



Manzanar Cemetery, Winter 2002.

This booklet was developed by the park rangers at Manzanar National Historic Site in partnership with the individuals profiled and their families.



The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. To learn more about your national parks, visit the National Park Service website at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov). To learn more about Manzanar National Historic Site, please visit our website at [www.nps.gov/manz](http://www.nps.gov/manz).

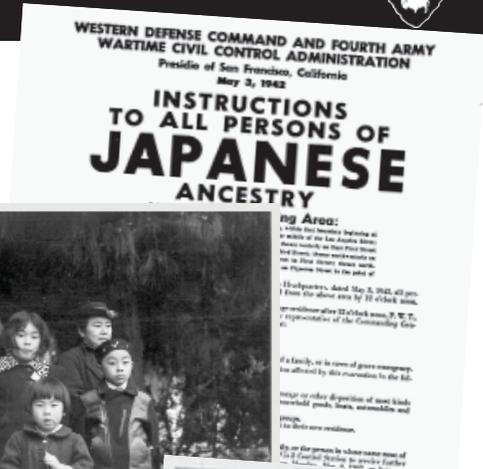
**Manzanar National Historic Site**  
**P.O. Box 426, Independence, CA 93526**  
**Tel. 760-878-2194**  
**E-mail: [manz\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:manz_superintendent@nps.gov)**

Printing was made possible by a grant from the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program.

# Manzanar



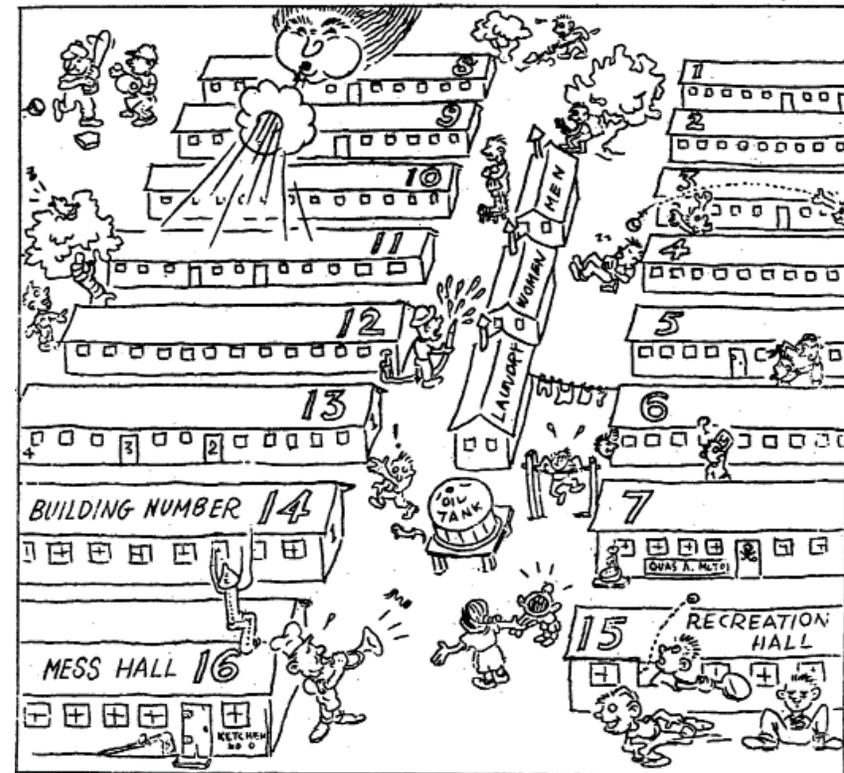
## ID Card





In 1942 the United States Government ordered over 110,000 men, women, and children to leave their homes and detained them in remote, military-style camps. Two-thirds of them were born in America. Not one was convicted of espionage or sabotage.

In this booklet, you will read the story of a person who lived this history, in his or her own words.



## LIFE IN A MANZANAR BLOCK

### Wind and Dust

This wind and dust I have to bear  
 How hard it blows I do not care.  
 But when the wind begins to blow –  
 My morale is pretty low.  
 I know that I can see it through  
 Because others have to bear it too.  
 So I will bear it with the rest  
 And hope the outcome is the best.

-- George Nishimura, age 16 (1943)

# MANZANAR Free Press

## MANZANAR

**Location:** Inyo County, California, at the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada.

### **Environmental**

**Conditions:** Temperatures can be over 100 degrees in summer and below freezing in winter. Strong winds & dust storms are frequent.

