

MINIDOKA WAR RELOCATION PROJECT

Hunt, Idaho

TO: E. R. Fryer, Regional Director  
ATTENTION: Edwin Bates, Chief, Regional Information Division  
SUBJECT: Report for Quarter Ended September 30, 1942.

GENERAL: There were three main phases of the Minidoka Relocation Center in the period ended September 30: construction of 600 one-story wooden buildings to form the physical shell of a city for the 10,000 evacuees; formation of an administrative body to direct and assist the evacuees in the conduct of the center; and the gradual emergence of a pattern of living as the evacuees adjusted themselves to the third part of their relocation.

Construction, under the direction of the U. S. Army Engineers, began officially June 1 although there was no large-scale activity the first month. Throughout the period of transfer of evacuees from the Puyallup and North Portland Assembly Centers to Minidoka completion of living quarters and dining halls was either barely abreast and often behind the movement of evacuees into the center.

When the advance crew of 213 from Puyallup arrived August 10 at 2:30 p.m., kitchen stoves on which they would cook their evening meal ~~were~~ being installed. Open ditches were being filled in. This was still the condition when regular daily arrival of evacuees began August 16. Powdery, flour-like dust was ankle deep. Heavy construction trucks rumbling through the area day and night

and strong prevailing winds kept a thick dust pall hanging over the entire district. Often this pall extended as high as 400 feet in the air. The hundred-foot pre-fabricated buildings would often be filled with a dusty haze and one end would be practically invisible from the other.

The confined area and haste of construction resulted in chaotic conditions. Approximately 3,000 workmen were digging, blasting, and building in and around blocks into which 500 evacuees were moving daily. Military police were scattered throughout the area. Forbidden and restricted areas, such as lumber piles and construction sectors, were not posted and the newly arrived evacuees sometimes wandered into them. Restricted areas changed overnight. Roads were open to evacuees part of the way and no farther yet there had not been time to erect signs.

It was a herculean task to bring approximately 500 evacuees daily (except ~~for~~ a hiatus August 22-29) into the center at around 4 p.m.; register each person; assign quarters; haul 500 cots, 1000 blankets and 3000 pieces of baggage to apartments, and provide an evening meal. Newly-laid wooden pipe lines broke so often that a water wagon had to stand by at meal times to insure kitchens of a supply. Kitchens were short of equipment. There was no hot water in the laundry rooms and few showers were installed. Outside latrines were, and still are, used pending completion of the sewerage.

Seven blocks were without lights when occupied. Two of them were filled between 7 p.m. and midnight due to the delayed arrival of the train from North Portland. Portable floodlights were borrowed

from the contractors on this occasion. Some of the evacuees were without lights for more than three weeks.

The hospital also began functioning without lights, heat, and sewerage. Heat remained an unfilled requirement at the end of the quarter.

Lack of warehouse space made it necessary to move supplies and equipment from one recreation building to another, as one was finished and another was required to house arriving evacuees. More than once baggage, and food and other supplies were piled in the sagebrush.

The project director and the assistant director had no desks for three weeks after the first evacuees arrived. The director's automobile was his office and it was open practically around the clock.

The bare physical essentials of construction were 97 per cent completed by the end of September, but the administration was still beset by problems arising from priority problems and a labor shortage in the center the latter due to the 2,300 evacuees leaving for outside harvest employment. The last of the evacuees arrived September 14 bringing the center's total to 9,381 (7060 from Puyallup, 2321 from North Portland), yet by the end of the month only 650 of the 2780 stoves the center required were connected and coal was not available to use in the few apartment stoves which were completely installed. The area's first killing frost occurred on September 26. The hospital's heat problem was gradually being solved as the period ended, acute temporary boilers

were being replaced by a low-pressure boiler with this in turn to be replaced by a high-pressure boiler. Throughout the project services and facilities were delayed due to priority difficulties, one of the chief ones being the expansion joints for the hospital's steam system. The procurement division exercised great ingenuity and resourcefulness in obtaining substitutes for critical materials and supplies not available to the project because of its relatively low priority rating.

