, *Urban and Rural Population* http://www.census.gov/population/censusdata/urpop0090.txt (accessed March 23, 2004).
[37] United States Census Bureau, *Urban and Rural Population* (Washington, D. C., 1995), http://www.census.gov/population/censusdata/urpop0090.txt (accessed March 23, 2004).

Chapter 3

Gardening in a Desert -

Settlement and Development

Introduction

Full appreciation of the Minidoka Internment National Monument requires an understanding of the agricultural history of southern Idaho. In 1900, 161,772 people lived in Idaho. 151,769, or 93.8 percent, lived in rural areas.[38] While an overwhelming majority of the state's residents lived outside urban areas, the crops they produced were largely consumed within state boundaries. 90 percent of people employed in the agricultural industry produced crops consumed within Idaho.[39] The agricultural history of Idaho represents a prominent place in the economic development of the state, the use of the land, and the life of its people.

In part, Minidoka was the product of a legacy of western expansion and the agricultural development of land and water on the arid landscape. On the route that would eventually become the Oregon Trail, some Christian missionaries passed south of Fort Boise in 1836. They were given corn and peas grown in a garden at the fort by Thomas McKay, a former member of the Lewis and Clark expedition.[40] Eventually, missionary Henry Spalding created not just a garden in the "wilderness," but the first irrigated farming in present day Idaho. Spalding and his wife Eliza joined Marcus

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[38] United States Census Bureau, *Urban and Rural Population*, www.census.gov/population/censusdata/urpop0090.txt
[39] Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho*, 109.
[40] Hine, *The American West*, 94-101; Arrington, *History of Idaho*, I: 112.

Whitman and his young bride, Narcissa Prentiss, in an effort to evangelize some of the Nez Perce and Cayuse Indian tribes in Northern Idaho and Eastern Oregon. Spalding encouraged the Indians to adopt a European American agricultural ideal. When the summer of 1839 offered conditions so dry that Spalding feared he would lose his crops and perhaps his converts, he dug a ditch from a nearby stream and practiced irrigation for the first time in the region.[41]

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the federal government encouraged settlement and development of the American West. President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act into law in 1862. For nearly 120 years, two million individuals attempted land claims under the Homestead Act and subsequent land grant legislation. In total, these laws allowed settlers to claim approximately 270-285 million acres or around eight percent of all the land in the United States.[42] The first settlers enjoyed success while farming the fertile river bottomland in Idaho. Once those lands were settled, development required more aggressive support for irrigation and reclamation projects. After Congress passed reclamation legislation such as the Carey and Newlands Reclamation Acts, Idaho's agricultural projects flourished.

Federal Land Acts

Water or the lack of water determined success or failure in the Snake River Basin. The basin, approximately 109,000 square miles, contained river plains, foothills, upland valleys, and mountains. A climate of low precipitation, large temperature ranges, and an abundance of sunshine combined with the gentle slope of the land to make the area

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[41] Beal and Wells, *History of Idaho,* I: 208; United States Department of Agriculture, *Agriculture and Irrigation.* http://imnh.isu/digitalatlas/geog/agirrig/agirtext/agigmain.htm (accessed June, 2, 2004).
[42] National Park Service, *The Homestead National Monument of America: the Homestead Act,* http://www.nps.gov.home/homestead_act.html/ (accessed April 19, 2004).

unique in the United States if not the world. Many irrigation projects along the Snake River have maximized the use of the land's gentle slope allowing much of the unused water to flow back to the rivers. This recapturing of the water allowed efficient usage of the annually low rainfall levels.[43]

The United States government took an active role in populating the West through land and water legislation. As early as 1841, Senator Lewis Linn introduced legislation in Congress to extend American laws to any United States citizen living in Oregon Territory. More important, Linn proposed giving up to 160 acres of this land to any male citizen over 18 willing to risk life in the West. At the time, this territory was jointly owned and occupied by Great Britain. Congress voted down Linn's proposal out of fear of offending Great Britain and provoking hostilities over land disputes in the West. Linn persistently worked to pass land grant legislation. Finally, in 1850, Congress passed the Donation Land Claim Act authorizing settlement on land in the Northwest.[44]

The series of congressional initiatives in the later part of the nineteenth century include not just the Homestead Act of 1862 but also the Desert Land Act, passed in 1877, and the Carey Act of 1894. Congress passed the Desert Land Act to encourage and promote the economic development of the arid and semiarid public lands of the western United States. Through the act, "white, male, heads of households" applied for a desert-land entry to reclaim, irrigate, and cultivate up to 320 acres.[45] This legislation facilitated the initial settlement efforts in southern Idaho. The first settlers came to the Upper Snake

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[43] W.G. Hoyt, *Water Utilization in the Snake River Basin*, U.S. Geological Survey Water-Supply Paper 657 (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1935), 1, 6-9, 35.
[44] Oregon Trail Foundation, "End of the Oregon Trail," June 8, 2004. http://www.endoftheoregontrail.org/index.html (accessed June 11, 2004).
[45] United States Bureau of Land Management, *Desert Land Entries*, http://www.blm.gov/nhp/landfacts/DesertLand.html (accessed March 10, 2005).

River Valley in the early 1880s and 1890s. Population increased over the next decade as more settlers joined in the migration to the upper valley. Historian Mark Fiege documented the growth in irrigated farmland during the early settlement period. "Between 1896 and 1900, the area of irrigated land in Fremont and Bingham counties [located only 70 miles from the monument site] rose 225 percent, from 65,000 to 211,111 acres." [46]

The Carey Act, even more important than the Homestead or Desert Land Acts to the settlement and development in Idaho, offers insight into much of the reclamation of the southern part of the state.[47] Designed to keep the projects under local control, the Carey Act worked to stimulate private and state efforts toward reclamation. The idea of keeping the federal government out of the process appealed to many citizens in Idaho who appreciated and valued the successful cooperation of individuals. Colonies in the southern or far western part of Idaho worked together on canal and irrigation projects because of a goal of communal success: missionaries farmed the land to become self-sufficient and stable while pursuing their primary goal of converting the Indians; Mormon communities established colonies in southern Idaho as an extension of their desire to live independently of the rest of American society; and early agribusiness supplied food to the gold and silver miners to build wealth. For Idaho, pockets of communal farmers worked the land for specific reasons unrelated to the national trend toward land reclamation servicing large populations interested in moving west.[48]

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[46] Fiege, *Irrigated Eden*, 86; William Darrell Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project: A Historical Study of Reclamation and Regional Development, 1890-1930" (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 1974), 44.
[47] Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project," 44.
[48] Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows*, 166.

Large canal projects in Idaho and in other western states needed major capital investment. Under the Carey Act, successful reclamation projects utilized capital from private companies or from state governments. The Carey Act of 1894 authorized the President of the United States, acting on behalf of the federal government, to transfer up to one million acres of arid land to the nine western states that accepted the provisions of the act.[49] Proponents of the Carey Act recognized that the aridity of the West would not support settlement in the same manner as the Homestead Act in the Midwest. The legislation authorized the states and private water and land companies to recoup money spent building dams and canals. Reclamation corporations made money when they sold the land and water rights to the farmers who would be served by the canals and dams. In 1895, Idaho established an office of reclamation that provided for the organization of irrigation districts willing to work with interested farmers.[50]

In parts of south central Idaho the irrigation districts and canal companies created under the Carey Act enabled cooperation among settlers where religious and collective objectives did not already exist. Idaho, more than any other state, maximized the opportunities for reclamation under the Carey Act, in part, because of visionary individuals such Ira B. Perrine and Stanley B. Milner. Historian Carlos Schwantes contends that although the cowboys and ranchers are often the heroes of western books and films, the true and unsung heroes of the American West are the civil and structural engineers. Perrine chose the site of the Milner Dam and acted as his own engineer.

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[49] See Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project," 44. (The states that signed the Carey Act agreement were Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.)
[50] United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Homestead National Monument*. http:// www.nps.gov.home/homestead_act.html (accessed April 19, 2004).

Nineteenth century engineers, who built the canals, ditches, and dams, brought water to the arid but sunny West. [51]

Figure 4. Historic site of Milner Dam. (Idaho State Historical Society 77-127.1/B)

Ira Burton Perrine and Stanley B. Milner - Agricultural Entrepreneurs

In 1883, at age twenty-two, Ira Burton Perrine came to Idaho to work the Wood River Mines. Like some other men of his day, Perrine realized that supplying food to the miners was a quicker, easier, and safer method of building a fortune than mining itself. Perrine traveled to Idaho Falls in order to obtain forty dairy cows that would produce valuable milk and butter. In the middle of a sagebrush desert, Perrine saw a farm. When

[51] Carlos A. Schwantes, *So Incredibly Idaho! Seven Landscapes that Define the Gem State* (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press, 1996), 82 and 166; Sheryl L. Chapman, *Irrigated Agriculture: Idaho's Economic Lifeblood*. http://www.iwua.org/history/idhistory.html (accessed May 20, 2005).

the Wilson Price Hunt overland party from the East had traveled across the Twin Falls area of southern Idaho on the way to Oregon, its members did not predict the area's later land use. In a famous Washington Irving quote about Hunt's trip, the land was recorded as "a dreary desert of sand" and a "treeless waste… that must ever defy cultivation." Perrine saw something entirely different. When Perrine originally allowed his cattle to graze on the grasslands fed by lakes and underground springs, he visualized successful irrigation projects utilizing the expertise of surveyors and engineers.[52]

Figure 5. Ira Burton Perrine. (Idaho State Historical Society 73-75.15)

[52] Arrington, *History of Idaho*, I: 477.

Burt Perrine needed a place to keep his 40 dairy cows healthy and fed in the winter of 1884. The canyon floor of the Snake River near Shoshone Falls provided the ideal location for Perrine's winter pasture. This fertile area, later called Blue Lakes in reference to the two spring-fed ponds, became the birthplace of the Twin Falls tract and the Perrine irrigation and agricultural testing grounds.[53]

Perrine made productive use of his time from 1884 to 1900 by demonstrating the feasibility of growing award winning produce on the Snake River Plain. Perrine grew "treasure" rather than mined it. He brought in trees by horseback from the Hagerman Valley forty-five miles away. He sold fruits, vegetables, and small grains to the miners. His notoriety grew as he won gold medals for fruit excellence in the United States and Europe. By 1900, Perrine envisioned building upon his agricultural success by finding men to help him divert water from the Snake River at a spot called "The Cedars." Five years later, water was being diverted from that spot which was home to the newly completed Milner Dam.[54]

Capital became much more accessible in the early twentieth century after the nation recovered from the depression of the 1890s. Some bankers and bonding houses grew interested in western irrigation projects although many still saw the enterprise as risky. One man attracted to irrigation ventures was Stanley B. Milner. Milner, a Salt Lake City banker, contributed the largest portion of the $100,000 required to incorporate the Twin Falls Land and Water Company. Filed in September 1905, the articles of incorporation named Milner as company president and Perrine as vice-president. When financial

[53] Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project," 50-51
[54] Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project," 52.

estimates to complete the project climbed to $1,500,000, Pennsylvania steel magnate Frank H. Buhl joined the company.[55]

The Twin Falls Company signed a contract with the state of Idaho to develop 270,000 acres under the Carey Act. Settlers purchased the land from the state for 50 cents per acre. Under the Carey Act, settlers were required to purchase water rights from the company, which built the dam and canals. The company sold the rights at $25 per acre for a contract period of 10 years. In 1905, the Twin Falls Company completed the Milner Dam under the protection of the Carey Act provisions.[56]

The North Side Canal

Burt Perrine also saw potential in the north side of the canyon as early as 1900 when he mapped out over 300,000 acres for a new irrigation project. He negotiated with, and transferred the water rights of the North Side Project to, James S. Kuhn and William S. Kuhn in 1906. The North Side project sold very well based on the success of other Twin Falls area reclamation projects. The land offering, begun on October 1, 1907, sold 50,000 acres of North Side land in the first forty-eight hours. In 1908, water first ran through the canal, extending eight miles southwest from the recently completed Milner Dam. The North Side Project, completed in phases from 1909 to 1916, added 170,000 irrigated acres to the region.[57]

The Kuhns miscalculated the water distribution on the North Side and suffered from insufficient water supply. First, the tract on the North Side suffered under a system of

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[55] Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project," 62.
[56] Arrington, *History of Idaho*, I: 477.
[57] Hoyt, *Water Utilization in the Snake River Basin*, 126; *Idaho Statesman*, "Key dates in the 169-year history of Idaho water development," http://www.idahostatesman.com/apps/pbc.dll/article?AID=/200500116/NEWS0105/501160 (accessed March 9, 2005).

prior appropriation. In one account of the settlement history, William Gertsch explained the water rights system. "Those settlers on the first segregation had prior claim on water, and it was entirely possible that settlers on the third segregation would receive none."[58] Prior appropriation meant that upstream irrigators with the earliest rights diverted most of the water. Second, the disastrous inability of the Jerome Reservoir to fill with water due to the porous ground created an even more serious problem: the North Side was without sufficient water during cyclical drought years. In 1914, when the Kuhn financial empire began to fail, the North Side Project fell into receivership and the United States Reclamation Service intervened to provide water to the struggling farmers on the North Side tract from Jackson Lake reservoir. The government negotiated payments from the farmers to finance future dam and reclamation projects in southern Idaho.[59]

Newlands Reclamation Act

Because of entrepreneurs, such as Perrine and Milner, and a willing state government settlers in Idaho reclaimed about 60 percent of the land under the Carey Act. While Oregon, Wyoming, and Montana saw limited success, the other five states that agreed to the Carey Act provisions developed only 7,000-388,000 acres in irrigated farmland under the legislation. Congress then proposed even stronger legislation, the Newlands Reclamation Act, to stimulate development in the other states. Rep. Francis G. Newlands of Nevada fought for federal assistance to farmers and ranchers who worked the arid lands of the West. Under the legislation passed in 1902, a self-perpetuating funding system was established that made the federal government, not state governments or private companies, in charge of constructing and managing irrigation projects. The

[58] Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project," 74.
[59] Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project," 110; *Idaho Statesman*, "Key dates in the 169-year history of Idaho water development."

Newland Reclamation Act of 1902 provided for a United States Reclamation Service (now the Bureau of Reclamation) to oversee dam and canal construction and supervise the formation of irrigation districts in the western states. This act represented a major turning point in the growing influence of the federal government in the West.[60]

Minidoka Irrigation Project

The Reclamation Act of 1902 resulted in the Minidoka Project around Rupert and Gooding and the Boise Project in southwestern Idaho. The Minidoka Project had federal roots dating back as early as 1889 when a team from the U.S. Geological Survey conducted research on the Snake River for possible reservoir sites.[61] In 1890, the federal government made canal surveys. As a part of this decade-long project, surveyors determined sites for present and possible future dams at Minidoka Rapids, American Falls, Swan Valley, Palisades, Alpine Canyon, and Jackson Lake. Private promoters took most of the land near the Twin Falls and American Falls during the Carey Act projects. In the two decades following the Newlands Act of 1902, the Secretary of the Interior withdrew nearly all the remaining lands from public entry in anticipation of their inclusion in federal reclamation projects.[62]

The Secretary of the Interior withdrew lands from entry because the federal government assumed responsibility for surveying the lands prior to irrigation settlement. Morris Bien, acting director of the U.S. Reclamation Service, confirmed the withdrawal of land on the Minidoka Project in a letter to the Secretary of the Interior dated October 7,

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[60] Hugh Lovin, "The Carey Act in Idaho, 1894-1925: An Experiment in Free Enterprise Reclamation." *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 78 (October 1987): 128; Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project," 71-72, 75; Arrington, *History of Idaho*, I: 478; U-S-History.com, "Theodore Roosevelt Administration Newlands Act," http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h938.html (accessed March 10, 2005).
[61] Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project," 119.
[62] Gertsch, "The Upper Snake River Project," 119

1908. "It is recommended that the following described lands under the Minidoka Project, Idaho, be withdrawn from all forms of entry under the supervisory authority of the Secretary of the Interior," wrote Bien. The lands approved for withdrawal include the land that would someday become the Minidoka Internment National Monument.[63] Explaining the reason for the withdrawal, Bien wrote:

> It is proposed to make surveys of these lands for a pumping proposition and as the lands which will be required for irrigation works cannot now be determined, it is impossible to segregate such lands from those which may be irrigable. In order to prevent the expense to the Service and the hardships which will surely be suffered by the entrymen on account of such uncertainty, it is desired that the following land be withdrawn…[64]

The Minidoka Project and other projects completed after the 1902 Newlands Act encouraged the end of private reclamation and individual capitalistic enterprise in favor of government aid and administration. The federal government balanced aid requests made by the citizens in the West with resistance to federal reclamation efforts voiced by constituents in the East. The United States government recognized the difficulty in managing reclamation projects. Based on the reclamation failures by private companies in Marysville, Idaho, and many in other western states, the federal government cautiously committed to reclaim no more than 450,000 acres in Idaho under the act. The Minidoka project totaled 120,000 acres and the Boise project anticipated 327,000 acres.[65]

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[63] See the document approving the withdrawal in the Minidoka folder, Bureau of Reclamation - Burley Office, Burley, Idaho. The document withdrew: "Minidoka Project, Idaho - Boise Meridian…T. 8S., R. 19 E., all Sec. 1 to 30; E1/2 NE 1/4, NW 1/4, NE 1/4, N 1/2 NW 1/4, S 1/2 SW 1/4, SE 1/4 SW 1/4 and S 1/2 SE 1/4 Sec. 31; N!/2, N1/2SE1/4 and NE1/4SW1/4 Sec.32; all Sec. 33 to 36." The Minidoka Relocation Center was on T.8S, Sec. 27 to 31.

[64] Morris Bien to Secretary of the Interior. Memorandum. October 7, 1908. Minidoka Folder, Bureau of Reclamation - Burley Office, Burley, Idaho.

[65] Hugh Lovin, "The Carey Act in Idaho," 127.

Private and public reclamation projects in Idaho functioned differently. The Milner Dam diverted water into a large canal that irrigated new farms south of the Snake River beginning in 1905. The 1908 completion of the tremendously successful South-Side project, run by the Twin Falls Canal Company, reinforced the advantages of private over federal funding. A writer described the project in *Harpers Weekly* as "one of the miracles of modern American life." Owned collectively by farmers, the Twin Falls Canal Company regulated payment plans and earned the appreciation of the community. The federal projects such as the Minidoka Project, however, experienced very little of that community approval. Noting a Collier's magazine article from 1910, Historian Hugh Lovin wrote, "South Side farmers prospered while Minidoka farmers still waited for federal reclaimers to build an acceptable irrigation system and to provide other amenities." As one observer noted, "settlers were 'very bitter against the government.' "[66]

Milner-Gooding Canal

A Bureau of Reclamation project from 1931, the Milner-Gooding Canal stretched nearly eighty miles from the Snake River to the city of Shoshone. It connected the Little Wood River, the Big Wood River, and the irrigation systems of the Big Wood Canal Company downstream. The Milner-Gooding Canal diverted water at Milner Dam, 12 miles west of Burley, Idaho. The construction of the Milner-Gooding Canal furnished a full water supply for 20,000 additional acres on the Minidoka Project. The canal was only one small part of the Minidoka Project extending 300 miles from Ashton to Bliss. The project provided water from several constructed irrigation ventures, "Minidoka Dam and Powerplant and Lake Walcott, Jackson Lake Dam and Jackson Lake, American Falls

[66] Louise Morgan Sill, "The Largest Irrigated Tract in the World," *Harper's Weekly* 52 (Oct. 17, 1908): 11.

Dam and Reservoir, Island Park Dam and Reservoir, Grassy Lake Dam and Grassy Lake, two diversion dams, canals, laterals, drains, and some 177 water supply wells."[67]

Private and Public Land

Settlers claimed extensive areas of southern Idaho during several land claims filed in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The 33,000 acres in southern Idaho that became the Minidoka Relocation Center are surrounded by and overlap with land claimed under each of the acts mentioned above. On May 2, 1918, in township 9 south, range 19 east of the Boise Meridian, Edward Crandall and George Hineman filed a patent for 160 acres under provisions of the Desert Land Act of 1877. A year later, on September 22, 1919, James Henry filed a claim for 240 acres under the same Act. In 1925, Clyde Oakes claimed 80 acres and in 1929 Phoebe Williams and Lathel Hepworth filed on 40 acres. Willon Wildman filed a patent on 160 acres neighboring Oakes under the Homestead Act.[68] These land claims are situated just southwest of what would become the Minidoka Internment National Monument.

In addition to land patents filed by private citizens, the area surrounding the relocation site also held large tracts of state and federally owned land. On October 7, 1908, the Bureau of Reclamation withdrew acres in township 8 South, range 19 East, in Jerome Country under a sectional order under the Minidoka Reclamation Project. This plot of land is directly north of the property that now contains the Minidoka Internment National Monument. On October 8, 1915, the State of Idaho claimed 151,343 acres of land under

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[67] Fiege, *Irrigated Eden*, 19; United States Bureau of Reclamation, "Minidoka Project History," http://www.usbr.gov/dataweb/projects/idaho/minidoka/history.html (accessed March 10, 2005); United States Bureau of Reclamation, "Dams, Projects, and Powerplants," http://www.usbr.gov/dataweb/html/minidoka.html (accessed May 13, 2005).

[68] Bureau of Land Management - General Land Office Records, "Land Patent Details," http://www.glorecords.blm.gov (accessed March 21, 2005).

the Carey Act in townships and ranges in southern Idaho. On March 3, 1919 the State of Idaho claimed an additional 8526.92 acres.

In the years following World War II, settlers filed claims on the land that had been the Minidoka Relocation Center. In 1958, John Taylor filed a land patent on 127.11 acres of land just north of the North Side Canal and northwest of the present monument site. In 1954, Wendell L. Tarbett filed on 133.65 acres north of the John Herrmann farm. Herrmann's property is directly north of the present monument.

Conclusion

When the United States government needed publicly owned land on which to place relocation and internment centers, nearly one hundred thousand acres in southern Idaho met the requirement. Because of the federal land withdrawal and the acres held by Idaho under the Carey Act, these acres met the first criteria of land to be used as a center: they were public land. They also met the second requirement because they comprised a large tract suitable for a facility capable of holding thousands of internees. Finally, it was far away from strategic military facilities but near to farms suitable to employ the Nikkei as a labor pool.

Chapter 4

Legalized Discrimination -

Nikkei Before World War II

Introduction

In autumn 1942, the United States government constructed an internment camp in southern Idaho to hold Japanese and Japanese Americans relocated from the West Coast. The Minidoka Relocation Center, known as Hunt Camp, held a total of 13,078 people during its operation from September 1942 to October 1945. One of ten War Relocation Authority centers in the American interior, Minidoka not only exemplifies one aspect of the nation's response to events during World War II, but also illustrates a portion of the larger history of Asian Americans - their place and treatment - in the American West. In order to understand why the government selected, constructed, and operated Minidoka as an internment camp, it is important to first understand the experience of Japanese and Japanese Americans in the West prior to the Second World War.

Chinese Immigration

Ethnic and racial diversity in the West conditioned the experience of the arrival of Japanese to the region. The Chinese immigrant story precedes the story of Japanese immigration to America. As the economic, social, and political instability in China worsened during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, immigration to the United States offered Chinese a means of self-preservation in a time of civil unrest and starvation. During this period of massive migration, mining and its opportunity for

sudden wealth brought many Chinese immigrants to North America. In 1848 gold was discovered in California. From 1849 to 1882, when Congress forbade Chinese immigration to American states or territories, almost 300,000 people (mostly men) came from China to North America to seek fortune in the gold and silver mines in the American West.[69]

Racially diverse people have immigrated to America for a variety of reasons. Laborers and entrepreneurs from countries around the world came to North America to work and build wealth. Whether immigrant workers arrived from Europe or from Asia, they often shared a dream to make a better life in America. In the American West, immigrants were most often men who shared a dream of conquering and taming nature or creating and building wealth. However, the racial diversity in the West eventually overwhelmed any feelings of camaraderie. Severe prejudice led to discrimination based on racial difference.[70]

European American settlers to the American West, immigrants themselves, resented competition from the Asian workers, who often received lower wages. Some of the earliest racial stereotypes called Asians treacherous and uncivilized; treacherous because they "stole" work, and uncivilized because they dressed and ate differently. The concentration of Chinese laborers in the West contributed to discrimination by the majority white population. After the first two decades of immigration, the 1870 federal census recorded some 60,000 Chinese living in the United States. Of that number, about 50,000 lived and worked in California. California's 1879 state constitution included many anti-Chinese laws. Chinese immigrants could not vote or testify in court against

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[69] Laurie Mercier and Carole Simon-Smolinski, *Idaho's Ethnic Heritage* vol. 1(Boise, ID: Idaho Ethnic Heritage Project, 1990), 7-10.
[70] Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 260.

European whites. Most important to the economic story, the laws barred Chinese from some forms of employment and from land ownership.[71]

Employment on railroad construction eventually took Chinese workers east, away from California's discriminatory laws. Chinese laborers also worked many other gold rushes in the Intermountain West. In Idaho, the Chinese miners painstakingly recovered gold in previously mined areas.[72] In 1870, the Chinese population totaled greater than 3,500 or more than one quarter of the roughly 15,000 persons in Idaho territory. Concentrated in the mining industry, 58.6 percent of the nearly 6,000 Idaho miners were Chinese.[73]

Chinese faced discrimination in several states and territories. Chinese miners were barred from the gold fields of Washington Territory before 1863. In 1864, the Idaho territorial legislature imposed a monthly four-dollar tax on all Chinese persons. By 1866, a new law increased the tax to five dollars. Although the law stated that no Chinese immigrant could take gold from Idaho territorial mines without paying the tax, the territory levied the tax on all Chinese - merchants, packers, and prostitutes - not just miners.[74]

From 1850 to 1880, the Chinese population in America grew so rapidly that Congress passed several Chinese Exclusion Acts. The 1882 Exclusion Act stopped all Chinese immigration. When immigration halted, most of the Chinese in the United States were single men. Without Chinese women to marry and with whom to start families, their

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[71] Harry Kitano and Roger Daniels, *Asian Americans: Emerging Minorities* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 23-24.
[72] Mercier and Simon-Smolinski, *Idaho's Ethnic Heritage*, 1: 7-10.
[73] Walter Nugent, *Into the West: The Story of Its People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 59.
[74] Mercier and Simon-Smolinski, *Idaho's Ethnic Heritage*, 1: 11.

population declined over the course of the next few decades. By 1900, only 1,467 Chinese residents remained in Idaho.[75]

Figure 6. Chinese miners worked on several claims in Idaho. (Idaho State Historical Society 3796)

Often, the Chinese immigrants only received support from those who benefited from exploiting their labor. Leland Stanford, one of the founders of the Central Pacific railroad, praised the Chinese for being industrious and economical laborers. In an example of thinly veiled racism, his partner Charles Crocker argued that good and wholesome white men would not debase themselves by doing the menial tasks preformed by the men from China.[76]

[75] Nugent, *Into the West*, 59.
[76] Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest*, 264-265.

The 1882 Exclusion Act established a 10-year moratorium on immigration from China. In 1892, Congress passed the Geary Act extending the exclusion for an additional 10 years. Immigration from China resumed in 1902 under new regulations and restrictions concerning registration and residence requirements. In 1910, the government established an immigration station at Angel Island, located in the San Francisco Bay, to manage the large numbers of immigrants arriving from China. Immigration officials conducted physical examinations, quarantined immigrants, and assessed the paperwork of the Chinese immigrants. "After sailing through the Golden Gate and getting off their ships at Angel Island, the newcomers were placed in barracks at the immigration station," wrote ethnic studies professor, Ronald Takaki. "Their quarters were crowded and unsanitary, like a slum."[77] According to Takaki, some 50,000 Chinese immigrants entered America through Angel Island to pursue employment opportunities and a new life in America.