**Acreage:** 6,000

**Opened:** March 21, 1942 as a Reception Center and June 1, 1942 as a War Relocation Center.

**Closed:** November 21, 1945

**Max. Population:** 10,046 (September 1942)

**Demographics:** Most internees were from the Los Angeles area, Terminal Island, and the San Fernando Valley. Others came from the San Joaquin Valley and Bainbridge Island.



---

---

## LILLIAN MATSUMOTO

**Family # 18661**

**Camp: Manzanar, CA**

**Address: Children's Village**

---

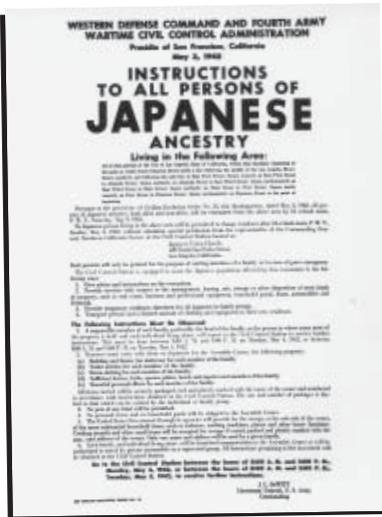
---



I was born in Salt Lake City, Utah on February 4, 1913. My parents were Shiro and Isa (Tomita) Iida. I was the oldest child in the family with two sisters, Grace and Kim and two brothers, Albert and Ted. We moved to Berkeley in 1929 where my father worked for the *Nichi Bei Times* newspaper based in San Francisco.

I attended the University of California, earning a graduate certificate in social welfare studies. In 1935, I became the Assistant Superintendent of the *Shonien* (Children's Garden) home for Japanese children. Located in Los Angeles, *Shonien* was founded in 1914 by Rokuichi Joy Kusumoto, who also served as its Superintendent. Being a Japanese citizen, Mr. Kusumoto was immediately picked up by the FBI on December 7, 1941. In his absence, I was appointed Superintendent of in charge of operations at *Shonien*. There I had met Harry Matsumoto, one of the younger Nisei members of the Board of Directors. With our future so uncertain Harry and I married on February 15, 1942.

As the Army began removing all people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast, it discovered that there were Japanese children cared for in institutional homes. Besides *Shonien*, there was the Maryknoll Catholic Home for Japanese Children in L.A. and the Japanese Salvation Army Home of San Francisco. A



*Evacuation poster, 1942*

few children were also in non-Japanese orphanages and foster homes.

Originally, the government planned to leave the orphanages isolated within the cities where they were located. Harry and I were uncomfortable with this plan, wondering how we would justify our presence in the restricted military zone when all other Japanese

Americans were being removed. We suggested that the orphans be moved along with everyone else. The Army agreed, and permitted us to select the camp.

Due to legal and financial aid considerations, our first choice was a location in California. Manzanar was outside the restricted area but still in the state. We visited the camp in late March, 1942, when it was in the early stages of construction. For the children's home, we selected a location next to the nearly completed hospital building, by an apple orchard. It was in the camp community but slightly apart from it.

We asked to take the small wooden folding chairs and tables used by the children and our piano; also baby cribs, because I had heard from people at Manzanar that only cots were issued, and I thought that

---

**Rather than be isolated in the city, we suggested the orphans be moved along with everyone else.**

---

Harry and I filed papers announcing our intention to relocate out of the camp in July 1944, and made a special request to take with us one of the orphans whom we planned to adopt. We stayed on until September to train our replacement, Ms. Eva Robbins.

The Children's Village officially closed in September 1945. *Shonien* did not reopen after the war, and I never received any official report as to the eventual dispersal of the remaining children. I heard that, where possible, they were returned with relatives. Children with no living relatives were placed in foster homes.

In May 1992, a 50th anniversary was organized by the "children" of the Village. This occasion was the first time since leaving the Village that many of them had an opportunity to discuss their experiences with people who also been there. After so many years, they accepted that period as part of their childhood experience. I thought that, despite the unhappy beginnings in their lives, what wonderful adults they had grown up to be. It gave me great satisfaction. I have always believed that the children's home had a positive role to play in our community.