The lumber shortage prevented evacuees from making furniture for their apartments and delayed until some future time the building of staff housing, schools, a chapel, school furniture and other necessities. Nail picking crews and a magnet device made on the project scoured the grounds for nails dropped by construction workmen. There was only one hammer for every 10 workmen; one saw for every eight; one shovel and one pick for every 50 until late in September. Limited automobile transportation complicated administrative work and the telephone system, limited to 35 of which 15 were in the hospital, 5 for fire and emergency purposes and 7 for the military police, was of little service for on-the-project communication. With only 56 typewriters available for 137 secretaries, stenographers, clerks, and other personnel, it was necessary to use them on day and night shifts.

Such working hours were not the only adjustment the evacuees were forced to make. Doubling up of strange families in a single apartment produced numerous social problems. Coming from a wet

climate the dust affected many of the evacuees adversely, dealing a severe blow to their morale. Cooks, unused to preparing foods at 4000 feet, served beans and potatoes hard as rocks until they learned differently.

Lack of heat, sewerage and building materials continued to be major obstacles to the normal operation of the community. While the population dropped off to 8350 by September 30, this affected the community housing and other requirements only slightly since the great majority of those leaving for farm work were individuals who left their families in the center.

PROJECT PLACEMENT AND OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT: The center's population of 5041 males and 4445 females was situated as follows: number employed on project, 3033 (male, 2083, female, 950); number in private employment off project but living on project, 127 (91 males, 36 females); number away from project on group employment, 1444 (1300 males, 144 females); number registered for work but not working, 939 (120 males, 819 females); number assigned but not yet on job, 246, all males; total in labor force, 4218 (2449 males, 1769 females); number not in labor force, 3697 (1201 males, 2496 females).

Other statistics show that 65 per cent of the American citizen males who registered for work were employed and 55 per cent of the citizen females; 80 per cent of non-citizen males who registered were employed and 22 per cent of the non-citizen females. Thirty-one per cent of the single males who registered were employed and

30 per cent of the married males who registered were employed; 31 per cent of the single females who registered were employed and 9 per cent of the married females.

The dining hall operations led all sections with a payroll of 1350 persons (832 males, 480 females at \$16; 38 males at \$19); project maintenance was next with 371 (369 males, one female at \$16; one female at \$19); health and sanitation, 257 (45 males, 167 females at \$16; 33 males, 12 females at \$19); transportation and supply, 235 (216 males, 10 females at \$16; 9 males at \$19); miscellaneous community activities 200 (83 males, 76 females at \$16; 39 males, 2 females at \$19); employment, placement, and housing, 169 (64 males, 95 females at \$16; 9 males, 1 female at \$19); building construction, 103 (93 males, 1 female at \$16; 9 males at \$19); land development, 77 (67 males, 3 females at \$16; 7 males at \$19); project administration, 76 (31 males, 36 females at \$16; 9 males at \$19); police department, 74 (71 males, 3 females at \$16); education, 69 (13 males, 56 females at \$16); fire department, 43 (43 males at \$16); community enterprises, 9 (2 males, 3 females at \$16; 4 males at \$19).

As the period ended the farm labor recruiting program to relieve the southern Idaho shortage was reaching proportions affecting the operation of the center. The Public Works Division was 30 per cent below requirements to meet essential service needs. The construction and building section needed 100 additional workers; irrigation needed 50; land subjugation required 100 more, and project maintenance was short 100.

Proposed improvements including school buildings and staff housing required 1200 workers who were not available. Transportation and supply were down to 75 per cent efficiency. The fire department was 50 per cent efficient. The hospital lost many trained personnel.

A serious development in workers' morale was traced to the wage rate. The evacuees desired more levels than the \$12, \$16, and \$19, to indicate a difference in training and skill. It was felt that even a 50-cent difference in the rate of pay of second cooks and that of dishwashers, for example, would make for a more normal community society in which pride and ambition would be acknowledged.

The small difference in the wage rate for highly-trained professional people and other important jobholders and those performing menial tasks (such as dishwashers) also created discontent. The variation in hours of work in jobs paying the same rate also was the cause of dissatisfaction.

Some doctors expressed the opinion that they should be placed on a different pay scale since they had been requested not to take advantage of the outside group labor employment program.

