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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Minidoka Internment National Monument

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™



Minidoka Internment National Monument

Jerome, Idaho

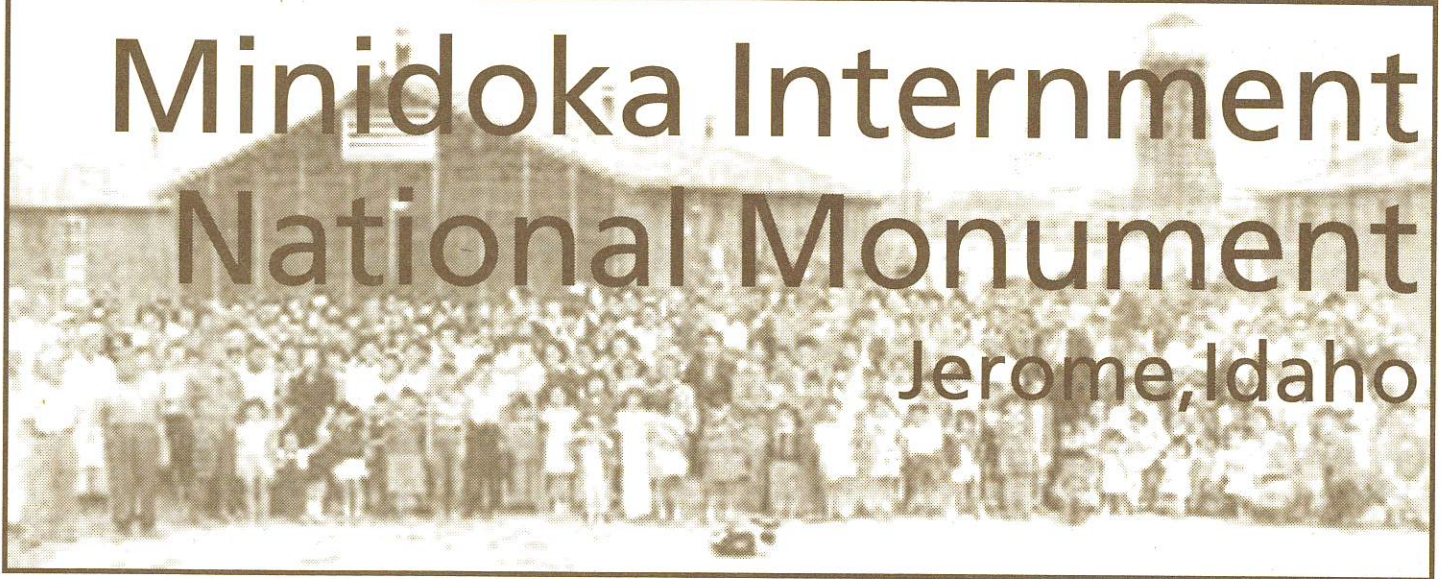


Photo courtesy Minidoka Interlude 1943

Minidoka Internment National Monument was established by Presidential Proclamation on January 17, 2001 as the 385th unit of the National Park System. The Monument commemorates the hardships and sacrifices of over 120,000 Nikkei, or persons of Japanese ancestry, who were interned by the government during World War II. Seventy percent of these people were Nisei, or 2nd generation, born in the U.S. and American Citizens

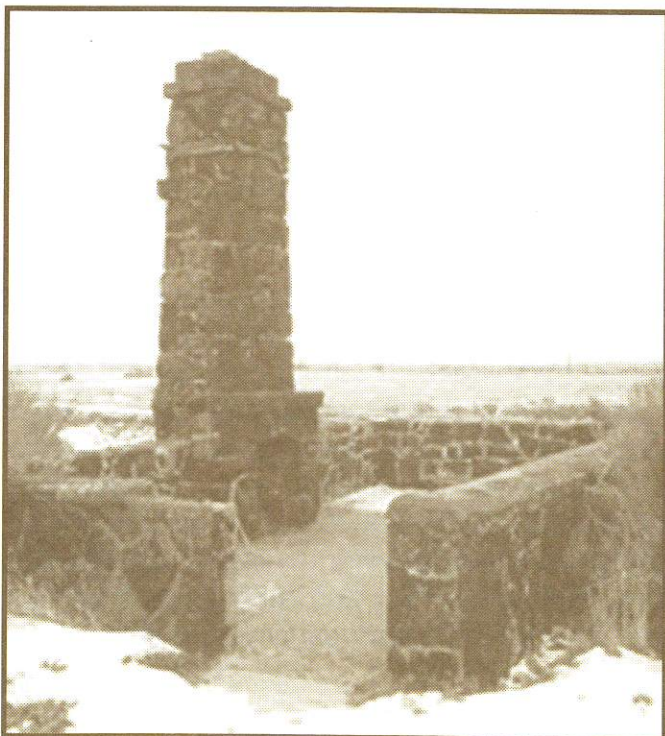
by birth; the remaining thirty percent were Issei, or 1st generation immigrants to America. The Minidoka Relocation Center was one of 10 internment camps established by the Wartime Relocation Authority.

