

ST. PAUL EXTENDS A HAND

By ALICE L. SICKELS

In welcoming resettled Japanese Americans, St. Paul is living up to its traditions of hospitality and friendliness to people of all nationalities which began a hundred years ago when General Sibley built the first Minnesota mansion on the banks of the Mississippi below the fort. Under his own roof he included an extra room with its own entrance which was never locked, where Indians and voyageurs paddling down the river with their furs could find shelter, food, and companionship. St. Paul's attitude is also in keeping with the spirit of a city which once in three years, even in war time, dramatizes its belief in the equality of all peoples in a great city-wide Festival of Nations put on by the 33 nationality and cultural groups who, like Japanese Americans now, found a welcome in St. Paul because they had something to contribute and were willing to their part.

Nine months ago there were only nine adult Japanese and six small children of that race in St. Paul. Three were employed on the private car of the president of the Great Northern Railroad, one family owned a gift shop, one was a butler, and another was a physician who for many years has been the head of the X-ray laboratory of a large hospital.

The first of the Pacific Coast evacuees to arrive in the present program of resettlement were Earl and Ruth Tanbara, who came in August of 1942 with letters of introduction from Miss Annie Clo Watson, executive of the International Institute in San Francisco. Her promise that they would prove an asset to the community has been more than fulfilled. They have been the best possible ambassadors of goodwill.

In September, a city-wide committee was set up by the St. Paul International Institute to co-operate with the War Relocation Authority in the government's program of resettling evacuees and to serve as a local clearing house for accurate information. This committee, made up of prominent men and women, aimed to do a pioneering job on a case-by-case basis without any publicity except by word of mouth to carefully chosen small groups. Almost from the beginning, the demand for workers exceeded the supply. In the last six months, in addition to about 20 college undergraduates and many household workers who have resettled, jobs have been found for a number of stenographers, nurses' aids, mechanics, lens grinders, janitors, attendants, nurserymen, two chemists, a dressmaker, and medical technician. In every case, employment was arranged in advance. Job opportunities, requests for resettlement, and notices of arrival are cleared through a three-way process, which includes the Resettlement Committee with headquarters in the International Institute, the regional office of the WRA, and the Japanese American Citizens League, which has recently appointed Earl Tanbara as its representative in this area. Problems of social adjustment are referred to the International Institute case worker.

The dormitories of the YMCA, the Catholic Guild Hall, the Methodist Girls Club, and the YMCA are open to the Japanese American on arrival. The committee then locates single rooms in private homes; due to scarcity

scarcity, furnished apartments are hard to find for anyone. The housing committee is careful not to allow the Nisei to take rooms in undesirable districts or to congregate in one neighborhood.

The new arrivals are encouraged to join existing clubs and classes and participate in social events. Seven couples recently joined people of many nationalities in the All-Nations Ball which was attended by the Lieutenant Governor and city officials. They were cordially received by everyone, including a group of 20 Chinese Americans. Few of the Nisei fit the old stereotyped notion of a "Japanese type." They pass largely unnoticed in a city where there have always been a few Chinese, and where at first glance the curly-haired Nisei girls seem not unlike of the local Mexican Americans.

The newcomers have, of course, experienced annoyances incidental to migration, and have had to make many adjustments. They have been lonesome—at least until they met some of the Nisei soldiers from the Army Language School at Camp Savage, nearby; the winter has been severe. Those who made their own arrangements and took any sort of job just to get out of the centers have sometimes been disappointed. Among the first arrivals were household workers recommended to old St. Paul families by friends in California. Many of the descendants of these first families prefer to live in their ancestral than move to the newer residential districts. Their three story mansions, with rather dark interiors, much heirloom furniture, many pictures and art objects, were at first somewhat appalling to girls whose traditional idea of beauty is studied simplicity and who had formerly been employed in bungalows or compact two-story houses. The St. Paul winter diet and rich deserts took longer to prepare than Pacific Coast meals of sea foods, fresh vegetables, and fruits. Many an experienced cook felt suddenly inferior because she had never learned to make a pie or baked bread. Salaries and wages have not been too high, but are partly compensated for by lower living cost compared with other mid-western cities.

In general, the Japanese Americans have expressed surprise and pleasure at their reception and life in St. Paul. First to venture out of the comparative, if narrowing, security of the relocation centers, they have truly been pioneers. On the whole, they have found the city friendly and fair. For St. Paul has realized that these new arrivals will be an asset. Their skills are needed.

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