

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

POSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, UNIT I

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Poston Elementary School, Unit 1
Colorado River Relocation Center

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Poston Road 0.4 miles west of Mohave Road

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Parker

Vicinity: X

State: AZ

County: La Paz

Code: 012

Zip Code: 85371

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: ___

Public-Local: ___

Public-State: ___

Public-Federal: ___

Tribal Lands: X

Category of Property

Building(s): ___

District: X

Site: ___

Structure: ___

Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

10

0

6

0

16

Noncontributing

6 buildings

0 sites

9 structures

0 objects

15 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: Japanese Americans in World War II Theme Study

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ___meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ Entered in the National Register
- ___ Determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
- ___ Removed from the National Register
- ___ Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	DEFENSE	Sub: Military Facility/Relocation Center
	EDUCATION	Sub: School
	AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE	Sub: Irrigation Facility
Current:	VACANT/NOT IN USE	
	AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE	Sub: Irrigation Facility

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Modern Movements

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Concrete
Walls: Adobe, Wood
Roof: Asphalt
Other:

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INTRODUCTION

After President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on 19 February 1942, more than 120,000 Japanese Americans were removed from their homes and detained in a system of government assembly and relocation centers. The Colorado River Relocation Center (Poston) in Arizona became the second of ten relocation facilities to open, was one of the longest operated, and served as the largest of the centers until November 1943. Uniquely, Poston was the only facility that housed evacuees in three separate camps (Poston I, II, and III), and it contained the largest number of residents who arrived directly from their homes. Located on the Colorado River Indian Reservation, the center also held a unique position within the relocation system due to its administration by the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) during 1942 and 1943. That agency's plans for improvement and management of the site reflected philosophies and policies developed through its traditional work with Native Americans. It envisioned employing Japanese American labor in the completion of a long-promised irrigation system that would turn the valley into a productive agricultural area and in the construction of permanent buildings that would benefit the reservation's inhabitants long after the relocation center closed.

The lives of Japanese Americans at the center and the impact of OIA plans on the people and the site are represented by the remaining historic resources. Within the nominated area is the only standing elementary school complex within a former relocation center, as well as portions of two irrigation ditches. A Japanese American architect, Yoshisaku Hirose, designed the school buildings; evacuees drafted the plans and manufactured the adobe blocks used in their construction, and residents of the center erected the buildings. Japanese American laborers participated in construction of the irrigation system that provided water for landscaping of living areas, established agricultural programs, and created recreational facilities. The property is significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 1 for its association with nationally significant events identified with and representative of broad patterns in American history during World War II and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained. The property is significant in the areas of politics and government (The Relocation Decision), ethnic heritage (Japanese American History), and social history (History of Minorities in the U.S.). The *Japanese Americans in World War II Theme Study* recommended the Poston elementary school area for further study as a potential National Historic Landmark, "assuming its ability to testify to its national significance survives."¹

The nominated portion of the Colorado River Relocation Center encompasses a site within the evacuee living area known as Poston I, occupied by Japanese Americans during 1942-1945. The nominated area consists of twenty-two acres of land in extreme western Arizona on the reservation of the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT). The remote locale is 169 miles south of Las Vegas, 131 miles west of Phoenix, and 229 miles east of Los Angeles. The site is in La Paz County, southwest of the town of Parker, and lies about 3.5 miles east of the Colorado River, which forms the state's border with California (See Figure 1). Alexander H. Leighton described the approach to the Colorado River Relocation Center from Parker during World War II:

Just beyond the [Indian] Agency the ground drops suddenly almost to the level of the Colorado and spreads southward in a widening plain of heat-shimmered green through which the river flows between deserts and rock mountains. For several miles along the dusty roads, there are meadows with cattle, or fields for cotton, and on the banks of the irrigation ditches occasional lofty tamarisk and cottonwoods create shade. Farther on, the wilderness closes in and the road bumps along between dust-laden mesquite and creosote bushes until at a point 17 miles from Parker the site of the first evacuee camp [Poston I] is reached.²

¹ National Park Service, National Historic Landmarks Survey, *Japanese Americans in World War II: A National Historic Landmark Theme Study, Draft* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, February 2005), 60, 65, 90.