Japanese Immigration - The Story of the Issei

Like their Chinese counterparts, the earliest Japanese settlers came to America to evade political unrest and to acquire wealth. In 1638, Japan adopted a strict policy of isolation, barring trade as well as emigration and immigration. The Tokugawa Shoguns forbade the construction of ocean-going vessels and destroyed the existing ones. These policies resulted from the deeply held belief that Christian missionaries to Japan posed a threat to the political structure of the country. For nearly a century and a half, Japan developed free from foreign interference. In 1854, Commodore Matthew Perry of the

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[77] National Archives and Records Administration, "Chinese Exclusion Act 1882," http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=47 (accessed October 26, 2005); Ronald Takaki, *Ethnic Islands: The Emergence of Urban Chinese in America* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1994), 31, 32, 35, and 37.

United States Navy arrived in Edo Bay. After Perry negotiated with the Emperor to open trade to the West, Japan underwent a series of revolutionary changes to its political and economic structure. These social changes encouraged emigration from Japan.[78]

Initially, Americans perceived the Japanese immigrants differently from the Chinese. The initial interaction between American and Japanese society occurred at the highest level. Newspapers in 1872 described the first Japanese visitors to America as representatives of an intelligent nation. Members of San Francisco society competed with each other to entertain the Japanese nobility and businessmen. Japan did not send large numbers of emigrant workers into the American economy. According to census figures, only 148 Japanese immigrants lived in the United States in 1880.[79]

Japanese settlement in the United States began with professional businessmen and adventurers. For example, Hachiro Onuki left Japan in 1876 to bring artifacts to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. He worked as an interpreter for a short time at the exposition before traveling back to Japan. Along the way, he mined silver in Tombstone, Arizona, and in Phoenix established the first gas and electric company and began a truck gardening operation, called Garden City Farms.[80]

When significant numbers of immigrants from Japan arrived in the 1890s, most came from a respected middle class. Four rigid social classes existed in Japan in the late nineteenth century: warrior or samurai, the upper class; an upper-middle agricultural class; a lower-middle class comprised of artists and mechanics; and finally, the merchant

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[78] Robert A. Wilson and Bill Hosokawa, *East to America: A History of the Japanese in the United States* (New York: William Morrow and company, Inc., 1980), 19; United States Department of the Interior, *Wartime Exile: The Exclusion of the Japanese Americans From the West Coast* (Washington, D.C.; Governmental Printing Office, 1946), 4.

[79] Harry Kitano, *Japanese Americans: The Evolution of a Subculture* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1976), 13.

[80] Eric Walz, "Japanese Settlement in the Intermountain West, 1882-1946," in *Guilt by Association*, ed. Mike Mackey (Powell, WY: Western History Publications, 2001), 1.

or lower class. The majority of Japanese immigrants to America came from the upper-middle, agricultural class. Although this group lost power during the period of reorganization in Japan after the country reopened its boundaries to world trade, the agricultural class was highly esteemed in Japan. This group valued land ownership and hard work. In most cases, its members hoped to acquire agricultural wealth in America and then return home to continue a long legacy of power and position within the *ken*, the prefecture in Japan that each inhabited.[81]

In addition to agricultural pursuits, Japanese immigrants worked in service industries and factories. In 1891, a representative of the Japanese government, Fujita Yoshiro, completed a trip through the Pacific Northwest in order to make a report on the Issei, the first generation, living in the region. "In Seattle, there is one grocery store and ten restaurants owned or operated by Japanese," Yoshiro reported. Yoshiro traveled from Seattle to Port Blakely on Bainbridge Island, where he found about eighty Issei employed in a sawmill. In Tacoma, Yoshiro declared that the ninety "Japanese residents [were] indeed enterprising young men, and many of them have already gained the confidence of Americans living in the community." According to historians Robert Wilson and Bill Hosokawa, diplomats and consular officials such as Yoshiro made reports to Japan on the conditions among Japanese in America because Japan sought to end an inequitable treaty system and obtain full sovereignty as a nation-state. In the late nineteenth century, "the end of the unequal treaty system in Japan remained as a major diplomatic preoccupation and Japan's image was of great concern to her representatives abroad."[82] Japan cared

[81] Kitano, *Japanese Americans*, 11.
[82] Wilson and Hosokawa, *East to America*, 33-34.

about who came to America, why they came, how they lived, and how they were perceived.

Issei Kengo Tajima explained why he thought the first immigrants came to America:

> Of course, the Japanese people were mostly farming people…they were sort of middle-class people. The economic situation at the time was not stable and there was constant fluctuation, and many small landowners had difficulty. In order to salvage the family situation, young men emigrated. They were mostly *chonan*, eldest sons in the family. They had that responsibility; so they emigrated. They came with the idea of staying in America for three years, saving money, and then returning to restore the family fortune.[83]

Not all emigrants came for financial gain. For Nisuke Mitsumori, a second son whose family had farmed for generations, America was more a dream than an economic challenge. He heard that America was "a huge country - very rich - and that it was a country where one could act as he wished." Mitsumori recalled, "I don't know the reason, but I longed to see this country."[84]

While immigration from Japan increased, many more Japanese immigrants came to Hawaii than to the Pacific Coast states on the United States mainland. Japanese immigration to Hawaii began in 1868, and grew to significant numbers by the first years of the twentieth century. In 1902, for example, some 9,125 Japanese immigrated to Hawaii, 2,518 to California, 130 to Oregon, 2,419 to Washington, and 263 to other states. In 1903, some 13,045 came to Hawaii, 4,511 to California, 329 to Oregon, 1,820 to Washington, and 336 to other states.[85]

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[83] Eileen Sunada Sarasohn, *The Issei*: *Portrait of a Pioneer* (Palo Alto, CA: Pacific Books, Publishers, 1983), 26.
[84] Sarasohn, *The Issei*, 18.
[85] Japanese Association of the Pacific Northwest, *Japanese Immigration: An Exposition of Its Real Status* (Seattle, WA: Japanese Association of the Pacific Northwest, 1907), 9.

Those Issei living on the United States mainland compared their assimilation in America to a small stream. They followed the contours of the land, took the avenues of least resistance, avoided confrontation when possible, and developed independently. Yet they recognized the way that the external factors of the dominant society shaped them. This was in contrast to the behavior of colonial Japanese in the Philippines, the South Pacific, and Asia who imposed their culture much as the European colonial powers had done in other parts of the world.[86]

Distinctively Japanese, the first generation immigrant experience allowed the Issei to "follow the stream" in America while remaining ethnically separate. The Issei adapted to the changing environment in America without losing group cohesiveness. In fact, group cohesiveness represented a defining characteristic of the Japanese immigrants. Group identity followed from the patriarchal structure of family within an ancestral clan or house. A family might become independent of the clan but could never discontinue the relationship of the ancestral unit. One's family was more valued than oneself. For this generation of Japanese immigrants in America, the needs of the whole took precedence over the needs of the individual.[87]

Social and economic cohesion developed rapidly in the Issei community. Discrimination against the early Japanese settlers encouraged Issei to develop a successful parallel economic community. The Issei worked together within the community to make sure that all Issei succeeded. They offered each other apprenticeships and training; provided credit and pooled capital for investments; and successfully fought against discrimination by working together to boycott certain

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[86] Kitano, *Japanese Americans*, 3.
[87] Stephen S. Fugita and David J. O'Brien, *Japanese Americans: The Persistence of Community* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1991), 5; also see Kitano, *Japanese Americans*, 33-35.

businesses that would not trade with them. Unity of the Issei businessmen defeated most attempts to harm the community. When sociologist Frank Miyamoto studied the Issei living in the Seattle area, he found that every attempted boycott of their businesses failed.[88]

Discrimination varied by city, social class, and racial interaction. Nisuke Mitsumori worked for a Japanese newspaper in San Francisco in 1905. When interviewed about his impressions of that city he replied, "At that time American feeling toward the Japanese was already bad in general, and we were advised not to go out at night." He remembered that white American youngsters beat up many of his friends. "Sometimes we celebrated the fact that we were not hit that day. I began to think that San Francisco was not a good place to stay, and I went to Los Angeles." Mitsumori lived just across San Francisco Bay from Kiyoshi Noji, who had a different experience in America. Although Noji heard about many cases of racial discrimination, his interactions were positive. "I don't remember any ill feelings," he recalled. "I think it is because my contacts and associations were with Christians, and I attended Christian gatherings mainly."[89] Like Noji, Mrs. Ai Miyasaki recalled her early American interactions as mostly good. "We heard that everyone was tall and pretty. We had just come from Japan and we were small. And yet, even to us women, the men tipped their hats and paid their respects," she noted. "Japanese men would never do that."[90]

One area of discrimination against the Issei occurred when white Americans scorned the type of work performed by Japanese immigrant laborers. During this early period, some men came from Japan to study. When their money ran out, they turned to domestic

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[88] Kitano, *Japanese Americans*, 21.
[89] Sarasohn, *The Issei*, 59-60.
[90] Sarasohn, *The Issei*, 62.

work: houseboys in wealthy homes, cooks in restaurants, and housekeepers in small hotels. The majority population looked down upon them, much as it looked down upon all Asians who worked in domestic and other menial jobs. Men working within private residences, or performing tasks more generally done by women, "justified" claims of Asian inferiority. The willingness of Japanese men to work in traditionally female occupations resulted in the dominant society viewing them as weaker.[91]

As discrimination gained momentum, the citizens of California declared the Asian immigrants unassimilable. Harry Kitano and Roger Daniels conclude in their book, *Asian Americans*, that Asian immigrants looked different from European immigrants, and this exposed them to animosity. The first Japanese immigrants to America seemed educated and exotic. When Japanese immigration became a massive wave of laborers, discrimination grew exponentially. Economic competition as well as their racial features targeted them for discrimination.[92]

State and city governments responded with legislation designed to manage the change in the population. Interracial marriage was illegal in California but allowed in Seattle, Washington. On October 10,1906, the San Francisco school board voted to segregate Asian students. The Nikkei, all persons of Japanese ancestry, mobilized politically and blocked this act of discrimination. The action by the San Francisco board, largely ignored by most Americans across the United States, also angered the Japanese government. Combined with the efforts to enact debilitating legislation against Japanese

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[91] Walz, "Japanese Settlement," 2; also see Susan Lee Johnson, " 'Domestic' Life in the Diggings," *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West*, eds. Valerie J Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), for more detail on European American views on the domesticity of ethnic miners and laborers.

[92] Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 35; Hine, *The American West, 237.*

immigrants on the West Coast, the episode became an international incident.[93] The attempt to segregate school children in California angered the Japanese government because it insulted Japan's dignity and reminded the nation of the days of inequality under Western treaties and domination.[94]

In an effort negotiated through a series of letters between Tokyo and Washington, D.C., the Japanese and United States governments established the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908. Theodore Roosevelt, ambivalent toward Asian segregation policies, wrote that the shift from small numbers of educated Japanese immigrants to the large-scale immigration of rural Japanese farmers had ignited hostility in the existing population on the West Coast. When Roosevelt negotiated the Gentleman's Agreement in 1908, he hoped to stop laborers from flooding California and the American West. Under the agreement, the Japanese government agreed to limit immigration in return for better treatment of Nikkei already in the United States. The only concession from the U.S. government was that it would not specifically name Japan in any future exclusionary laws.[95] The Japanese government interpreted its part of the bargain to mean stemming the massive influx of poor or unskilled laborers to the United States. The agreement, however, did allow wives and children to join male Japanese immigrants in America. After the agreement, Japanese immigration numbers increased rather than decreased as women legally came to join their husbands who were working in the West.[96]

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[93] Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 13-15; Sarasohn, *The Issei*, 128.
[94] Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 15.
[95] Sarasohn, *The Issei*, 51.
[96] Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 15-16; Mercier and Simon-Smolinski, *Idaho's Ethnic Heritage*, 1: 48.

The agreement brought many young Japanese women to the West Coast as "picture brides." As the men working in the United States became more financially stable, most wanted to start a family and wrote home to friends and relatives requesting suggestions for an arranged marriage partner. Young women sent pictures to the Issei men and eventually came to the United States to marry them. This practice troubled many Americans. While arranged marriage was common in Japan, the American ideal of freedom included meeting a prospective mate and falling in love. The large influx of females showed that the Gentlemen's Agreement had not ended immigration. In addition, increased number of the marital unions after 1908 resulted in a significant number of Japanese-American babies. These children, born on United States soil, were American citizens by birth. Many of the young Issei women who came to America as picture brides suffered almost as much from disappointed marital unions as from discrimination. One Issei woman, Mrs. Miyasaki, claimed:

> The picture brides were full of ambition, expectation, and dreams. None knew what their husbands were like except by the photos. I wondered how many would be saddened and disillusioned. There were many. The grooms were not what the women thought they were. The men would say that they had businesses and sent pictures, which were taken when they were younger, and deceived the brides. In reality, the men carried blanket rolls on their back and were farm laborers…Many Issei women suffered much, but they could not afford to go back to Japan. Their expectations were great, so the disappointment was so great.[97]

The Gentleman's Agreement was made between two sovereign governments. While not a traditional treaty with economic or political repercussions, each party made the Agreement in good faith. Subsequent failure of the Agreement was a disappointment to each country.

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[97] Sarasohn, *The Issei*, 55.

Not only as a result of the failed Gentleman's Agreement, but also the military victory of Japan over Russia during the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905, increased discrimination in communities on the West Coast. The Japanese triumph prompted books and newspapers in the popular media to call the Japanese a "yellow peril." In 1907, William Randolph Hearst's paper, *The San Francisco Examiner*, ran a two-part Sunday insert called "Japan May Seize the Pacific Coast," which claimed the existence of the "yellow peril.[98] And in both Hearst's *Seattle Post Intelligencer* and the *San Francisco Examiner*, the publisher and his editors accused Nikkei of disloyalty while warning the majority population about "Japanese treachery." For example, this 1916 poem on the editorial page of the Hearst *New York American* cautioned "They meet us with a smile, but they're working all the while…waiting to steal our California."[99]

Eventually unable to stop or even slow the immigration of Japanese to America, Congress passed the National Origins Act of 1924, preventing immigration by aliens already deemed ineligible for citizenship. Under the Alien Act of 1790, neither Chinese nor Japanese immigrants could attain naturalized citizenship. Shortly after the ratification of the American Constitution, the United States government decided that naturalization could not be decided by individual states and barred naturalization from "non-whites."

The sudden end to immigration created a unique situation for the Japanese immigrants. From 1924 until 1952, long after the end of Second World War, no Japanese immigrated to the United States. The abrupt end of immigration created a distinct line between the Issei and Nisei, the second generation. No longer did a flow of immigrants

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[98] Densho: Online Japanese American Legacy Project, *Prelude to Incarceration*, http://www.densho.org/learning/spice/lesson3/3reading3.asp (accessed March 8, 2005).
[99] David A. Takami, *Divided Destiny: A History of Japanese Americans in Seattle* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 24.

allow the Nisei to mingle with Issei of a similar age. Later, in the internment centers of World War II, the line between the generations would result in totally divergent understandings and interpretations of the experience. The first generation Issei felt Japanese by birth and by the inability to ever become United States citizens. The second generation Nisei felt American by birth and maintained a desire to become part of the majority culture.

However, the majority population in America discriminated against all Nikkei, not just the Issei. Racism against Asian immigrants ran rampant. In 1919, the hardworking and successful farming practices of the Japanese immigrants resulted in an Anti-Japanese League in Seattle. League President Miller Freeman argued that the Issei were a threat because they were economically successful. "They constantly demonstrate their ability to best the white man at his own game in farming, fishing, and business," Freeman contended. Racism increased in direct proportion to success. Consequently, in the first three decades of the twentieth century many Nisei college graduates were unable to find work outside of the Nikkei community.[100]

In addition to the political threat that Japan posed, the Issei work force threatened white Americans' security and stability on the farmlands of the Intermountain West and the West Coast. European American settlers in Idaho also experienced stiff competition from the Asian laborers beyond agriculture. Issei laborers received the lowest wages of railroad workers in Idaho. They earned from $1.10 to $1.50 per day. Standard pay began at $1.50 and went as high as $3.50 per day. Many of the Issei took leaves of absence from the railroad to work in the sugar beet fields. As early as 1907, Japanese immigrants

[100] Takami, *Divided Destiny*, 23-24.

worked all of the 4,000 acres of sugar beet fields in Idaho Falls, Sugar City, Blackfoot and Moore.[101]

A series of national laws were designed to incapacitate ethnic minorities in America. Just before the First World War, Congress passed the Anti-Alien Land Act of 1913, preventing Issei immigrants from owning land. The law limited land ownership to citizens, and because of the Alien Act of 1790, Issei could never be citizens. In the early 1920s, after a lull caused by the First World War, immigration to America climbed back to an average of one million persons per year. The 1924 anti-Alien legislation not only ended all immigration by "non-whites" but also specifically targeted immigrants from Japan.

In an effort to fight the discrimination against Issei, Toga Yoichi, a Japanese immigrant to California, published an important chronological history of Japanese immigration to America. In that work, Yoichi wrote that a nation or race couldn't succeed without the ability to complete a detailed account of its history. In the *Chronological History of U.S.-Japan Relations and the Japanese in America* (1927), Yoichi argued, "A nation/race [minzoku] disrespectful of history is doomed to self-destruction." Yoichi led a group of academics, amateur historians, community leaders, and Issei "common men" to the completion of just such a comprehensive interpretive project in only fourteen years. The completed work, *Zaibei Nihonjinshi* (*History of the Japanese in America*), was published in San Francisco in 1940.[102]

These Nikkei writers created a cultural and racial identity by comparing and contrasting the Issei to immigrants from China or Europe. Unwilling to accept the

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[101] Mercier and Simon-Smolinski, Idaho's Ethnic Heritage, I: 59; Walz, "Japanese Settlement," 3.
[102] Eiichiro Azuma, "The Politics of Transnational History Making: Japanese Immigrants on the Western 'Frontier,' 1927-1941," *The Journal of American History* 89 (March 2003): 1401-02.

discrimination embedded in national and state legislation, the writers of *History of the Japanese in America* used the events of the past to create a distinction between themselves and immigrants from China. In 1924, most Americans viewed Asians as a "mongrel race." The authors of the history project instead employed the past to establish a similarity between Japanese and European American cultures. By applying historian Fredrick Jackson Turner's model of progressive pioneer farmers on the frontier, these academic and amateur historians associated the agricultural settlement of the Issei to that of the European homesteaders across the West, thereby challenging European American exclusivity as superior frontiersmen.[103]

The "Japanese identity" in America, from both the Issei and the majority population perspectives, grew out of the agricultural efforts of the early immigrants. Skilled in agricultural techniques learned on their crowded island homeland, the Issei developed some of the most successful irrigation techniques in California. In only thirty years, nearly half of all farm labor in California was from Japan. In some crops, such as celery, the Issei farmers dominated the market.[104] According to one Issei historian, the laborers competed with Chinese, Greeks, and Italians before eventually dominating the agricultural operations in California.[105]

Sugar was one of the major agricultural industries during the early twentieth century in the western United States. Sugar beet companies sought field labor to weed, thin, and harvest the beets in Nebraska, Colorado, Idaho, and Utah. In 1900, ten factories processed sugar from just under 40,000 tons of beets. Germans from Russia, escaping discrimination after the reign of Catherine the Great, comprised the largest group of field

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[103] Azuma, "The Politics of Transnational History," 1403, 1405-1406.
[104] Hine, *The American West*, 237.
[105] Azuma, "The Politics of Transnational History Making," 1421.

laborers in those four states. By the 1930s, the industry grew to forty-nine factories processing 4,779,000 tons of beets. When the industry required additional hands to perform the grueling "stoop" labor in the beet fields, sugar producers turned to the agriculturally competent Issei to fill the need.[106] The stoop labor preformed by Issei farmers was both a point of pride and pain. Issei were proud of their success but acknowledged the brutality of the work. "Sugar-beet thinning was the kind of work to break not only backs, but spirits too."[107]

Many Issei moved from railroad labor to contract field labor and eventually to independent farming. Renting land offered the opportunity to generate larger sums of money needed to return to Japan. Issei rented farms and eventually owned land in the name of their citizen Nisei children and also under the names of European American friends. Pressure to succeed drew the Issei to the interior West. A 1925 newspaper article in the *Rocky Mountain Shimpo* encouraged the Issei to move to Idaho and farm. Several reasons to relocate appeared in the article. Not only would a rented farm offer a better chance for quick capital but also rural areas had not yet experienced the intensity of racial discrimination felt in the cities. In addition, the article asserted that Japanese immigrants were adventurous and willing to endure hardships in the West.[108]

Idaho citizens and legislative leaders debated legalized discrimination against Japanese immigrants. In 1921, Idaho defeated an "Alien Land Measure." The state bill was designed to deny aliens the right to lease or hold land in Idaho after 1925. A Washington County legislator, Senator Paddock, argued against the measure and praised

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[106] Walz, "Japanese Settlement in the Intermountain West," 2.
[107] Mary S. Henshall, "Pioneer Portraits," *Idaho Yesterdays* 19 (Spring 1975): 21, as quoted in Eric Walz, "From Kumamoto to Idaho: The Influence of Japanese Immigrants on the Agricultural Development of the Interior West," *Agricultural History* 74 (2000): 408.
[108] Walz, "From Kumamoto to Idaho," 410.

the Nikkei farmers. In Boise, citizens invited John P. Irish, Chair of the American Committee of Justice in California, to speak. Irish noted that the concern about competition from the skilled Nikkei farmers was understandable. "The Japanese have an absolute genius for the reclamation of bad land," Irish proclaimed. Some citizens felt that limiting future immigration from Japan might be advisable but they also believed that the existing Nikkei residents of Idaho should be afforded equal rights and privileges. This opinion did not last. In 1927, only two years after the measure was defeated, Idaho passed legislation forbidding Issei from leasing land. That law remained in effect until 1955.[109] Those Nikkei not involved in agriculture operated privately owned businesses in southern Idaho. For example, a 1910 study, "Japanese in Business in Idaho," noted that whenever Nikkei had been employed in agricultural or railroad projects for a year or more, a small number eventually left and opened private businesses such as supply stores, boarding houses, restaurants, barbershops, pool rooms, and tailor shops.[110]

Before World War II, Nikkei in Idaho retained many parts of their Japanese culture, language, and customs. Cooking traditional foods, building home Butsudan shrines, celebrating the emperor's birthday and other traditional Japanese holidays helped Nikkei in Idaho to retain emotional and intellectual ties to Japan.[111] Issei in Idaho, like the California businessmen and historians who wrote the *History of the Japanese in America*, wanted to instill pride and heritage in their Nisei children. The Nisei in Idaho, as elsewhere in the American West, were American citizens by birth and carried with them the rights and privileges of citizenship.[112]

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[109] Mercier and Simon-Smolinski, *Idaho's Ethnic Heritage*, 1:54,62,65-66.
[110] Mercier and Simon-Smolinski, *Idaho's Ethnic Heritage*, 1: 67.
[111] Mercier and Simon-Smolinski, *Idaho's Ethnic Heritage*, 1: 68.
[112] Mercier and Simon-Smolinski, *Idaho's Ethnic Heritage*, 1: 72.

The Story of Nisei in the American West

The Issei told their children that they were American. Issei fought to keep the Nisei in public schools on the West Coast because they believed that segregation was unfair. They told their children that if they worked hard in school then the future would be bright. Issei worked diligently to fight discrimination by banding together to combat injustice and prejudice. By placing farms in their American children's names, Issei circumvented laws barring them from land ownership. They encouraged their children to become just like other American children interested in Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, Glenn Miller, and high school dances.

Figure 7. Bainbridge Island Elementary School Children, circa 1925. (Densho: Japanese American Legacy Project and Bainbridge Island Japanese Community Association. Densho: i34-00048)

But the Nisei sensed they were different. Life for the Nisei included going to white schools but coming home to a Japanese world after class. When the Issei enrolled their children in afternoon Japanese Language School, the Nisei saw no opportunity to apply what they learned of Japanese manners or language in the larger society. The Nisei children believed that they were Americans, and yet somehow they knew that they were distinct. Before the Second World War, the Nisei recognized that they did well in school but did not gain commensurate employment. For the Nisei in prewar America, identity was elusive. They were certain that they were unlike the Issei. Yet, as hard as they worked, the larger society did not include them. For many Nisei, World War II offered them an opportunity to *prove* that they were American.

In his book, *Nisei: The Quiet Americans*, Bill Hosokawa explains that the first estrangement Nisei children felt from the Issei concerned language. When the Issei won the fight to keep their Japanese American children in white schools, they also gave their children the gift of English. Some Issei parents purposefully spoke no English at home so that their children would be free of any bad habits or poor pronunciation when grammar school began. Hosokawa writes that a particular father, "a short, muscular man with a bristly mustache and glasses, had been apologetic when he registered his son at school. 'My boy is not speak English,' he explained painfully. 'We is not teach him because we is not want him learn bad accent from me.' "[113] Hosokawa argues that there were two reasons why most Issei did not speak English well. First, they lived and worked primarily in the Japanese community and thereby did not require proficiency in

[113] Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2002), xiv.

English. Second, unlike many other immigrant languages, Japanese was not rooted in a similar Greco-roman base.[114]

Figure 8. Traditional Japanese dance and language schools helped Nisei maintain ties to cultural heritage, circa 1910-1919. (Densho: Japanese American Legacy Project and Bainbridge Island Japanese Community Association. Densho: i34-00159)

Japanese Language School offered Nisei the opportunity to connect in a manner similar to the way Issei had in their professional and societal groups. Many Issei still saw America as temporary and Japan as "home." Teaching their children Japanese language and customs would ease their transition back to Japan if ever the day came to return home. Monica Sone recalled the emphasis on proper customs at language school. "The first time I recited I stood and read with swelling pride the lesson which I had prepared the night before," Sone wrote. "Suddenly [my teacher] stopped me…I looked up at her confused, wondering what mistakes I had made. The teacher demanded, 'Are you

[114] Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 157.

leaning against your desk? Stand up straight!'" Sone learned that, "I could stumble all around in my lessons without ruffling [teacher's] nerves, but it was a personal insult to her if I displayed sloppy posture."[115]

The Nisei felt caught between the two worlds. They were American citizens living in America, while attempting to maintain a Japanese cultural standard for the sake of their parents. Although Sone's neighbors tried to mold her into an ideal Japanese young lady, Sone admitted the cause was hopeless and undesirable. When forced to choose, the scales weighed heavily toward maintaining an American disposition.

> As far as I was concerned, Nihon Gakko [Japanese Language School] was a total loss. I could not use my Japanese on the people at [my father's] hotel. Bowing was practical only at Nihon Gakko. If I were to bow to the hotel patron, they would have laughed in my face. Therefore promptly at five-thirty every day, I shed Nihon Gakko and returned with relief to an environment which was the only real one to me. [116]

The Great Depression of the 1930s intensified the plight of the Nisei. It was difficult to ignore that white classmates found employment while Nisei, graduating at the top of their college classes, went back to the farm or stacked oranges at a fruit stand. In this era, the second great estrangement between Issei and Nisei developed. The Issei banded together and resolved to be more Japanese when under the attack of the larger society. The Nisei decided to become so Americanized that their rights could no longer be denied. In this climate, the Nisei formed the Japanese American Citizens League.