The Fair Labor Practice Board to hear and act in labor disputes was being organized as the period ended.

HOUSING: The housing section was making progress in readjusting the situations which resulted from emergency measures taken during the reception of evacuees from the assembly centers, when adequate housing was not available at certain times. This

made it necessary to put two families of two or three members each into a single large apartment. Bachelors were housed in dormitories, 120 feet long with no partitions. This proved so unsatisfactory that plans were made to partition all dormitories into rooms for groups of four, five, and six who would be formed with cultural backgrounds and common interests in mind.

A census of family groups showed 716 bachelors; 448 families of two members; 525 of three, 470 of four; 351 of five; 215 of six; 96 of seven; 52 of eight; 12 of nine; 1 of 10; 5 of 11; 4 of 12; and 1 of 13.

When the evacuees were sent to Minidoka they arrived at the Hunt siding, five miles from the project, and were transported in rented buses to the project. A head count was made as the buses were loaded at the siding and the family roster was checked during registration at the center. A cursory medical examination was given all arrivals. It usually required about two hours to receive and register a group of 500.

HEALTH AND SANITATION: By the end of the period the 200-bed project hospital was nearly completely organized, although many facilities were still lacking, including hot water, heat, laundry, x-ray, morgue equipment, delivery table, surgery tables, and adequate dishes for the hospital dining hall.

A temporary boiler supplied steam heat to two radiators in the surgery, one in the nursery, one in the delivery room, and steam to run the sterilizers. The rest of the hospital was cold. Wooden



packing cases were used as a delivery table and for surgery (not operating) tables. An examining table was used as an operating table. Dining hall equipment totalled 40 forks, 150 knives, 50 plates, no teaspoons, no tea cups, and only temporary electric stoves. Despite this 200 were being fed daily.

Up to the end of the period there were nine births and eight deaths; two of each were premature twins. Two residents were committed to the Idaho State Hospital for the insane at Blackfoot. The average number of patients in September was 77 with 11 the minimum and 135 the maximum. While there was no serious epidemic, an outbreak of intestinal disorders hospitalized 60 residents from one block, most of them staying only 24 hours. The cause was attributed to unsanitary kitchen conditions and specifically to pickling barrel where harmful bacteria were found. There was no unusual outbreak of children's diseases.

The hospital staff of 200 include the Caucasian chief medical officer, six doctors of Japanese ancestry, a third-year medical student, three Caucasian nurses, five graduate nurses of Japanese ancestry, three student nurses, 85 nurses' aides and attendants, male and female, 15 pharmacists, one three-year student pharmacist, three laboratory technicians, four assistant laboratory technicians, and ten dentists. The dentists, the eye, nose, and throat doctor and other doctors were obliged to use much of their own equipment.

An assistant dietitian was placed in each mess hall to prepare and dispense baby food to children up to two years of age. Like-

wise, she dispensed baby formula ingredients. These dietitians were under the supervision of the hospital dietitian.

Other hospital services included well-baby clinics, prenatal clinics and venereal diseases clinics. A sanitation inspection service was being organized.

The 15 wings of the hospital included six patient wings with beds for 35 in each wing. There were the usual nursery, pediatrics, maternity, isolation, and tuberculosis wards.

Mobile equipment included two ambulances which picked up women in the eighth and ninth months of pregnancy for the prenatal clinic and other pregnant women who live more than a half mile from the hospital.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES: These activities were organized entirely by the residents themselves with the division chief giving direction and counsel. A resident director was chosen and he selected six supervisors to head specific phases of the program--athletics, arts and handicrafts, music, clubs, entertainment, and children's activities. The project was divided into seven sections with supervisors working with leaders in each section.

Boy Scouts, Girls' Scout, and YWCA organized activities tied in with the national groups. A cooperative arrangement was working out with the YWCA in Twin Falls to provide facilities for domestic workers and farm workers near that city.

Lack of finances to promote craft and club work, furniture and equipment for recreation halls and places to hold meetings retarded

the program. A board of review was formed to assist the Community Enterprises in selecting movies.

Special work clothing--caps, mackinaws, overcoats, breeches, and gloves--was issued from a supply of surplus provided by the Army.