² Alexander H. Leighton, *The Governing of Men* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1945), 54-55.

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Located in the northern Sonoran Desert, the annual precipitation at Poston averages less than four inches, the average daily maximum temperature in the area exceeds one hundred degrees during the summer, and snow and temperatures in the thirties occur at times in winter. Elevations within the relocation center site vary from 330' above sea level at the northern end to 313' at the southern end.³

HISTORIC PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

When it opened in 1942, the Colorado River Relocation Center occupied a site encompassing 71,600 acres (See Figure 2). The tract included land “highly suited” for irrigation as well as land “so highly impregnated with salts and alkali that cultivation would be difficult.”⁴ Unlike most other war relocation centers that featured a single developed area, Poston included three separate camps containing housing and other facilities for twenty thousand evacuees.⁵ Poston I, the first built and farthest unit north, had a capacity of ten thousand evacuees, while Poston II and III to the south were planned to house five thousand residents each (See Figures 2 and 3).⁶ The camps consisted of grids of clustered blocks delineated by streets and separated by undeveloped fire breaks, some of which contained irrigation ditches. Functional areas within each unit accommodated a variety of activities, and included evacuee housing, administrative offices, warehouses, sewage and water facilities, garages, and schools. Irrigated fields and agricultural facilities occupied outlying areas adjoining the camps. A single barbed wire fence enclosed three sides of the site, and military police controlled access through a checkpoint at the north end on the road to Parker. Unlike other relocation centers, Poston did not have guard towers. The facility’s remoteness, location on a dead end road, and the desert terrain were believed sufficient deterrents to escape.

The Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) erected many of the buildings at Poston before developing modified theater of operations construction standards in consultation with the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command and the Office of the Chief of Engineers in June 1942. Generally, relocation center construction resulted in inexpensive temporary buildings that avoided the use of critical war materials and could be assembled quickly. The government’s experience at Poston taught it modifications to military Theater of Operations designs would be necessary for housing families. The construction of later camps incorporated the lessons learned at Poston. In recognition of the desert climate, later buildings at the center featured double roofs separated by an air space for insulation against the fierce summer temperatures. As part of its planning for the postwar use of the center, the Office of Indian Affairs supervised the evacuee design and construction of adobe school buildings. Thus, the center became the only relocation facility to feature permanent, purpose-built elementary school buildings.⁷

Poston I

As the largest unit, Poston I (See Figure 3) included the greatest diversity of building functions, with some facilities serving the entire center. Aside from the school area, plowed fields and new development have replaced most of the other areas of the center; on the east side of Mohave Road a half mile east of the school in the former garage area lies a somewhat modified machine shop, a re-sided paint shop, and five concrete foundations dating to the relocation era. The west side of Mohave Road contained the most development, including thirty-six evacuee

³ Karl Lillquist, Central Washington University, “Imprisoned in the Desert: The Geography of World War II-Era, Japanese American Relocation Centers in the Western United States,” September 2007, p. 400, http://www.cwu.edu/~geograph/faculty/lillquist_files/ja_relocation_cover.html (accessed 8 February 2009).

⁴ U.S. War Department, Headquarters Western Defense Command and the Fourth Army, Office of the Commanding General, Presidio of San Francisco, *Final Report: Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), 250.

⁵ Rivers Relocation Center (Gila) in southeastern Arizona contained two separate camp areas.

⁶ Poston III, the last built unit, was smaller than planned since it never housed the anticipated maximum population.

⁷ U.S. War Department, *Japanese Evacuation*, 264; Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1969), 343.

