



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.



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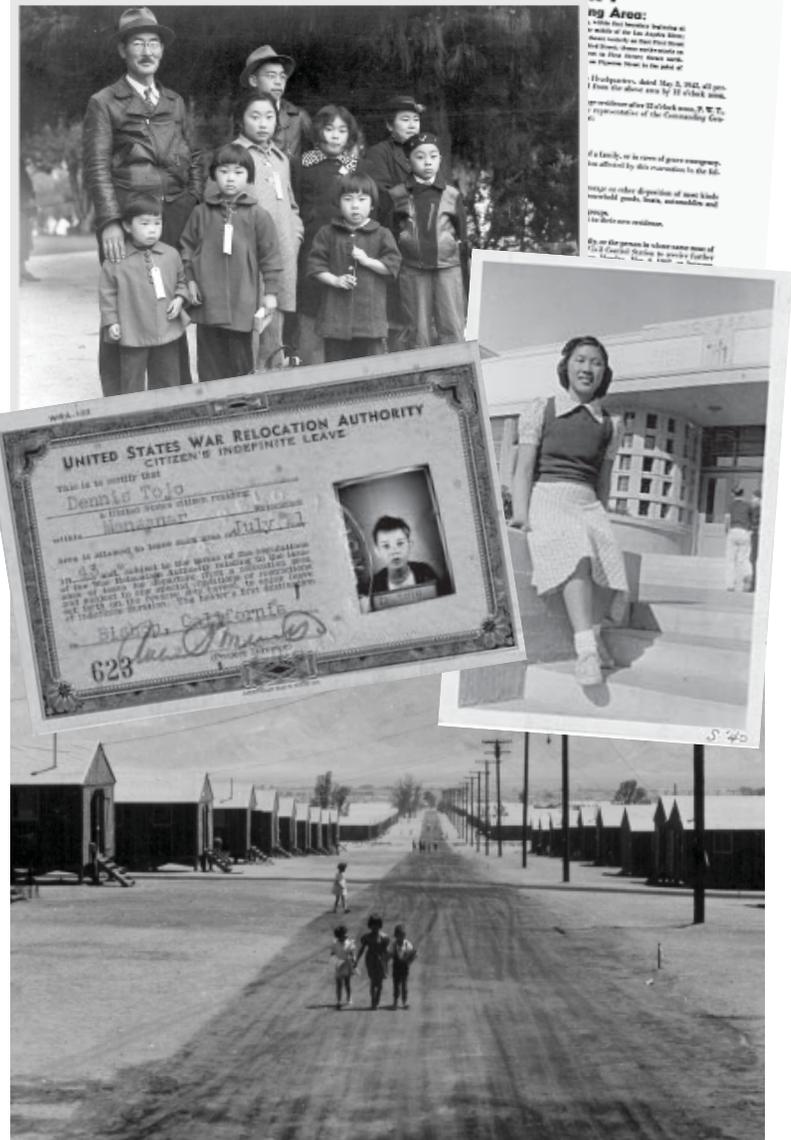
Manzanar



ID Card

WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY
 WARTIME CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION
 Presidio of San Francisco, California
 May 3, 1942

INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY





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.



WILBUR SATO

Family # 4655

Camp: Manzanar, CA

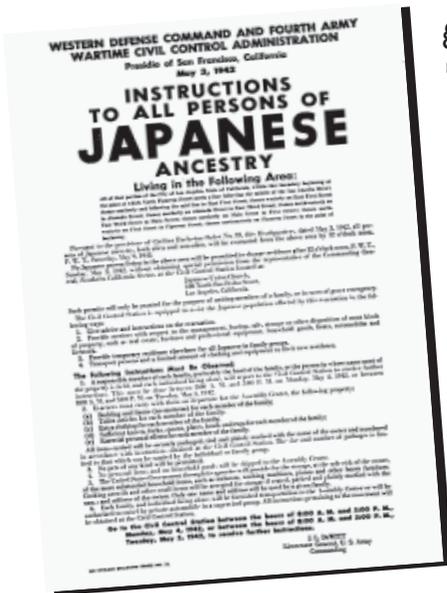
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My father came to the U.S. in the early 1900's when he was a teen. His father was in the nursery business in Pasadena and produced one of the first floral floats for the Rose Parade. His father was also an early pioneer photographer who produced photographs in the rough, old cumbersome method of glass plates and chemicals. My mother was born in Rialto, CA and attended school in Little Tokyo and Roosevelt High in Boyle Heights. She was fiercely patriotic and volunteered for the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps prior to WW II. She prized her citizenship and was dismayed when she learned that she would lose her citizenship because she married an alien ineligible for citizenship.

