

Public Archeology 2009

Manzanar National Historic Site



You are invited to help the National Park Service conduct archeological investigations and stabilization at Manzanar. The main focus of this year's work will be at three unique World War II era features: the relocation center Chicken Farm, the Camouflage Net Factory, and Merritt Park. Uncovering and restoring these areas will help increase visitor understanding of the internee experience, as well as protect these important resources.

The abundant and substantial remains at the internee-built chicken farm show the extent the government went to in its efforts to make Manzanar as self-sufficient as possible. The net factory, which made camouflage nets for the U.S. Army, is emblematic of the many ways in which the internees supported the war effort in spite of their incarceration. Archeological work at these areas will consist of clearing brush, uncovering concrete slabs, restoring rock alignments, repairing two collapsed walls, and detailed mapping.

Merritt Park, the largest internee-built landscape feature remaining at any of the ten relocation centers, was a source of community pride during the internment and it remains so today. Last year volunteers uncovered two large ponds, two waterfalls, a rock-lined stream course, rock walls, stepping stones, and the remains of a tea house. This year we will excavate a possible Dutch oven, locate fenceposts and other small landscape features, and restore one or more rangui (wood post) walls.

Park Archeologist Jeff Burton is recruiting volunteers to assist with these projects. Work will be from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, July 3 to 7, July 31 to August 4, and August 28 to September 2, 2009. You may volunteer any number of days, and any number of hours, but a full day (and multiple days) is preferred. The work will be conducted outdoors, regardless of weather. Please be prepared.



Henry Nishi at his father's pond



Previous archeological experience is not necessary. While much of the work is physically demanding, there will be a variety of tasks each day appropriate for anyone. All that is needed is an interest in history and a willingness to get dirty.

If you are interested in participating and for local lodging options, please contact Manzanar Volunteer Program Manager, Carrie Andresen at 760-878-2194 x2714 or Carrie_Andresen@nps.gov

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Merritt Park waterfall before excavation



Merritt Park waterfall after excavation

Work involves a variety of tasks, including:

- counting, recording, and cleaning artifacts
- pruning trees, raking, and removing brush and debris
- uncovering and recording features
- repairing concrete
- reconstructing landscape features
- detailed mapping
- digging with shovels, picks, and small hand tools
- operating wheelbarrows
- screening sediments to retrieve artifacts
- taking notes, filling out forms and labels
- or assisting others in these and other tasks