

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

Residential Area:

1. Write the address hereafter at a station on the San Antonio River. Do not locate on East First Street and do not locate westward of East First Street. House numbers are to be placed here on the west side of the street.

2. Occupants, dated May 3, 1942, all persons from the above area by 12 o'clock noon or earlier after 12 o'clock noon, P. M. T., representative of the Commanding General.

3. If a family, or in case of grave emergency, as allowed by this instruction to the Adjutant General, or other disposition of area lands, including public lands, easements and property.

4. Do not use any building.

5. Do not use any building in which there is any fire hazard. See War Relocation Authority Manual, May 3, 1942, or hereafter.





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.

MAS SEGIMOTO

Family # 4524

Camp: Manzanar, CA

Address: 10-5-4

My father Katsutaro Segimoto came to the United States in 1906, and my mother Kiso Dakeno in 1920. Both came from the Wakayama prefecture in Japan. The marriage was arranged by their parents in Japan, and my mother came to this country as a "picture bride."



My father worked as a commercial fisherman in Terminal Island. He was a crew member on boats that net-fished for sardines and mackerel. My mother worked at the canneries, processing the freshly caught fish.

There were four children in our family, three girls and one boy. My oldest sister had graduated from high school,

and left home to work in San Pedro. The rest of us were in school. I was in the sixth grade in the Mildred Obarr Walizer Elementary School, in Terminal Island. All the students were of Japanese descent, and we spoke Japanese in school and outside.

At 12, I was too young at the time to fully realize the consequences of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, however there was some anxiety, and fear that acts of violence might occur in our community.

My father and all other Japanese fishermen in our community were arrested by the FBI as soon as the fishing boats returned to the harbor, on December 8. He was allowed to unload the fish, but given no time to change clothes before he was taken away to the immigration station on Terminal Island. My mother was without a job since no more fish were being caught or processed.

We were given the privilege of visiting my father, who had been moved to the Tujunga detention facility, a former CCC camp. There were guards standing in front of us and we had to speak English, which nobody knew, so we used sign language to communicate with him.

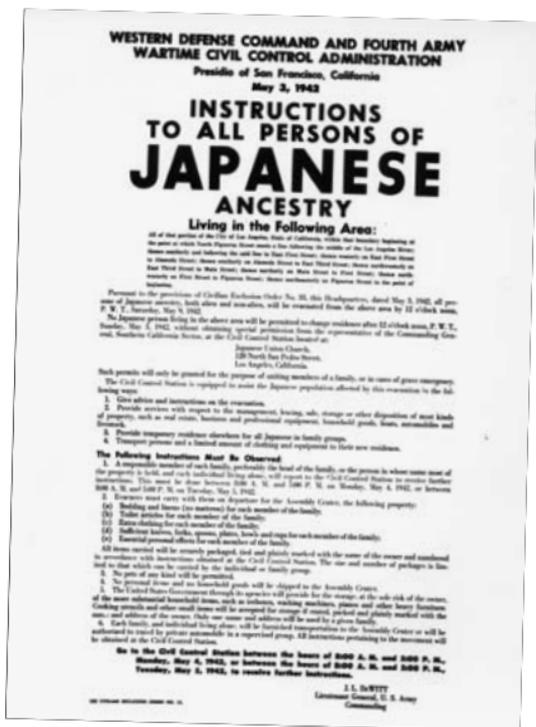
Many of our belongings were left behind when the family left Terminal Island and moved in with our father's cousin in North Hollywood. This was weeks before the

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Navy ordered all Japanese families to evacuate Terminal Island within 48 hours. We had hardly any valuable items to start with, except for bare necessities, so there was no great concern to dispose or sell the items.

We were allowed to take anything we could carry ourselves to the relocation camp. I took only clothing and some of my mother's items in my bag. I didn't have any cherished items, so I had no difficulty in leaving anything behind. There was one box camera, considered contraband, which we turned over to the authorities.

My entire family, except for my father who was interned in North Dakota at this time, went directly to the Manzanar War Relocation Center. My father was later transferred to Fort Missoula, Montana, and finally to Santa Fe Internment Camp, New Mexico. I wrote him a letter in English, and he wrote back but there were many parts of his letter crossed out by the censors. It was two years later before he was released and rejoined the family at Manzanar.



My first impression of Manzanar was, "What a desolate place this is," so barren and dusty. People from the close knit community of Terminal Island came together and occupied blocks nine and ten and portions of two other adjacent blocks.

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The first thing we did when we arrived was set up the room, and prepare the beds for sleeping. This involved filling the long fabric bag with straw, and this became your mattress. There were two families in our unit. To create some privacy, we hung blankets suspended from the ceiling to serve as partitions. The second family that shared the apartment later moved, as barracks construction was completed.



Manzanar under construction, 1942

Later, I don't know how long it was, linoleum was installed to cover the cracks in the floor, to keep dust from entering the room during dust storms.

The majority of people in camp were *Nisei* (sons or daughters of immigrants from Japan), and most spoke English. But it was strange for me to speak English in school, since we had spoken strictly Japanese at my former grammar school.