As early as 1918, a small group of young professional Nisei met periodically after work in a San Francisco YMCA to discuss the trials of bridging two societies. The group included Dr. Thomas Yatabe, a recent dental school graduate, attorney Tom Okawara,

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[115] Monica Sone, *Nisei Daughter* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1979), 23.
[116] Sone, *Nisei Daughter*, 28.

among others. The Nisei generation grew up surrounded by the discrimination of their parents and became increasingly aware that their own citizenship did not seem to matter.[117] Although they were American citizens by birth, and had lived and worked in America their whole lives, the larger society saw them as foreign. Strangers would ask, "When did you come to America?" or "What is Japan like?" This San Francisco group of young men created an organization called the American Loyalty League. Through this organization, the Nisei became involved in politics, hoping to gain a base of power and to assert their rights. Many Nisei on the West Coast felt that they could fight discrimination by battling anti-Japanese legislation. Completely unaware of the efforts being made in San Francisco, another group formed in Seattle, Washington. The Seattle group, called the Seattle Progressive Citizens League, worked on a similar agenda fighting the legalized discrimination of anti-alien legislation.[118]

In 1928, the Seattle organization changed direction. Instead of working to combat negative legislation, the group decided to build the abilities and character of the second generation. The organization hoped to show Nisei as loyal citizens willing to make significant contributions to America. During 1928, the American Loyalty League of Fresno invited the Seattle group to a conference. Although the meeting was cancelled, representatives from Seattle, already on the way to Fresno, drove to San Francisco and then Los Angeles to meet with California Nisei interested in developing a movement for Japanese Americans all along the West Coast. In 1930, a national organization, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), held its first convention in Seattle.[119]

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[117] Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 191-193.
[118] Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 193.
[119] Hosokawa, *Nisei*, 197.

The JACL formed a "Second Generation Development Program" in 1936 that required Nisei to contribute to the larger society in community, commerce, and public service. Meeting in national and regional conferences, the JACL had lofty goals but little ability to transform the league from a social club to a group with political clout. On the eve of the Second World War, the JACL foundered due to a lack of direction. The war became the defining event for Nisei and the JACL.[120]

Even before Pearl Harbor, leaders of the JACL worked with the FBI to formulate an enemies' list.[121] The Japanese American Citizens League, which had its roots in promoting American loyalty, occasionally aided the government by informing on suspicious persons or activities. Togo Tanaka, the unofficial historian of the JACL, wrote about the leadership in *History of JACL*. "Out of the habit of defining loyalty, talking about loyalty, [and] interpreting it for both the Japanese and Caucasian communities, a segment of the JACL leadership in 1939 and 1940 began to arrogate to itself the authority to judge and evaluate the loyalty of the Japanese community."[122]

The JACL promoted cooperation with the federal government from the beginning of the war. On December 7, 1941, the JACL formed an Anti-Axis Committee and released a statement to the media. The statement declared Nisei support of national security

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[120] Japanese American Citizens League, The History of the JACL, http:// www.jacl.org/about.html, (accessed May 24, 2004) and Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 63-64.
[121] Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial*, 23.
[122] Deborah Lim, "The Lim Report" (paper prepared for Japanese-American Citizens League National Convention at San Diego 1990, distributed at Japanese-American Citizens League National Convention at Salt Lake City, 1994). In June 1989, Deborah Lim, an attorney and instructor of Asian Studies at San Francisco State University, was contracted by the JACL to conduct a study documenting JACL policies regarding relocation. Lim's report summarized 6-months of research into the archives of the JACL and U.S. government, library special collections, and oral histories. The report, prepared for a 1990 convention, became controversial. The JACL tabled presentation until the 1994 National Convention at Salt Lake City where the JACL distributed copies of the 154-page version to its assembled delegates. The Convention itself, however, took no action on the conclusions in the study.

measures and also announced to Issei and Nisei that any acts against the United States government would be reported:

> We are all Americans pledged to the defense of the United States. Any disloyal act by any Japanese or American citizen of Japanese descent harms the United States…Any act or word prejudicial to the United States committed by any Japanese must be…reported to the FBI, Naval Intelligence, Sheriff's Office, and local police.[123]

In the JACL archives, a notice from the National Headquarters, undated but with 12/7/41 written at the top in pencil, communicated the necessity of being beyond suspicion. Offering support to its Nisei constituents, the notice assured that the laws of the United States "will give protection to our parents as long as they are law-abiding." The notice continued, "Those who have been under suspicion may be apprehended temporarily until their status is clarified. But there is no fear of concentration camps for the Issei as a whole at this time." The Nisei leaders of the JACL never suspected that the events of the next few months would result in the incarceration of all Nikkei, not just the Issei.[124]

Conclusion

The decision by politicians and military leaders to remove Nikkei from the West Coast followed a long history of racially based initiatives amounting to legalized discrimination. National anti-alien legislation combined with discriminatory state land ownership laws created the basis for the wartime incarceration of the Nikkei.

Politicians, military leaders, and press members contributed to an Anti-Japanese frenzy that swept the West Coast after the bombing at Pearl Harbor. The argument was that there could be no way of discerning loyal from disloyal "Japanese." No amount of

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[123] Lim, "The Lim Report," 9.
[124] Lim, "The Lim Report," 8-9.

evidence could sway the decision makers. Leadership in the JACL sent a telegram to Attorney General Francis Biddle on February 16, 1942 that stated, "we have cooperated with all Federal Agencies in apprehending subversives and have actually become informants for the FBI."[125] Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, a document authorizing exclusion and removal of Nikkei from western states, three days later on February 19. Faced with these discouraging realities, the Nisei felt that their only course of action was to remain loyal. In Seattle, the leadership of the JACL passed a resolution that its members would cooperate with the government regarding evacuation.[126]

Within weeks, the federal government created military zones on the west coast and declared that all persons of Japanese ancestry must evacuate. As this study will demonstrate in the following chapter, when voluntary evacuation failed the government built relocation and internment centers to incarcerate Nikkei. During World War II, the Minidoka Relocation Center in Idaho held innocent Japanese and Japanese Americans for over three years.

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[125] Lim, "The Lim Report," 9.
[126] United States Commission of Wartime Relocation, *Personal Justice Denied* (Washington DC: Congress, 1982), 102.

Chapter 5

Outcry for Relocation - World War II in America

Introduction

In September 1942, only nine months after the Japanese military bombed Pearl Harbor, the United States government moved Japanese and Japanese Americans from the West Coast to Idaho. Government records from 1943 called the movement of some 110,000 people to 10 facilities between the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Mississippi River "one of the largest controlled migrations in history."[127] This "migration" was a forced resettlement and incarceration of innocent people for political reasons. In order to better understand the Minidoka Relocation Center facility, the purpose of the center, and the intentions of the federal government during center operations, it is important to reconstruct the political and military decisions made from December 1941 to October 1942.

Background of One Infamous Day

In the early twentieth century, Japan was a growing military and political empire. America, along with other military powers around the world, felt unsettled by the conflicts in the Far East and by Japanese dominance in the region. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 had its roots in the simultaneous efforts of both Japan and Russia to dominate Korea and Manchuria. The war began on February 8, 1904, when the main Japanese fleet launched an attack on the Russian naval squadron at Port Arthur. In the

[127] War Relocation Authority, *Relocation of Japanese-Americans* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 1.

peace treaty mediated by Theodore Roosevelt, a defeated Russia agreed to give Japan control of Korea. Both sides returned control of Manchuria to China.[128]

At the same time, discriminatory legislation in the United States against Japanese and Japanese Americans initiated calls in Japan for retaliation against the United States for dishonorable treatment of their fellow countrymen. According to historian Greg Robinson, the United States not only recognized Japan's resentment but also respected its emerging imperial power. "The [United States] Navy began preparing for the possibility of war with Japan over the Alien Land Act in early spring 1913," Robinson argued. A naval war plan, including information from naval strategists, warned Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels to be wary of an attack by Japan. "A confidential memorandum," Robinson continued, "warned that it was 'probable' that Japan would use the upcoming Alien Land Act as a pretext to declare war and seize the Philippines and Hawaii." At the time, however, the United States was dealing with the very real danger of German U-Boats in the Atlantic. Preoccupied, America turned its attention away from an uncertain Japanese threat.[129]

Tensions remained high between the United States and Japan. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Democratic nominee for Vice-president in 1920, argued in favor of joining the League of Nations. Without commitment to the League of Nations and disarmament, Roosevelt argued, the United States would have to spend billions of dollars to build up an army and navy able to withstand attack by "the 'great nations' such as England, France

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[128] Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th Edition, "Russo-Japanese War," http://www.bartleby.com/65/ru/RussoJap.html (accessed March 11, 2005).
[129] Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 23.

and Japan." At the time, the American public was unwilling to recognize the power of Japan. The democrats and their pro-League platform were defeated in a landslide.[130]

Racial tensions, distrust, hatred, and conflict intensified from the turn of the century to 1941. The depression of the 1930s increased racial animosity within the United States. Nisei wondered why they should even try to succeed if they simply faced racial prejudice that eliminated opportunities. During the Great Depression, European Americans experienced high unemployment and became more unwilling to compete with Nikkei for work. Anti-Japanese legislation and severe racism strengthened the ties within Nikkei social groups. After Pearl Harbor, the majority population interpreted membership in these groups as anti-American and evidence of covert operations in preparation for acts of sabotage against the United States.[131]

Within the context of this historic global political and military environment, the events of December 7, 1941, come into focus. As the political tensions increased, Japan sent an envoy to Washington and at the same time secretly sent a naval armada to sea in November 1941. Understanding that international relations were at an all time low, the United States military monitored Japanese radio transmissions closely. Eventually the military decoded an intercepted message telling the Japanese envoy to break off the negotiations. Believing that this message could mean the beginning of hostilities, President Roosevelt and General George Marshall sent a message to the commanders at Pearl Harbor at 7:33 on the morning of December 7. That message sent via normal

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[130] Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 27.
[131] Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 61.

commercial channels did not reach the military leadership at Pearl Harbor until almost noon.[132]

At 7:55 A.M. the Japanese attack began. The dive-bombers first attacked Wheeler Field north of Pearl Harbor. The Japanese believed that in order to be successful they must keep the American warplanes out of the conflict. The American aircraft, kept wingtip to wingtip at the airfield in order to protect against sabotage, were easily destroyed. A second, larger attack of 183 aircraft followed the first wave of 167 planes. By 10:00 A.M., the Japanese planes headed back to their aircraft carriers after successfully pummeling the ships and planes of the American military.[133]

Military and Political Perspectives After Pearl Harbor

The attack on Pearl Harbor shocked many people in America. Unwilling to believe that an Asian nation had trampled a Western power, pundits soon claimed a mysterious "fifth column" must have aided the Japanese. Respected journalists expressed xenophobia and fear while labeling all persons of Japanese ancestry "untrustworthy." One of the most vocal critics was Hearst Newspaper columnist Henry McLemore. On January 29, 1942, he wrote about his disdain for the Japanese and Japanese Americans living in America: "I am for immediate removal of every Japanese on the West Coast to a point deep in the interior. Herd 'em up, pack 'em off and give 'em the inside of the badlands. Let 'em be pinched, hurt, hungry, and dead against it." McLemore declared further, "Personally, I hate the Japanese. And that goes for all of them."[134]

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[132] National Geographic Online, "Remembering Pearl Harbor," http://plasma.nationalgeographic.com/pearlharbor/ (accessed April 18, 2004).
[133] National Geographic Online, "Remembering Pearl Harbor," http://plasma.nationalgeographic.com/pearlharbor/ (accessed April 18, 2004).
[134] Byron Grapes, ed., *Japanese American Internment Camps* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2001), 18, See Henry McLemore, Hearst Syndicated Columnist, full text in appendix.

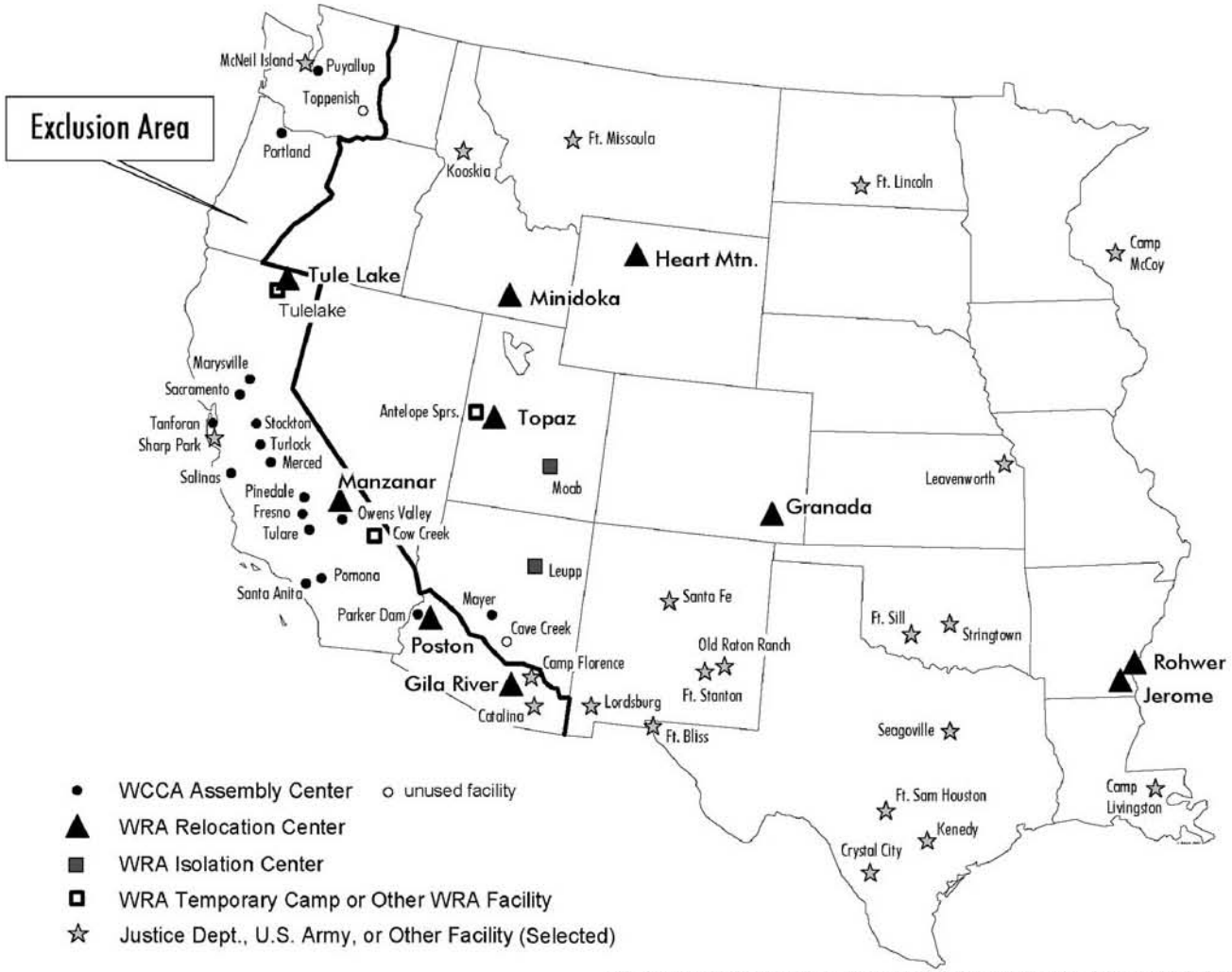

Figure 9. Sites associated with relocation and internment of Nikkei during World War II. (Western Archeological and Conservation Center)

In February 1942, two months after the bombing at Pearl Harbor, General John L. DeWitt, in charge of the Western Defense Command, recommended that any person of Japanese ancestry be moved away from the West Coast for reasons of military necessity. In this proposal, made to Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, DeWitt made blatantly racist remarks. "The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possess United States citizenship, have become 'Americanized,' the racial strains are undiluted," DeWitt argued. "It, therefore, follows that along the vital Pacific Coast over 112,000 potential enemies, of Japanese extraction, are at large today," he continued. He then made an unsubstantiated charge that almost assured relocation. "There are indications that these [persons] were organized and ready for concerted action at a favorable opportunity. The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will take place."[135]

Oddly, DeWitt argued that the lack of any sabotage proved their disloyalty. DeWitt made this claim because he assumed that some Japanese immigrants or citizens must be aligned with the Japanese Empire in the conflict against the United States. It must follow, DeWitt concluded, that the lack of any acts against America by resident Nikkei established that they must have been waiting for a signal from Japan to attack. Although the American government repeatedly denied Japanese immigrants citizenship and opportunities for assimilation, Nisei (citizens by birth) attended "Caucasian" schools and thought of themselves as Americans. DeWitt argued that their race made them inherently disloyal. In other words, because of their race people of Japanese ancestry were guilty of

[135] U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation, *Personal Justice Denied*, 6.

possible sabotage against the United States in time of war. DeWitt asserted that race was more powerful than nationality or citizenship.

The United States government investigated leaders within the Nikkei community and created an "enemies list" even prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. A special representative of the State Department, Curtis B. Munson, concluded in a report to President Roosevelt in November 1941 that the vast majority of Nikkei were loyal to the United States. However, in a reply from Army Intelligence, drafted in early December, the government argued that although "widespread sabotage by Japanese is not expected…identification of dangerous Japanese on the West Coast is reasonably complete."[136] The existence of an enemies list prior to hostilities suggests a political and military role in relocation that derived from racial stereotyping as much as military necessity.

The argument against the Nikkei quickly became circular. The "Japanese" were unassimilable and therefore should not be allowed citizenship or land ownership. The fact that the Japanese immigrants were not allowed to own land or to become citizens not only made them loyal to the Japanese empire but also proved that they were not really "Americanized." They were therefore unassimilable. Ethnicity or race proved disloyalty, and disloyalty must be attributed to ethnicity or race. No further argument was necessary.

The list of enemies, composed prior to Pearl Harbor, allowed Federal Bureau of Investigation officials and military police to search Nikkei homes within hours of the attack. The attack lasted from 7:55 to 9:45 A.M. Hawaii standard time. A little over an

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[136] Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America: Japanese in the United States and Canada During World War II* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972), 28.

hour later, the Japanese Imperial Headquarters declared a state of war with the United States and the British Empire. By the end of the day, the FBI had arrested and detained over 700 mainland Japanese nationals.[137]

"Evidence of disloyalty" resulted from such benign activities as membership in fellowship or ethnic groups. These organizations for persons of Japanese ancestry developed in a climate of segregation and racism. Within these community groups, the Nikkei could support each other economically, politically, and religiously. In a new environment, isolated from the majority population by language, culture, and sometimes religion, the fact that Issei and Nisei met to support each other hardly seems sinister. However, with the growing power of Japan on the world stage, affinity with anything Japanese appeared to be a threat to the United States. Leaders of cultural organizations, leaders of Buddhist temples, attendees of the 1940 Japanese Convention in Tokyo (which celebrated the 200th anniversary of the Japanese nation) were suspects. The government developed the list over many years. As early as 1936, Franklin Delano Roosevelt wrote a memo to the chief of naval operations establishing the basis for the federal government's wartime policies. "Every Japanese citizen or non-citizen on the Island of Oahu who meets these Japanese ships arriving in Hawaii or has any connection with their officers or men," Roosevelt instructed, "should be secretly but definitely identified and his or her name placed on a special list of those who would be the first to be placed in a concentration camp in the event of trouble."[138]

During the days following Pearl Harbor, federal officials confiscated common everyday items as further "proof of disloyalty." The government seized knives, guns,

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[137] Tetsuden Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial*: *Japanese American Imprisonment During World War II* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2003), 46-47.
[138] Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial*, 16.

Japanese flags, and short-wave radios as evidence of loyalty to Japan and proof of an intention to conspire with the Japanese military against the United States. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, a Nisei and author of *Farwell to Manzanar*, a memoir of her family's internment, recorded her experience as a young girl in the hours after Pearl Harbor:

> That night Papa burned the flag he had brought with him from Hiroshima thirty-five years earlier. It was such a beautiful piece of material; I couldn't believe he was doing that. He burned a lot of papers too, documents, anything that might suggest he still had some connection with Japan. These precautions didn't do him much good. He was not only an alien, he held a commercial fishing license, and in the early days of the war the FBI was picking up all such men, for fear they were somehow making contact with enemy ships off the coast. Papa himself knew it would only be a matter of time. [139]

General DeWitt used the confiscated knives, guns, and radios as evidence of the possibility of sabotage. He later claimed that the swift incarceration of high-ranking, powerful members of the Nikkei society prevented sabotage on the West Coast. As the head of the Western Defense Command, DeWitt used his authority to declare the entire coast as a theatre of operations.[140]

While the attack on Pearl Harbor was a surprise, hostilities with Japan were not. Many military and political leaders felt that in the event of war, the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 should be invoked. This act allowed the wartime arrest, imprisonment, and deportation of any alien subject to an enemy power. Prior to December 7, 1941, the White House prepared Public Proclamation 2525 which, upon the President's signature, would reinstate the act.[141] The act authorized the detention and imprisonment of enemy aliens. Edward J. Ennis, an assistant to Attorney General Francis B. Biddle, called the

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[139] Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar* (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), 6.
[140] U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation, *Personal Justice Denied*, 64.
[141] Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial*, 49.

government's incarceration of enemy aliens after the attack a form of public relations. In an interview given in 1985, Ennis said, "you must understand that Attorney General Biddle and I didn't feel that either the Germans or the Japanese who had been living in this country very long were very strong supporters of these foreign governments in wartime. But you know, that won't go down. You have to have a program." Ennis went even further. He said that some members of the American public required some concrete action by the government because of the "conceived threat to their lives." He concluded, "with the fear that had been aroused by the Japanese attack and their success during the first months of the war in the Pacific, [the internment of community leaders] was about as minimal a program as the public would stand."[142]

General DeWitt eventually succeeded in relocating all persons of Japanese ancestry, not just the leadership, because many military leaders misrepresented the threat. Two days after Pearl Harbor, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox traveled to Hawaii to determine the reasons for the American defeat. When Knox returned to the mainland on December 9, 1941 he told the media, "I think the most effective Fifth Column work of the entire war was done in Hawaii with the possible exception of Norway [where citizens of Norway aided the German army]."[143] In reality, the Japanese and Japanese Americans in Hawaii had no part in the bombing and even came to the aid of the islands during and immediately after the attack. Historian Franklin Odo asserted, "After the attack, every available person was recruited for assistance. Since nearly 40 percent of the population was Japanese American, it was impossible to avoid their involvement at many critical levels." Odo continued, "On December 7, a frantic radio summons called the ROTC

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[142] Kashima, *Judgment Without Trail*, 53.
[143] U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation, *Personal Justice Denied*, 55.

students to the campus, where they gathered at the armory." Noting the irony of arming the Nisei, Odo wrote, "The students were handed old Springfield rifles - this time with firing pins, which they had never used - and one clip containing five rounds of ammunition. Then, although most bore Japanese faces, names, and heritages, they were marched into anticipated combat against, as Ralph Yempuku indelicately put it, their 'own kind.'"[144]

Secretary Knox, who had worked in Chicago as a newspaper publisher, understood the power of the press. In an effort to encourage the American public to keep faith in the armed services, he made the Hawaiian Nikkei into scapegoats for the naval blunder at Pearl Harbor. Knox knew that the media would gladly convey the story of Japanese "treachery." For Knox, the story was politically useful and good business. It sold newspapers and, for the most part, the public wanted to hear it.[145]

Examples of military, political, and citizen voices raised *against* mass relocation of the Nikkei did not routinely appear in newspapers. J. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, Major Karl R. Bendetsen, chief of the U.S. Army's Aliens Division, attended a meeting in Attorney General Francis Biddle's office on Sunday, February 1, 1942. The Attorney General had prepared a press release stating that, "The Department of War and the Department of Justice are in agreement that the present military situation does not at the time require the removal of American citizens of Japanese race." Biddle told the military leaders that the Justice Department was against mass evacuation and would not participate in it. When Biddle presented the Army officers the draft of a press statement that he hoped to release jointly from the political

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[144] Franklin Odo, *No Sword to Bury: Japanese Americans in Hawaii During World War II* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004), 105.
[145] Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America*, 36.

and military leadership, the officers would not agree. The statement argued that the Nikkei community posed no threat. The Army refused to release such information to the public.[146]

Encouraged by the military and members of the media, political leaders and the general public turned on the Nikkei. Politicians in California understood that groups such as the California Growers Association favored relocation of the Nikkei because their removal would be good for business. Prejudice as well as economic factors played a role. Representative Leland Ford, a Republican from Santa Monica, initially opposed relocation but changed his mind after receiving letters from influential constituents. Ford not only argued for relocation of Japanese aliens and citizens alike, but he devised a loyalty trap for the Nikkei. Ford argued that anyone "willing to go to a concentration camp was a patriot," but that unwillingness to go was proof of disloyalty.[147] Again, circular reasoning trapped the Japanese immigrants and their children. Relocate willingly to prove loyalty. But, why would relocation be needed if Nikkei were loyal?

Misinformation blended with decades of prejudice until the inertia behind relocation pushed the majority of American citizens, politicians, and military leaders to support the removal of the Nikkei from the West Coast. In the military, poor intelligence as well as prejudice encouraged the relocation policy. General Joseph W. Stilwell noted in his diary that DeWitt and the Western Defense Command appeared unable to distinguish credible from incredible threats. As Stilwell observed, "common sense is thrown to the winds and any absurdity is believed."[148] J. Edgar Hoover agreed with Stilwell's assessment of the Army intelligence. Hoover argued that the Army on the West Coast was so "untrained,

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[146] Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America*, 55.
[147] Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America*, 47.
[148] U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation, *Personal Justice Denied*, 64.

disorganized, and incapable" that "[h]ysteria and lack of judgment" permeated the Military Intelligence Division.[149]

Crucial military intelligence concerning the actions and intentions of the Japanese government were concealed from some important decision makers, including Hoover and Attorney General Biddle. The President and a select group of high-level military leaders had been reading secret Japanese communiqués for over a year. In 1940, an elite group of Army cryptanalysts broke Japan's diplomatic code. Under the cover name MAGIC, the group decoded messages that revealed an attempt by Japan to recruit spies and form an espionage ring in the United States. In a MAGIC message sent May 9, 1941, the Los Angeles consul stated, "We shall maintain connection with our second generation who are at present in the army."[150] Some authors have used this communiqué to argue that military and political leaders in favor of relocation understood this message to mean that Japan had a "network of Nisei spies in the United States Army."[151] Other authors argue that the message only implied Japanese awareness of Nisei in the Army and a desire to recruit them as spies.[152]

On February 19, 1942, presented with the decoded information, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the Secretary of War to establish military areas on the West Coast. This law stripped American citizens of their constitutional rights. On March 2, General DeWitt designated most of the West Coast (all of California and most of Washington and Oregon) as Military Defense Zone 1 and required all persons of

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[149] U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation, *Personal Justice Denied*, 65.
[150] Greg Robinson, "Why the Media Should Stop Paying Attention to the New Book that Defends Japanese Internment," http://hnn.us/articles/7092.html (accessed March 11, 2005).
[151] Michelle Malkin, *In Defense of Internment: The Case for 'Racial Profiling' in World War II and the War on Terror*. (Washington, D.C.: Regenery Publishing, Inc. 2004), 44.
[152] Robinson, "Why the Media Should Stop Paying Attention to the New Book."

