



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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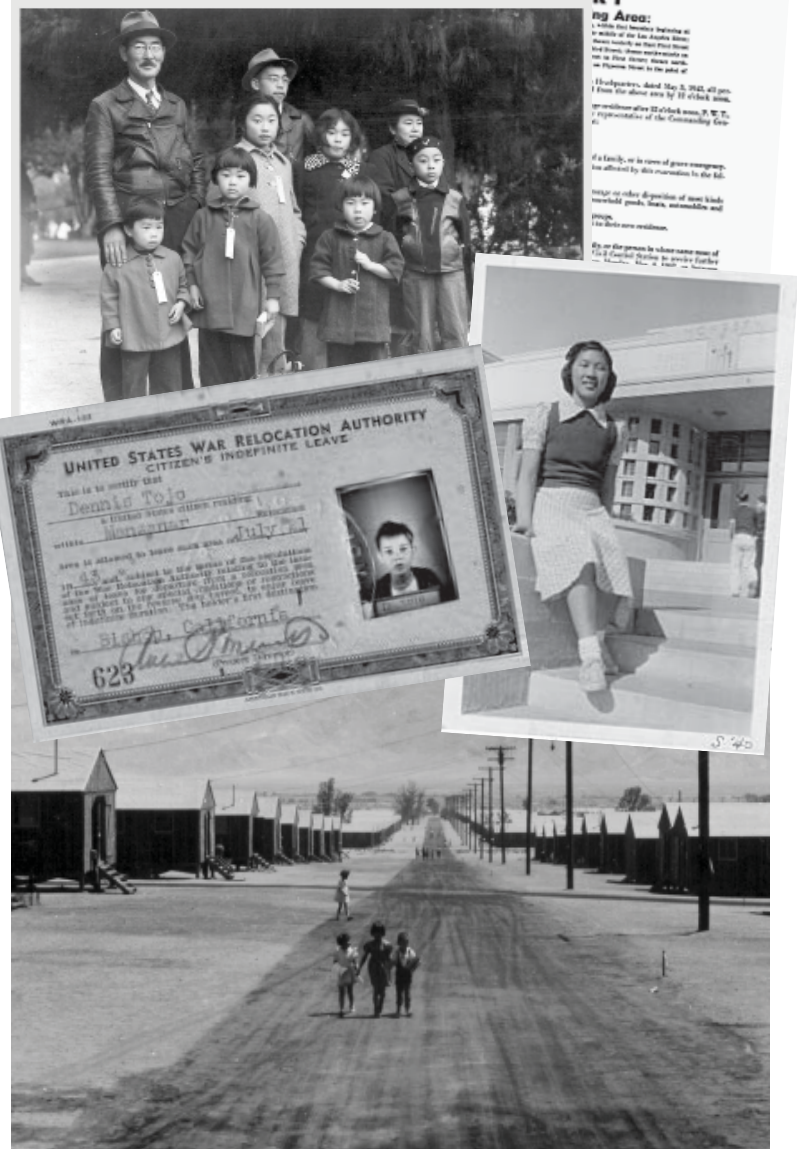
Manzanar