I started seventh grade at Manzanar. Each classroom occupied one of the four units of each barrack. The condition of these learning quarters was as expected, considering the overall construction was just like our living quarters.

My most enjoyable moments in camp were participating in sports like baseball and basketball. One member in our block who was athletic-minded built a horizontal bar, rings, and parallel bars for the



Students Practice Judo

boys. I had wanted to take judo lessons before the war, but my family couldn't afford them. So when the judo building was completed, I joined up immediately and reached green belt level.

I was considered one of the naughty boys who snuck out a lot to go fishing. Security relaxed over time, and it was easy sneaking past those empty guard towers.

One memorable event was sneaking out of camp in the early morning with two older buddies from Terminal Island, and hiking well up toward Mount Williamson, having lunch and going fishing on one of the local creeks (I didn't catch anything). I was considered one of the naughty boys who snuck out a lot to

go fishing. Security relaxed over time, and it was easy sneaking past those empty guard towers. When I reached the creeks, I would tie a line on a straight branch and I was ready to fish.

I left camp at 16, in September 1945, and went directly to Seabrook Farms in New Jersey. My older sister and her friend, after graduating Manzanar High, had left for Seabrook in 1944, followed by my mother and another sister.

Our housing at Seabrook reminded me of the Manzanar camp. The barracks were long and narrow, holding four or five apartments. Each unit was divided into small rooms, with their own kitchens and bathrooms, so there was much more privacy than we had at Manzanar.

I attended high school in neighboring Bridgeton, with many students who came to Seabrook Farms from other relocation camps. I graduated in 1948, with 43 other Japanese Americans. We held a 50 year reunion in 1998, and all of them were still alive.

Living in camp affected me very little in regard to attitude or sense of goal. Going to school in New Jersey awakened me to the need for higher education to escape the blue-collar class of my parents' generation. There was much competition among the *Nisei* students to earn good grades at high school, which had a significant effect on my attitude toward education and career. Inspired by my high school chemistry teacher, I chose to pursue a career in chemical engineering.

My father settled in Long Beach and returned to fishing. He made enough money to put me through college. After finishing college, I volunteered for two years of military service and then spent the next 38 years working with reinforced plastics in the aerospace and defense industries.

When my wife and I go fishing in the Eastern Sierra we will turn into Manzanar. And I will say, "This is where I used to live." I have no bitterness about this place, just positive memories.

When...I go fishing in the Eastern Sierra and turn into Manzanar I say, "This is where I used to live." I have no bitterness...just positive memories.

My advice for any young student is to evaluate yourself, and earn a living in something you like doing. Prepare yourself during your high school years, and pursue your goal by receiving higher education in your chosen field.

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.

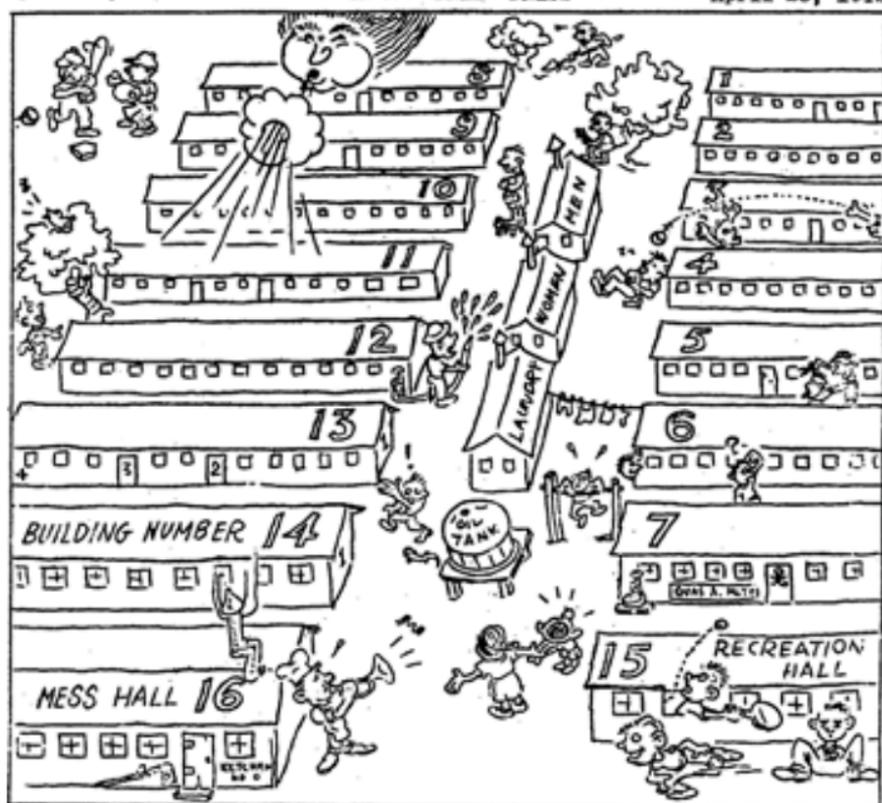
Acreage: 6,000

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.



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