Japanese ancestry to relocate.[153] Of the roughly 126,000 Japanese in the United States in 1942, over 110,000 lived in the designated military zones. It is critical to remember that over two-thirds of these persons were Nisei and therefore American citizens.[154]

The President signed Executive Order 9066 during a several-week, multifaceted military response to the Nikkei on the West Coast. The FBI, the Western Defense Command, and the Department of Defense held a conference in San Francisco on January 4. The attendees at the conference declared Issei "enemy aliens" who must register with the Department of Justice. In DeWitt's military zones, Nikkei rights were suspended. Entry to Category A military zones surrounding military and defense installations required an official pass. In the Category B zones covering the rest of the West Coast, Nikkei were subjected to curfews and other prescribed conditions.[155]

DeWitt's final report detailed allegations of covert signals sent from shore to enemy submarines, contraband found in Nikkei homes, a concentration of Nikkei around military installations, and ethnic Japanese organizations considered pro-Emperor, as justifications for removal. DeWitt also noted the danger that vigilantes posed to evacuees in the final report.[156] When DeWitt recommended that Nikkei move for their own protection, he made the victims pay for the injustice of others. Once the President signed the order, many Americans assumed the worst about neighbors and former friends. The argument in favor of relocating Nikkei for their own protection held little validity. Protecting the population against violence was a civil matter. Public officials might have

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[153] Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 67.
[154] Harry Kitano, *Japanese Americans: The Evolution of a Subculture* (Englewood Cliffs: N.J.: 1976), 72.
[155] Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America*, 46.
[156] U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation, *Personal Justice Denied*, 87.

chosen to uphold the law and protect the innocent, not order those people from their homes to maintain public order.[157]

On March 18, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9102, which established the War Relocation Authority. Roosevelt created the WRA to manage relocation of Nikkei from the West Coast without diverting military personnel from the war effort. Milton S. Eisenhower, an official from the Department of Agriculture who headed the new WRA, believed that relocation would be a swift and efficient process of moving people from temporary assembly centers to civilian life in other areas of the United States. DeWitt instructed Nikkei living in the military zones to move voluntarily. Offering that this would save them trouble in the future, DeWitt also proclaimed that it was their "patriotic duty to make this move voluntarily and with a minimum of inconvenience to the Government."[158]

The Nikkei attempted voluntary relocation and about 9,000 moved to the Midwest or East Coast to live with family or friends. However, because the government froze Issei assets in American banks, the majority of the Nikkei did not have the financial resources to make the move. Nor did they have social or economic connections to the interior that might have helped them. Complicating the voluntary relocation process further, DeWitt and government officials failed to prepare the rest of the country for the influx of the Nikkei population. As an official WRA document concluded in 1946:

> From all of the neighboring States began to come violent protests against receiving a population that California, Washington, Oregon, and the Army had discredited. Apparently nobody wanted these refugees. The Japanese people were alarmed by rumors of plans to

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[157] U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation, *Personal Justice Denied*, 89

[158] War Relocation Authority, *The Relocation Program* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946), 2.

> separate husband and wives in concentration camps and to separate children from their parents.[159]

Faced with discrimination and hatred from the majority population throughout the United States and without adequate financial resources, voluntary relocation stalled.[160]

On April 7, 1942, WRA Director Eisenhower met in Salt Lake City with the governors of the intermountain and western states to discuss the relocation program. After Eisenhower outlined the WRA plans for assisting the evacuated persons in resettlement, he requested cooperation from the governors and the citizens of the intermountain and western states in return for his assurance that the War Relocation Authority would not do anything with the Nikkei that would create economic, social, or political problems in their communities.[161]

Eisenhower soon realized the difficulty of the task before him when the governors reacted with hostility to his plans. The governors felt that the problem was being dumped on them. Governor Carville of Nevada stated that although he would support a concentration camp in his state, he would not tolerate enemy aliens moving freely through his jurisdiction.[162] The extent of the opposition and the variety of responses was documented in the following quotation found in a WRA report:

> Some [governors] expressed complete and bitter animosities toward settlement or purchase of land by any Japanese in their States. Some indicated definite suspicion or conviction that California was using interior States as a dumping ground for an old problem. Some refused to recognize that Japanese, even though United States citizens, had any rights. Some indicated that the temper of the people in their States could not be controlled unless Japanese who had already entered the States were brought under guard. Some opposed Japanese entering private business. Some demanded that the Federal Government

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[159] WRA, *The Relocation Program*, 2.
[160] Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America*, 84.
[161] Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America*, 83.
[162] Commission of Wartime Relocation, *Personal Justice Denied*, 102.

> guarantee to remove any and all Japanese remaining at the end of the war. Some indicated that the States could operate the program if Federal funds were made available to them. The official conception by State officers of the type of program best suited to the situation was one of concentration camps with workers being farmed out to work under armed guards.[163]

The most difficult question for Eisenhower to answer concerned the effects of relocation on the post war communities. The governors wanted to know if these evacuees would remain after the war. Eisenhower guaranteed the governors that the WRA would not transfer land to the Nikkei, but he pointed out that the government could not forbid private transactions. "It is not the province of the Authority," Eisenhower claimed, "other than in the orderly evacuation and relocation of the Japanese, to dictate their lives."[164]

Eisenhower had not agreed to head the WRA in order to place the entire Nikkei population living on the West Coast in concentration camps. He hoped to aid the relocation of Japanese immigrants and Japanese American citizens into productive civilian lives outside of the military zones. After the Salt Lake City conference, Eisenhower realized that relocation plans required modification, but he remained convinced that thoughtful planning could promote Nikkei loyalty to the United States and at the same time mitigate the resentment of the majority population. He was eventually unable to accept the reality of imprisonment for thousands of innocent Issei and Nisei for the duration of the war. Eisenhower resigned in June 1942. In his resignation letter to President Roosevelt, Eisenhower recognized the political reality of bending to the majority population when he conceded that the public influence over the program might be acceptable because America was a democracy. However, he also informed the

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[163] WRA, *The Relocation Program*, 6.
[164] Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America*, 93.

President that the Japanese Americans were exceptionally loyal and encouraged him to make a strong statement on behalf of the Nisei internees. Finally, he pushed the White House to consider a thorough postwar rehabilitation program for the Nikkei displaced by relocation.[165] He poignantly conveyed his concerns about the program to his successor Dillon S. Myer when he said, "Accept the position only if you can do the job and sleep at night."[166]

Conclusion

In the spring of 1942, the WRA and the federal government realized that a quick program of relocating Nikkei from the West Coast was unachievable. The government would have to build facilities in the American interior to hold thousands of people for an indeterminate time. That realization brings this study to the construction of the relocation camps and specifically the site selection and construction of the Minidoka Relocation Center in southern Idaho.

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[165] Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America*, 103.
[166] Jeffery F. Burton, Mary M. Farrell, Florence B. Lord, and Richard W. Lord, *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites* (Seattle, WA: University of Seattle Press, 2002), 38.

Figure 10. Nikkei fought discrimination before, during, and after World War II. (210-CC-IN-4, Records of War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD)

Figure 11. The United States government forcibly removed legal Japanese Aliens and Japanese American citizens from the West Coast. (210-G-2A-572, Records of War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD)

Figure 12. Col. Karl Bendetsen managed the removal of Nikkei from Bainbridge Island. (National Archives and Records Administration NARA LC-US262-69204)

Figure 13. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the creation of military zones of exclusion on the West Coast. (National Archives and Records Administration NARA LC-US262-117121)

Figure 14. Evacuation Day. Note evacuation tags. The federal government assigned each family a number for evacuation and relocation. (Densho: Japanese American Legacy Project and Bainbridge Island Japanese Community Association. Densho: i34-00080)

Figure 15. Political and military leaders asked for Nikkei to relocate voluntarily and without incident to prove loyalty and patriotism. Japanese American children on train wave flag and show victory sign. (National Archives and Records Administration)

Chapter 6

A Dust Covered Pseudo City - Camp Construction

Introduction

In the spring and summer of 1942, the Minidoka Relocation Center quickly grew out of the sagebrush-covered desert. The land that became Minidoka during World War II has a place in the larger trends of Idaho and Western history. The historical context for Minidoka includes the agricultural, ethnic, military, and political events that were leveraged against the fulcrum of December 7, 1941. Those events have been discussed in previous chapters. Several questions still remain about the Center. Although the government built ten relocation centers, what made Minidoka unique? What did the government plan for Minidoka? Who built the Center? Who staffed it? What did the construction of a large facility at the end of the Great Depression mean to the local economy? This chapter addresses such questions.

Relocation Bureaucracy

As stated earlier, the military and political response to Pearl Harbor was to relocate Nikkei from the West Coast. On February 12, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. On March 2, General DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command, required the removal of all Nikkei from designated military zones covering most of California, Oregon, and Washington. On March 5, two weeks before the creation of the WRA, Assistant Attorney General Tom Clark began negotiations with officials in southern California to establish the first, more permanent "concentration or registration

center."[167] On March 11, DeWitt created the Wartime Civil Control Administration to administer the Army's portion of the evacuation. Major Karl B. Bendetsen was promoted to full colonel and placed in charge of the WCCA.[168] On March 18, the President created the War Relocation Authority to operate as a civilian organization for facilitating the relocation of the Nikkei away from the prescribed military zones of exclusion. From March to June 1942, WRA director Milton S. Eisenhower worked to assist Nikkei in relocation. When Dillon Myer succeeded him in June, the WRA oversaw internment and incarceration instead of evacuation and relocation.

As early as April 23, the government announced plans to build a relocation center in Idaho. The citizens of Idaho met the decision with mixed emotions. Through the spring of 1942, Idaho governor Chase Clark made racist remarks about Nikkei and opposed any efforts to bring them to the state. At meetings of American Legion groups and chambers of commerce in south central Idaho, anti-Nikkei opinions outweighed expressions of sympathy and support. Those opinions changed only when the federal government lifted restrictions on crops, allowing farmers to double their sugar beet acreage, and the citizens of Idaho realized that relocated Nikkei could help with the harvest. Two sugar beet refineries announced that they could immediately utilize Nikkei labor.[169]

Minidoka Relocation Center - The Link to Public Works Projects

On April 17, 1942, only six days before the announcement regarding the relocation of Nikkei to Idaho, S.R. Marean, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Superintendent on the Minidoka Reclamation Project made a proposal to representatives of the War Relocation

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[167] Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America*, 88.
[168] Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America*, 86.
[169] Robert Sims, "Japanese-Americans in Idaho," in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, eds. Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry H.L. Kitano (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1986), 104-105.

Authority regarding the establishment of an evacuee center on BOR land in southern Idaho. On April 29, the Secretary of War informally approved the idea subject to "satisfactory arrangements being made for the use of the land and for a water supply for irrigation."[170] Finalized over several months, Bureau of Reclamation officials in the Department of the Interior and the Secretary of War created a *Memorandum of Understanding* allowing the use of public land in southern Idaho as a wartime relocation center. In the memorandum, the Bureau made available thousands of acres within the Gooding Division of the Minidoka Project. Among items in the agreement, the Bureau maintained the right to approve the WRA's land use programs and irrigation practices, and its "work programs of lateral construction and betterment, including measures for reduction of seepage losses in the Milner-Gooding Canal."[171]

During the same early months of relocation, the period when Milton Eisenhower, head of the WRA, wished to help Nikkei relocate to cities and towns in the American interior, other members of the government acted to intern Nikkei in agricultural work camps. Eisenhower's successor, Dillon Myer, then with the Department of Agriculture, wrote to the Acting Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation. "We are indeed interested in your proposal that evacuees from the West Coast be given the opportunity to participate in completing construction programs on reclamation projects," Myer stated. "From the beginning we have been interested in public works and it strikes me that a work proposal

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[170] Harold L Ickes to Dillon S. Myer, 27 October 1942. File 386.05, Record Group 115 (hereafter, RG115), National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado. Ickes refers to his April 29, 1942 letter in the text of this cited letter.

[171] War Relocation Authority, "WRA Relocation Center - Gooding Division, Minidoka Project." File 386.05, RG 115. National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.

which would carry to completion a program in which there is already a large public investment is particularly desirable."[172]

On March 18, when Executive Order 9102 created the WRA for the purpose of removing Nikkei from the West Coast, it stipulated that the director of the Authority should create a program with three objectives. First, the program should evacuate and relocate Nikkei and "provide for their needs in such manner as may be appropriate, and supervise their activities." Next, this program would "provide, insofar as feasible and desirable, for the employment of such persons at useful work in industry, commerce, agriculture, or public projects, prescribe the terms and conditions of such public employment, and safeguard the public interest in the private employment of such persons." Finally, the program should "secure the cooperation, assistance, or service of any government agency" in order to reach its goals. In a letter to John C. Page, Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, Myer detailed three projects located on Bureau lands: Tule Lake, part of the Klamath Falls Reclamation project in California; Minidoka, part of the Gooding Reclamation project in Idaho; and Heart Mountain, part of the Shoshone Reclamation Project in Wyoming. Myer noted that these areas were "selected as relocation centers for a part of the evacuees from the West Coast in order to provide for evacuee employment in the production of foods for their subsistence, and to assist in supplying the armed forces, lend-lease, and civilian population insofar as practical with foods requiring considerable hand labor." Myer also wrote:

> These areas were also selected because of the productiveness of the lands, because practically no displacement of local people was involved, and because the [land] development could be carried out with a minimum of critical materials. The labor for this development, as

[172] Dillon S. Myer to H.W. Bashore, 31 July 31 1942. File 386.05, RG 115. National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.

> well as the production of foods, would be supplied by the evacuee population in these centers.[173]

In this letter, Myer contended that it was his responsibility to develop acres of land for subsistence foodstuffs as well as to keep the internees employed in "useful" public works projects. The letter stipulated the amount of land to be cleared, leveled, and irrigated to provide "for at least subsistence foods." Myer concluded that Minidoka would "develop approximately 2,000 acres to provide subsistence for the 10,000 evacuees."[174]

In an early draft of the *Memorandum of Understanding*, the Bureau of Reclamation authorized as much as 72,500 acres of public land.[175] This number was reduced to 33,750 by September. The negotiations continued over the autumn. From the evidence, it is likely that different agencies within the government were advocating alternative plans for the evacuated Nikkei. The Bureau of Reclamation might have seen the thousands of Nikkei as a convenient and inexpensive labor pool. The WRA officials may have entered into negotiations with the BOR to facilitate site selection and fulfill the employment mandate of the Executive Order. By November 1942, the War Production Board, in an effort to limit expenses, ordered an end to all construction activities under Bureau of Reclamation jurisdiction.[176]

The reality of using Nikkei labor to reclaim large portions of southern Idaho did not fulfill the initial estimates or expectations. By November, Myer was even fighting to win approval of the plan for subsistence foods production. "I should like to point out," argued

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[173] Dillon Myer to John C. Page, 31 October 31 1942. File 386.05, RG 115. National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.
[174] Myer to Page, 31 October 1942.
[175] "Notes on Proposed Memorandum of Understanding Governing the Minidoka Project," File 386.05 in RG 115. National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.
[176] Dillon Myer to John C. Page 12 November 1942. File 386.05, RG 115. National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.

Myer, "that a certain amount of land development and other construction incident to irrigation development is essential to the operation of the three Relocation Centers in question -- Tule Lake, California; Minidoka, Idaho; and Heart Mountain, Wyoming." A letter from Bureau of Reclamation official Walker R. Young to Twin Falls BOR engineer L. B. Ackerman finalized details for the program at Minidoka that included canal repair and lateral construction. "This program," Young wrote, "while it falls far short of the work necessary to complete the amount contemplated in the tentative draft of the memorandum of understanding, is believed to be the maximum amount which may be undertaken by the W.R.A. for the next season's development."[177]

By December, the *Salt Lake City Tribune* marked the anniversary of Pearl Harbor with an article on the programs and policies of the WRA. "Plans for extensive development of the Minidoka relocation project, especially agriculture, have been changed, project officials revealed Saturday. Originally it was planned to subjugate some 17,000 of the 68,000 acres of the sagebrush-covered project area." The article correctly reported that the financial and logistic problems of the war stalled the development. "This program did not get underway last fall due to lack of machinery and a shortage of project labor, the latter due to the fact the 2,300 of the center residents worked in the southern Idaho harvest fields to help save needed food crops." The article concluded, "In line with the government's plan for early permanent resettlement …the relocation center will be held to a minimum development. Probably not more than 1000 acres will be cleared, irrigated, and planted."[178]

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[177] Walker R. Young to L. B. Ackerman, 24 November 1942. File 386.05, RG 115. National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.
[178] S.R. Marean to the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, 8 December 1942. File 386.05, RG 115. National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.

In a sharp contrast to the conclusions made in that *Tribune* article, at least one BOR official, H.W. Bashor, blamed the Nikkei for the lack of successful development on the Bureau land. Acting Commission Bashor expressed these concerns in a letter written in early January 1943 to United States Senator Edwin C. Johnson. Johnson had written to the Bureau in December 1942 to request a "Japanese colony on the San Luis Project for the purpose of constructing Mogote dam." Bashor replied, "I am not sure that such an arrangement would bring satisfactory results in view of our experience with the Japanese on three Bureau irrigation projects." According to Bashor, some of the problems on the irrigation projects were caused by the wartime shortage of critical materials. Bashor also noted that the WRA released Nikkei to aid in the harvest on private lands instead of long-term government projects. But Bashor also made his feelings about the lack of progress on BOR projects perfectly clear. "It has been the experience on Japanese relocation projects that the Japanese is [sic] fundamentally a farmer and not a builder," Bashor wrote. "He works very well on his own little garden, but he cannot see the value of erecting irrigation works for the common good."[179]

Bashor's remarks ignored overwhelming evidence of cooperative activity in Nikkei communities and the fact that Nikkei were actively involved in the construction of irrigation canals and laterals at Minidoka. Bashor's comments minimized the financial constraints that government agencies faced during the earliest months of the war and attributed blame to the Nikkei for the project failures. Bureau of Reclamation officials, who hoped to get Nikkei to perform some work by grabbing government relocation funds, soon discovered the reality of wartime allocation issues:

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[179] H.W. Bashor to Senator Edwin C. Johnson, 6 January 1943. File 386.05, RG 115. National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.

> When the plan of evacuating persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast military zones was first under consideration, it was generally assumed that this plan, being a necessary and urgent war measure, would, without question, be given a high priority rating, thus insuring no difficulty in procuring, by transfer or purchase, such equipment as necessary to carry on all activities contemplated. Conditions since that time have changed, and the Authority appears at the moment to rank low in the list of favored organizations. This fact now casts a shadow of doubt as to the likelihood of being able to accomplish any great portion, or even a very small portion, of the work contemplated by the Memorandum of Understanding.[180]

The federal government spent millions of dollars on relocation. Perhaps to justify the expense, Dillon Myer argued that the WRA would keep the internees employed in "useful" public works projects. None of this information suggests that the Nikkei were relocated from the West Coast for the purpose of reclaiming public land. However, the information does suggest that while some in the government argued that relocating the Nikkei was a military necessity, officials in other branches of government thought that the relocated persons might provide labor for improvement to public works managed by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Part of this link to "public works" can be understood through pre-war America's experience with New Deal programs, most notably the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Late in 1942, with soaring wartime employment and skyrocketing wartime expenditures, President Roosevelt called for the end of the WPA. In its nearly eight years of operation from 1935 through 1942, the WPA employed 8 million people constructing public projects such as buildings, municipal sewers, airports, roads, and highways. "For some of these projects such as rural road building," historian Jason Scott Smith has noted,

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[180] T.W. Parry and H.R. McBirney, 17 November 1942. File 386.05, RG 115. National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.

"the WPA often had to set up temporary camps so workers could eat and sleep near the job site."[181] The WPA had nearly a decade of experience with large-scale projects, and including workforce management, making the agency a "valuable resource for the internment effort."[182]

Officials at the WPA realized in the spring and summer of 1942 that the government-funded projects of the Great Depression would be obsolete in wartime. Within this new political dynamic, WPA administrators participated in the Nikkei relocation. WPA assistant commissioner Rex L. Nicholson organized and staffed the assembly and relocation centers and "supervised the reception and induction division of the WCCA."[183] During the first few months of the war, the WPA spent $4.47 million on relocation and internment.[184] Harry Hopkins, director of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, wrote a letter to President Roosevelt in which he assured the President that the WPA and its acting commissioner, Howard Hunter, were "handling all the building of those camps for the War Department for the Japanese evacuees …with great promptness."[185]

Constructing the Minidoka Relocation Center

While the WPA staffed the assembly centers and relocation centers, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers designed and built them with the assistance of private contractors. The Army Engineers spent $10.7 million constructing the assembly centers and $56.5 million on building the relocation and internment centers.[186] As noted above, through the WPA, the government had completed small camp facilities for work projects but nothing

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[181] Jason Scott Smith, "New Deal Public Works at War: The WPA and Japanese American Internment," *Pacific Historical Review* 72, no. 1 (February 2003): 63-92.
[182] Smith, "New Deal Public Works at War," 69.
[183] Smith, "New Deal Public Works at War," 64.
[184] United States Army, *Final Report* (Washington D.C.: Governmental Printing Office, 1946), 350.
[185] Smith, "New Deal Public Works at War," 70.
[186] U.S. Army, *Final Report*, 350.

on the scale of the proposed relocation centers. Construction plans for the first center, Manzanar in California, were drawn up in March 1942. Although there was no standardized plan for the centers, all of the sites except Minidoka located the barracks and administration buildings within a single rectangular grid. Due to the unusual topography caused by uneven terrain and the curving North Side Canal boundary, the Minidoka Relocation Center layout was unique. A 1999 archeological report on the WRA and Department of Justice sites documented some of the distinctive features of the Minidoka design. "At Minidoka," the report noted, "the barrack blocks are in four separate groups following the arc of the North Side Canal, so that the block grids vary from the standard north-south orientation. Administration areas of the relocation center also were geographically separate, with their grids laid out at slightly different angles."[187]

Figure 16. Construction of the center in southern Idaho began with clearing the sagebrush-covered land. (210-CMA-MK-139, Records of War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD)

[187] Burton, et al., *Confinement and Ethnicity*, 205.

Figure 17. Camp construction removed the sagebrush and released a fine, volcanic ash-like dust over the center and its residents. (210-CMA-FS-38, Records of War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD)

Figure 18. Typical scene of barracks construction with prefabricated section lying in position. (Denver Public Library, Western History/Genealogy Dept., X-6571)

In Idaho, the Army engineers constructed the project with Morrison-Knudsen Corporation of Boise. Morrison-Knudsen had a history of working with the federal government on projects around the globe. For example, when Harry Morrison, the company president, realized that construction of Hoover Dam was too large for one company, he found five other contractors and formed the Six Companies, Inc., in order to complete the project. On the eve of the war, Morrison caught one of the last planes out of Wake Island before hostilities erupted. Hundreds of company workers were eventually captured by the Japanese Imperial Army while working on a naval air base on the island.[188]

Morrison-Knudsen began construction of the Minidoka Relocation Center on June 5, 1942. During construction, the contractor employed 3,000 workers to build Minidoka. Although local farmers initially protested against the relocation center, businessmen in the region felt confident that the construction project would contribute to the local economy.[189] According to Roger Daniels, "each of the camps produced a small 'boom' in its sparsely populated vicinity."[190] According to a report issued in January 1943, Minidoka cost $5,807,000. Total man-hours exceeded some 2,000,000. Morrison-Knudsen completed the construction of the buildings for some $4,600,000 and the roads and railroad spur for some $251,400. The Glen Stanton and Hollis Johnson Company of Portland, Oregon, negotiated a lump sum of some $35,000 for architectural engineering.

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[188] "Construction: The Master Builder," *Time Magazine* (May 29, 1950).
[189] Sims, "Japanese-Americans in Idaho," in *Japanese Americans from Relocation to Redress*. 105.
[190] Daniels, *Concentration Camps*, 97

And, the Rushlight Automatic Sprinkler Company of Portland, Oregon, completed an automatic sprinkler system in October 1942.[191]

Information regarding another internment center places construction costs and wage rates for the governmental facilities in historical context relative to civilian work in the same year. According to a study of the Manzanar Relocation Center, "Between 1,000 and 1,500 workmen would be employed during the peak construction period at Manzanar and that the weekly payroll of these men would average between $50,000 and $70,000."[192] At this rate, the work averaged a premium rate of between $46 and $50 per worker per week. In a government study completed one year later, the national average for weekly earnings was only $43 per week.[193]

The transition from the high unemployment caused by prewar depression to wartime labor shortages occurred almost overnight. On government projects around the country, contractors paid premium rates and required employees to fulfill longer workweeks to get the jobs completed. Morrison-Knudsen's request for permission to extend work hours from 48 to 56 hours per week on another wartime construction project demonstrated the labor crunch. In a letter regarding the contractor's request, Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner John Page informed the Secretary of the Interior that, "It can well be anticipated that this office will receive many requests from contractors engaged in

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[191] Office of Engineer, Boise, Idaho, "Completion Report: Minidoka War Relocation Area, January 31, 1943." National Archives and Records Administration, Seattle, Washington.
[192] Harlan D. Unrau, *Manzanar Historic Resource Study/Special History Study* http://www.nps.gov/manz/hrs/hrs7.htm (accessed March 30, 2005).
[193] U.S. Department of Labor, "Hours and Earnings June 1943" File 107, RG115. National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.

construction work on the various projects."[194] For the completion of the center at Manzanar, construction laborers worked six days a week on 10-hour shifts.[195]

Even though the first internees arrived at Minidoka on August 10, 1942, the center was not finished. Construction continued for many more months. A War Relocation Authority report, detailing activity from July 1 to September 30, 1942, described the incomplete facilities:

> Seriously hampered by wartime shortages of materials and wartime transportation problems, construction of the relocation communities went busily forward under supervision of the Army Corps of Engineers throughout the summer months. At most centers, the building of evacuee barracks was finished on or very close to schedule. Installation of utilities, however, involved more critical materials and consequently moved forward at a considerably slower rate. At some centers, evacuees were forced temporarily to live in barracks without lights, laundry facilities, or adequate toilets. Mess halls planned to accommodate about 300 people had to handle twice and three times that number for short periods as evacuees poured in from assembly centers on schedule and the shipment of stoves and other kitchen facilities lagged behind.[196]

This sterile description of the centers by the WRA document trivializes the experience of the people who arrived at the unfinished facilities. For residents of Minidoka, incarceration began without necessary utilities. In the first months, the community suffered with inadequate lights, no sewer system, and outdoor latrines.[197]

In anticipation of some 10,000 internees at Minidoka, the contractors built over 500 residential, administrative, and utility buildings. In each of Minidoka's 35 residential blocks stood 12 barracks (each with 6 separate compartments), a mess hall, a recreation

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[194] John C. Page to the Secretary of the Interior, 27 May 27 1942. File 107.0, RG 115. National Archives and Records Administration, Denver Colorado.
[195] Unrau, *Manzanar Historic Resource Study/Special History Study*.
[196] War Relocation Authority, *Second Quarterly Report* - July 1 to September 30 1942. File 386.05, RG 115. National Archives and Records Administration, Denver, Colorado.
[197] WRA, *Second Quarterly Report 1942*, 74.

hall, and a central H-shaped building with bathrooms, showers, and a laundry. Each block was numbered. Unique to the story of Minidoka, while the blocks were numbered up to 44 not all numbers were used. Where blocks 9 and 11 would have been built, there was a ball field. The camp also never held a block number 18. Next to block 19, the construction crew built Block 17 in an unusual shape to accommodate the arcing layout. During the years they were interned, the Nikkei built nine baseball diamonds, filled an outdoor depression for winter ice skating southwest of Block 44, and also helped construct a gym near Block 23.[198]

When the internees first arrived, one of the most troubling elements was the dust. The government contractors created a city in the desert in less than six months. In that time, the 3,000 workers erected the center on an area three and half miles long and one mile wide. To accomplish this, they bulldozed the high desert landscape of sagebrush and native grass. Without the vegetation, the dirt blew in the dry air and dust went everywhere. According to a civilian worker at the camp, during his first visit to Minidoka on September 26, 1942, "the wind was blowing a gale and the dust was swirling in all directions, coming in all the cracks and crevices of the buildings and literally covering one with a gray film of volcanic ash."[199] Complicating the dust problem, the center initially lacked hot water. Attempting to bathe and do laundry amid the dust and without hot water made the situation more difficult to bear.