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housing blocks, high school and elementary school blocks (including the nominated resources), an administration complex, the center's hospital, and warehouses. The less developed east side of the road encompassed the garage and motor pool, administrative and personnel housing, and the military police compound. Support and special function areas on the edges of the camp included a sewage plant, water pumping facility, nursery, poultry farm, and camouflage net garnishing factory. Fire breaks cut through the camp on north-south and east-west alignments and separated clusters of blocks. Lateral ditches of the center's irrigation system extended through two of the fire breaks and separated the camp into three sections.⁸

The evacuee housing area represented the largest land use and generally occupied the northern and western area, away from Mohave Road. Housing blocks, mostly grouped in clusters of four, contained a total of 504 residential barracks. Each residential block followed the same layout in all three camps: two columns of seven rectangular evacuee barracks along the eastern and western edges; a rectangular mess hall in the southwest corner; a rectangular recreation building in the southeast corner; and, aligned between the columns of barracks from north to south, a men's lavatory, a women's lavatory, a laundry building, and an ironing building (Figure 6).⁹ In all three camps, residents attempted to mitigate the harsh surroundings by planting gardens and trees, digging ponds, and otherwise landscaping the housing areas and creating parks enjoyed by the entire camp (Figure 11).

Poston I's elementary school complex contained thirteen buildings: an office, auditorium, library, wood shop, crafts and supplies building, and eight classrooms. While the longer axes of the office and library were oriented north-south and that of the auditorium ran east-west, the remainder of the buildings had axes angled twenty degrees north of true west, producing a west-northwest east-southeast alignment. With the exception of the auditorium, the one-story buildings featured slightly sloping asphalt roofs, with deep full-width open porches on the south walls and bands of windows on the north. The auditorium, a double-height building, had a shallow arched roof, buttresses, and bands of windows at the top of the north and south walls. Evacuees fabricated adobe bricks for the walls of the school buildings on the site. Production of the 12" X 18" X 4" blocks began in the summer of 1942, with an estimated 700,000 bricks needed for all of the center's school buildings. Covered wood walkways, with square wood posts and plank roofs sheltered sidewalks that connected the buildings, providing relief from harsh conditions of the site and climate (See Figures 15 through 18). The elementary school complex still stands and its current appearance is described below. The high school (no longer extant) lay at the western edge of the housing area and included ten adobe buildings connected by walkways: an office, library, auditorium, wood shop, supplies and craft building, and classrooms.

The seven-building administration area in Poston I housed the center's main administrative facilities, including a post office, relocation office, personnel management office, print shop, office supplies storage, and internal security and fire protection offices. Buildings in this part of the camp were more substantial than those in the evacuee housing area, and some had horizontal wood siding rather than tarpaper over sheathing. The interiors of the more substantial buildings featured wood floors, forced air heating, and bath and toilet facilities inside living and working quarters. The center's administrative housing area contained twenty apartments and four laundry buildings. Personnel housing areas for the center's non-evacuee workers included shared quarters, small houses, a laundry, and a latrine. The military police compound at the extreme eastern edge of Poston I included twelve buildings: an administration building, officers' quarters, barracks for enlisted men, a mess hall and infirmary, latrine, sentry building, and guard house.

Covered and enclosed walkways linked the seventeen-building hospital complex that served the entire center. The 250-bed hospital included an administration building; quarters for doctors, nurses, and other staff; a medical clinic; general wards; an obstetrical ward; an isolation ward; a mess hall; a boiler house; a laundry; a medical

⁸ This discussion is primarily based on a June 1945 map prepared by the U.S. War Relocation Authority, "Poston-Unit I Area, Exhibit C," Map, June 1945.

⁹ In Poston II, the long axis of a residential block was oriented east-west.