Two libraries were opened in recreation halls with books secured from various sources, principally from the residents themselves and from their assembly center libraries.

Lack of machinery to clear play areas in the center held up outdoor activities.

Community government was being organized near the close of the period.

An inter-faith council of Protestant, Catholic, and Buddhist ministers was organized to meet once a month to coordinate religious services for the center residents. Protestant denominations united to hold inter-denominational meetings in different parts of the center on Sundays and smaller meeting during the week. The Protestant young people held vesper services each Sunday evening and sponsored a public forum each Wednesday. The Buddhist schedule of services was much the same as the Protestant. Catholic Mass was said daily at the project by a non-resident priest, a Maryknoll missionary, who had established residence at Jerome. There were eight Protestant ministers and six Buddhist priests residents. Three non-resident Protestant workers established residence at Twin Falls and commuted daily to the project.

Lack of chairs, benches, and a chapel forced the religious groups to hold services in dining halls which were not suitable. There was no chapel.

EDUCATION: Schools were not yet open at the close of the period. Requirements for teachers, such as an A. B. degree for elementary teachers at \$1620 a year, made it difficult to fill these positions. Also, the general wartime labor shortage extended into the teaching profession. Physical equipment, such as school benches, supplies, and books, and space in which to hold classes also retarded organization of the school system.

The education program was started late in September with a ten-day workshop for orientating Caucasian and evacuee teachers. Curriculum planning was also undertaken. Thirty-six Caucasian teachers and 39 teachers of Japanese ancestry were on duty. The resident teachers included two certified teachers, 20 student teachers (holding degrees or with four years' or more experience who could qualify as teachers) and 17 teaching assistants. Since the classes will be large with 40 to 45 pupils in each, it was planned to use teaching assistants to help the regular teachers in classroom detail. In addition five nursery schools were planned with student teachers and 12 teaching assistants employed.

Enrollment at the end of the period was 766 from kindergarten through sixth grade and 1204 from seventh through twelfth grades. These figures were obtained in a pre-registration census to find

out how many children of school age there were in the center and in what groups they belonged. The elementary school pre-registration was done at certain points after announcements were made in dining halls. High school registration was done through block managers who handed out blanks to families concerned. Teachers later went door to door to be certain of contacting everyone.

COUNSELOR: The counselor was occupied with facilitating the release of students, advising residents in social problems, arranging marriages and funerals, and arranging for border passes for residents who had to go to Twin Falls, Jerome, or other cities.

Up to September 30 a total of 21 students had been released to continue their college studies. There were 10 funeral services held in the center, two of which were for persons who had died elsewhere, one an American soldier of Japanese ancestry. Four burials had been made in the center cemetery. There were five marriages in which both principals were residents of the center. None, however, was performed inside the center, the principals choosing to travel 10 miles to Jerome, the county seat of Jerome county in which the center is located, for the ceremonies. Five families were aided in preparations for repatriation at the earliest possible time. One hundred eighty applications for repatriation, made in the assembly centers prior to arrival to the Minidoka center, were filed in this office.

Social problems arising from unusual conditions in the center were brought to the counselor. A number of family disputes, both inter-family and intra family, were handled. The doubling-up of

strange families, often incompatible, in a single apartment because of the housing shortage created problems. Mental problems were fairly numerous. Two wives of non-Japanese husbands (one Chinese and one Filipino) were released from the center and other mixed marriage problems were presented. The question of parental authority created some difficulties. In one case a girl of age wished to marry a man not residing in the center to whom her parents objected. The administration entered the dispute because the girl could leave the center to get married only with permission of the administration.

The need for border passes for sunrise to sunset was found and these were issued through the counselor. These were given only for legitimate reasons, such as a visit to friends living at the F. S. A. Camp at Twin Falls, a girl shopping for her trousseau, business which could not be transacted at the center, and shopping which could not be done any other way, such as a Seattle hotel owner who had to buy a large quantity of bedding for his business.

Juvenile delinquency was not a serious problem.

LEGAL AID BUREAU: Routine legal problems, rendering of legal opinions and special cases of evacuees were handled by this section functioning under an evacuee-lawyer, Clarence Arai, formerly of Seattle.