In addition to the dust and hot water problems, the sewage system and heating sources were not completed in time. The internees complained about the obvious health problems associated with flooded latrines. And, in many barracks, an empty space existed where

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[198] Burton, et al. *Confinement and Ethnicity*, 205.
[199] Hausler, "History of Japanese-American Relocation Center," 15; Arthur Kleinkopf, *Relocation Center Diary* (Twin Falls, ID: Minidoka Internment National Monument, 2002), 3.

the potbellied stove would eventually sit. As an internee wrote to a friend back home, "the room is 20 x 24 with five windows, a large closet, and a place for a large pop [sic] bellied stove."[200]

Figure 19. Internees recall the pot-bellied stoves in each barrack. (National Archives and Records Administration)

[200] Kleinkopf, *Relocation Center Diary*, 38; Isaki (last name withheld by repository, hereafter [?]) to Father Emory Andrews, 24 August 1942.; War Relocation Authority, *Third Quarter Report, 1942*, 61. *Minidoka Irrigator*, September 25, 1943, 4.

Figure 20. Winter precipitation turned the ash-fine dust into thick mud. (210-G-11G-413, Records of War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD)

With the arrival of winter the dust turned into sticky mud. Nikkei who walked the roads in the center fell into mud up to their ankles. But, winter brought conditions much worse than mud: the extreme cold of Idaho. In 1942, the town of Rupert, close to camp, recorded a near record low of 21 degrees below zero.[201] Coal train deliveries were delayed. In the end, the coal deliveries could not keep up with demand. In addition to the quantity of coal, the quality was also poor. "When unloaded it soon disintegrates and becomes too fine for stove burning," wrote one WRA employee.[202] The cold temperatures and lack of coal to meet the demand forced some residents to roam the area

[201] Donald E. Hausler, "History of Japanese-American Relocation Center at Hunt, Minidoka County, Idaho," PhD. diss. (Logan, UT: Utah State University, 1964), 17, 15.
[202] Kleinkopf, *Relocation Center Diary*, 21.

around center for sagebrush to be used in the stoves. In early December 1942, Takaji Abe got lost in the sagebrush and died. On December 3 "all available men and high school boys [had] been asked to aid in the search for the lost man." The report came back that Abe had died just two miles from camp due to exhaustion and the cold.[203] Internees resented the lack of completed facilities, the absence of sufficient coal, and the conditions in the center.

Conclusion

Although the government built ten centers throughout America, Minidoka was unique. The Minidoka, Tule Lake, and Heart Mountain centers were placed on public land owned by the Bureau of Reclamation. Officials at the Bureau allowed the War Department and the War Relocation Authority to use the land, but desired the interned Nikkei labor to make some improvements. The government's plans for Minidoka evolved quickly, and soon officials decided that Nikkei labor on neighboring farms provided a faster and more efficient use of the interned population than reclaiming thousands of new acres. The Army Corps of Engineers built Minidoka with Idaho's own Morrison-Knudsen. The construction of the large facility provided employment and high wages to the local economy in the final days of the Great Depression. When the internees arrived at Minidoka, the center was not finished. The government created a pseudo city in the desert containing a faux municipal infrastructure: fire stations, sewer systems, and schools. The internment camps eventually provided a place where Nikkei lived, worked, worshiped, attended school, and waited. The following chapter details some of their experiences at Minidoka.

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[203] *Minidoka Irrigator*, December 5, 1942, 5.

Chapter 7

Camp Minidoka -

Evacuation, Relocation, and Incarceration

Introduction

What was the Minidoka Relocation Center? Army officials claimed that the relocation centers were federal camps built to facilitate the relocation of Nikkei from the West Coast. The over $5 million construction cost suggests that Minidoka was built to provide long-term housing, not just to be a temporary way station. The federal government built Minidoka as a manufactured "pseudo city" designed to accommodate nearly 10,000 people. Residents lived in manufactured cities with barbershops, general stores, schools, fire stations, and recreation halls surrounded by barbed wire. In 1940, sixty four percent of Idaho's 524,873 people lived in rural areas. The three largest cities in Idaho were Boise with a population of 26,130; Pocatello with 18,133; and Idaho Falls with 15,024. By 1943 Minidoka held a peak population of 9,397, making it the eighth largest city in the state.[204]

Nikkei unable to move voluntarily were evacuated to assembly centers. Nikkei waited at the assembly centers until the government could complete construction on the more permanent facilities in the American interior. A WRA document, written in 1943, explained the gradual evolution of relocation and internment of Nikkei. "At first, plans were made by the Western Defense Command and the WRA to build accommodations

[204] Linda Morton-Keithly, Idaho State Historical Society (phone interview, December 9, 2004); Hausler, "History of Japanese-American Relocation Center at Hunt, Minidoka County, Idaho," 17.

for only a portion of the 110,000 evacuated people. A considerable percentage of them, it was hoped, would move out of the restricted area and resettle inland on their own initiative," the War Relocation Authority claimed, "but the great majority were held back by limited resources, general uncertainty, and the community hostility in the intermountain regions."[205] Author and internee Monica Sone wrote about the realization that voluntary relocation could not succeed:

> General DeWitt marked off Military Area No. 1, hallowed ground from which we must remove ourselves as rapidly as possible. Unfortunately we could not simply vanish into thin air, and we had no place to go. We had no relatives in the east we could move in on. All our relatives were sitting with us in the forbidden area, themselves wondering where to go.[206]

Sone went on to argue that the adjoining states protested having the coastal problem dumped on them. "The neighboring states in the line of exit for the Japanese protested violently at the prospect of any mass invasion. They said, very sensibly, that if the Coast didn't want the Japanese hanging around, they didn't either."[207]

When efforts failed, the WRA ceased the voluntary relocation and assembled people in hastily transformed fairgrounds until relocation centers in the American interior could be completed. The Wartime Civil Control Administration, an agency set up by the Western Defense Command, began evacuating Nikkei to assembly centers in the weeks following the end of voluntary movement. Col. Karl B. Bendetsen oversaw the WCCA and its administration of the first evacuation of Nikkei on March 24, 1942. On that day, Bendetsen directed the removal of fifty-four Nikkei families, 274 total people, from Bainbridge Island, near Seattle in the Puget Sound. In what historian Roger Daniels called a dress rehearsal for the large-scale removal of thousands of Nikkei from the coast,

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[205] WRA, *Relocation of Japanese-Americans*, 1.
[206] Sone, *Nisei Daughter*, 159.
[207] Sone, *Nisei Daughter*, 160.

these families traveled to the assembly center at the Puyallup Fairgrounds. Under a government order to bring only what they could carry, the Nikkei took "bedding, toilet articles, clothing, and sufficient knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls, and cups for each member of the family."[208] Residents of Bainbridge Island, friends of the Nikkei, "had tears running down their cheeks" when they came out to support their former neighbors. Soldiers in the Army supervised the peaceful relocation as the Nikkei boarded ferries at the Eagledale Dock and then transferred to a train waiting for them at the Port of Seattle.[209]

The assembly centers, "where the evacuees could be gathered, housed, and fed were thrown up almost over-night,"[210] according to another government document. The government intended for the assembly centers to be temporary. From March 31 to June 6, 1942, the Wartime Civil Control Administration confined over 93,000 persons in fifteen assembly centers, former fairgrounds, racetracks, and livestock exhibition buildings converted to modest accommodations.[211] A short history of the conditions in the assembly centers provides context for explaining the relocation process and the eventual arrival at the more permanent facilities like Minidoka.

Puyallup Assembly Center

Of the persons eventually interned at Minidoka, 7,149 came from the Puyallup Assembly Center. The military relocated most Washington and Oregon Nikkei to the Puyallup Center, a former fairground with a horse racetrack. Given the nickname "Camp Harmony" by Army public relations officials, the center was divided into four sections,

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[208] Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America*, 86.
[209] *Bainbridge Review*, April 2, 1942, 1, 5.
[210] War Relocation Authority, *Relocation Communities* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 1.
[211] Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial*, 134.

known as A, B, C, and D. Section A was the largest. Section D, the former stable area, was the second largest. Section B was the third largest and section C was the smallest. Electric lights illuminated the dark stables. Internees described section B as more pleasant than the other three areas because it had lots of greenery.[212]

Most internees traveled to Puyallup by bus. After a brief physical examination, each family member stuffed his or her own mattress with straw. These mattresses were quite uncomfortable and often infested with insects. Under guard, the families were escorted to their barracks. Each barrack held six living units with one family per unit. The walls between rooms did not reach to the ceiling and consequently the internees at Puyallup had very little or no privacy. Having been constructed to house animals and not humans, the structures felt unsanitary, uncomfortable, and inhuman. The roofs, for example, leaked during the frequent rainstorms.[213] The shower stalls and toilet areas in the bathrooms or latrines lacked partitions and assembly center residents complained about the lack of privacy. The hot water often ran out in section A and D and the internees had to get permission to use the showers in section B. In an effort to mitigate athlete's foot, the evacuees wore clogs in the showers.[214]

Each section of the camp contained one mess hall. Health conditions in the former fairgrounds were suspect. Strange insects infested the drinking water. The suppliers delivered the hamburger to the center uncovered, allowing dust and dirt to taint the meat. The main complaint about the food, which was generally plentiful, was the repetition of

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[212] Anne O. Freed, "Puyallup Assembly Center Interview," *War Relocation Authority, 1942-1946,* April 17, 1943, http://www.PuyallupAssemblyCenterInterview.htm/ (accessed April 27, 2004).
[213] Freed, "Puyallup Assembly Center Interview."
[214] Freed, "Puyallup Assembly Center Interview."

the menu. The internees disliked the frequency of the pork and beans served with wieners, for example.[215]

Although referred to as Camp Harmony, Puyallup was a prison. The internees lived behind barbed wire and under the supervision of armed guards. The residents were not allowed to move between the different sections. On special occasions, however, the internees were granted permission to visit friends in other areas of the center. At first, the residents were only allowed to greet visitors through the barbed wire fences. If visitors stayed too long, they were asked to leave. Eventually a reception room was created.[216]

Portland Assembly Center

Minidoka also housed 2,318 transfers from the Portland Assembly Center, 12 from Tanforan in Northern California, 3 from Tulare in Southern California and 6 from Turlock in Central California. Minidoka eventually became the residence for 2,328 transfers from other relocation centers. The greatest number of transfers, 1,930, came from Tule Lake.[217] The military relocated the Oregon Nikkei to the Portland Assembly Center. The center, formerly the Pacific Livestock Exposition Center on Marine Drive, had been used as an exhibition hall for livestock competitions. On April 28, 1942, the government issued the Evacuation Order in Oregon. Four days later, evacuation began. In only three days, from May 2 to May 5, the government removed all Nikkei from the Portland area.[218]

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[215] Freed, "Puyallup Assembly Center Interview."
[216] Freed, "Puyallup Assembly Center Interview."
[217] United States Department of the Interior, *Evacuated People* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1947), 11.
[218] Mae Ninomiya, "Oral History," *Center for the Columbia River History*, http://www.ccrh.org/comm/slugh/oral/ninomiya.htm (accessed July 12, 2004).

The residents of the Portland Center endured unpleasant summer months in the former livestock center. The hot conditions made the animal odors worse. The accommodations were meager. Plywood covered the floor. When the evacuees entered the housing, the only pieces of furniture they saw were metal cots and mattresses. Like Puyallup, the walls between rooms did not reach to the ceiling. Saku Tomita wrote in her diary that she was unable to sleep because the children in the next room coughed all through the night. She was filled with compassion for the children's parents, however. "I can imagine the trouble and anxiety this must cause their parents," wrote Tomita. "I truly sympathize with them."[219]

Tomita recorded in her diary that the evacuees attempted to remain active and lead semi-normal lives during the assembly center incarceration. They held dances, took art classes, and the children attended school. The evacuees met with each other and discussed the incessant rumors going around the center. Some evacuees heard rumors about stolen property or money. "Someone has had a thousand dollars stolen," wrote Tomita. Other evacuees talked about work releases. Tomita documented the departure of a group released for farm work, "Fifteen people left for the sugar beet farms in eastern Oregon." Others worried about conditions in the internment centers. "More than six inches of snow fell at Tule Lake. They say that there isn't any electricity and hardly any provision there." For the evacuees, the uncertainty of the future was one of the most difficult conditions to tolerate. In the autumn, the uncertainty ended with news that relocation would begin. The official notice told evacuees that that they would be

[219] Saku Tomita, "Portland Assembly Center: The Diary of Saku Tomita" *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 79 (Summer 1980): 153.

relocated to Idaho. "Five or six days ago there was mention of news of the evacuation to Idaho," wrote Tomita.[220] The military personnel called the camp Minidoka.

Minidoka Relocation Center

Designed to be complete communities, the internment centers felt more permanent than the assembly centers, but far more primitive than home. Over the months, the centers eventually offered an infrastructure similar to a small town with barbershops, schools, stores, churches or temples, and fire stations, but they could never offer a "normal life." When asked how Minidoka compared to Puyallup, internee Akio H. replied, "Oh, Minidoka was much more organized….At Minidoka we had our own dining rooms and our own laundry facilities…And so things were a little bit better…We had a little city of our own."[221]

Government documents described the center's proposed organization. "The evacuees will set up their own community government, elect their own officers, and provide their own police and fire protection," stated the WRA. "Schools and recreation halls will be built. Stores, newspapers, barbershops, dental offices, movie theaters and many other community enterprises," were to be established within the camps.[222] In the internment center were stores, hospitals, schools, and butcher shops, much like businesses in Seattle or Portland. Instead of houses or apartments, internees lived in dusty barracks.

Upon completion, Minidoka had thirty-six housing blocks. Between the North Side Canal and the housing units were the hospital area, military police station, administration area, warehouse, and eventually a swimming hole. A typical housing block arranged

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[220] Saku Tomita, "Diary of Saku Tomita," 156,161,163,157,158,163.
[221] Densho- Japanese American Legacy Project, Online Archive. Aiko H., Interview I, segment 9. Interviewed by Stephen Fujita and Lori Hoshino (July 11, 1997).
[222] WRA, *Relocation Communities*, 3.

twelve barracks around a dining hall and an H-shaped building with laundry and bathroom facilities. Each block also had a recreation hall that could be used for religious services or schools. Within each barrack were 6 rooms called "apartments."[223] Consequently, the return address for mail would look something like the following: 28-12-D, Hunt, Idaho. Translated, this would mean, twenty-eighth block, twelfth building, room D. In a poor imitation of the services provided in other small towns in America, the government and the internees operated schools, libraries, cooperative stores, offices, baseball fields, and theaters among the housing blocks.[224]

First Impressions

On August 10, 1942 the first internees arrived at Minidoka.[225] Other Nikkei arrived daily, traveling by trains carrying 400-500 people.[226] In a letter dated August 24, 1942, one of the early internees wrote, "tomorrow it will be one week since we got off the train in the midst of dust and sagebrush." The letter described the train ride and initial impressions of Minidoka. According to the writer, the train left Puyallup at 9:35 in the morning and arrived at Tacoma at 9:55. "At 1:35 we arrived at Vancouver, Washington and five minutes later crossed the bridge into Oregon." Although the letter referred favorably to the food offered on the train, "at 12:15 we finished lunch consisting of meatloaf, boiled potatoes, peas, head lettuce salad, Jell-o and tomatoe [sic] salad," the trip was no vacation tour. "At 2:00 we arrived at Portland and there we stayed in the sweltering heat for one hour and a half while water, food, and another diner car were

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[223] Stanley Hayami, "Stanley Hayami: A Young Nisei's Diary," *Only What We Could Carry*, ed. Lawson Fusao Inada (Berkley, CA: Heyday Books, 2000), 141.
[224] Anky Arai, *Minidoka Relocation Center Map*, 1943. Distributed at the "Minidoka Remembered" Pilgrimage.
[225] *Minidoka Irrigator*, August 5, 1944, 2.
[226] Donald E. Hausler, *History of Japanese-American Relocation Center at Hunt, Minidoka County, Idaho* (Logan, UT: Utah State University, 1964), 17.

added to the train." The 200-mile trip along the Columbia River provided scenery more pleasant than the views during the trip through "bare mountains and sage brush."[227] During the journey, the train passed through Nampa, Idaho. At the station, the writer saw former friends who had left Seattle before the evacuation. "I thought how ironic it was that we should see two Japanese who were free to do as they pleased while we, by train loads, were being herded to camps."[228]

Finally, the train arrived at its destination at 2:50 the next afternoon. According to the letter, yellow school buses waited outside the train to take the passengers the final eight miles to Minidoka. About an hour later, the Nikkei arrived with their belongings at "camp." "At the sight of dust and rows and rows of barracks I was ready to cry when I thought that this was to be our home for the duration." The letter offered some details regarding that first day. "After much fuss and bother we were given our room. Our neighbors who share our common stairs, porch, and hall are Ruby and Ishi Aoki."[229]

In Minidoka's hot and dusty environment, the internees battled the extreme weather conditions from the first day. "The heat here is terrific," an internee noted. "At night when we go to sleep it is still very warm, but about 2 or 3 in the morning it gets very cold." Internees experienced not just the weather, but also insects and snakes. The majority of internees arrived from August 10 through August 30. Those who arrived on the later trains were "to be pitied beyond words" because the barracks were not finished.

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[227] Isaki[?] to Father Emery Andrews, 24 August 1942. The return address reads: Block 5 Barrack 11 Apt. E, Minidoka W.R.A. Center, Eden, Idaho. Emery Andrews Papers, University of Washington Special Collection, No. 1908-3.
[228] Isaki [?] to Andrews, 24 August 1942.
[229] Isaki [?] to Andrews, 24 August 1942. This detailed letter reported the arrival in the sagebrush field. "From the train windows we could see yellow buses waiting to take us to Minidoka 8 miles away."

Approximately 500 people lived in recreation rooms and laundry rooms until their barracks could be completed.[230]

More than any other condition, the early internees commented on the dust billowing through the incomplete facility. "The barracks were very dusty and unfurnished. And I think there were cots in there, but we still had to get our mattresses and army blankets and seven beds all lined up," remembered Ruby I. "The barracks were bare, very dusty, but we swept the dust off and put up our beds and our things, put our things in," said Nobu S. Henry M. recalled how incomplete the center seemed upon arrival when he told an interviewer, "The place was a huge dust storm area and the only thing you could see was a big cloud of dust on the horizon and that's where the camp was. When we got to our block, which was Block 19, the water facilities weren't running." He continued, "But they were hard pressed to keep up with the increasing demands of the incoming population. The barracks weren't completely finished, and there was... huge piles of lumber across the street from the block. Then the winds would come up and create all kinds of dust conditions that were very difficult to put up with." Minidoka was worse than other centers, according to Henry M.: "The conditions at Minidoka were kind of different I guess from other places like -- I had listened to people from Heart Mountain. And they had all their school buildings built. They had a gymnasium built. In Minidoka's case they hardly built anything other than the sewage facility, which was not complete at that time. And they hadn't built all the structures for all the barracks. So consequently it was a chaotic mess."[231]

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[230] Isaki [?] to Andrews, 24 August 1942.
[231] Densho Archive. Ruby I, Interview I, segment 23. Interviewed by Alice Ito and Dee Goto (April 2 and 4, 2003). Nobu S. Interview I, segment 27. Interviewed by Dee Goto (June 3, 1998) and Henry M. Interview II, segment 4. Interviewed by Tom Ikeda (May 4, 1998).

Perhaps in order to cover the dusty ground with soil conserving plants, and perhaps to bring some beautification to the environment, the Nikkei began gardening and planting projects throughout the center almost immediately. The Nikkei purposefully shaped their environments in the center to express some of the traditional Japanese cultural themes: perseverance (*Gaman*) and acceptance of the present reality (*shikata ga nai*).[232] The internees wandered down to the canals and brought back vegetation to augment the small plants, vines, and ferns brought from home.[233] Lush gardens growing between the barracks rewarded their efforts. "I notice still more attempts being made toward beautifying the grounds around the barracks," recorded the superintendent of schools at the camp. "Saw a lady carrying two shapely clumps of sagebrush and one, large tumbleweed. Watched her as she carefully planted them near her doorway. Near another doorway I saw a small pond with a footbridge across it."[234] In addition to the work by the internees, the WRA planted grass and some trees donated to the site by residents of nearby cities, Jerome and Twin Falls.[235]

Work

After the internees became settled in their barracks, the WRA began a program provided work opportunities for the Nikkei inside and outside of the relocation center boundaries. The wages compared unfavorably to average wartime pay scales, but the jobs provided a chance to feel productive and make money to cover debts back home. In camp, some workers "were anxious to 'work for the people,' and others were enjoying the

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[232] Anna H. Tamura, "Gardens Below the Watchtower: Gardens and Meaning in WWII Japanese American Internment Camps." (master's thesis, Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 2002), 3. See *Gardens Below the Watchtower* for information regarding the cultural maintenance of traditional Japanese values and beliefs within camp.
[233] Hausler, *History of Japanese-American Relocation Center*, 21.
[234] Kleinkopf, *Relocation Center Diary*, 24.
[235] Hausler, *History of Japanese-American Relocation Center*, 21.

new feelings of responsibility, prestige, or authority" and consequently "took the attitude that the low wage was irrelevant."[236] Originally the WRA hoped to provide employment for any interested and able internee. "The agency began with a plan for a work corps in which everyone could enlist under an agreement that one would work on assigned jobs for the duration of the war and 14 days thereafter."[237] Although the WRA abandoned the work corps program after a few months, the idea of full employment under a "make work" policy remained for the first year. After that initial year, internees applied for employment through referral systems. When job opportunities came to the center from surrounding farmers, or from East Coast manufacturers, Nikkei applied for and were granted work release permits.[238] The headline on the first edition of the camp newspaper, the *Minidoka Irrigator*, informed camp residents that the first off-site work would be granted to those willing to aid the local beet farmers.[239]

The low pay scale, $12, $16, and $19 per month, caused discussion and debate in camp. Should the highest pay go to those with the least desirable jobs like garbage collection or coal hauling, or should the highest pay reward those in the most important prestigious and important occupations, such as doctors or nurses in the camp hospital? Most camp residents voted that all workers should be paid the same wage. "Everyone should get the same, it was felt, because actually, everyone was working for the welfare of all in the centers and different wages were irrelevant in such a situation." In the end, the $12 wage was paid to apprentice labor, while most jobs received $16.[240]

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[236] WRA, *Impounded People: Japanese Americans in the Relocation Centers* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946), 56.
[237] WRA, *Impounded People*, 54.
[238] WRA, *Impounded People*, 54-55.
[239] *Minidoka Irrigator*, September 10, 1942, 1.
[240] WRA, *Impounded People*, 59.

Works Projects Administration official Clayton Triggs mistakenly announced to the press "that Japanese Americans would be paid according to the WPA wage scale for their work while they were interned."[241] That scale would have paid the Nikkei between $40 and $70 per month. This announcement brought immediate public censure. "The public complained that Japanese Americans would be getting paid more than American soldiers."[242] Almost immediately, WRA administrator Milton Eisenhower issued a statement declaring that the Nikkei wages would be lower than soldiers' wages.[243] In a letter to friend E.H. Wiecking, the premature announcement by the WPA official made for "a fresh outbreak of bad publicity," Eisenhower wrote. "The facts of the case are that the Army was merely considering using the subsistence wage scale of the WPA," Eisenhower continued, "and in any event, the WRA would charge against this wage the cost of subsistence."[244]

In another letter written to Harold D. Smith, Director of the Budget, Eisenhower admitted that the wage issue was "ticklish":

> If we were to announce that the Government is going to provide the minimum essentials of food, clothing, and shelter and, in addition, would pay a maximum cash wage of $21 a month for public work on such projects, I think that the public would approve…But this would be bad policy. We would have established an invitation to laziness. Those who did not wish to work would receive the same food and housing as those who wanted to work very hard.[245]

In Eisenhower's letter, the scenario for the wage scale would be set between $40 and $75 per month. Once the government deducted living expenses the wage netted down to approximately $21 per month. Asking internees to pay for their own incarceration was

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[241] Smith, "New Deal Public Works at War," 87.
[242] Smith, "New Deal Public Works at War," 87.
[243] Smith, "New Deal Public Works at War," 87.
[244] Smith, "New Deal Public Works at War," 88.
[245] Smith, "New Deal Public Works at War," 88.

its own public relations problem. Although officially the WCCA and WRA decided they would not charge the internees for subsistence, the pay scale wound up remarkably close to what it would have been under just such an expense deduction program. The WCCA and WPA set a maximum scale in camp at $21 per month, and for outside work, internees "would be paid a prevailing wage, often for work harvesting agricultural crops such as sugar beets."[246]

Early confusion by WRA officials added to the anxiety and animosity of many young people in the internment centers. While some jobs began soon after relocation, the government failed to formalize a comprehensive policy to provide work within and beyond the center boundaries until almost a year after internment began. The chaos built resentment, especially among the Nisei. So much about the process of evacuation, relocation, and internment seemed beyond their control. For Nisei, work inside or outside camp offered one chance to regain some influence over their lives.[247]

Some of the Issei who had worked very hard after immigrating to America took advantage of the opportunity to not work and passed their time creating bonsai, art, and playing a board game called *go*. According to WRA documents, because the centers provided shelter, food, and most other basic necessities, the relationship between work and survival had been seriously broken. This generalization was not true for all Issei, but many adopted a balanced attitude regarding work in camp. Proud and pleased with various elements in their pioneer past that included successfully farming some of the least desirable land in the far West, the Issei had no intention of working particularly hard in camp after being moved against their will. "For $16 [a month] we should not work like

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[246] Smith, "New Deal Public Works at War," 89.
[247] WRA, *Impounded People*, 55.

we did in Fresno. For $16 or $18 we should not work so hard. Of course, we should all work. But we must not think this place is the same." Some Issei, suspicious of the government's motivations for displacing them onto underproductive farmland in the interior, had no intention of creating another garden in the wilderness. "They were wary of the vague, larger plans in terms of which the administrators seemed to be talking. They were suspicious of the purposes behind such plans, but they could accept the objective of immediate comfort in the near-at-hand aspects of center life." In other words, Issei would plant and farm vegetables necessary and desirable for their own consumption around the center. But Issei opposed work on the canal drops and larger projects needed to make the surrounding farmland more valuable.[248]

One of the most difficult jobs at camp was the work done on the canal drops. The Milner-Gooding Canal connected Milner Lake, behind Milner Dam, to the various privately built canals in the area. The Bureau of Reclamation constructed the canal in the 1930s to provide irrigation water to the agricultural areas around Gooding. Although the North Side Canal defined the south border of the camp, it had never been used to irrigate that section of land or supply water to the relocation center. Due to the elevated geography of the land, using the North Side Canal would have required a costly pumping facility. Instead the War Relocation Authority used water from the Milner-Gooding Canal located five miles to the northeast of Minidoka. One of the first tasks accomplished by the internees, under the direction of the United States Bureau of Reclamation, was the construction of a lateral canal to run from the Milner-Gooding to the recently cleared sagebrush field around the camp to provide water for the camp and

[248] WRA, *Impounded People*, 57.

for irrigating some acres for farming.[249] The internees worked with the Bureau of Reclamation and the D.J. Cavanaugh Company on the canals and laterals. The laterals carried water to the crops raised by the internees.

North and east of the housing units were 248 acres of land farmed by the internee workers. On these acres, internees planted zucchini, carrots, onions, squash, cucumbers, peas, radishes, lettuce, cabbage, potatoes, broccoli, eggplant, corn, tomatoes, watermelon, celery, peppers, nappa, turnips, and beans.[250] At Minidoka, the internees built a large food cellar measuring 45 feet by 200 feet to store crops. One of the more desirable jobs in the center was working inside the cool root cellar out of the scorching summer heat.