Pearl Harbor was on a Sunday and that night or the night after there was a terrible bombardment around Terminal Island. Anti-aircraft guns were going off, and the sky

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was crisscrossed with giant searchlights. This went on all night until the early hours of the morning. This was a frightful beginning of an odyssey for our family and thousands of other Americans of Japanese ancestry. Everything was a blur after Pearl Harbor. The integrated community on the

Terminal side of Ter-

minal Island where we lived was caught up in the celebratory patriotic fervor of the times. The naval base was gearing up for war. P-38s soared daily overhead. A Kaiser shipyard was operating 24 hours a day. Everyone had a job.

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hours. There was not time for farewells or good wishes from neighbors, friends and classmates who were perplexed and embarrassed as we were ashamed and humiliated. Associations and

Our family left Manzanar in 1944 and settled in Des Moines, Iowa. We later returned to Los Angeles in 1945. Our journey and our quest has been to find ways to strengthen the family, build communities, honor history and culture, seek justice by way of redress, build democratic institutions by empowering people to participate in community and national affairs, to respect the rule of law and the primacy of the Constitution and to help build a nation united in spirit and in the principles of human dignity, justice and equality. On this journey we have rediscovered America and recovered our sense of place and national identity.

Before our detention I was an avid stamp collector. This was my way of leaping over tall buildings or soaring across oceans. It was also a way of learning about people, geography, history, culture and natural resources. Three weeks after our arrival at Manzanar my mother presented me with a packet of stamps for my birthday. Though this gift was with love and good cheer, it could not overcome the feelings of humiliation, alienation and loss. I was not free to dream beyond the barbed wire, guard towers and mountains that bounded our prison. To this day I cannot look with joy or wonder at my old collection for it reminds me of the terrible days at Manzanar.

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cept of people helping people, was dimmed. But the most important loss suffered by the injustice of our internment was the rule of law and the primacy of the Constitution as the cornerstone of our rights.

The poet Derek Walcott has written, "Either I 'm a nobody or I'm nation." Author Russell Banks claims our essential, individual identities depend upon our ability to view ourselves as a people. The identity of Japanese Americans was shattered by the incarceration and the scorn directed towards them. But America is a nation that views people as an inclusive term beyond race, religion or ethnicity. People reached out to Japanese Americans and offered them grants and scholarships for colleges and universities, jobs, housing and welcome help in settling in new communities in the East and Midwest. During the internment there was a popular song that was ironic but yet, a hopeful anthem of healing. The song, called "The House I Live In," included these words:

What is America to me?
A name, a map or a flag I see?
A certain word, democracy?
What is America to me?
The house I live in, a plot of earth, a street,
the grocer and the butcher and the people that
I meet,
the children in the playground, the faces that
I see,
all races and religions, that's America to me.

friendships built over years were dissolved in an instant. There was catastrophic suffering, tragic loss of property and great fear and sorrow. We left under a cloud of suspicion and scorn. This disquietude was further enhanced when I was curtly escorted from the principal's office to my locker to retrieve my personal belongings and then escorted to the school entrance without a word of concern or encouragement or farewell.

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Union Station Los Angeles, 1942

This presentiment came to pass on April 1st as we were ordered to Manzanar to be interned. We prepared for Manzanar with a sense of duty and optimism. But on arrival at Union Station for our departure we were met by a host of helmeted soldiers with sidearms and rifles with fixed bayonets. We were given a box lunch consisting of a peanut butter sandwich and an orange. The windows of the train were shuttered and a detachment of soldiers accompanied us. The cars were crowded with families

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lies dressed in their Sunday best. There was no air conditioning. In this darkened, muggy, closed atmosphere there was an eerie silence—muffled conversations and the occasional cry of an infant. The faces could not hide the fear, worry and anguish.

We arrived at Manzanar as the sun was beginning to set and for the first time in that interminable day we heard friendly kind words uttered by fellow internees who greeted us and helped us to get settled in our first night behind guard towers and barbed wire. We arrived at Manzanar impoverished, frightened for our safety, fearful of our future, humiliated,



Arrival at Manzanar, 1942

alienated, grieving our loss of friends, property and familiar surroundings. We suffered most grievously a loss of nationality and because nationality is an essential component of identity we suffered a diminishing of self. But the internment and institutional living also put great stress on the family. Communities were scattered and destroyed, culture was devalued and that beacon of democracy, the concept of people helping people, was dimmed.

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