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supply building; and a morgue.¹⁰ The thirty-eight-building warehouse facility occupied three blocks and contained buildings for the storage of furniture, stationery, paint, plumbing and electrical supplies, lumber, school supplies, janitorial supplies, wire, tools, old office records, and evacuee property. Other buildings in the compound included the construction and maintenance office, box factory, refrigerated warehouse, crematory, and ice storage building and butcher shop built by evacuees.¹¹

The garage area of Poston I contained the machine shop, motor pool, gasoline station, motor repair shop, and paint shop. Open storage of scrap iron and construction supplies, a loading ramp, steam cleaning facility, wash rack, and horse shed and corral were also located here. Other facilities in the vicinity of Poston I included a five-building camouflage garnishing plant, where evacuee workers aided in the war effort by applying garnish (scraps and strips of fabric) to camouflage nets. A chicken farm, consisting of several brooder and laying houses, a warehouse, and a privy, lay northwest of the high school on the west side of the main canal. A pumping plant contained a water tower, steel tank, pump house, a watchman's house, and a water well. The camp's sewage disposal plant had a pump house, digester, clarifier, and sludge bed. In addition to playing fields, evacuees built recreational facilities, including a large stage (See Figure 12), a small golf course, and three large swimming pools along the irrigation ditches.¹²

Poston II

Poston II, the second largest of the three units at the Colorado River Relocation Center, lay three miles south of Poston I and three miles north of Poston III (See Figure 4). A 1980s school complex, plowed fields, and postwar development on the east side of Mohave Road have obliterated the presence of the camp. Nearly all of the developed area of the camp was on the west side of Mohave Road. The center's principal irrigation canal passed by the northwest corner of the camp, a lateral ditch (Lateral A-73-19) flowed along the northern edge, and a north-south ditch divided the built-up area in half before turning west at the southern edge. Poston II contained eighteen residential blocks. While each block followed the same internal layout described earlier for Poston I, the long axis was oriented east-west instead of north-south, placing the mess hall in the southeast corner and the recreation hall in the northeast corner.¹³ The high school/junior high school, with evacuee-built adobe buildings including an office, library, and ten classrooms, stood at the western edge of the camp. An open recreation area, including a swimming pool, lay to the east, and evacuee housing areas were built to the northeast and southeast. The southeast corner of the camp included administration, warehouse, and garage areas. Other facilities included a camouflage net garnishing plant and a personnel housing area. The sewage facility lay at the southwest corner of the camp, and poultry and nursery areas were located at the northwest corner.

Poston III

The last built, smallest, and southernmost of the three units at the Colorado River Relocation Center, Poston III lay on the west side of Mohave Road (See Figure 5). Today, a portion of the sewage treatment plant near the southwest corner of the center still remains; new development on the west side of Mohave Road and plowed fields erased the rest of the camp. The Main Drain irrigation canal passed about a thousand feet west of the camp. Poston III contained eighteen residential blocks, grouped in three clusters of six blocks each; seventeen of these blocks were used for evacuee housing. The long axis of each block was oriented north-south, as at Poston I, and the internal layout of the blocks followed the same pattern as that unit. Recreation halls in the blocks were used for a variety of community functions. The schools of Poston III utilized both evacuee-built adobe buildings and

¹⁰ Some sources put the number of beds at 235. Original plans called for a crematory as part of the hospital complex, but evacuee objections over the possible impact on morale resulted in its placement in the warehouse area.

¹¹ *Poston Official Daily Information Bulletin*, 18 June 1942 [Poston newspapers are available through the Densho Digital Archive, <http://archive.densho.org>]; Paul Bailey, *City in the Sun: The Japanese Concentration Camp at Poston, Arizona* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1971), 97-98.

¹² Bailey, *City in the Sun*, 101.

¹³ This discussion is primarily drawn from a U.S. War Relocation Authority map, "Poston-Unit II Area, Exhibit E," June 1945.

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traditional barracks.¹⁴ The camp's adobe high school/junior high school included an auditorium, office, library, four classrooms, and separate buildings for art/home economics, science, and commercial classes. The seven classroom buildings were sited at an angle from true north, and covered sidewalks connected the buildings. The camp also contained three administration buildings, a warehouse area with facilities such as a carpenter's shop and a cold storage building, and a garage area. Poston III's water supply consisted of an elevated water tower, steel tank, and pump house. North of the water tank was a nursery area, with a poultry farm to the northeast. A sewage disposal plant functioned in the southwest corner of the camp. An open recreation area, a large swimming pool, a smaller wading pool, and a stage provided recreational opportunities. A motor pool area and a camouflage net garnishing plant were also present.