Dining Halls

In each housing block, the barracks surrounded a large dining hall. The WRA allowed a maximum of $.45 per day per person for food. The internees ate wholesome, monotonous meals. When citizens in the rest of the nation complained about rumors of extravagance in the camp provisions, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt toured the relocation center facilities personally. She calmly reported that the WRA met the needs of the relocation legally. "When I read that accusations against the Authority for acquiring quantities of canned goods, and laying in stocks of food, I realized there was a lack of understanding of one basic fact," she clarified. "The government authorities such as this have to live up to the law, and if it is the law of the land that we are rationed, we are rationed everywhere - in prisons, in hospitals, in camps, wherever we may be," she said.

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[249] Sims, "Japanese Americans in Idaho," 103-111.
[250] Arai, *Map of Minidoka Relocation Center, 1943.*

"And even the War Relocation Authority cannot buy more than is allowed for the number of people they have to feed."[251]

Providing adequate food for over 9,000 people was a daunting task. The camp newspaper reported that each day Minidoka residents consumed 4,000 pounds of rice, 900 gallons of milk, 3,500 pounds of meat, 4,400 loaves of bread, and 1,126 dozen eggs.[252] An internee wrote about the meals in a letter, "We're having good food these days. The noon meals are usually served American style and today we had pork chops. Yesterday we had steak. The evening meals are Japanese style and tonight we had mackerel which wasn't too bad."[253] Arthur Kleinkopf served as the Superintendent of Education at Minidoka. Kleinkopf kept a diary form 1942 until 1946. In the diary, he often mentioned the food, sometimes favorably and sometimes less so. In October he wrote, "Lunch poor. Wieners and sauerkraut. Kraut too rotten. Soup made from greasy mutton and was full of curry powder which I do not like." In September Kleinkopf wrote, "At lunch at Dining Hall No. 2. Had baked lima beans, soup, potatoes, bread, butter, milk, salad and tea. Food was well prepared and very tasty."[254]

Although the Nikkei were supposed to use their own block mess hall, some began to eat at other dining halls. This presented logistical as well as communal problems. "Chef in one dining hall complained that people from other blocks are eating in his dining hall," Kleinkopf noted. Not only did this create problems for preparing the correct number of

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[251] Burton, Farrell, and Lord, *Confinement and Ethnicity* http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/antropology74/ce2.htm/ (accessed January 15, 2004).
[252] *Minidoka Irrigator*, January 2, 1943.
[253] Tom Fukuyama to Betty, 22 September 1944, 2. Betty Fukuyama Papers. University of Washington Special Collection, No.4411.
[254] Kleinkopf, *Relocation Center Diary*, 3.

lunches on any given day, but also this problem exemplified one important cultural casualty of the incarceration: the breakdown of the family.

Figure 21. Nikkei ate in large mess halls, which contributed to the breakdown of the family hierarchy while living at Minidoka. (210-CMA-CA-7, Records of War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD)

Traditionally, the Japanese culture revolved around a patriarchal family structure. Before relocation, most Nisei lived in a traditional family unit. Some Nisei attended Japanese language schools not only to learn Japanese but also to be schooled in the cultural manners of Japan. Respect for elders, proper old world manners, and sufficient Japanese language ability often had seemed out of place for the Nisei in their prewar American life. Within the camps however, many of the formal traditions were forced aside. Young Nisei often ran around the camps in gangs or simply ate lunch and dinner with friends their own age. The Issei noticed the differences but were at a loss to regain control. When remembering the camp experience years later, the Nisei consequently had

a much different perspective on the camp experience. Although a woman interned at Minidoka recalled that some young people enjoyed camp, she also understood that the breakdown of the family authority had lasting results. "There are some people who say that camp was a fun time for them," said May S. "Well yeah, [they] had nothing but freedom, but it affected the rest of [their lives]."[255]

The Nikkei community in the center realized that some of the freedoms granted to the youngest internees created an opportunity for mischief. Seven boys were arrested by the camp patrol for burglary in September 1942. The boys signed confessions and returned most of the property stolen from the block 6 canteen.[256] But even some of the older Nisei wrote about the gangs of younger boys. "Just outside on our steps the block boys are riding my bicycle and polishing three pairs of my shoes. I see also that they are polishing their shoes calling themselves the 'black-toe Gang.'"[257] The unstructured existence of camp life was undoubtedly taking its toll on parental authority. "The kids in our block got involved in some sort of personal feud. The parents got together and decided that they should be more alert to their responsibilities."[258]

Social Activities

The Nikkei eventually created social activities for themselves in the relocation centers. A Nisei man described them in a letter written back home to his European American girlfriend. "Tonight, our block boys are going on a short hike to the canal for a wiener roast." On another occasion, he wrote about a "successful square dancing party." Boys and Girls Scout troops met in the center and were reported in the camp newspaper:

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[255] Densho Archive. May S., Segment 23. Interviewed by Alice Ito and Lori Hoshino (October 28, 1997).
[256] *Minidoka Irrigator*, September 25, 1942, 3.
[257] Tom Fukuyama to Betty, 16 October 1944, 2. University of Washington Special Collection, No.4411.
[258] Tom Fukuyama to Betty, undated. University of Washington Special Collection, No.4411.

"Hunt's Girl Scout troops will honor their parents at their 'Get-Together' in D.H. (dining hall) 24 from 7 p.m. Saturday."[259] Young and old met in each other's apartments for social gatherings as polite and formal as teas or as spontaneous and casual as "gab fests."[260]

Figure 22. Nisei attended school, youth groups, boy scouts, and dances in the center. (210-G-16B-961, Records of War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD)

Sporting activities provided an outlet for the energetic youth at Minidoka. Ken Mochizuki, in his children's book titled, *Baseball Saved Us*, wrote, "One day, my dad looked out at the endless desert and decided then and there to build a baseball field." The

[259] *Minidoka Irrigator*, December 9, 1942, 5.
[260] Tom Fukuyama to Betty, Friday, 29 September 1944, 24 September 1944, and 16 August 1944. University of Washington Special Collection, No. 4411.

school baseball team was the pride of Minidoka. When the Minidoka team played at the center against Twin Falls High, Minidoka won 16 to 4 in front of a crowd of nearly 4,000 internees. The students were sometimes given short-term leave to play ball, and when Minidoka played Twin Falls the following evening at Twin Falls High, the score was the same: 16 to 4. Minidoka played very well against the regional high schools in southern Idaho. After defeating seven nearby schools, Minidoka traveled 175 miles to play in the state championship. They were beaten in the state tournament by a team who allegedly brought in a professional pitcher.[261]

Nikkei also played basketball in camp, skated on frozen flooded fields in the winter, and swam in a swimming hole and in the rushing water of the North Side Canal in the summer months. The canal provided a place for entertainment as well as quiet meditation. Many internees fished along the canal, too. On May 25, 1943, Kleinkopf wrote in his diary about the summer weather bringing the opportunity for leisure activities by the water. "It seems summer is here at last," he wrote. "As I look down along the banks of the canal, I can count scores of people -- men, women, and children -- fishing. Some have even built shacks out of rock and sagebrush near the banks of the canal where they spend the entire day, and, if permission is given, part of the night."[262] The canal waters could look deceptively calm. Underneath the surface, the canal water traveled very quickly, resulting in at least one death by drowning. Akio Yanagihara recalled the day his friend died while swimming in the canal. Classmates sent

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[261] Page Smith, "*Democracy On Trial,"* In *Life in a Japanese American Internment Camp,* ed. Diane Yancey (San Diego, CA: Lucent Books, 1998), 62.
[262] Kleinkopf, *Relocation Center Diary*, 45.

Yanagihara, only a child himself, to the barracks to tell the parents. "It was very painful for me. This was just an example of how we had to grow up quickly in camp."[263]

Figure 23. The canal waters provided a place for recreation and meditation but held dangerously fast currents under the surface. (National Archives and Records Administration)

As part of their social life, the Issei and Nisei attended movie nights at the center. An October 14, 1942 headline in the *Irrigator* read, "Hunt Shown First Movies This Week." The article went on to report that Bud Abbott and Lou Costello starred in the film titled "Ride 'em Cowboy" shown at dining hall 5. "Each section will get a chance to see the film before the week is over," according to the co-op representative interviewed for the article.[264] The following week, the feature film was "Citizen Kane."

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[263] Akio Yanagihara, "The Drowning," *Minidoka Stories* (Seattle, WA: Yanagihara, 2003).
[264] *Minidoka Irrigator*, October 14, 1942, 1; Minidoka Irrigator, October 24, 1942, 1.

The Community Activities committee organized an art exhibit in November 1942. The show exhibited crafts made by the internees. More than 4,500 people from the camp and also the surrounding area attended the event. "Encouraged by the enthusiastic cooperation of colonists in contributing exhibits and the overwhelming response of the general public," a newspaper article reported, "Mrs. Ishi Morishita, arts and handicraft supervisor, indicated that more and better exhibits will be held in the future."[265]

Figure 24. Dining hall decorated for Christmas. (210-CMA-CA-14-2, Records of War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD)

Many former residents of Minidoka remember Christmas decoration contests during the holidays. One internee stated that he had "fond memories of Christmas in camp. Although there was an absence of presents because there really wasn't much to give each

[265] *Minidoka Irrigator*, November 18, 1942, 1.

other, there was always a contest between the dining halls for best decorated."[266] The WRA provided Christmas trees for each dining hall, schoolroom, church hall, and hospital ward. According to the chairman of the decorating committee, Mrs. S. G. Kashiwagi, the Christmas tree decoration had to be made by the internees themselves but left up to the discretion and ingenuity of each housing block.[267]

Worship in Camp

Religion and religious worship played a very large role at Minidoka. Religious celebrations including holiday dances (both Christmas and traditional tolo hops) occurred in early December 1942. Many housing blocks had a church and or a Buddhist temple. Camp life created a form of necessary unity among people of faith. The various Christian denominations joined together in camp and were called The Federated Christian Church. The Federated Christian Church noted at the first Christmas that they were "enjoying the creative challenge of working across denominational lines which had hitherto kept us apart." In addition, some of the "old antagonisms between Christians and Buddhists" were dissolved.[268] There were five active internee pastors at the FCC, Tsutomu Fukuyama, Joseph M. Kitagawa, Naomichi Kodaira, Henry Sakuma, and Gennosuke Shoji. Kihachi Hirakawa supported the organization as a retired pastor along with seven European American missionaries including Emery A. Andrews.

After completing seminary in 1929, Andrews became the pastor of the Japanese Baptist Church in Seattle. Fourteen years later, when the government relocated his entire congregation, Andrews moved his family to Idaho from Washington. In Idaho, he leased

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[266] Densho, Ike I.. Interviewed by Alice Ito and Lori Hoshino (October 28, 1997).
[267] *Minidoka Irrigator*, December 2, 1942, 3.
[268] T.F., (name withheld), to Emery Andrews, 16 December 1942. Emery Andrews Papers. University of Washington Special Collection, No. 1908-1.

a large house to accommodate the flow of visitors to the center and to aid those leaving camp. During the war, he made fifty-six trips back and forth from Twin Falls, Idaho, to Seattle to bring tools, clothing, furniture, and even automobiles to the internees. For example, when an internee received a trunk brought to camp from Seattle she wrote to Andrews, "I should say thank you very much for your kindness. You brought over my trunk from Seattle the other day. I was very surprised because I did not think that you could bring it at all. I thought it was my dream."[269]

In addition, Andrews attempted to find employment for internees interested in procuring work releases. After a camp official informed an internee that release would be a simple matter if employment were secured, she wrote to Andrews. "I am asking for your help," she pleaded. "I know you must know some people living in Chicago where I can get a job even as a house girl. I know that I would be much happier working like that then living here. I have written other people but I haven't an answer yet."[270] Internees also asked Andrews to assist them in their effort to have family members released from the Department of Justice internment camps.[271] Reverend Emery Andrews was denied service at a local café in Hunt because of his tireless work on behalf of the evacuated population at Minidoka. A Twin Falls resident, troubled by Andrews' efforts, bought the house he was leasing and evicted him.[272]

Meanwhile, throughout internment camp residents held worship services. One Christian church had 70-80 in the congregation weekly. Church groups in camp also

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[269] H.O., (name withheld) to Emery Andrews, 1942. Andrews Papers, No. 1908-1, box 1, folder 45, University of Washington Special Collections.
[270] J.E., (name withheld) to Emery Andrews, 1942. Andrews Papers, No. 1908-1, box 1, folder 44, University of Washington Special Collections.
[271] M.F. (name withheld) to Emery Andrews, 1942. Andrews Papers, No. 1908-1, box 1, folder 44, University of Washinton Special Collections.
[272] Finding Aid. Andrews Papers. No. 1908-1. Box 1, Folder 1, University of Washington Special Collections.

formed successful youth groups for the children and young adults and even sent them to Christian summer camps outside of the centers. The people in the faith communities felt a bond within and beyond the barbed wire boundaries of camp. For example, in a letter to her bishop, Jane Chase reported on a visit she made to Minidoka in 1942. Chase met with some former members of her Episcopal church in Portland who were now housed at Minidoka. Her Bishop asked Chase to check on them and report back to him regarding the conditions in the camp. Chase wrote about the internees with a deep feeling of religious kinship. Her church friends were now behind barbed wire. Reporting on the internee response to her visit, she wrote, "The visit was appreciated by our people." She reported on many aspects of camp life from the dining halls to the compartment rooms. "There isn't a green thing in sight - in fact there is nothing in sight but the sagebrush and that wretched barbed wire fence the Army insisted on putting up around them." Concerning the lack of privacy in the communal latrines and the Army engineers' apparent lack of concern, Chase wrote, "The inside toilets have never been connected up - lack of parts or something, and the Army Engineers with a most extraordinary lack of imagination have built the outside toilets right on the street." Chase concluded, "The public arrangement of them has been one of the hardest things for our people to get used to."[273]

The Buddhists also organized worship services and social activities. The worship bulletin used in the Buddhist service in camp offers insight into spiritual life within the internment center. Although the internees lived within barbed wire fences, as a part of their weekly worship they recited, "We are grateful for our country's protection as we

[273] Jane Chase to her Bishop (unnamed), 23 November 1942. Idaho State Historical Society, Manuscript Collection. MS/1391.

strive to perform our duties and contribute to the fullest development of our country."[274] A Buddhist Grace preceded the camp meal: "Now I gratefully receive the excellent food gift of fellow beings and the providence of Lord Buddha. I contemplate this source and providence and give no thought to the quality."[275]

School

Minidoka had two elementary schools, one junior high school, and one high school. Huntville Elementary was in Barrack 10. This school offered class for the students from barracks 1 through 19. Stafford Elementary was in Barrack 32 situated in the middle of Barracks 21 through 44. The junior high and high school students attended classes in Barrack 23. Barrack 23 was very close to the middle of camp. Superintendent Kleinkopf held several meetings in September with school administrators and teachers to define the curricula. His diary recorded the physical layout of the camp and the schools, the students, teachers, and internees, as well as the day-to-day activities. On September 29, 1942 Kleinkopf wrote, "Attended an all day teachers meeting in Recreation Hall No. 8. Entire morning taken up with discussion of school aims. Much said, little accomplished. One Japanese student teacher said that Japanese students were taught by their parents to accept the teaching of their instructors as law."[276] On October 19, 1942 the elementary schools opened. "There are 775 pupils and only 10 teachers. Need twice as many teachers, "Kleinkopf wrote.[277] Kleinkopf noted the breakdown of the family and of manners in the youngest internees. "During the day, I visited a number of the other elementary school classes. Lack of courtesy on the part of the students is quite

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[274] Buddhist Sunday Service, United Buddhist Church of Minidoka, Idaho, 2. Idaho State Historical Society, Manuscript Collection. MS2/0921.
[275] Buddhist Sunday Service, 3. MS2/0921.
[276] Kleinkopf, *Relocation Center Diary*, 5.
[277] Kleinkopf, *Relocation Center Diary*, 17.

noticeable. This is in contrast to the extreme courtesy of the adults. Camp life must be in a large measure responsible. Parental control and family life are fast deteriorating."[278]

According to the civilian teachers at the center, the student experience varied greatly depending upon age. The younger students felt the discrimination less keenly. "They had a certain amount of fun," claimed teacher Mary Roth. Roth did not feel as much resentment from the younger students. However, when she was transferred from fifth grade to high school, the resentment became palpable. In some ways, the Japanese American students appeared "more mature than Caucasians," Roth said. When studying the United States war with Mexico and the American takeover of California, the older students drew parallels with Japan's encroachment into Mongolia. At one point, when the class became particularly vocal about the governmental policy of relocation, Roth admitted the inequity of their incarceration. "I said that I could understand their bitterness and their resentment." Because she was Italian American, she offered that she should be imprisoned with them and not free to come and go as she pleased. "Actually, to make this fair," she told the students, "all Italian-Americans and all German-Americans ought to be in concentration camps like this." The teacher recalled that this emotional exchange was unusual. "I guess they just needed one time they could get it out of their systems." The teacher remembered that the students seemed particularly American. There seemed to be no difference in her mind between the children in camp or the students she taught prior to the war. "Never did I feel that the students I worked

[278] Kleinkopf, *Relocation Center Diary*, 27.

with were anything but Americans, really." The teacher felt that "it was a delight to teach them and they were very bright."[279]

Figure 25. Nisei graduated high school in the Minidoka Relocation Center. (210-CMA-E-1321, Records of War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD)

On June 1, 1945, the high school graduating class heard the keynote address, "Where Do We Go From Here?" Although the speaker is unknown, the address illuminated some of the pervasive Nikkei response to internment. The speaker challenged the graduating

[279] Mary Roth, interview by Jonathon Hughes, September 10, 1984, transcript, Boise: Idaho Oral History Center.

seniors to move out and make a difference in the world. "Injustices have been done, hardships encountered, a radically different type of life has had to be lived, and seemingly almost impossible barriers erected," the speaker noted. "My generation and the one preceding must take the blame for it," the address continued. "But you are the young people who have the opportunity to help clean up the mess. You have completed a course of study and are ready to roll up your sleeves, double up your fists, and say, 'What's next?'"[280]

The 442nd Regiment

For several internees at Minidoka, the next step was enlistment in the military. The federal government originally developed a questionnaire to determine Nisei eligibility for military service. Nisei from all of the internment centers were granted leave in order to serve in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, an all-Nisei unit that fought in Italy, France, and North Africa with the 100th Infantry Battalion. The motto for the distinguished 442nd was "Go for Broke." By going for broke, by attacking the enemy with extraordinary vigor, the 442nd hoped to convince the United States citizens of its patriotism. The 442nd had more servicemen from Minidoka than from any other relocation center. "With less than 7 percent of the male population" at Minidoka, the center "provided 25 percent of the volunteers."[281] Some Issei felt the Nisei betrayed their families by enlisting to fight for a country that imprisoned its innocent residents. An internee wrote about this in a March 1943 letter to a friend. "On Thursday night of last week," Jeanne Moire wrote,

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[280] " 'Where Do We Go From Here?' Address to Graduating Class, June 1943." Minidoka Manuscript Collection. Hagerman Fossil Beds.

[281] James M. Sakoda, "The 'Residue': The Unresettled Minidokans, 1943-1945," *Views From Within: The Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study*, ed. Yuji Ichioka (Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 1989), 258.

"Mrs. Hiroshige was over at the house and said that she was never going to let Toshi volunteer, and that if he did against her wishes, he would be disowned."[282]

Some Nisei did enlist and serve bravely. Many young men from Minidoka died overseas. The *Minidoka Irrigator* reported as many as ten deaths a day during the worst battles of the war. At Minidoka the internees built an Honor Roll and garden to remember the young men who had recently shared camp with them in Idaho. The large sign that listed all of the servicemen and women in the U.S. Army from Minidoka carried a quote from Franklin Delano Roosevelt: "Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart. Americanism is not and never will be a matter of race or ancestry." Behind the sign, the internees built a garden under the supervision of Fujitaro Kubota in 1944.[283]

Figure 26. Nisei left camp to serve in the 442nd Regiment. Photo taken in Europe, circa 1943. (Densho: Japanese American Legacy Project and Bainbridge Island Japanese Community Association. Densho: i34-00050)

[282] Jeanne H. Moire, to Emery Andrews. Andrews Papers. No. 1908-01, University of Washington Special Collections.
[283] Tamura, "Gardens Below the Watchtower," 81.

Figure 27. The Honor Roll and garden celebrated those men and women who left camp to serve in the military. (210-CMB-i2-1348, Records of War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD)

Fujitaro Kubota, Seattle's most famous Japanese landscape designer, owned a nursery in south Seattle. Kubota built a 20-acre Japanese style garden next to his nursery that contained waterfalls, bridges, pools, and plantings. Serving as a display for his nursery, the garden was also a place of enjoyment for the citizens of Seattle. Kubota designed the garden at Minidoka with political as well as aesthetic intentions. Covering nearly one acre, the Minidoka Honor Roll and garden was built near the entrance to the center, dramatically juxtaposing the honorable, patriotic Nisei soldiers with the guard tower and gate.[284]

[284] Tamura, "Gardens Below the Watchtower," 79.

Loyalty Questionnaire

Before Nikkei could leave the centers, to fight in the 442nd regiment or to live in communities outside of the military exclusion zones, the government required that the internee pass a questionnaire and be determined "loyal." The WRA's loyalty questionnaire created one of the greatest points of contention between the generations in the relocation centers. After the first year of internment, the government concluded that the centers should refocus their efforts to facilitate enlistment or relocate internees and not just house camp residents. A process to move considerable numbers of residents to military service or civilian life outside of the camps required the application of a loyalty questionnaire for all internees. The original argument in favor of relocation had included the presumption that the internees posed a security threat. Internees must therefore pass a loyalty test to justify release or enlistment.

Calling it the "War Relocation Authority Application for Leave Clearance" or "Leave Clearance Questionnaire," the WRA hoped to accelerate internee release and assure the majority population that relocated Nikkei posed no security threat. The most controversial questions on the survey were numbers 27 and 28. In question Number 27, the leave clearance form asked if internees would "serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty wherever ordered." Number 28 asked if they would swear unqualified allegiance to the United States, faithfully defend it, and also foreswear any allegiance to the Japanese emperor. The problems posed by the questions surfaced when the first two camps, Manzanar and Tule Lake, issued the survey. Answering Yes/Yes was impossible for the Issei. Issei would be without a country if they answered yes to 28, and they were too old to answer yes to military service. For Issei and Nisei women, the

question about serving in the armed forces was changed to read, "If the opportunity presents itself and you are found to be qualified, would you be willing to volunteer for the Army Nurse Corps or the WAAC?" Number 28 was changed to "Will you swear to abide by the laws of the United States and to take no action which would in any way interfere with the war effort of the United States."[285]

The crisis over the questionnaire took center residents and administrators by surprise. At first unclear about the best way to answer, many at Tule Lake answered No/No. This resulted in "42 percent of those 17-years and older at Tule Lake [being] declared 'disloyal,' in contrast to 10 percent at other camps."[286] The divide between the Issei and Nisei grew in the aftermath of the questionnaire. Many Issei were insulted by the attempt to make them national orphans and many Nisei were eager to accept any test to prove loyalty. Some Issei and Nisei wanted to answer "No" to both questions as a way of resisting the injustice of incarceration. A man of draft age who answered with a negative on both questions became known as a "No/No boy." Many of the "No/No boys" were Kibei. Kibei were Nisei who left America and lived with their grandparents while being educated in Japan. The Kibei living in the centers returned to the United States before the war. Kibei felt closer to their Japanese cultural roots and to the Issei than they did to the Nisei, who spent all of their school years in the United States. The government transferred any person who answered "No" to either question to Tule Lake. The

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[285] Chizu Omori, "The Loyalty Questionnaire," in *Guilt by Association: Essays on Japanese American Settlement, Internment and Relocation in the Rocky Mountain West*, ed. Mike Mackey (Powell, Wyoming: Western History Publications, 2001), 278.
[286] Sakoda, "The 'Residue,'" 254.

government sent so many internees to Tule Lake that the center became overcrowded. Eventually over 1,900 "Yes/Yes" respondents were sent from Tule Lake to Minidoka.[287]

Camp Politics

The internees transferred from Tule Lake brought their own attitude to the existing social and political environment at Minidoka. Relationships, whether between Issei and Nisei or internee and staff, were complex and sometimes contentious. In the early days of the center, the WRA assigned temporary block managers until the internees could elect their own representatives. "Block managers for camp have been appointed on a temporary basis," reported the *Irrigator* in its first edition on September 10, 1942. Two weeks later, the paper contained a story about the upcoming democratic process. "Preliminary steps toward setting up the machinery of democratic self-government for this colony will be taken next Tuesday when all persons 18 years of age or over will meet in their respective dining halls to indirectly elect a community council organization." From that meeting, each block sent two representatives to form a "congress." The seventy-two-member congress, 2 each from the 36 blocks, would recommend seven members to form the center council. The center authorities had a final veto on the seven recommended members. The WRA set specific guidelines for the election process and for the qualifications for office. For example, the WRA denied Issei eligibility for office because they lacked American citizenship. Only the Nisei were eligible for office.[288] This rule contributed to the ongoing tension between the Issei and Nisei.

Life in the relocation centers consistently exacerbated the disparity between Issei and Nisei attitudes. The Issei felt left out of positions of camp leadership. Many Issei

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[287] Omori, "The Loyalty Questionnaire," 285;
[288] *Minidoka Irrigator*, September 10, 1942, 4; *Minidoka Irrigator*, September 25, 1942, 1.

community leaders were imprisoned in Department of Justice camps instead of the relocation centers. By imprisoning the most powerful Issei at Department of Justice incarceration facilities, the government eliminated the opportunity for those men to influence the persons who held leadership positions in the relocation centers. The remaining Issei were concerned about their relocation center disenfranchisement for two reasons. First, without an ability to hold a position of authority, the traditional social balance between Issei and Nisei became inverted. During a camp meeting, one Issei remarked, "The Issei and Nisei relationship is that of parent and child. It should not be disposed of lightly. Even if government regulations make a distinction, we should all cooperate to create an ideal city." Second, the Issei felt that the Nisei might be deceived by the governmental offer of leadership, or in other words, lulled into a submissive comfort. "After peace, what is going to happen to the Nisei? There is no doubt in my mind that they will be kicked around like dogs." Issei understood that the Nisei came to the centers with a different view. Prior to incarceration, Nisei lived a more integrated American lifestyle. They spoke English, attended school, danced to swing music, and rooted for American baseball players. On the other hand, most Issei lived, worked, and socialized in traditional Japanese business and community organizations. "Since the Niseis' minds run in different channels, even though they have within their systems a part of our blood, we cannot entrust our future welfare to the Nisei."[289]

Conflict in Camp

Over time, the relationship between staff and internees and between Issei and Nisei became increasingly strained. At the Minidoka Relocation Center, the relationship between the internees and the administrators began favorably. "During the first year of

[289] WRA, *Impounded People*, 80.

operation, the administration in Minidoka established a good relationship with the evacuees," wrote sociologist James Sakoda. Several factors contributed to a gradual deterioration in that relationship: the assistant project director was replaced, a reorganization in the make-work programs caused a reduction in the labor force, and the arrival of "loyal" transfers from Tule Lake changed the social dynamic within the center. The residents of Minidoka bore the pain of relocation with a reputation for greater stoic acceptance than the populations found at other relocation centers. To the new arrivals from Tule Lake, the internees at Minidoka were "docile."[290]

During the years of internment, Minidoka experienced some of the same conflicts found at other centers. The construction of the barbed wire fence surrounding the center created one of the most disruptive periods at Minidoka. The first internees arrived in August 1942. On November 12, the center newspaper reported that the subcontractor was still working on the incomplete fence. After being imprisoned at the center for more than three months, after relocating without incident, and after traveling into the nearby sagebrush for fuel but never to escape, the Nikkei felt insulted to be corralled behind barbed wire. The wire made the relocation center imprisonment harder to tolerate. Many internees felt that if the military and civilian authorities and the surrounding cities did not trust the Nikkei, what hope could there be for a successful assimilation back into society at large after the war? In addition to the humiliation the fence represented, it was also a barrier to the needs of the community. The internees not only searched the land around the camp for sagebrush fuel but also for items to use in the barrack compartments. The WRA only provided each room with 4 or 6 steel cots, a closet, and a pot bellied stove. The internees made all other chairs, tables, dressers, or decorative items. They used

[290] Sakoda, "The 'Residue,'" 262.

pieces of wood scraps from the construction or manzanita wood and sagebrush.[291] The fence hindered these important subsistence activities.