*Lillian returned to Manzanar for the first time in 2006, with her daughter Karyl, the baby she and Harry adopted when they left Manzanar in 1944.*



*Lillian & Harry (center, with baby Karyl) pose with their Children's Village family*

Around the buildings the ground was bare. In the spring of the second year we put out a call for volunteer help to create a simple lawn. Several imaginative gardeners from the camp responded, taking an even more adventurous view of the project. They constructed a fence of tree trunks and branches completely bordering the lawn. Trees and shrubbery were brought back or freshly planted, and a lacework of tree trunks and large branches fashioned into a gazebo. The result was a cool, park-like setting somewhat free of the desert dust where children could play and staff relax while watching over them. It was unique to the entire camp. The camp's project director Ralph Merritt was very proud of the Children's Village, and always wanted to show it off to visitors.

The children attended camp schools from first grade on. The older children formed a baseball team and participated in the camp league. They also attended camp churches. Many outside contacts were developed through clubs and other social community activities. We encouraged them to have as normal a life as any other child in the camp. As with all parents, we too placed parental restrictions on our children.

some of the youngest ones were safer sleeping in cribs. We packed up all the clothing we had, including a mountain of diapers, even though we had only one infant in our care at that time. We felt a need to have on hand supplies enough for any and all situations that might arise. There was a lot of worrying, fear too. We just didn't know what was in our future.

On June 23, 1942 we departed for Manzanar with 62 children, from 1½ to 17 years old, including the Maryknoll Home orphans and a few from Los Angeles area foster homes.

On the morning of our departure a group of young people from the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization, brought food, drinks and water, and stayed to help occupy the children with entertainment and games while the staff was busy with last minute packing and preparations.

To move us, the army sent two buses and a van. Two soldiers, fully armed with rifles and bayonets, accompanied us, one in each bus. They sat in the front of the bus near the driver. Whenever a stop had to be made the soldiers would come out of the bus and take a position by the door, holding their rifles with bayonets in place.

To pass the time on the long trip we sang songs and told stories. A little four-year girl got up and said she wanted to sing. She then began to sing "God Bless America." She didn't know all the words but she knew the melody. The young

---

**Two soldiers, fully armed with rifles and bayonets, accompanied the orphans. . . A little girl sang "God Bless America. I could see tears flowing down the young soldier's cheek.**

---

soldier holding on to his rifle with the bayonet listened, and I could see tears flowing down his cheek.

Manzanar was the only camp to have a children's home. It was officially named the Children's Village. Ultimately 105 children came under its care, ranging in age from 3 months to 17 years, all of them American born. Harry and I and four adult staff lived in the Village with the children. Our staff, including us, totaled nine.

All parentless children from the west coast exclusion zone who had even a trace of Japanese blood were included in the relocation order. Some came from far away, including two brothers and a sister from Alaska – their Japanese father was detained by the FBI while their Eskimo mother was hospitalized for tuberculosis, and they did not have an extended family to care for them.

The three structures that made up the Children's Village measured 25 feet by 135 feet, and stood in a row side by side from west to east. They were somewhat better than the camp barracks. Our buildings were larger, faced with wood rather than tarpaper, and the floors of wooden planks were closely fitted to avoid



*Harry & Lillian with Sarah, one of the Manzanar orphans*

problems such as draft, dust, and grass coming in from below. Three potbelly coal stoves in each building provided the heat.



*Manzanar Children's Village, 1943*

Building No. 1 on the west was our dining hall with kitchen, and a social hall where the children could gather for nursery school and group activities. That's where we had our piano. We had a professional cook who worked carefully with the menus, setting aside a little sugar and special ingredients to make treats for the children for parties and holidays. Next to the social hall were two very small rooms, one used as private quarters for Harry and me, the other for a small reception area.

The middle building, called No. 2, was our nursery for the infants and toddlers. The nursery opened to a small hallway. On one side of this hallway there was the girls' bathroom with showers, toilets and washbasins. On the other side was a room for the night nurse. The hallway connected to the dormitory for the girls. Each cot had a small footlocker. The older girls also had little box-like shelves mounted on the wall near the head of their beds to hold personal things.

Building No. 3, the boys' dormitory, was organized similar to No. 2. The middle part of this third building had a room for showers, toilets, and washbasins. A hall separated these facilities from a room used by the adult attendant. On the other side was an all purpose room, mainly for sorting and folding laundry. Three to four women assisted by some of our girls, usually worked there.