Registered voters were aided relative to absentee voting. Those unable to read and write English were assisted in the preparation of Selective Service questionnaires. The bureau also helped claimants for old age and survivors insurance. Numerous property

problems resulting from evacuation were dealt with. Preparations of federal reserve license applications and reports was undertaken.

The bureau also offered a notary public service.

COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES: Organization of this division was just getting under way as the period ended, but already it had established laundry and dry cleaning pickup service (arranged with a Twin Falls firm); a watch repair shop; a mail order department to help residents in buying through catalogs; a delivery service of seven boys to deliver newspapers morning and evening; a telegraph service (via phone to Jerome); and three stores which stocked dry goods, ice cream, confections, newspapers, magazines, household supplies, and sundries.

By showing an educational film of cooperatives in the United States and Sweden and by acquainting the residents with the advantages and benefits of a cooperative, the division started an education campaign to form a cooperative to supply services needed by the residents and not furnished by the government. The lack of a definite understanding of this department's relationship to the rest of the administration was a hampering factor.

TRANSPORTATION AND SUPPLY: Lack of warehouse space and garage and service facilities at the Project was overcome late in the period. By September 30 these services were well organized. Until warehouses were completed, supplies and materials had to be moved as many as a dozen times from building to building. Lack of

refrigerating units created several emergencies in the food supply. Refrigeration space was rented at Twin Falls and two reefer cars, which had to be iced every other day, were held at the Hunt siding, to preserve meat and other perishables. The project steward had to limit transportation of rations practically to daily consumption.

A garage was rented at Eden until a building was available at the project about September 30.

An average of nine carloads of freight, supplies, and materials arrived daily at Eden, 12 miles from the center. In addition there was baggage of evacuees from assembly centers to the Minidoka project. Carload lots of supplies and materials were received at the Hunt siding. Less than carload lots were unloaded at Eden.

This division was responsible for transporting mails from the Twin Falls post office to the project, 20 miles. A  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ton truck made two round trips daily except Sunday and three round trips each Monday.

Equipment totalled 115 vehicles including 26 sedans, five coupes, two ambulances, nine pickup and  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton trucks, and 73  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ton trucks. All were serviced in the project's own shop.

PUBLIC WORKS DIVISION: In order to bring irrigation water to the 200-acre center area, a primary canal was constructed from the Milner-Gooding canal to a point near the center, a distance of about six miles. About 50 residents were employed on this job which was started in mid-August and finished a month later under severe handicaps. To build the ditch, which has a capacity of 10 cubic feet per second, two patrols and two Farmall tractors were the



only heavy equipment available. Eight shovels comprised the total equipment for hand work when work was started.

The first water was used to irrigate 12 blocks in the eastern end of the center and nine of these blocks were planted in rye to tie down the soil which had presented a serious dust condition on windy fall days.

The airport site about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile northeast of the center was surveyed. One runway will be four thousand feet long and approximately 600 feet wide.

Desks and tables needed by all departments in view of the shortage of manufactured equipment were made in the carpenter shop largely from scrap lumber.

This division was principally occupied with numerous service and maintenance functions within the center.

PROJECT AGRICULTURE: Lack of workers and equipment and priority of other immediate works on the project retarded land subjugation up to the end of the period. The farm superintendent studied local conditions and inspected numerous farms and farming systems in the area to determine suitable crops for the project. He found that the silt loam in the project farming area could become very productive under proper farming methods. The farm area ranged from level, small areas to steep stony hills and benches. Irrigation water to be taken from the Milner-Gooding canal was presumed to be sufficient for the irrigation of the first several thousand acres of land to be cleared. However, numerous ditches, laterals, and other construction will be necessary for proper dis-

tribution of water to the different tracts.

While selection of food crops which may be planted on the first thousand acres to be cleared had not yet been made, it was believed a cover crop would be planted first on the cleared-off land and then potatoes, onions, and, perhaps, some vegetables would be planted next summer.

Because of the lateness of the season, it was believed that the 1943 farming program would be largely clearing the land of sagebrush, planting field crops, and establishing a hog farm, and a poultry plant.