In one of the few incidents of resistance, some internees attempted to dismantle the fence. When they pulled up fence posts and cut wire, the civilian subcontractor electrified the fence. Although the contractor acted without the knowledge or consent of the administration, this rallied and invigorated the community and created severe animosity between the internees and the center authorities. "The furor created yesterday when colonists discovered the center area was being electrified was expected to subside somewhat today with the announcement that the electrification was not authorized either by the Army or the WRA," the *Minidoka Irrigator* informed the community on November 14, 1942. The center residents met to discuss how to bring the issue before the WRA. In the end, the administration apologized for the electrification, asserted that destruction of government property was a serious offence, and resumed completion of the fence.[292] Captain Dorland of the military police warned internees "heavy fines and imprisonment face residents who persist in cutting the wires since they will be charged with malicious destruction of government property. Colonists who wish to go out of the center limits must use the gates provided and not crawl through the wires."[293]

According to the WRA approved newspaper, the Army constructed the guard towers to be "fire lookout posts" and "night watch towers." From the available sources, it is difficult to determine the intentions of the WRA concerning the fence and guard towers. What may have been Army public relations policy concerning the towers and fence was

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[291] Jeni Yamada, "Legacy of Silence (II)" *Last Witness: Reflections on the Wartime Internment of Japanese Americans*, ed. Erica Harth (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 48.
[292] *Minidoka Irrigator*, November 18, 1942.
[293] *Minidoka Irrigator*, November 14, 1942.

reported in the *Minidoka Irrigator* as news. In the article, the government claimed, "The towers will serve as fire look-outs and are equipped with fire spotting maps and equipment." The WRA official quoted in the article stated that the towers "will also be used as observation posts to curb trespassing off center limits between sundown and sunrise. We will enforce this regulation in the severest form if necessary."[294]

The situation in the center continued to deteriorate over time. At first, the "work projects" policy promised full employment to any internee interested in working. After the first year, budgetary reductions and policy changes encouraged internees to move out and forced the center to reduce drastically the employment of Nikkei working inside the center. The center administration mismanaged the reduction of staff in the boiler rooms. The block maintenance staff had been reduced from 11 to 4. After a fire broke out in one of the rooms, the limited staff was asked to work extra shifts. "After a heated meeting with administration representatives, the boiler men decided to go out on strike - the first for Minidoka." The Community Council unsuccessfully tried to mediate between the internees and administration officials. The strike ended only because the staff resumed their old schedule. "The settlement was not satisfactory to anyone. The people felt that they had lost the strike and had suffered unnecessarily, going without hot water for a week."[295]

Mail carriers, gatekeepers, telephone operators, warehouse workers, and construction workers on the high school gymnasium also experienced similar conflicts with the administration officials at Minidoka. The gymnasium crew went on strike when the administration attempted to change its schedule from four-hour to eight-hour shifts. The

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[294] *Minidoka Irrigator*, October 31, 1942.
[295] Sakoda, "The 'Residue,'" 263.

administration tried to circumvent the work stoppage by asking volunteers to complete the gym. When no volunteers came forward to finish the building, the structure sat empty and incomplete. Eventually, administration officials granted Rev. Kitagawa permission to use the building to commemorate Nisei soldiers who died in battle. The partially completed gym opened as a memorial to the soldiers but also served as a memorial to the ill will and labor disputes in the center.[296]

Camp Closures

The high cost of running the centers during wartime, the change in political and public opinion concerning the threat posed by Nikkei and legality of holding Nikkei in centers, and the eventual military successes in the war in the Pacific caused administration officials to gradually increase the pressure on the Nikkei to leave the center. Initially, the number of people released and relocated from Minidoka was small. From August through December 1942, only 106 internees left the center; in 1943, 2,404 people left; and in 1944, only 2,165 persons left Minidoka. Beginning in early 1945, the pace of relocation changed drastically for a couple of reasons. First, the United States Supreme Court had approved a writ of *habeas corpus* for Mitsuye Endo late in 1944. The Court ruled unanimously that Endo, a loyal native-born American citizen, with no charges against her, could not be detained by the WRA in a relocation center. This prompted the WRA to announce that all centers would be closed by January 1946. Although the official closure date was to be by January 2, 1946, most of the camps were closed by November 1945.[297]

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[296] Sakoda, "The 'Residue,'" 263.
[297] Roger Daniels, "The Exile and Return of Seattle's Japanese," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 88. no. 4 (Fall 1997): 171; and Sakoda, "The Residue," 257.

During this period, the West Coast was reopened to Nikkei and administration officials began to insist that Nikkei leave the centers. Departures from Minidoka jumped from approximately 200 per month to over 500 per month after March 1945.[298] Most of the Nikkei leaving Minidoka returned to the Seattle and Portland areas. In Washington, they encountered animosity from veterans groups and the general public. One Veteran of Foreign Wars member wrote that "if this [the return of the Nikkei] results in sub-standard jobs for returning veterans…while disloyal Japs are sheltered in jobs on the West Coast…it will result in some rough handling of the Japs."[299] The political leadership on the West Coast offered similar warnings. The new governor of Washington, Mon C. Wallgren, opposed the return of Nikkei to the Coast until after the war, and U.S. Senator Warren G. Magnuson called for a mass deportation of any Nisei "who have indicated by act or implication their loyalty to Hirohito."[300] For Nikkei with money or property, the return to Washington was manageable. Those who owned businesses could begin again.[301] In an early postwar survey, S. Frank Miyamoto and Robert W. O'Brien found that "the economic discrimination in Seattle against Japanese Americans is not so serious as to prevent them from making a decent livelihood, as they did before the war."[302]

When the WRA had announced the closures of all camps in December 1944, "73 percent of all evacuees were still in the [relocation] centers."[303] That December, some 7,900 internees still resided at Minidoka, only about 1,500 lower than the peak population of some 9,400.[304] Those remaining at the center were reluctant to return to the West

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[298] Daniels, "The Exile and Return," 170.
[299] Daniels, "The Exile and Return," 171.
[300] Daniels, "The Exile and Return," 171.
[301] Sakoda, "The Residue," 262.
[302] Daniels, "The Exile and Return," 171.
[303] Sakoda, "The Residue," 257.
[304] Burton and Farrell, *This is Minidoka,* 10.

Coast for several reasons. One Issei explained his reluctance to his children when he wrote, "If the WRA decides to close the center, we can't do anything about it and will relocate, but I would rather wait until that time." He continued, "I feel it's better to remain here for the present. We would be a burden on the children if we went out, but right now we don't need any money and we don't have to depend on anyone else."[305] Many center residents attempted to negotiate terms for relocation back to the Coast. The Nikkei wanted financial assistance and some assurances that they could return to the center if necessary. Internees questioned if the financial aid ($25 per person, train fare, and meal reimbursement) was sufficient. Sociologist James Sakoda wrote, "Issei, particularly the elderly and those with dependents, had lost their confidence to make it on their own without government assistance." The war years spent in the internment centers broke their resolve. "For these Issei, the tragedy was not the guard towers or the tar-papered barracks. It was the loss of their sense of independence."[306]

The last internees had to be forced out of Minidoka under Administration Instruction 289.[307] Among other stipulations, the instruction instituted a three-day notice of departure dates. Departure dates were set for those unwilling to make their own plans. The center administrators began the systematic closure of the camp over the final months. First, mess halls serving less than 128 people were closed. Next, laundry rooms and latrines closed. Electricity was turned off in empty barracks and darkness returned to the nighttime desert of southern Idaho. Ultimately, 4,326 people, or 55 percent of all

[305] Sakoda, "The Residue," 260.
[306] Sakoda, "The Residue," 262.
[307] Sakoda, "The Residue," 266.

departures in 1945 occurred in the final three months.[308] On October 23, 1945, the last internees left Minidoka. Five days later, Minidoka officially closed on October 28, 1945.

Conclusion - An Administrative Look Back At Relocation

Harry L. Stafford, Project Director of the Minidoka Relocation Center from April 22, 1942 to September 26, 1945, summarized the issues he faced during his tenure. The War Relocation Authority asked Stafford to "look back through the Minidoka Project operations for outstanding events which may be of interest to those future administrators dealing with similar problems," and to recap those issues in a letter to WRA director Dillon S. Myer. In the document submitted on his final day, Stafford first mentioned the difficulties faced by the internees who arrived before center completion. "Military expediency forced the occupancy of Minidoka before the Camp was in any sense ready," Stafford wrote. "Clouds of abrasive volcanic dust permeated the air, reaching upward for thousands of feet. Work was several times abandoned when dust storms brought about utter darkness." In addition to the dust, Stafford noted that the incomplete facilities led to "prolonged use of outdoor latrines (foul affairs)."[309]

Stafford reported that the lack of coal created problems in the early days of incarceration. "Ultimately occupation was made worse by the absence of fuel. As cold weather approached, morale dropped with the temperature. Evacuees were trundling sagebrush from the desert to protect the aged, infirm, and the sick," Stafford wrote.

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[308] Sakoda, "The Residue," 266, 267, and 265.
[309] Harry L. Stafford, "Project Director's Narrative, H.L. Stafford," Japanese American Relocation Digital Archives (hereafter JARDA), Online Archive.
http://texts.cdlib.org/xtf/servlet/dynaXML?docId=ft9p3000845&doc.view=entire_text
(accessed March 2, 2005).

Stafford admitted that conditions forced him to wire the U.S. Army's Quartermaster General on August 1942, "Get us some coal or face a public scandal."[310]

Figure 28. Minidoka Relocation Center Project Director, Harry Stafford. (210-CMA-ASM-1a, Records of War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD)

In the letter to Myer, Stafford documented the use of Nikkei labor in the beet fields near the relocation center. "During the fall months of 1942 some 2,700 persons left Camp to help harvest beets and potatoes in the upper Snake River watershed," wrote Stafford. "These opportunities to serve the Intermountain folk at going wages boosted the morale and accomplished the salvage of thousands of tons of food stuff in the war

[310] Stafford, "Project Director's Narrative, H.L. Stafford," JARDA Online Archive.

effort." Aid to surrounding farmers helped the center's public relations, according to Stafford:

> The Minidoka Project enjoyed fairly satisfactory public relations. I would assume that among the many factors contributing was the open public service attitude of the Camp administration. How and where could we help the public in the war effort? This was always a question challenging the administration. We were always willing to be of service. Minidoka never had a short answer for the neighbors, their counties, or their problems. The various Civic groups were invited to make tours of the Center. To allow the public to see for it self and to see all was our policy.

Stafford felt that communicating information to the surrounding communities contributed to his success. "Public knowledge from the first hand information became wide-spread in Southern Idaho," argued Stafford. "On invitation, speakers were dispatched as far as 200 miles to tell the story of Minidoka."[311]

Stafford appeared to credit himself and the other center administrators for the large number of military volunteers from Minidoka. "Minidoka scored complete registration of all eligible persons in Camp, and produced approximately 312 volunteers for the Armed services," he noted. Stafford attributed his high numbers to information meetings regarding military induction. "To the end that every man, woman and child shall have the opportunity to understand [the military] program," he decided early on, "we [held] educational meetings." Stafford invited "outside dignitaries" and "patriots" to attend the meetings. "Their services were inspirational," he reported.

Yet, Stafford did not take credit for the demeanor of the Nikkei interned at Minidoka. He could have assumed that his policies did not create an atmosphere for the level of violence and resistance seen at other centers. "Contemporary opinion accounts for [the

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[311] Stafford, "Project Director's Narrative, H.L. Stafford," JARDA Online Archive.

lack of mob violence] by the assumption that Seattle and Portland Japanese were a docile and easily managed lot. I should not distort that opinion. The Seattle and Portland people were a splendid group," Stafford recalled.[312]

Concerning personnel at the center, Stafford confessed that staffing a center in the heart of south central Idaho was difficult. "The desperate war manpower situation presented grave problems," he wrote. In recapping the problem, Stafford lamented the fact that military service eliminated the best people from his pool of personnel. Prejudice among staff members hired from the available labor pool posed problems for Stafford. He wrote passionately:

> New personnel brought prejudicial attitudes into collision with tempestuous Oriental suffering all phases of a persecution complex. Eternal restraint of appointed personnel in the daily working relations with the Evacuees developed powder-house potential of pent-up emotion. Camp isolation aggravated by the transportation bottleneck brought about close grouping of persons in contrasting fields of specialization. Emotional and philosophical collisions provide the chaotic premise of appointed personnel relations. However, time, patience, personnel training, and a turnover of above 100% for the three-year-period has finally remedied most phases of the personnel problem. [313]

Stafford also made some general comments regarding Minidoka. While Stafford asserted that the Nikkei interned at Minidoka were loyal to the United States, he argued that relocation was justifiable:

> Over three years' association with Japanese people of Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, [has] led me to believe that their absolute loyalty to one another in their respective clans would have afforded the Japanese Imperial Government ample opportunity to infiltrate the U.S. Coast population for subversive purposes.

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[312] Stafford, "Project Director's Narrative, H.L. Stafford," JARDA Online Archive.
[313] Stafford, "Project Director's Narrative, H.L. Stafford," JARDA Online Archive.

And yet, Stafford admitted that all of his internees were loyal to America. "In all, the Minidoka Project received approximately 13,000 Japanese residents," Stafford wrote. "I am not conscious of a single enemy in the entire group." Based on his observations of the Nikkei and the military situation on the West Coast at the beginning of the war, Stafford concluded that the WRA managed relocation and internment efficiently and appropriately. "To my mind, War Relocation Authority policy provided a super system of humanitarianism," he wrote.[314]

However, in a summation of his report, Stafford called the wartime "evacuation, incarceration, relocation, and resettlement" of the Nikkei a "most unfortunate experience for Evacuees and Government alike." In closing the report, Stafford realized the political situation that the WRA faced during the war. "Two strikes and three balls were tallied before the game started. We played that game through showers of stale eggs and political ballyhoo," Stafford poignantly recorded. To Dillon Myer, the WRA director, Stafford offered, "I extend my profound sympathy and congratulations. It is my hope that some future historian will honor you with due credit."[315]

The federal government dismantled Minidoka quickly after its closure. If a visitor to the site today were unaware of the story, little remains to tell the tale of the constructed "city" that once stood in the volcanic dust of southern Idaho. The area looks nothing like the days when it was the eighth largest city in the state. The government divided some of the land into farm units granted in a post war lottery. The winners received two barrack buildings with their land. Concrete foundations, some rolled up barbed wire, scattered elm and locust trees, the military police station and reception room, remnants of the

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[314] Stafford, "Project Director's Narrative, H.L. Stafford," JARDA Online Archive.
[315] Stafford, "Project Director's Narrative, H.L. Stafford," JARDA Online Archive.

Honor Roll and garden, and the canal drops built by the internees, are some of the little that remains of the wartime camp.

Chapter 8

Farm in a Day -

Settlement and Development Resumes

Introduction

The center's official closure on October 28, 1945 ended the most intensive period of human activity at today's monument. But the human story in the area continued after the camp shut down and a familiar theme in the history of south central Idaho reemerged - agriculture. Agricultural history provides context for understanding the internment in Idaho. The Nikkei not only worked in the fields around Minidoka to provide subsistence crops, but also worked on farms across the state. After the war, farmers settled the land that had once held the internment center.

Idaho's agricultural history includes the story of both settlers and migrant farm workers. Some 7,000 farm laborers came to Idaho in the decade preceding World War II. While a portion came from Mexico, the majority came from the Midwest to earn a living and support their families during the Great Depression. These laborers moved from town to town following the seasonal production of crops. The workers lived in farm labor camps, built by the federal government under the Farm Security Administration, when the war broke out in 1941. The war produced a labor shortage in Idaho because many men enlisted in the military. As a result, during the war Idaho farm labor came mostly from Mexican *braceros* and the interned population at Minidoka.[316] After the war, the

[316] Elizabeth James-Stern "Idaho and the Great Depression: A Survey of Historical Studies," *Idaho Yesterdays* 42 (Spring 1998): 42, 25.

federal government quickly dismantled the internment center and settlers resumed agricultural development on the Snake River plain. These settlers, who came to farm the land that was once Minidoka, continued a well-established agricultural history in the southern part of the state.

Veterans Win Land Prize

On February 4, 1946, just over three months after the last internees left the Minidoka Relocation Center, the WRA transferred the land back to the Bureau of Reclamation. In 1947, Congress passed the Interior Department Appropriation Act. The portion of the act regarding the transfer of former War Relocation Centers read:

> For purposes of effecting settlement of war veterans on public land reclamation projects and to provide facilities for veteran employment in construction and operation of reclamation projects, the Bureau of Reclamation is hereby authorized to acquire by transfer without exchange of funds from the War Assets Administration or other Federal agency in responsible charge. And, such agencies are directed to transfer the lands, improvements, buildings, furnishings, and equipment acquired by the War Relocation Authority and declared surplus on the War Relocation Centers on the Heart Mountain Division of the Shoshone project, Wyoming, the Minidoka (Hunt) project, Idaho and the Tulelake Division of the Klamath project, California. That said lands, improvements, buildings, furnishings, and other equipment shall be made available under regulations of the Secretary of the Interior to veteran settlers and nonprofit organizations.[317]

The Bureau divided Minidoka's 33,000 acres into farm units and disbursed those farms to returning war veterans according to a lottery system. The irrigation, soil preparation, and construction needed to establish the farms took considerable capital. Not all farmers prospered, but as one man said, they had "been given a mighty fine opportunity to earn and pay for a piece of land from which we can make a living and a home."[318]

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[317] *Interior Department Appropriations Act of 1947*., Public Law 60, U.S. Statues at Large 386 (1947).
[318] Bessie M. Shrontz, *Hunt for Idaho: Evacuees and Homesteaders* (Boise, ID: Bessie M. Shrontz Publisher, 1994), 239

The federal government promoted the land claims. "43 Idaho Farm Units Open for Veterans," a March 1947 headline read in the *Idaho Statesman* newspaper. The article included information on the plots of land stating that they were near Eden on the Gooding Division of the Minidoka project. As the returning veterans carried the burden of reclaiming the land, the government gave each an incentive, according to the newspaper. "Veterans who qualify will be given an added start when they tackle the raw land, since each entryman will receive two buildings without charge from the War Relocation Authority evacuation camp in the area." The government transferred the burden of removing some of the center buildings to the new inhabitants. The Army Corps of Engineers had designed the barrack buildings with a distinctive low-pitched roof. Driving around southern Idaho, many people acquainted with the story could spot barrack buildings across fields throughout the state. The article, which read like a government public relations piece, argued that the veterans were fortunate to have the opportunity and the federal aid. "Surplus equipment ranging from small tools and sewing machines to rubber boots and blankets also will go to the 43 lucky homesteaders."[319]

On September 30, 1949, an Associated Press news release from Washington, D.C. reported that forty-six additional farm units would be given away. "The Bureau gave World War II Veterans a ninety day preference in applying for the 3,618 acres in the project's Hunt unit, 20 miles Northeast of Twin Falls, Idaho," the announcement claimed. "The 46 winners will be determined sometime after December 30." The lottery winners worked hard on the winning farm units. In *Hunt for Idaho: Evacuees and Homesteaders* (1994), Bessie M. Shrontz noted that the land drawings settled 81 families on the units. Shrontz listed each farm, and detailed the total and irrigable acres on each farm unit. In

[319] "43 Idaho Farm Units Open For Veterans, " *Idaho Statesman*, March 15, 1947, 6.

addition, her account recorded first-hand opinions from the farmers who settled the land. In the various reports, the farmers' opinions offered a wide range of emotions. "When Carl was 27 and I was 22, we were kids with responsibilities on the 96.4 acres we came by in the drawing for the homesteaders at the Minidoka Relocation Center," admitted Fern Butler. Just like the internees and the prewar settlers, Fern and Carl battled drought and wind. "Our first crop was mostly grain," said Fern, "Exactly hard work! Because of the wind the dirt was powdery dry, ditches were constantly washed out." The Butlers appreciated the barrack building given to them by the government. "From a barrack that was 120' x 20', we built a home that was 48' x 20'. We called this location home for 25 years."[320] Vurel and Carrie Thomas, who moved to their farm unit from California, compared southern Idaho favorably to California. Bright days in Idaho versus clouds in California, clean air versus smog, quiet versus noisy streets. Vurel Thomas claimed that the barrack on his farm in Idaho suited him perfectly, "I'm in the house I have always wanted to live in."[321]

Not everyone felt comfortable living on the sagebrush-covered land. "This Homesteading was BAD business no one will ever know until they go through it," claimed Norman and Susan Johnson, farmers on the Minidoka units. The Johnsons confessed that they felt trapped by the experience. "We finally put a sign over our shop that read: 'We do not live/ We only Stay/ We are too poor/ To move Away.' "[322]

Homesteader Carl Butler understood both the opportunity and the hardship that came with reclaiming this difficult land:

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[320] Shrontz, *Hunt for Idaho*, 210.
[321] Shrontz, *Hunt for Idaho*, 237.
[322] Shrontz, *Hunt for Idaho*, 225.

> I would like to state how the settlers of the Hunt Project feel about homesteading. We have been told many times by people off the project how lucky we are that we have been "given one of those farms." In actual dollars and cents we have been "given nothing." The cost of clearing, leveling, and ditching the land, brings the cost per acre up to the cost of surrounding farms outside the project. Therefore, we feel that we have been given nothing but an opportunity -- which we appreciate.[323]

Newspaper accounts called the returning veterans "modern era pioneers."[324] The lottery winners agreed to develop the land under the Homestead Act. The act required the winner to move onto the land within six month, live on the land for at least three years, and have at least one sixteenth of his land under cultivation at the end of the third year. With housing provided by the use of an old barrack building, the veterans proved able to complete the requirement. The published accounts recorded the "perseverance and forwardness" shown by the veteran settlers, and noted that "putting forth the same stubborn American spirit and ingenuity with which these same men helped win the war, they have promoted this area into a fruitful and prosperous agricultural section."[325]

While data from the general land office records revealed that the farms created from the Minidoka Relocation Center were settled as late as 1969, a majority of the farms units were filed in the late 1940s and 1950s. The farms varied in size but averaged approximately 90 acres. In some cases, a family member or spouse appeared to settle on a neighboring farm unit. In 1955, T. Robinson filed a claim for 90.6 acres northwest of the monument site. Anna Robinson filed on a nearby farm in 1968. In 1953, Otto Jorstad filed on 100.3 acres and Emily and Otto Jorstad claimed the farm unit due north in 1956. Dan Lynch filed 117.8 acres of the land west of the current monument site in 1953. In

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[323] Shrontz, *Hunt for Idaho*, 239.
[324] "Veterans Developed Hunt Project After the War," (*Times News* ?) Newspaper article without citation information. In "Farm in a Day folder," Minidoka Collection, Hagerman Fossil Beds.
[325] "Veterans Developed Hunt Project After the War."

1954, Eugene Kinner filed on 89.8 acres next to Lynch, and in 1951, Keith Bennett filed 85.4 acres.[326]

Over sixty acres of the former relocation center became contested land. In 1947, the United States government filed a petition for 60.47 acres owned by Charles Marshall and his wife Marjorie Marshall. The document stated that the government owned the land, had used it for "a relocation center and other military purposes," and described a perpetual easement for the construction of a road. In 1949, a Bureau of Reclamation superintendent admitted that the War Department had acquired the land, but it remained unclear "whether the 60.47 acres of land included were ever formally transferred to the Bureau of Reclamation."[327] The problem with the land ownership dated back to actions taken during the war. The War Department "acquired 60.47 acres of land by lease for use of the War Relocation Authority in connection with the Minidoka Relocation Center, Idaho. The lease contained an option to acquire the fee title," according to Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson.[328]

Farm-In-A-Day

Homesteaders John P. Herrmann and his wife Alfreida enjoyed notoriety beyond other settlers because of their participation in a "Farm-In-A-Day" program organized by the local Soil Conservation District. Herrmann and his neighbor, Harry Peterson, from Brush, Colorado, came to Idaho for the first drawing of Minidoka lots in 1949. Although

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[326] Bureau of Reclamation, "Land Patent Details." http://www.glorecord.blm/PatentSearch/Detail.asp? (accessed March 21, 2005).

[327] James Steffend (?) to the Regional Director of the Minidoka Project, 9 December 9 1949. Minidoka File, Bureau of Reclamation, Burley, Idaho.

[328] Robert P. Patterson to the Secretary of the Interior, 18 March 1947. Minidoka File, Bureau of Reclamation, Burley, Idaho. In a 1946 court document, Patterson declared the acres to be public land to be used for military purposes and offered the Marshalls "just compensation for said land." In the document, Charles and Marjorie Marshall appeared to have been offered $302.00 as compensation for the condemned acres.

Peterson successfully drew one of the first lots that year and filed on the land, he never returned to claim it. Aware of Peterson's story, John Herrmann filed a claim with the Bureau of Reclamation in 1950 and was awarded the farm. Eighteen days later, Hermann returned to the U.S. Army when he was recalled into service. At Fort Lewis, Washington, Hermann received a letter from the Soil Conservation District requesting the use of his land for an experiment. The District needed a unit that had never been farmed to demonstrate different forms of machinery and the newest conservation practices. Noting that the Hermann land had never been farmed, the Soil Conservation District requested permission to use the site to show the latest examples of land leveling, land curves, soil classification, and crop-specific irrigation and row spacing.[329] The Herrmann property encompassed much of the historic landscape of the former relocation center. The farm held Water Tower #1, the fire station, a baseball diamond, sewage treatment area, Blocks 21 and 22, and portions of other housing blocks. In addition, the historic vegetable cellar used by the center during the war was also on part of the Herrmann property.[330]

Calling the experiment "Farm-in-a-Day," the Soil Conservation District organized some 1,500 people to demonstrate the most efficient techniques in land use. The SCD hoped that the event would impart agricultural information to several farmers at one time because the district did not have the manpower to visit each farm and teach each farmer independently. The event received publicity in local media. The *North Side News* featured full-page advertisements calling "Everyone Out for the big Farm-in-a-Day." For

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[329] Schrontz, *Hunt for Idaho*, 219.
[330] National Park Service, *Minidoka Internment National Monument General Management Plan*, "Background of the Monument," (Washington, D.C. : General Printing Office, forthcoming),36.

that edition, the weekly newspaper was printed one day early to allow for advertisements and for additional information on the project including maps and articles.[331]

On April 17, 1952, 200 machines plowed, leveled, and ditched the 128-acre tract. With several breaks in the day for ceremonial programs, speeches, and band concerts, the event included home cooking and home furnishing demonstrations, weed control discussions, as well as the construction of a farmhouse. Thousands of spectators watched the extraordinary event.[332] Mary Heiken was twenty years old when she and a friend witnessed the demonstration. "This once in a lifetime project," sparked her curiosity. "When we arrived at the John P. Hermann farm," she recalled, "people by the hundreds were busy working all over the farm." She and her friend wanted to help too. "We went back to the house and thought that we might be able to help paint or something. There were enough people that we were unable to find something to do."[333]

According to the Twin Falls newspaper, the spectators described the event as "bigger than a county fair," "more exciting than a circus," and "organized confusion."[334] Officially 11,321 persons turned out in blistering heat to watch the spectacle. That number did not take into account visitors who came to the site during the evening hours after the official tabulating was complete. Fortunate and famous, John Herrmann and his wife walked into their completed farmhouse at 6:45 p.m. In the article, Emery

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[331] "Everyone Out," and "This Is How You Can Reach The John Herrmann Farm," *North Side News*, April 17, 1952, 4, 10.
[332] Beal and Wells, *History of Idaho* I: 300; "Fifteen Hundred to Be Employed Working the Land for Farm-in-a-Day," *North Side News*, April 17, 1952, 3.
[333] Schrontz, *Hunt for Idaho*, 219.
[334] "11,321 Look on as Crews Build Farm in One Day at Hunt," *Times News*, April 18, 1952, 1.