There has been much confusion about the name, Minidoka. While the Minidoka Relocation Center was also known locally as the 'Hunt Camp', because the nearest post office was in Hunt, Idaho, the origin of the word remains unsettled. Most believe it is a corruption of either the Shoshone, Bannock, or Sioux American Indian language, with its actual meaning lost to time. Whatever the case, the Minidoka Relocation Center was a 33,000-acre site, in operation from August 1942 until October 1945, with over 900 buildings and a peak population of almost 10,000 internees held from Washington, Oregon, and Alaska.

The 73 acre Monument preserves a scattering of building foundations and remnant features such as the entry guard station, waiting room, and rock garden from the original camp.

Waiting room at the entrance station today.

NPS Photo



Visiting the Monument

Minidoka Internment National Monument is located 19 miles northeast of Twin Falls, Idaho and 21 miles east of Jerome, Idaho. From the intersection of Interstate 84 (I-84) and Interstate 93 (I-93):

Travel north on I-93 for 5 miles to the Eden exit. Travel east on Highway 25 for 9.5 miles to the Hunt Rd. exit. Travel east on Hunt Rd. for 2.2 miles and look for a small parking area on your right.

Monument boundaries have not been adequately marked. There are no facilities or services at the site. Many buildings and features that were part of the Center are located on private property surrounding the Monument. Please be respectful by not entering any private property. Patience will be required as we work to establish relationships within the community to preserve the significant remaining components of the Relocation Center and to provide visitor services.

Collection of artifacts, rocks, plants, animals, or any other object within this National Monument is strictly prohibited. Help preserve your park by taking only memories and pictures. Report violations to the National Park Service (208) 837-4793.

Photo courtesy of Wing Luke Asian Museum

Japanese-American Internment During WWII

In the 1800's, many emigrants from agricultural and fishing villages in Western Japan crossed the Pacific Ocean to seek economic opportunity in America. Others, including Japanese students interested in seeing democracy at work, made the same journey. While most originally intended to return to their birthplace, many eventually established families, farms, businesses, and

communities. America became their new home, yet the pioneers (Issei) and their American-born children (Nisei) encountered various forms of racial prejudice in the United States. Congress passed laws prohibiting resident aliens from owning land or obtaining citizenship. Quotas were set restricting the flow of new arrivals. With the rise of militarism in Japan in the early 1900's, newspapers often fanned the flames of prejudice.

Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 intensified hostility towards Japanese-Americans. Some newspaper columnists and politicians treated all people of Japanese ancestry as potential spies and saboteurs. As wartime hysteria mounted, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942. This authorized the U.S. military to remove "any or all persons" from the West Coast, but was targeted specifically to Japanese-Americans and Japanese resident aliens.

Living Conditions at Minidoka

The first internees at Minidoka arrived to find a camp still under construction. There was no hot running water and the sewage system had not been installed. The initial reaction to the stark landscape by many was one of discouragement. Upon arriving, one internee wrote:

"When we first arrived here we almost cried, and thought that this is the land God had forgotten. The vast expanse of nothing but sagebrush and dust, a landscape so alien to our eyes, and a desolate, woebegone feeling of being so far removed from home and fireside bogged us down mentally, as well as physically."

The camp consisted of administration buildings and 36 residential blocks, a warehouse area, 2 elementary schools, a high school, hospital, 2 fire stations, several general and mail-order stores, barber and beauty shops, dry cleaning, watch and radio repair shops, and a cemetery. Internees also built several baseball diamonds and small parks with picnic areas. They had a virtually unbeatable baseball team. Taiko drumming and other musical groups were formed, and a newspaper was published.

Each residential block included 12 barracks-style buildings, each divided into 6 small one-room apartments, a communal dining hall, a laundry facility with communal showers and toilets, and a recreation hall. Provisions within the apartments consisted of Army issue cots and a pot-bellied stove. Light was provided by a single hanging bulb. Scraps of lumber were utilized to make furniture. Coal for the stoves and water had to be hand carried. When coal supplies ran low, sagebrush was gathered and burned. The hastily built barracks buildings were little more than wooden frames covered with tarpaper. They had no insulation.

During the winter of 1942 temperatures plunged to -21 degrees Fahrenheit. Over 100 tons of coal a day was needed for heating the buildings in the camp. Spring, with its ankle deep mud and blinding dust storms, was followed by scorching heat and temperatures soaring to 104 degrees Fahrenheit. An accidental drowning in the swift waters of the North Side Canal prompted the internees to build a swimming hole to cope with the oppressive heat.