INTERNAL SECURITY: The Internal Security Division faced serious problems during its period of organization. It was necessary to build up the force rapidly to take over the guarding of restricted construction areas within the center from the military police. Out-of-bound areas were in the process of being posted, lumber piles had to be watched, and the new residents needed guidance in their movements from one end of the three-mile-long area to the other. By the end of the period 70 men were on the staff, maintaining 24-hour patrol in the center. All but the Caucasian chief of the division and his assistant were residents.

A \$70 theft and a community store burglary, both solved with the apprehension of juveniles, were the only serious offenses up to September 30. The wardens aided other divisions in many ways, such as keeping residents out of unoccupied apartments, sealing fuse

boxes, and handling crowds at large gatherings. Organized gambling was broken up by the wardens.

A comprehensive training program for the wardens was planned. Uniforms for the staff were made out of Army surplus uniforms altered to make them individual in appearance.

FIRE PROTECTION: Frequent interruptions in the water supply, lack of trained personnel, inflammable character of the buildings and prevalence of wind presented grave fire hazards. Absence of stoves in apartments was a favorable factor. Lack of protection around fire hydrants resulted in more than 30 of them being knocked over and the flow of water halted for several hours during repairing.

The fire protection officer immediately trained two crews totalling 45 men and began a comprehensive program of fire education of the entire community on the proper methods of firing apartment stoves and fire prevention practices around the home. Until fuse boxes were sealed the shorting of circuits by the use of a penny and other methods was an additional hazard. Boiler crews were found to be unfamiliar with proper firing methods and they were given instructions.

There was only one fire warranting use of the apparatus and it was not inside the center. It was in the bridge at the entrance.

At the close of the period the farm labor recruiting program had seriously crippled operations. There were two pieces of apparatus on hand.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FISCAL: Payroll procedure for evacuees and W. R. A. staff members, a timekeeping system for the evacuee workers, property control, cost accounting, mails and files, and other administrative details were organized.

PROJECT REPORTS DIVISION: The reports officer issued various press releases to acquaint the surrounding communities with the new community of Hunt (post office address of the Minidoka center), the objectives of the War Relocation Authority and to promote the farm labor recruitment program. A weekly press release containing four to eight items was sent to 60 weekly newspapers in southern Idaho and was widely printed. Press releases were issued to 15 daily newspapers and press associations as warranted. These releases printed with few if any changes from the original. The press in no instance was unfair. The majority of the press releases dealt with the outside group employment program and the availability of evacuees at Hunt for outside farm work to relieve the critical labor shortage in southern Idaho.

The project director, the assistant director, superintendent of education, and other staff members made several appearances before civic clubs and other groups in surrounding communities, which did much to allay fears, reduce prejudices and acquaint the public with the facts about the project. A few small groups and individuals visited the project but no special effort was made to have writers, photographers, and such interested groups visit up to the end of the

period, since it was felt the project was still in a period of organization and it would be more favorable to have such visitors later.

Letters written by evacuees doing farm work and expressions by townspeople of Twin Falls, Eden, and Jerome were to the effect that such evacuees were not discriminated against to any great extent up to September 30. Many had an opportunity to visit cities, especially Twin Falls, to shop, to go to movies, and eat at public places. While comments about persons of Japanese ancestry were numerous, and there was some antagonism and discrimination shown by some store clerks and people on the street, there was generally a spirit of tolerance in view of the fact that the evacuees were helping to harvest crops which otherwise might have been lost and were spending considerable money in stores. The sheriff and the District Attorney of Twin Falls county both made public statements asking the residents of Twin Falls to remember that these people of Japanese ancestry were mostly citizens and should not be subjected to any discrimination or unfairness.

Rumors started during construction of the center about extravagant building materials and luxuries for the evacuees were spiked by factual description of the center in news releases, in public talks by the project director and by visitors to the project.

The project newspaper, The Minidoka Irrigator, was started in mid-September and issued on a twice-weekly basis; the size was

usually six pages, mimeographed. About 3,000 copies were printed and distributed to every apartment in the center through block managers. About 60 copies were mailed to other centers, federal agencies, libraries, and other interested parties.

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Harry L. Stafford,  
Project Director

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by John Bigelow,  
Reports Officer