Shellenbarger, the chairman of the project, noted that the irrigation, soil preparation, seeding, free labor, and farm buildings increased the farm equity by $50,000.[335]

Conclusion

Agricultural history offers a framework for understanding the human history of south central Idaho and for the site known as Minidoka. The federal government used persons from Minidoka to improve some acres around the center and to provide farm labor during the wartime labor shortage. Before the war, the state of Idaho first used the federal Carey Act and then the federal Reclamation Act to irrigate and farm the barren, desert-like land. After the war, the federal government encouraged settlement in south central Idaho by offering farms, created from portions of the Minidoka Relocation Center, to the returning war veterans. The "Farm-in-a-Day" program provided a dramatic conclusion to the agricultural link to Minidoka.

[335] "11,321 Look on as Crews Build Farm in One Day at Hunt," *Times News*, April 18, 1952, 1. The Herrmanns expressed gratitude but also conveyed to National Park Service employees that they incurred the burden of unforeseen expenses related to the project.

Figure 29. Potato fields in south central Idaho, undated. (National Archives and Records Administration)

Chapter 9

Conclusion - Commemoration and Memory

On January 17, 2001, a proclamation signed by President Bill Clinton set apart and reserved some 72.75 acres of the former wartime center as the Minidoka Internment National Monument.[336] Under the Antiquities Act of 1906, the President of the United States is authorized to declare historic sites and natural areas as National Monuments. The Minidoka Internment National Monument, placed on a small portion of the historic 33,000-acre Minidoka Relocation Center still owned by the Bureau of Reclamation, was created to protect the historic structures and objects of historic interest contained on the site as well as to interpret the relocation, incarceration, and internment of Nikkei during World War II.[337]

The Minidoka Internment National Monument includes the wartime entrance area to the relocation center. Incorporated in the monument are parts of the original parking area, the guard station, the foundation to the waiting room, remnants of the Japanese-style garden adjacent to the guard entrance, portions of the administration area, staff housing, warehouse area, the swimming hole, part of the vegetable root cellar, and access to the portions of the North Side Canal used for recreation.[338]

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[336] President, Proclamation, "Establishment of the Minidoka Internment National Monument, Proclamation 7395," *Federal Register* 66, no. 2 (January 2001), 7347.
[337] According to the 2001 *Cultural Landscapes Inventory*, the 72 acres contains approximately 50 acres of the original relocation center and another 20 acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management.
[338] Anna Tamura, *Cultural Landscapes Inventory* (Seattle, WA: National Park Service, 2001), Part 3 page 1.

Defining a Place in History

For many years following the war, visitors to the site saw only gradual land improvement. The exception to the slow but steady farm development came on April 17, 1952 when thousands of people crowded the acres to build the Herrmann farm during the dramatic "Farm-in-a-Day" project. The next large gathering of visitors came to Minidoka, however, to recognize the site as historically important. On October 13, 1979, former internees made a pilgrimage to the site of the internment center. Traveling from Seattle, Portland, and throughout the United States for the ceremony, internees met to commemorate the listing of 6.06 acres owned by the Bureau of Reclamation in the National Register of Historic Places, kept by the National Park Service. The small plot contained the remains of the entry guard station, waiting room, and former parking lot. The National Register distinction was the first step in defining Minidoka as a historic site of national importance. A bronze plaque placed on the old stone guard house near the former main entrance to Minidoka was dedicated in a ceremony at the site.[339]

A newspaper article described the commemoration as "a re-affirmation of liberty, a gathering held not in bitterness or reprobation but in faith." Internment survivors traveling to Minidoka believed the ceremony might help people learn from the past. Nikkei also made the emotional pilgrimage to the site in an effort to "ensure the past does not repeat itself."[340] An editorial in the *Idaho Statesmen* written in response to the designation argued that the relocation center "should not have been built, but it is now a

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[339] Tamura, *Cultural Landscapes Inventory 2001: Minidoka Internment National Monument* (2001), 16. The site was placed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 18, 1979.
[340] David Morrissey "Japanese-Americans visit, this time willingly," *Time-News*, August 18, 1979, A1, A8.

necessary reminder that American citizens must never again be treated in such fashion by their government, regardless of threats to national security."[341]

The editorial quoted William K. Hosakawa, associate editor of the *Denver Post* and former internee at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center. "We cooperated in the knowledge that we must do nothing to disrupt the nation's war effort," Hosokawa said. "Even though we knew in our hearts that our country was wrong in its evaluation of our loyalty, wrong to drive us out of our homes, wrong to lock us up in camps in the distant deserts," he declared.[342] Many internees believed that cooperation with internment and relocation proved their patriotism. In the years following the war, former internees and former government officials criticized relocation and internment. In 1961, President Harry Truman admitted, "They were concentration camps. They called it relocation but they put them in concentration camps, and I was against it. We were in a period of emergency, but it was still the wrong thing to do."[343]

Figure 30. Groundbreaking ceremony at the monument site, July 1, 1989. (Minidoka Manuscript Collection, Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument)

[341] "Never Again," *Idaho Statesman*, August 23, 1979, 4A.
[342] "Never Again," *Idaho Statesman*, August 23, 1979, 4A.
[343] Anna Webb, "Prison in the Desert," *Boise Weekly*, March 23, 2000, 16.

Figure 31. Former internees, their families, friends, and other persons interested in this history attend pilgrimages to the site. The 442nd honor guard accompanied the groundbreaking event on July 1, 1989. (Minidoka Manuscript Collection, Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument)

An address made by Senator Frank Church at the dedication ceremony was published in the *Congressional Record*. Church called attention to words on the site's bronze plaque, "May these camps serve to remind us what can happen when other factors supersede the Constitutional rights guaranteed to all citizens and aliens living in this country." The Senator then pleaded, "Let us remember the words on the plaque, not simply as a dedication, but as a prayer that the future will not scar our history again with camps for any minority group in this great republic."[344] Church argued further "the years have passed and although the disgrace of these relocation camps should never be erased from our memory, we all rejoice in a country strong enough to recognize its mistakes,

[344] Let Us Remember, 96th Congress, 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 125 (October 1, 1979), 2.

and make amends."[345] Senator Church cosponsored a bill with Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii that established a national commission to make the first official inquiry into the wartime relocation. Four years later, in 1983, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians published a report called *Personal Justice Denied*. The commission hearings represented a turning point in the reparation and redress movement. On August 10, 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed House Resolution 442 into law. H.R. 442 provided for individual payments of $20,000 to each surviving internee among other provisions.[346]

On May 26, 1990, the site was designated an Idaho Centennial Landmark. The Bureau of Reclamation designed new commemorative plaques and built sidewalks and a parking lot with the assistance of the Japanese American Citizens' League. At the time, the Bureau of Reclamation and internee survivors requested a second phase for the project that would restore and rebuild the Honor Roll and garden.[347]

In 2001, the Sun Valley Center for the Arts arranged for nearly 60 people from Sun Valley, Twin Falls, Boise, and Idaho Falls to take part in a daylong trip to the site. Family members of those interned at Minidoka experienced cold and wind during the November tour of the former center. "Cold and wind. That's what my mother remembers," voiced Marsha Edwards. The participants appreciated the historical relevance of Minidoka during the visit made just months after the September 11, 2001 attacks on America. "The tour was sobering for those who attended, as they wondered in

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[345] Let Us Remember, *Congressional Record*, 2-3.
[346] The American Forum, "The Japanese American Experience," http://www.globaled.org/curriculum/internmentd.html (accessed April 20, 2005).
[347] Tamura, *Cultural Landscapes Inventory*, 17.

hushed tones whether America could repeat itself in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks," a newspaper article reported.[348]

Beginning in June 2003, former internees, their families, friends, and fellow citizens, have attended annual pilgrimages to the site. Organized by the Minidoka Pilgrimage Committee, the Friends of Minidoka, the JACL Seattle Chapter, and the Nisei Veterans Committee, the pilgrimages offer the opportunity to commemorate, remember, and learn from the events at the Minidoka Relocation Center.

Figure 32. Sign commemorating relocation center site. (Minidoka Manuscript Collection, Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument)

[348] Karen Bossick, "60 tour site of WWII camp for internees," *Idaho Statesman*, November 30, 2001.

The Minidoka Internment National Monument comprises several overlapping layers of human history. The site not only portrays the familiar themes found in western history such as the development and reclamation of an arid landscape, but also the ethnic, military, and political history that reach far beyond the acres in southern Idaho.

Prehistoric events created the fine, ash-like dust at the site that both the internees and settlers experienced. The Native Americans, fur traders, overland travelers, missionaries, and miners who represent so much of the early history of southern Idaho left no mark on these particular acres. However, Minidoka embodies a prominent theme in western history, agricultural land development, and settlement. An impressive agricultural feature of the Minidoka Internment National Monument creates its southern boundary: the North Side Canal. In addition, the internees cleared sagebrush-covered acres, built canal drops, made repairs to the Milner-Gooding Canal, and farmed the fields surrounding the Minidoka Relocation Center.

The Minidoka Internment National Monument creates a context for understanding the legalized discrimination against immigrants from Asia. Chinese and Japanese immigrants experienced national and state legislation forbidding land ownership, citizenship, and equality under the law. During World War II, the military and political leadership responded to Pearl Harbor and the subsequent war in the Pacific with the incarceration of innocent legal aliens and American citizens based on race. The president designated Minidoka as a national monument because of the wartime land use of the site.

Dust, wind, and extreme temperatures remain consistent elements of the human historical experience on this land. After the war, returning veterans settled on the former internment center property by winning federal farm units in a land grant lottery. Many of

these settlers experienced the same harsh conditions felt by the wartime internees and the prewar settlers in the region. Today, tourists in and around the monument would not have many clues to the wartime land use. Commemoration at Minidoka comes from remembering the past and viewing its few remaining remnants.

As a site, Minidoka is associated with significant events in history and is deserving of its status as a national monument. Even though the barracks and fences are gone, the landscape evokes a sense of the time when some 13,078 Nikkei lived there behind barbed wire. Minidoka represents significant elements contained in western history, agricultural history, military history, and ethnic history. The Minidoka Internment National Monument acts as a prism, focusing light on some distinct acres during their specific land use history.

Figure 33. Minidoka Relocation Center entrance during World War II. (210-CMB-i2-1306, Records of War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD)

Figure 34. Minidoka Relocation Center entrance building as it looks today. (Western Archeological Conservation Center)

Figure 35. Nikkei working on canal drop during internment. Date and photographer unknown. Circa 1943. (Minidoka Collection. Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument)

Figure 36. Canal drop in section 6 on lateral 21.3 from Milner-Gooding canal to camp. (Western Archeological and Conservation Center)

Appendix A
EO9066

EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066
February 19, 1942

Whereas, the successful prosecution of the war requires every possible protection against espionage and against sabotage to national-defense material, national-defense premises and national defense utilities as defined in Section 4, Act of April 20, 1918, 40 Stat. 533, as amended by the Act of November 30, 1940, 54 Stat. 1220. and the Act of August 21, 1941, 55 Stat. 655 (U.S.C.01 Title 50, Sec. 104):

Now therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, and Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate, whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action to be necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any persons to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restriction the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion.

The Secretary of War is hereby authorized to provide for residents of any such area who are excluded there from, such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary, in the judgment of the Secretary of War or the said Military Commander, and until other arrangements are made, to accomplish the purpose of this order. The designation of military areas in any region or locality shall supersede designations of prohibited and restricted areas by the Attorney General under the Proclamation of December 7 and 8, 1941, and shall supercede the responsibility and authority of the Attorney General under the said Proclamations in respect of such prohibited and restricted areas.

I hereby further authorize and direct the Secretary of War and the said Military Commanders to take such other steps as he or the appropriate Military Commander may deem advisable to enforce compliance with the restrictions applicable to each military area herein above authorized to be designated, including the use of Federal troops and other Federal Agencies, with authority to accept assistance of state and local agencies.

I hereby further authorize and direct all Executive Departments, independent establishments and other Federal Agencies, to assist the Secretary of War or the said Military Commanders in carrying out this Executive Order, including the furnishing of medical aid, hospitalization, food, clothing, transportation, use of land, shelter, and other supplies, equipment, utilities, facilities and services.

This order shall not be construed as modifying or limiting in any way the authority heretofore granted under Executive Order No. 8972, dated December 12, 1941, nor shall it be construed as limiting or modifying the duty and responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with respect to the investigations of alleged acts of sabotage or the duty and responsibility of the Attorney General and the Department of Justice under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, prescribing regulations for the conduct and control of alien enemies, except as such duty and responsibility is superseded by the designation of military areas hereunder.

Signed, Franklin D. Roosevelt
The White House
February 19, 1942

Appendix B
Hearst Newspaper Column

"This is War! Stop Worrying About Hurting Jap Feelings"
By Henry McLemore

Los Angeles, Friday, Jan. 30. - Speaking strictly as an American, I think Americans are nuts. Twenty-four hours in Los Angeles have convinced me of this.

We are at war. California is our key state, not only because of its airplane industry, but because its shores offer the most logical invasion point.

So what does the government do about tens of thousands of Japanese in California? Nothing.

The only Japanese apprehended have been the ones the F.B.I. actually had something on. The rest of them, so help me, are as free as birds.

There isn't an airport in California that isn't flanked by Japanese farms. There is hardly an air field where the same situation doesn't exist.

They run their stores. They clerk in stores. They clip lawns. They are here, there and everywhere.

You walk up and down the street and you bump into Japanese in every block. They take the parking stations. They get ahead of you in the stamp line at the post office. They have their share of seats on the bus and the street car lines.

* * *

This doesn't make sense, for half a dozen reasons. How many American workers do you suppose are free to roam in Tokyo? Didn't the Japanese threaten to shoot on sight any white person who ventured out in Manila?

So, why are we so beautifully courteous?

I know this is the melting pot of the world and all men are created equal and there must be no such thing as race or creed or hatred, but do those things go when a country is fighting for its life?

Not in my book. No country has ever won a war because of courtesy, and I trust and pray we won't be the first one to lose one because of the lovely, gracious spirit.

Everywhere that the Japanese have attacked to date, the Japanese population has risen to aid the attackers. Pearl Harbor, Manila.

What is there to make the government believe that would not be true in California? Does it feel that the lovely California climate has changed them and that the thousands of Japanese who live in the boundaries of the state are all staunch and true Americans?

* * *

I am for immediate removal of every Japanese on the West Coast to a point deep in the interior. I don't mean a nice part of the interior, either. Herd 'em up, pack 'em off and give 'em the inside room in the badlands. Let 'em be pinched, hurt, hungry and dead up against it.

Sure, this would work an unjustified hardship on the 80 per cent or 90 per cent of the California Japanese. But the remaining 10 or 20 per cent have it in their power to do damage - great damage - to the American people. They are a serious menace and you can't tell me that an individual's rights have any business being placed above a nation's safety.

If making one million innocent Japanese uncomfortable would prevent one scheming Japanese from costing the life of one American boy, then let the million innocents suffer.

* * *

In an earlier column I protested against American soldiers in Honolulu giving military burial to a Japanese soldier. There were some readers who kicked me around in letter for such an attitude.

There are sure to be some Americans who will howl and scream at the idea of inconveniencing America's Japanese population in order to prevent sabotage and espionage.

Okay, let them howl. Let them howl timber-wolf type. Our government has told us we face war. All-out war. It has told us that we are up against the roughest days in our history. It has demanded of us sacrifice and sweat and toil and all the other of Mr. Chruchill's graphic words.

That's right. We will answer. But let us have no patience with the enemy or with anyone whose veins carry his blood.

Let us in this desperate time put first things first. And, who is to say that to the men and women of this country there is anything that comes above America?

Personally, I hate the Japanese. And that goes for all of them.

Let's quit worrying about hurting the enemy's feelings and start doing it.

Appendix C
The Name Minidoka

The United States government placed the internees on land withdrawn from settlement in 1908, part of the federal Minidoka [Reclamation] Project. The name "Minidoka" is used extensively in southern Idaho. Visitors to the region will find a town, a county, a massive reclamation project, and a dam bearing the name Minidoka.

The origin of the name in southern Idaho dates back to the nineteenth century. Oregon Short Line Railway employee, E.P. Vining, assigned names to train stations west of American Falls in the early 1880s.[349] The Oregon Short Line was a subsidiary of the Union Pacific railroad. Union Pacific wanted to use Indian names for train stations in the West.[350] Although Shoshone-Bannock Indians populated southern Idaho, Vining used a Dakota language dictionary. The name Minidoka "derives from a Dakota term that Stephen R. Riggs translated into English as 'a fountain or spring of water.'" In *A Dakota-English Dictionary*, Minidoka is spelled "mi'-ni-hdo-ka." Minidoka combines "mi'ni," a noun that means water and a second component, "hdo'-ka," a noun that means a hole. The Dakota dictionary defines "mini hdoka" as "a spring of water."[351]

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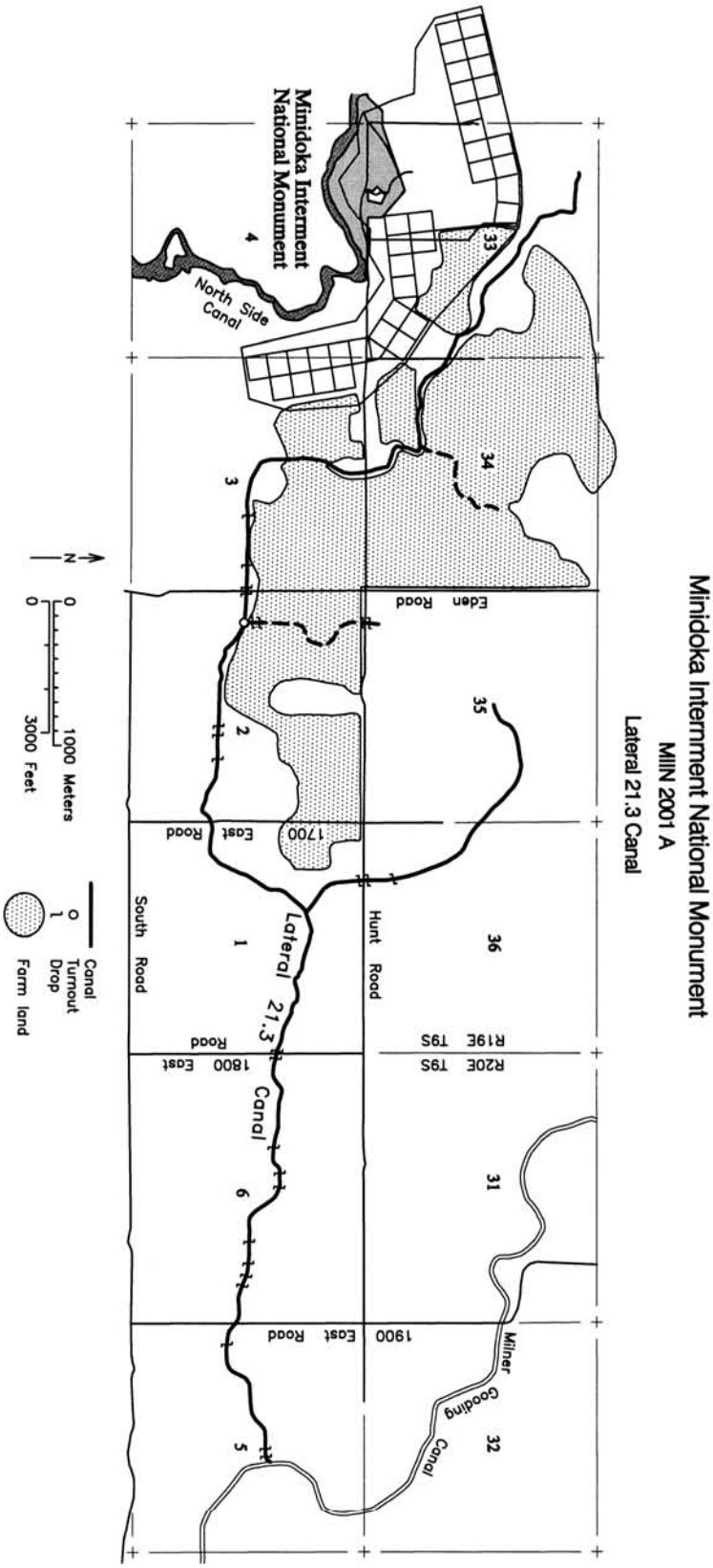
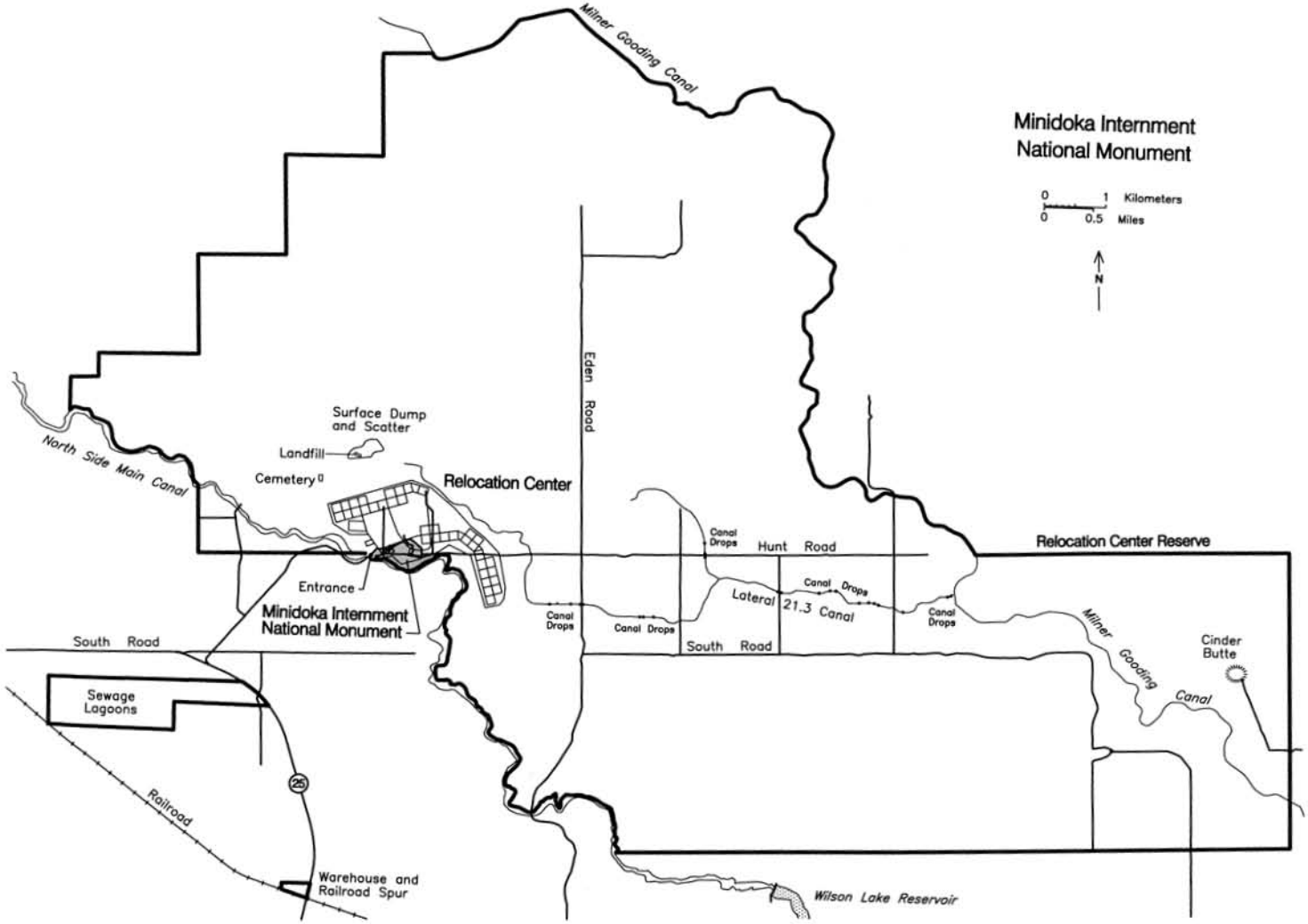
[349] Idaho State Historical Society, "The Name 'Minidoka," *Reference Series*, Number 34, January 1995.
[350] Idaho State Historical Society, "Oregon Short Line Names for Southern Idaho Stations Between American Falls and Glenn's Ferry," *Reference Series*, Number 1098, July 1995.
[351] Stephen R. Riggs, *A Dakota-English Dictionary* (Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution, 1852).

Appendix D - Maps of Minidoka




Minidoka Internment
National Monument
0 1 Kilometers
0 0.5 Miles
N
Milner Gooding Canal
Eden Road
Surface Dump
and Scatter
Landfill
Cemetery
North Side Main Canal
Relocation Center
Canal Drops
Hunt Road
Relocation Center Reserve
Canal Drops
Lateral 21.3 Canal
Canal Drops
Canal Drops
Canal Drops
Entrance
Minidoka Internment
National Monument
South Road
South Road
Milner Gooding Canal
Cinder
Butte
Sewage
Lagoons
25
Railroad
Warehouse and
Railroad Spur
Wilson Lake Reservoir

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Note on Terminology[1]

The United States government used euphemisms such as "relocation center" and "evacuee" while building and operating facilities that fit the dictionary definition of concentration camps. The War Relocation Authority, the government agency charged with removing persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast during World War II, not only removed people from military zones on the coast, but also kept innocent people confined deep within the American interior for political reasons that derived from historic economic and racial discrimination.

Throughout this study, the word internment is used to describe the government's policy of involuntary removal and incarceration. Although "internment" has legally and historically been used to imply the treatment of enemy aliens, this study employs the term in a broader political context to include all persons confined as a part of the wartime policy.

The debate over words and terminology reflects the diverse perspectives and intense emotions concerning the events. Some of the words in question include evacuee and evacuation, internee and internment, prisoner and imprisonment, as well as center, camp, or prison. The National Park Service recognizes the diversity of opinions regarding the meaning and significance of the terms. The Park Service will not describe certain words or terms as "acceptable" or "correct" but will instead encourage reflection, education, and discussion about this aspect of American history.

In addition to terms used for the governmental policies, certain Japanese words are used in this study. The word Issei is used to denote the first generation immigrants. Born in Japan, Issei were legal residents in the United States. The word Nisei is used to refer to the second generation Japanese Americans, citizens of America by birth. Nikkei refers to people of Japanese ancestry whether Japanese or Japanese Americans.

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[1] Jeffrey F. Burton and Mary M. Farrell, *This is Minidoka: An Archeological Survey of Minidoka Internment National Monument, Idaho* (Tucson, AR: Western Archeological and Conservation Center, 2001), 2; "What's in a Word? An Explanation of Terminology," *Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial Study of Alternatives/Environmental Assessment* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, forthcoming), viii; Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 261. The author gratefully acknowledges these notes and has adapted them for this study.

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