"There were six apartments which housed 20 people. There was a family of 9 in a one-room apartment, size 20 ft. x 20 ft. ... there were 16 families of 8 or 9 persons living in those one room apartments. Blankets suspended from the ceiling served as partitions..."

From the Diary of Arthur Kleinkopf,
Education Superintendent

For those living in the rural communities outside the camp and not allowed in, some thought that the internees were being "coddled," a perception that still persists today. For those confined within the 5 miles of barbed wire fencing and 8 watchtowers equipped with searchlights and armed guards who were forced to leave their homes and businesses behind, the perception was considerably different.

Despite the harsh conditions at Minidoka, internees were resourceful. To create beauty in an otherwise dismal landscape, paths were lined with decorative stones, elaborate vegetable gardens were cultivated, and both traditional Japanese and western-style gardens were planted. Some of these impressions are still visible today, yet most traces of daily life at Minidoka are now gone.



Internees tending a Japanese-style garden in the residential area, circa 1944.

Photo courtesy of Wing Luke Asian Museum

Wartime Efforts

The relocation centers were subject to the same wartime rationing as the rest of the country. Materials considered to be vital to the war effort were recycled. The camp at Minidoka was a self-sustaining community complete with vegetable gardens and hog and chicken farms. Japanese-Americans interned at Minidoka were also an indispensable source of labor for southern Idaho's agricultural-based economy.

"The Hunt residents were credited with possibly saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in crop losses in the local sugar beet and potato crops as well as in canneries, lumber mills, etc. in the region during the three years the center existed."

North Side News 8/5/82

While interned at Minidoka, Japanese-Americans cleared and cultivated 950 acres of inhospitable land and constructed the ditches and canals needed to irrigate them.

After camp closure in October 1945, these lands were divided into smaller farms and given to WWII veterans whose names were drawn by lottery or auctioned to the highest bidders. Each veteran also received two buildings. Issei were excluded from both the lottery and sale of the farms as they were not allowed to own property or become naturalized citizens until 1952. Many of the buildings were disbursed to government agencies and nonprofit organizations. Today, most of the former Relocation Center remains privately owned farmland.

The 442nd Regimental Combat Unit

In July 1946, President Truman received members of the 442nd at the White House, declaring,

"You fought not only the enemy but you fought prejudice – and you have won."

Despite their internment, most Japanese-Americans remained intensely loyal to the United States, and many demonstrated their loyalty by volunteering for military service. They were segregated into an all Japanese-American combat unit commanded by non Japanese-Americans. Of the ten relocation centers, Minidoka had the highest number of volunteers, about 1,000 internees— ten percent of the camp's total population during its peak. The 442nd combat unit fought in France and Italy alongside the 100th Infantry Battalion from Hawaii (also composed of Japanese-Americans) and was the most highly decorated unit of its size in American military history. During WWII, 73 soldiers from Minidoka died while fighting for their country and 2 received the Congressional Medal of Honor.



442nd Color Guard
U.S. Government Archival Photo

We Need Your Help!

The National Park Service is currently working with former internees, archaeologists, historians, and community members to reclaim Minidoka's past by learning how it impacted the lives of internees and affected local communities. The outcome of this initial three-year planning process will be a General Management Plan to identify the actions necessary to provide long-term protection of historic structures and artifacts and generate information for the public about this important chapter in American history. We are seeking contact with people interested in participating in the planning process. If you would like more information, please contact the National Park Service at:

Superintendent / Minidoka Internment National Monument

P.O. Box 570, Hagerman, Idaho 83332

(208) 837-4793 E-mail: MIIN_GMP@nps.gov www.nps.gov/miin

May We Suggest:

Visit the Minidoka Relocation Center display at the Jerome County Museum and the "restored" barracks building at the Idaho Farm and Ranch Museum (IFARM).

Museum Hours through Summer 2002: Tuesday through Friday 1-5 p.m. and Saturday 1-4:30 p.m.

