



# Foundation Document Overview

## Amache National Historic Site

Colorado



### Contact Information

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## Description

Amache National Historic Site was designated by Congress on March 18, 2022 (Public Law [PL] 117-106) to preserve, protect, and interpret resources associated with the incarceration and military service of civilians of Japanese ancestry during World War II at the Granada Relocation Center—more commonly known as Amache. The act also directs the National Park Service (NPS) to interpret the public reaction to the incarceration of Japanese Americans in Colorado and the transition and resettlement of incarcerated and their descendants after the closure of the camp. Amache is also included in the Japanese American World War II History Network established on December 29, 2022 (PL 117-328, Division DD—Public Land Management, Section 645).

Before World War II, Granada, Colorado, was a small farming community on the high plains of Colorado with a population of 342 in 1940. Incorporated in 1887 in territory historically associated with the Ute, Cheyenne, Apache, and Arapaho peoples, Granada served as a stop on the Atchinson, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway and, for a short time, was one of the largest towns of the Colorado High Plains. Railroad reroutes and two major fires in the early 1890s decimated the population and business community, but by the 1930s, Granada was one of many rural, agricultural towns along the Colorado section of US Highway 50's transcontinental transportation corridor.

After Imperial Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, political leaders and the media urged government action against Japanese Americans, stoking long-standing racism and prejudicial policies against Asian Americans on the West Coast. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the military to forcibly exclude "any or all persons" deemed a threat to national defense from "military areas" within the United States.



Incarcerated began coming to Amache at the end of August 1942. By the end of October 1942, 7,567 Japanese Americans had arrived at Amache. Courtesy of the Amache Preservation Society.

Under the direction of Lieutenant General John L. Dewitt, the US Army divided the West Coast into military zones and applied the order to everyone of Japanese ancestry in California and Alaska and portions of Washington, Oregon, and Arizona, including more than 70,000 US citizens. One-third were under the age of 18. Ultimately, the US government deprived more than 125,000 people of their freedom and civil liberties through unjust incarceration during World War II.

On June 3, 1942, US Army Colonel Karl Bendetsen informed Colorado Governor Ralph L. Carr that a site in southeastern Colorado had been selected for one of the 10 War Relocation Authority (WRA) incarceration camps designed to forcibly hold people removed from the West Coast. The lands covered approximately 10,500 acres south of the Arkansas River and extended 3 miles west and 4 miles east of Granada. While the other nine WRA camps were placed on federal, Tribal, or publicly owned land, Amache was the only incarceration site to be primarily built on private ranch and farmland that the government purchased by condemnation.

Although Amache was the smallest of the 10 incarceration sites, with a capacity of 8,000 residents, the camp became the largest community in southeastern Colorado and the 10th largest "city" in the state based on 1940 population counts. Given its size, a separate postal designation was required to reduce confusion between the incarceration site and the Town of Granada. The name "Amache" was suggested by Mayor R. L. Christy of Lamar, Colorado, in honor of Amache Ochinee Prowers, a Southern Cheyenne woman who married the county's namesake John Prowers. Her name in Cheyenne is Ameohtse'e, which means Walking Woman.



Ameohtse'e (Walking Woman/Amache) was also the daughter of O'kenehe (Ochinee/One-Eye), a prominent Cheyenne Chief who was murdered during the Sand Creek Massacre. The connection between the incarceration site and the Cheyenne goes beyond a name; the land on which the camp was situated is part of ceded treaty lands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche. These lands were also used for trade and traditional gatherings by other Tribes and are still significant to Indigenous traditions.

Portrait of Ameohtse'e (1846–1905), daughter of Southern Cheyenne chief O'kenehe and wife of John Wesley Prowers, circa 1860. Courtesy of History Colorado's Stephen H. Hart Research Center.

## Description

Incarcerated individuals embraced the camp's unofficial name, often referring to themselves as Amacheans.