PRESENT PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

As discussed above, Poston consisted of three concentrated areas of development, spaced at a distance of about three miles apart, along what is today Mohave Road. Unlike some other war relocation center sites, none of the camps at Poston currently exhibit a grid of roads or a pattern of foundations demarcating their former layout. Irrigation development during and after World War II made the Poston area highly productive for agriculture. In the decades after the war, the removal of buildings, plowing of fields, and overlay of other land uses eradicated much of the built environment at the three camps. Unlike the rest of the relocation center today, the Poston I Elementary School is a group of historically-related standing buildings in their original locations.

The nominated area totals twenty-two acres that include the intact and contiguous group of extant resources associated with the relocation center. The NHL consists of the elementary school site, portions of an irrigation canal and a ditch, and land between the two. In 1943, evacuees constructed the buildings that comprise the only extant relocation center elementary school complex and the only school buildings crafted from adobe and designed by a Japanese American architect at a relocation center.

Contributing/Noncontributing Descriptions and Resource Count

The district includes 31 resources. Current descriptions of the contributing and noncontributing resources are found below.

Contributing Resources

The nominated property contains 16 (52 percent) contributing resources (See Table 1). The contributing resources discussed below were associated with the relocation center historically, were constructed within the period of significance, and retain historic physical integrity.¹⁵

Poston School Resources

All of the contributing resources associated with the school are shown on a June 1945 War Relocation Authority map of Poston I. The walls of the buildings are composed of 12"-wide, 18"-long, and 4"-thick adobe blocks atop concrete perimeter foundations. The blocks (40 percent adobe and 60 percent sand, plus straw) were fashioned by evacuees from locally-available materials; exterior walls received a coating of adobe plaster. Evacuees designed and constructed the buildings and fabricated the adobe blocks.

Classrooms, Wood Shop, and Crafts and Supplies Building General Description. Based on the same plan, these eight one-story adobe buildings and two remaining foundations have long axes oriented west-northwest east-southeast, or about twenty degrees north of true west (See Figures 16 through 18 and Photographs 1, 2, and 3). A

¹⁴ This discussion is primarily drawn from a U.S. War Relocation Authority map, "Poston-Unit III Area, Exhibit F," June 1945.

¹⁵ Resource descriptions are based on fieldwork performed by the authors in September 2008 and November 2010, as well as fieldwork conducted by National Park Service personnel in March and April 2006, as reported in Jeffrey F. Burton, "Poston Relocation Center, Historic Resources Inventory," National Park Service, Western Archeological and Conservation Center, Tucson, Arizona, June 2006. In some cases, particularly for noncontributing resources, exact years of construction were unavailable; construction dates are presented as a range of years based on historic maps and other sources.

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1945 War Relocation Authority map (Figure 3) showed the configuration of the nominated area at that time, with eight classroom buildings arrayed in a column along the eastern edge of the school site and the wood shop and crafts and supplies building located on the western edge, at the north and south ends, respectively. One classroom building and the wood shop are no longer extant; their concrete foundations remain. In general, each of the buildings measures 22' 3" X 146' and has a nearly flat roof (one-half inch slope per foot) that projects outward on the north wall. The buildings originally featured porches extending across the full width of the south walls. The concrete porch decks are present for all buildings. The remaining porches feature a series of square wood posts atop concrete blocks, with double posts at each end. Wood ties with shaped ends link posts to the horizontal porch beam above (See Photograph 13). The south walls generally have four non-original flat arch pedestrian entrance openings (without doors) and one window. The spaces above the door openings, which originally contained wood louvers, are filled in. Typically, one window opening is on the south wall. The north walls have multiple, grouped, metal frame replacement windows with concrete sills in the following pattern: three single two-over-two-light windows in the center flanked by three eight-over-eight-light windows and five eight-over-eight-light windows at each end. Much of the window glazing on the north walls is missing or broken, as are some of the metal frameworks. East and west walls are generally blank. Characteristics and alterations specific to individual buildings are discussed below.