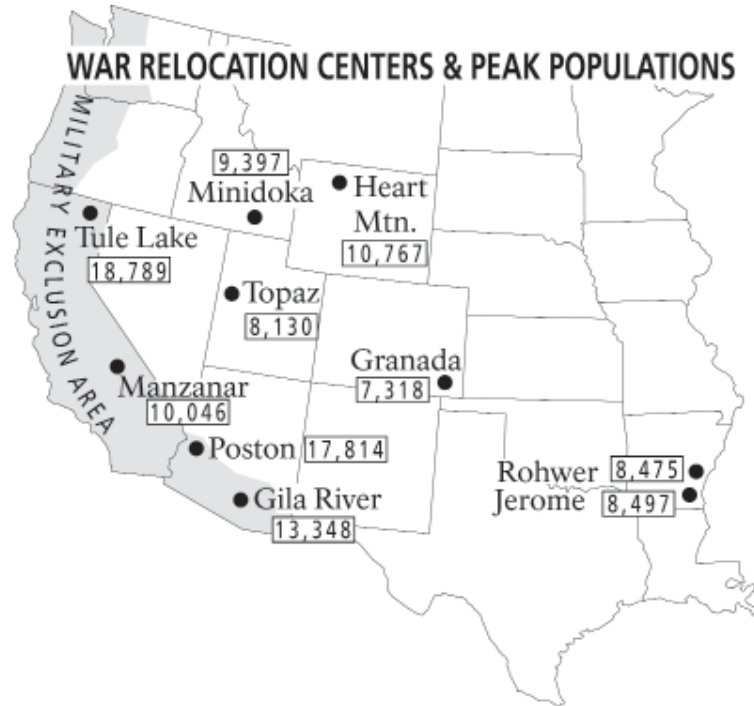


ID Card

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

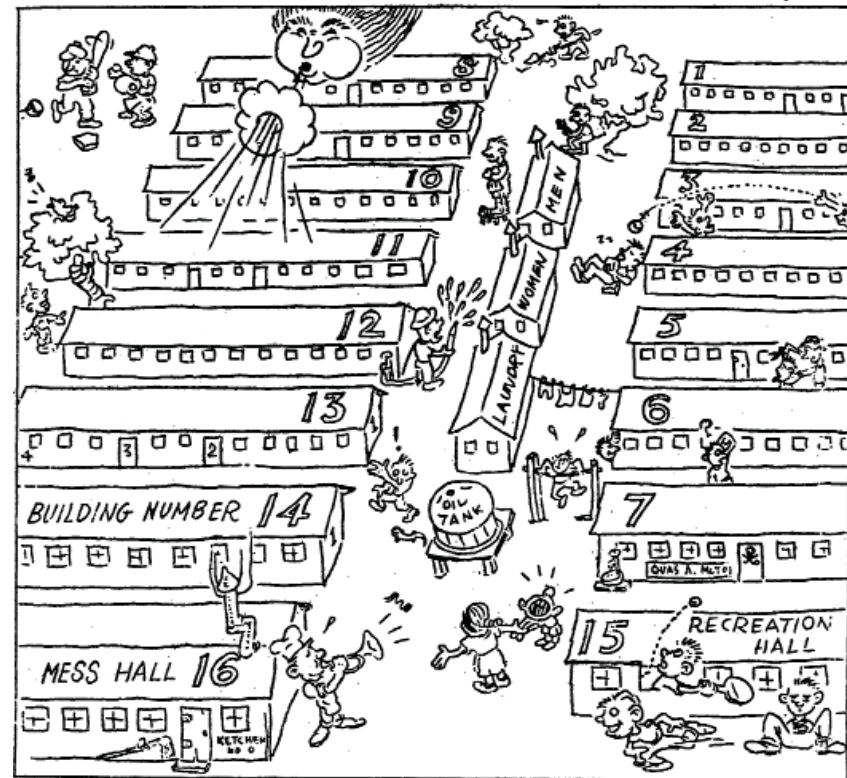
INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY





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.

MIDORI KUNITOMI IWATA

Family # 2614

Camp: Manzanar, CA

Address: 20-3-1



Midori, Tets & Sue in Los Angeles, 1932

My parents were from Okayama Japan; father leaving for America during the Japan-China war. The family sent his second cousin to marry father. They settled in Hollywood. Father started a transfer and express business and mother raised my five brothers, two sisters, and me.

Going to school on the bus was very uncomfortable with people staring and making comments.

I was attending Lincoln High School and was a senior when the war started. Going to school on the bus was very uncomfortable with people staring and making comments. School life was no different than before.

When the evacuation order was issued, we had to sell the grocery store, car and refrigerator in a hurry. We took only what we could carry to camp. The train trip was uneventful, but I was afraid because the destination was unknown.

Seven of us were assigned to one room in Block 20-3-1 and given family #02614. We had to fill mattress covers with straw and take it to our room. Before leaving Los Angeles, my junior high school homeroom teacher came to say goodbye. To this day, we are still in touch with one another.

I was 17 when we went to camp so my main worry was graduating high school. I was in the first graduating class and so we really didn't learn anything. We had to sit on the floor since there were no chairs or desks.

After graduation I worked as a secretary to Director Walter Heath of the Relocation Office. We assisted residents in getting jobs and relocating outside of California.

Our block had many young people so we were able to have block dances. I enjoyed the occasional movies and musical plays put on by the music teacher Louis Frizzell. I did not belong to any social or sports clubs, but enjoyed watching my boyfriend participate in basketball and baseball.

The only things that stand out in my memory are the terrible windstorms and the lack of privacy.

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I worked as a secretary in various offices but never experienced prejudice or any unpleasantness from anyone. I was encouraged to learn shorthand and typing by my brother since he felt that was the only chance I had to earn a living because of my Asian ancestry. But many jobs opened up for us after the war ended.

Camp life was difficult for many people, but being a teenager I was able to adjust and adapt myself easily. Mother was very bitter about evacuation and camp life and wanted to return to Japan. But she was very proud when three of her sons went into the U.S. Army.