Some of the first incarcerated individuals arrived from the West Coast in August 1942. Those sent to Amache came primarily from three areas of California: the northern San Francisco Bay area, primarily Sonoma County; Central California, namely the San Joaquin Valley; and southwestern Los Angeles. Colorado was outside the designated West Coast military exclusion zone; Japanese and Japanese Americans living in the state, or who moved there during the "voluntary evacuation period," were not subject to the executive order and subsequent incarceration, though they were still impacted by these wartime orders. Although the population at Amache was a mix of families from both urban and rural areas, farming communities were slightly more numerous, and Amache developed one of the most productive agricultural programs of the incarceration sites. Japanese Americans at Amache attempted to build a new community behind barbed wire.

A few of the key places developed by incarcerated individuals included the Amache co-op and silk screen shop. Started as a temporary soda pop stand in late August 1942, the co-op grew into a highly organized and structured business made up of a large sales section and numerous service departments housed in multiple buildings that included a warehouse, a security building, and an office. The Amache silk screen shop was created at the request of the US Navy to fulfill large orders of silk screen posters but expanded to produce materials for Amache organizations, groups, clubs, and even the camp administration. By the time the silk screen shop closed, it had printed over 250,000 posters for the US Navy and countless prints for use within Amache.



The Amache silk screen shop. Courtesy of the George Ochikubo Collection, Denshō: The Japanese American Legacy Project.



The Newman Drug Company in Granada was a popular spot for incarcerated individuals to shop when in town. Edward Newman, who owned the store, employed Japanese Americans from Amache and frequently bought advertisement space in the Amache High School yearbook. Courtesy of the George Ochikubo Collection, Denshō: The Japanese American Legacy Project.

The nearest town to Amache was within walking distance; it was less than 2 miles from Amache's entrance gates to the community of Granada. This proximity allowed the two communities to rely on each other and eventually develop a unique relationship, despite moments of friction. Although some businesses and locals were not welcoming to their Japanese American neighbors, most were glad for the business and began to cater to the needs of their customers. Granada did not have a movie theater, but Amache screened movies in recreation halls almost daily. Local townspeople visited the camp to view movies with the incarcerated individuals. Visitation to Amache also extended to communities beyond Granada. Amache's agricultural fairs and art shows drew hundreds of attendees from around the region.

In January 1945, the government rescinded mass exclusion orders and announced that the camps would close later in the year. When it officially closed on October 15, 1945, Amache had been in operation just over three years (1,146 days); a total of 10,331 Japanese Americans passed through the site. Those formerly incarcerated at Amache were given train tickets to destinations of their choice and \$25. Most people returned to their cities and communities in California, although not always immediately. Some families found work in Colorado, staying until they had saved money and arranged another place to live in California. Others decided to make Colorado their new home. The state of Colorado was second only to Illinois as a destination for resettlement by the end of the war. Of the 6,108 Japanese Americans resettling in Colorado after the mass exclusion was lifted, more than half settled in Denver, doubling the city's Japanese American population.

