

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

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JAPANESE-AMERICANS IN RELOCATION CENTERS

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Of the 127,000 persons of Japanese ancestry in the United States, approximately 107,000 are in ten relocation centers under supervision of the War Relocation Authority. Roughly two-thirds are American citizens, almost all of whom are under 40 years of age, and the remainder are aliens, most of whom have been in the United States since 1924, when the Exclusion Act went into effect. The population includes about 19,000 citizen men between the ages of 18 and 37.

The people now living in relocation centers were residents of strategic military areas on the West Coast, which were evacuated last spring and summer, by order of the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command. The evacuated area includes the entire state of California, the western half of Washington and Oregon, and the southern third of Arizona. The evacuation was announced and at first was placed on a voluntary basis. People of Japanese ancestry were instructed to move out of the region, but might go anywhere they liked. With Japanese invasion not unlikely and infiltration of Japanese agents always a threat, their presence in the coastal and border areas constituted a danger to the national security, but away from those areas it was considered that the evacuees need not be restricted. Several thousand moved out but many of them encountered difficulties of many kinds growing out of suspicion and general public antagonism. When it became evident that voluntary movement would not be sufficiently rapid, voluntary evacuation was halted, on March 29, 1942, and after that date, evacuation was carried out by military authorities on a planned and ordered basis, area by area.

The War Relocation Authority was established by Presidential Executive Order 9102 on March 18, 1942, to aid the military authorities in evacuation of any persons or groups from any designated areas and to relocate evacuated persons. Its immediate task was the relocation of the people of Japanese ancestry from the Pacific Coast areas.

As soon as it was determined that voluntary evacuation was not effective, and that public sentiment was opposed to large scale relocation in ordinary communities, the War Relocation Authority, in cooperation with the Army, began looking for locations for temporary communities where the evacuees might be maintained under protection until opportunities in private employment could be found. In the meantime, the Army hurriedly built 15 temporary "assembly centers" inside the evacuated area, at race tracks and fair grounds, where the evacuees could be housed until the relocation centers were ready.

Ten sites were chosen for relocation centers, to be supervised by the War Relocation Authority. Each one had enough land suited to agricultural development so the evacuees might produce much of their own food. The centers, their location, and their approximate populations are as follows:

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<u>Center</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Population</u>
Manzanar	California	10,000
Tule Lake	California	15,000
Colorado River	Arizona	17,000
Gila River	Arizona	14,000
Central Utah	Utah	8,000
Minidoka	Idaho	9,000
Heart Mountain	Wyoming	11,000
Granada	Colorado	7,000
Rohwer	Arkansas	8,000
Jerome	Arkansas	8,000
		<u>107,000</u>

The evacuation from homes to assembly centers progressed from April until August, 1942, and the second movement, from assembly centers to relocation centers, took place from May to early November.

Under the supervision of the Army Engineer Corps, barrack type buildings were put up to accommodate the evacuees. These are of frame construction, usually covered with tar paper, and lined with wallboard. Each building is 100 feet long by 20 feet wide, and is divided into four, five or six compartments; housing assignments are figured on the basis of about 100 square feet of floor space per person.

Twelve barrack buildings usually are grouped into a "block", and each block has a bath house and latrine, a mess hall, a recreation hall, and a laundry room. The blocks are separated by "fire breaks" of 200 feet.

Standard equipment for living includes a cot, mattress, and blankets for each person and a heating stove for each compartment. Each family is permitted to use its own furniture if it so desires, but most families did not receive their furniture from storage for some time and so contrived homemade furniture out of scrap lumber.

Feeding is done in mess halls, located in each block. Menus include both American and Japanese type food. Evacuees are subject to the same rationing restrictions as other civilians, and a maximum of 45 cents per person per day is allowed for food. Actual food cost has been about 40 cents per person per day.