Classroom (1943, Resource 1, Photograph 2). Resource 1 is the northernmost of the eight classrooms, located near the northeast corner of the complex. This classroom no longer has its porch, although the concrete porch deck is still in place. Four entrances and one window opening are present on the south wall. The north wall has the typical window openings described above but without glazing or metal frameworks. Between the two easternmost windows on the north wall is a garage door opening; a similar garage door opening is also present on the west wall. The garage door openings were added after the period of significance.

Classroom (1943, Resource 2, Photographs 4 and 5). This classroom no longer has its porch, although the concrete porch deck remains. The south wall has three entrances and one window opening (doors and windows are missing). At the east end of the south wall a portion of the wall and the roof above are no longer present. Part of the south wall at the west end is partially collapsed. The north wall has the typical window openings described above but without glazing or metal frameworks.

Classroom (1943, Resource 3). This classroom no longer has its porch, although the concrete porch deck is still in place. The south wall has four entrances and one window opening (doors and window missing). The typical window openings are present on the north wall, but without glazing or metal frameworks, except for one two-over-two-light window.

Classroom (1943, Resource 4). Resource 4 no longer has its porch. The south wall has four entrances and one window opening (doors and window missing); a portion of wall coating is missing toward the east end of the building and large sections of the underlying adobe blocks are exposed. The typical window openings are present on the north wall, but without glazing or metal frameworks.

Classroom concrete foundation (1943, Resource 5, Photograph 7). The concrete foundation remains for Resource 5, a classroom building. Still present is the concrete slab foundation (with a projecting perimeter foundation for the walls) and the concrete porch deck. The building was in extremely deteriorated condition and near collapse in 2008. A 2009-10 environmental remediation project razed the building.

Classroom (1943, Resource 6, Photographs 1, 6, and 7). This building is one of the more intact classrooms and retains its original porch. The south wall has one eight-over-eight-light window near the center and four entrances without doors; the exterior wall coating appears to be slumping off at the west end. The north wall displays the typical window configuration with glazing present in the western part; the easternmost window opening has no glazing.

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Classroom (1943, Resource 7). This classroom still has most of its original porch on the south although a section is missing at the east end. An eight-over-eight-light window is near the center of the south wall, which also contains three entrances without doors and one opening with a slab door with a narrow vertical light. The east end of the building appears to have experienced a fire, and portions of the roof and north wall are missing, including the easternmost windows on the north wall. The remainder of the north wall has the typical window configuration and some glazing is still present.

Classroom (1943, Resource 8, Photographs 8, 9, and 10). Resource 8 is the southernmost of the eight classroom buildings and is relatively intact. The original porch is still present. The south wall has four pedestrian entrances without doors and a rectangular window opening. The north wall has the typical arrangement of windows with some glazing still present. Southwest of this building, adjacent to a tree, is a fire hydrant manufactured by the United States CIP Company, Provo, Utah, with a 1942 year of manufacture.

Wood Shop concrete foundation (1943, Resource 9). The wood shop foundation (See Figure 18) lies near the northwest corner of the school complex, west of Resources 1 and 2 (classrooms). Still present is the concrete slab foundation for the interior (with a projecting perimeter foundation for the walls) and the concrete porch deck. A 2009-10 environmental remediation project razed the building.

Crafts and Supplies Building (1943, Resource 10, Photographs 11, 12, and 13). Located near the southwest corner of the school site, the crafts and supplies building is west of the southernmost classroom (Resource 8). The building retains most of its original porch, although the western third is missing. The south wall at the west end has some sections of adobe blocks exposed and some collapsed wall sections. Two double door entrances and two single door entrances are present on the south wall (all doors are missing). The north wall features the following fenestration from east to west: paired eight-over-eight-light windows; a single two-over-two-light window; two sets of paired eight-over-eight-light windows; and two groups of six metal window frames. Much of the glazing and some of the metal frameworks are missing.