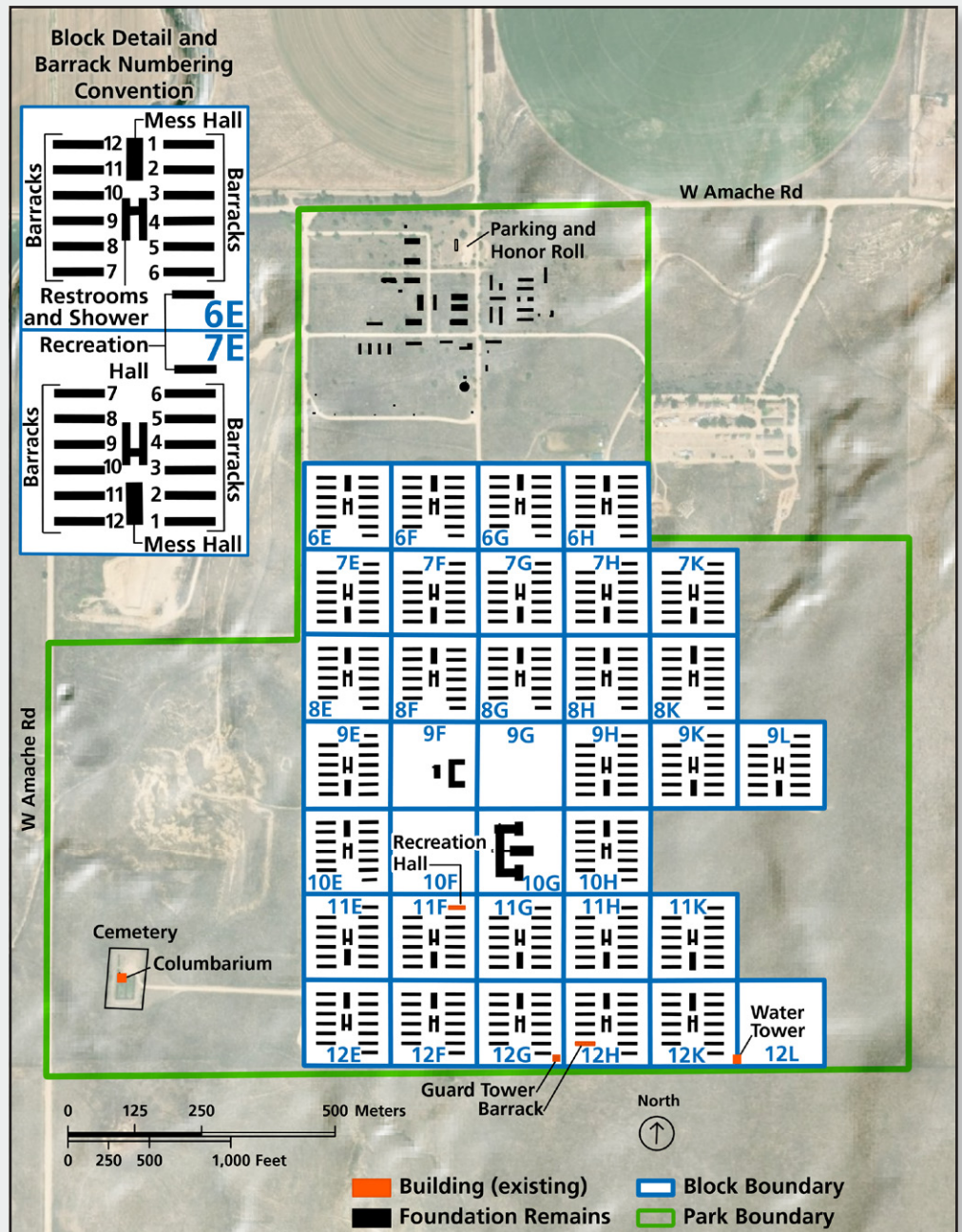
# Description

After Amache's closure, the core residential area was sold to the Town of Granada, and the surrounding agricultural land was leased—and later sold—to local farmers. The buildings associated with the incarceration camp were either sold and removed from the site or demolished. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Japanese American community members from Denver initiated preservation efforts and began annual pilgrimages back to Amache. These local efforts were part of the larger, nationwide movement within the Japanese American community to demand formal

recognition of the US government's wartime actions and to seek redress. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988, signed by President Ronald Reagan more than four decades after the close of World War II, acknowledged the violation of Japanese Americans' civil liberties and rights due to "race prejudice, war hysteria, and the failure of political leadership" and offered a formal apology and reparations to those who had been forcibly held at the WRA sites.

In the early 1990s, then-Granada High School social studies teacher John Hopper gave his class an assignment to investigate the history of the abandoned site just down the road. This research and interest grew and expanded and eventually led to the establishment of the Amache Preservation Society. The society's projects, supported by a variety of organizations, institutions, and state and federal preservation grants, spurred broader public interest in learning about this period of US history and preserving the site. Amache was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1994 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 2006. In the last decade, several WWII-era buildings have been reconstructed or located and returned to the site, and extensive archeological documentation of the site has occurred. Visitors to the site can view the rebuilt structures, navigate the historic roads and building blocks, and learn from interpretive waysides.

The site is one of several unique NPS units established to tell the story of Japanese American incarceration during World War II that also include Manzanar National Historic Site, California (1992); Minidoka National Historic Site, Idaho (2001); Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial, Washington (2008); Tule Lake National Monument, California (2008); and Honouliuli National Historic Site, Hawaii (2015).