Medical care is provided without charge to evacuees, and a hospital was included in the basic construction provided by the Army in each relocation center. Evacuee doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists make up most of the staff of each hospital and health service, although the head physician and head nurse usually are non-Japanese. Housing is such that most cases of illness must be cared for in the hospital rather than in the home.

Schools of elementary and high school grades are provided for children of school age. Lack of materials for the construction of school buildings has made it necessary to hold classes in barrack buildings and recreation halls, in most instances using homemade seats and generally improvised equipment. The curriculum is planned to meet the requirements of the state in which the center is located. It is expected that schools will operate the year around, with emphasis on work experience in the summer months. Evacuee teachers are employed to the extent that they are available, but since their number is insufficient, about half the teaching staff is composed of non-Japanese teachers.

The foregoing items: Housing, food, medical care and education through the high school level, make up the basic items which the War Relocation Authority provides to the evacuees. In addition, the evacuees are given the opportunity to earn cash compensation by performing the necessary work of the community, and by engaging in production of some of the commodities needed by the evacuees themselves.

The largest single group of workers is engaged in handling food; warehousemen, truck drivers, chefs, cooks, servers, etc. There is a considerable amount of clerical work in connection with the administration of the project, and it is done by evacuees. Each administrative division, responsible for schools, construction, agriculture, etc., headed by a Civil Service employee, has a staff of evacuees, which carries on not only the laboring jobs but also some of the "white collar" work as well. Evacuees who work at regularly assigned jobs are paid wages of \$12, \$16, or \$19 per month, depending on the type of work and the skill of the worker. Clothing, too, is regarded as a part of compensation, and cash allowances for clothing are paid to each worker, based upon the number of dependents he has. The maximum is \$3.75 per month for an adult, with allowances scaled down for children.

Inside the center evacuees are accorded about the same freedoms they would have outside. They speak in English or Japanese, operate their own newspapers, and worship as they choose. They operate their own stores, barber shops, shoe repair shops and other service enterprises on a non-profit cooperative basis. With limited resources and facilities they have developed extensive programs of recreation, including sports of many kinds, arts, crafts and hobbies.

Permits to Leave.

The growing scarcity of manpower resulted in demands early in 1942 that evacuees be available for some of the agricultural work in western states which ordinarily is performed by itinerant workers. During the spring and summer months of 1942, over 1,600 evacuees from assembly centers and relocation centers were recruited to cultivate sugar beets in states outside the evacuated area. In the fall, the demand for labor to harvest sugar beets and other crops was much greater and about 10,000 were granted short term permits for work in the harvest fields. It is estimated that the sugar beets harvested by the evacuee workers in 1942 would make about 297,000,000 pounds of refined sugar. Many of the harvest workers were

hired on a permanent basis by their employers, and have not returned to relocation centers.

In July, 1942, the War Relocation Authority announced a policy of permitting qualified American citizens among the evacuees to leave relocation centers to accept permanent jobs. On October 1, this policy with the approval of the War and Justice Departments was broadened to include aliens as well as citizens. Under present policies of the War Relocation Authority, any evacuee may apply for a permit of indefinite leave. The permit will be granted under the following conditions:

- a. He has a place to go and means of supporting himself;
- b. A check of records of the FBI and other intelligence agencies, plus the applicant's record of behavior in the relocation center indicates that he would not endanger national security;
- c. There is evidence that his presence in the community in which he proposes to go is not likely to cause a public disturbance;
- d. He agrees to keep the War Relocation Authority informed of his address at all times.

In addition to the several hundred evacuees who left relocation centers for harvest work and obtained permanent jobs, many others have been granted permits of indefinite leave; thousands have had their applications for leave approved, and their actual return to private life outside a relocation center awaits only the offer of a suitable job.

Of those who have left the relocation centers, agricultural and domestic workers have been most numerous, but the group also includes students, stenographers, cooks, hotel workers and a wide variety of skilled workers. One of the largest single categories to date has been wives and sweethearts leaving relocation centers to join soldiers of Japanese ancestry serving in the United States Army.

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