Jerome County Historical Society and IFARM

220 N. Lincoln, Jerome, Idaho 83338

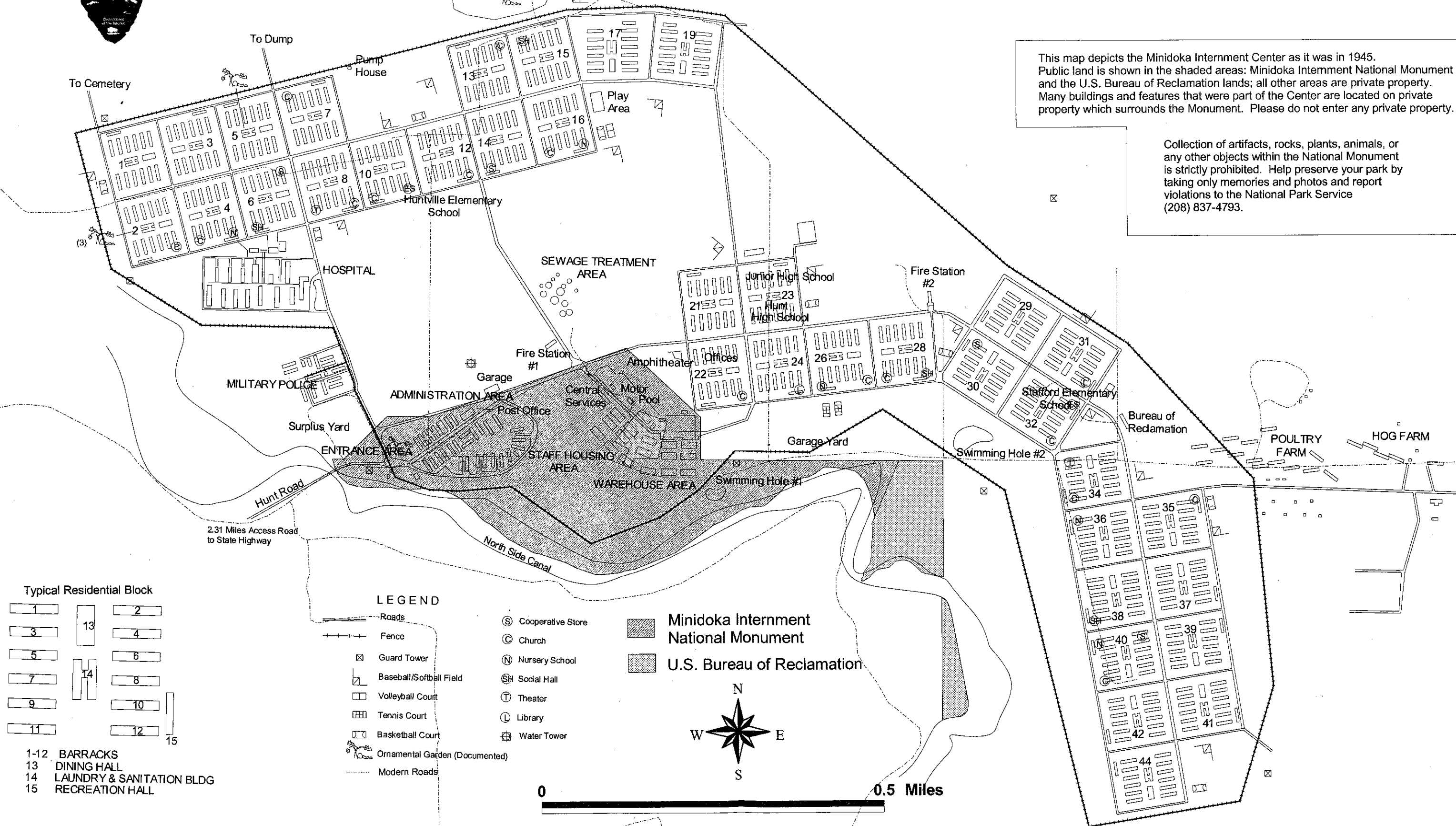
(208) 324-5641 www.historicaljeromecounty.com



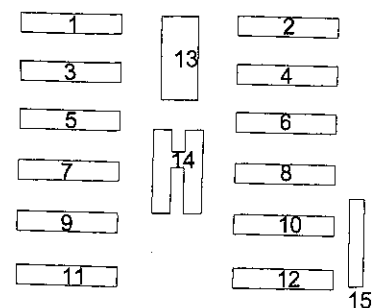
Minidoka Relocation Center - 1945

This map depicts the Minidoka Internment Center as it was in 1945. Public land is shown in the shaded areas: Minidoka Internment National Monument and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation lands; all other areas are private property. Many buildings and features that were part of the Center are located on private property which surrounds the Monument. Please do not enter any private property.

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Typical Residential Block

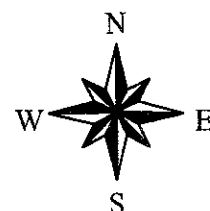


- 1-12 BARRACKS
- 13 DINING HALL
- 14 LAUNDRY & SANITATION BLDG
- 15 RECREATION HALL

LEGEND

- Roads
- Fence
- Guard Tower
- Baseball/Softball Field
- Volleyball Court
- Tennis Court
- Basketball Court
- Ornamental Garden (Documented)
- Modern Roads
- Cooperative Store
- Church
- Nursery School
- Social Hall
- Theater
- Library
- Water Tower

- Minidoka Internment National Monument
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation



0 0.5 Miles