## Purpose



Amache in December 1942. Courtesy of Robert Y. Fuchigami and the North Bay Ethnic Digital Collection, Sonoma State University.

*Located near Granada, Colorado, AMACHE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE preserves, protects, and interprets the history, resources, and landscape where Japanese American citizens and legal residents of Japanese ancestry were unjustly incarcerated by the US government during World War II. The historic site honors the experiences of incarcerated, educates the public about the lasting impacts of incarceration on survivors and descendants, and encourages reflection and conversations about systemic racism, civil liberties, and the importance of maintaining national values in times of crisis.*

## Significance

Significance statements express why Amache National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

1. Amache National Historic Site preserves and interprets the site of Granada Relocation Center (Amache) where more than 10,000 people were denied their civil liberties by the federal government during World War II. The site offers a unique setting to examine the history of unjust incarceration during World War II, and its enduring lessons for upholding constitutional and human rights.
2. Amache is one of the most visibly intact examples of a WRA incarceration site of World War II. The concrete foundations of barracks and communal buildings, original gravel roads and infrastructure, and reconstructed buildings help convey the regimentation, crowding, and lack of privacy that was experienced at Amache.
3. Community archeology and oral histories have revealed the degree to which incarcerated transformed the landscape of a WRA incarceration site. Archeological remains of gardens, sports fields, and other examples of material culture illustrate how individuals lived inside the camp. Ongoing research at the site continues to provide avenues for deeper understanding, reflection, and education.
4. Colorado's less hostile political environment and an existing Japanese American community encouraged more Japanese Americans to move to Colorado than any other state during the "voluntary evacuation" of 1942. Governor Ralph S. Carr emerged as an important ally, first welcoming Japanese American citizens to move to the state and then defending and protecting those incarcerated at Amache.

# Significance



During the years they were held at Amache, over 3,000 incarcerated were employed by the War Relocation Authority in the agricultural and farming programs. Courtesy of the Amache Preservation Society.

- Amacheans developed one of the most productive agricultural programs of the 10 WRA incarceration sites. Japanese American farmers at Amache introduced new agricultural products and innovative farming techniques that continue to influence Colorado's agricultural industry.
- Amache was the only incarceration site where the entirety of land was privately owned and acquired by the US government through eminent domain. The condemnation represents a recurring pattern of government displacement in this region that includes the contested taking of Mexican territory and the removal of the Southern Cheyenne from established treaty lands.
- Amacheans created unique opportunities for entrepreneurial endeavors and creative expression within the regimented incarceration camp, including the silk screen shop and Amache Consumers Enterprises, Inc. (the Amache co-op).
- Amache had the highest percentage of incarcerated voluntarily entering military service of any incarceration site created by the War Relocation Authority. More than 950 men and women from Amache served in the military. Amacheans were part of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, 100 Infantry Battalion, Military Intelligence Service, Navy Japanese Language School at University Colorado-Boulder, Women's Army Corps, and the Nursing Corps.

- Amache was closer to an existing town than any other WRA site. The geographic proximity to Granada created an opportunity for regular interactions between Amacheans, Granada residents, and local businesses—a complex connection that continues to evolve.
- The forced removal and resettlement during World War II effectively dispersed the Japanese American community across the United States. Thousands of former Amacheans remained in Colorado. Some moved to Denver, one of the designated “resettlement locations” established by the US government, to continue the systemic dispersal of Japanese Americans away from the West Coast. There, Japanese Americans helped grow the city's Japantown.
- A long history of preservation and memorialization exists at Amache. Many organizations and individuals in the Japanese American, academic, and preservation communities have been involved in preservation, research, and programs of remembrance at the site. Locally, the Amache Preservation Society, a unique school-sponsored program organized in the 1990s, has allowed generations of young people to be involved with the preservation of the former WRA incarceration site and its interpretation to the wider public.



John Hopper (right) was instrumental in starting the Amache Preservation Society. He and the society's student members from Granada High School have long cared for and interpreted Amache for the public. NPS photo.

## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Archeological and Cultural Landscape**
- **Restored, Reconstructed, and Relocated Buildings**
- **Amache Cemetery**
- **Collections, Archives, and Personal Stories**
- **Community and Cultural Connections**
- **Partnerships**

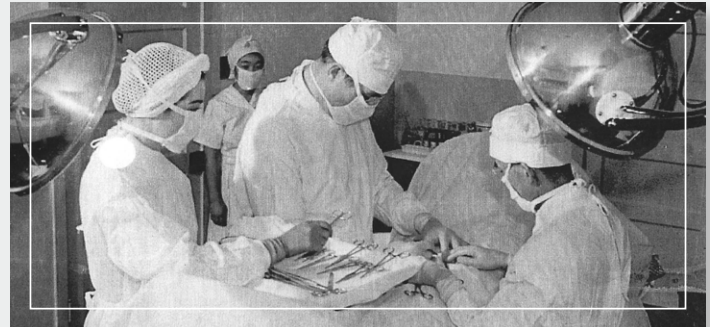


The first formal pilgrimage to Amache was part of Colorado's state centennial commemoration in 1975–1976. Since then, survivors, descendants, members of the Japanese American community, and others have taken part in the annual memorial service to honor those who died while incarcerated at Amache or while serving in the US military. NPS photo.

## Related Resources

Related resources are typically not owned by the National Park Service. They may be part of the broader context or setting in which park resources exist, represent a thematic connection that enhances the experience of visitors, or have close associations with park fundamental resources and the purpose of the park. The related resource represents a connection with the park that often reflects an area of mutual benefit or interest, and an opportunity for collaboration between the park and owner or manager of the related resource.

- **Museum Collection and Archives Held by the Amache Preservation Society and the University of Denver (DU) Amache Project**
- **Buildings Relocated from Amache and/or Constructed from Brick Originating at Amache**
- **World War II-Era Buildings in Granada**



Incarcerees with medical backgrounds worked in the Amache hospital and clinics. Chief resident Japanese physician Dr. S. Yamada and resident physician Dr. Gerald A. Duffy perform an emergency appendectomy at Amache Hospital. Courtesy of the Amache Preservation Society.



Art was an important part of life for Amacheans, as shown in this 1942 photo of an artist working on a watercolor of the Amache landscape. Courtesy of the Amache Preservation Society.

## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- The forced removal of people of Japanese descent to incarceration sites like Amache lays bare the fragility of civil liberties guaranteed in the Constitution, when hate, fear, racism, and war hysteria are allowed to go unchecked.
- Balancing hope and despair daily, those incarcerated at Amache found many ways to move forward with their lives, striving to create a sense of normalcy and community despite ongoing uncertainty and harsh living conditions.
- Amache’s geographic location near the existing town of Granada, Colorado, resulted in complex connections between different individuals and groups in the area. Complicated interactions developed among individuals living in Amache and Granada; incarcerated families new to Colorado and the environmental conditions of the high plains; Japanese, Indigenous, and European American cultures and groups; and connected communities whose evolution has been, and continues to be, integral to shaping Amache’s lasting impact and meaning.



The Amache Museum in Granada is operated by the Amache Preservation Society. It houses a collection of over 1,400 historic objects associated with Amache. NPS photo.



Amache was scheduled for closure on October 15, 1945. Here, two young girls leave the site by truck for the Granada railroad station. When they left Amache, each incarcerated was issued a ticket to their destination and \$25 to restart their lives. Courtesy of Robert Y. Fuchigami and the North Bay Ethnic Digital Collection, Sonoma State University.

- The struggle to overcome the lasting injustices of incarceration caused by the US government’s deliberate fracturing of the Japanese American community continues to impact Amache survivors and descendants as they wrestle with intergenerational trauma—the ongoing effects of traumatic events passed through generations of families and communities, cultural disruption, physical dispersal, and challenged identities.
- Amache provides an opportunity for civic engagement around the violation of US constitutional rights and the survivor redress movement, which resulted in an apology from the US government. Despite the government’s apology and reparations to survivors, opinions about the injustices faced during World War II have never been static.
- Amache National Historic Site serves as a powerful place to gather, honor, and heal from the mass trauma and lasting impacts of the incarceration and, through acknowledgment and remembrance, inspire continuing dialogue about how to create a more just society.