School Office concrete foundation (1943, Resource 11, Photograph 14). The school office (22' 3" X 73' 3") foundation is located on the west edge of the school area, slightly north of its center and northwest of the auditorium (Resource 13). The long axis of the foundation is oriented north-south. Still present is the concrete slab foundation for the interior (with a projecting perimeter foundation for the walls) and the concrete porch deck. A 2009-10 environmental remediation project razed the building.

School Library (1943, Resource 12, Photograph 15). The school library is on the west edge of the school area, slightly south of its center and southwest of the auditorium (Resource 13). The long axis of the one-story adobe building (22' 3" X 73' 3") is oriented north-south. The library has a full-width open porch on the west wall. The west wall has four pedestrian entrances (doors gone) and an eight-over-eight-light window. The east wall has two sets of eight-over-eight-light windows toward the south end and four two-over-two-light windows toward the north end. All but one of the windows have security bars. There are no doors or windows on the north or south walls.

School Auditorium (1943, Resource 13, Photographs 16, 17, and 18 and Figure 15). The auditorium, located in the west-central part of the school site, experienced a 2001 fire that destroyed its arched roof, frame upper walls on the east and west, windows and doors, and interior. Measuring 53' 6" X 106', the auditorium is twice the height of other historic buildings at the school complex. The front (west wall) has a central, projecting entrance bay (7' X 33' 3") with adobe walls and a central entrance. The west wall of the auditorium is taller than the entrance bay and has buttresses at the north and south ends. The frame second story of the entrance bay is missing. A dedication plaque at the southwest corner bears the following inscription: "Poston Elementary School, Unit I, June 1943, Built by the Japanese Residents of Poston" (Photograph 18). The north and south walls of the auditorium are divided by stepped buttresses with slanted shoulders; openings high on the wall between the buttresses originally had windows. Portions of the north and south walls have collapsed, and sections of adobe blocks are exposed (Photograph 17). The rear (east) wall is divided by three buttresses with

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slanted tops, has no entrance, and includes two small openings near ground level at each end. A curving section of concrete sidewalk is west of the building.

Concrete Sidewalks (1943, Resource 14, Photographs 16 and 19 and Figures 15 and 18). As protection from the fierce sun, high temperatures, and occasional downpours creating muddy conditions a network of concrete sidewalks with canopies connected the original school buildings. The main north-south sidewalk extends through the school site, with the classroom buildings to the east and the auditorium, office, library, wood shop, and crafts and supplies building to the west. Short sections of sidewalk extend from the main path to the concrete porch decks of adjacent buildings. Angled sections of sidewalk pass north and south of the auditorium and connect the main north-south sidewalk to a curving section of sidewalk immediately west of the auditorium. Sidewalk segments also extend to the school office and library.

A canopy, composed of wood posts with brackets that supported horizontal wood beams, rafters, and wood planks laid parallel with the orientation of the sidewalk, originally sheltered the sidewalk system. The height of the canopy was about 8' 3". Each post attached to its slightly raised concrete base by anchors made from annealed wire "incorporated into the concrete, brought up on both sides of the posts from opposite sides, turned down and stapled."¹⁶ While the concrete sidewalks still exist, the canopies are no longer extant. A short section of canopy north of Resource 12 (the school library), present in 2008, was removed as part of an environmental remediation project in 2009-10.

Other Resources

Irrigation Ditches. An extensive system of irrigation ditches played an important role in the agricultural development of the Colorado River Relocation Center. One large north-south lateral ditch (Resource 30) lies about 300' west of the school area. The ditch is about 15'-wide, is unlined, has sloping banks, and is flanked by narrow dirt access roads (Photograph 20). At the ditch's north end is a water diversion structure with curving concrete abutments, metal gates controlled by wheels, and an extruded metal catwalk (Photograph 21). An oval swimming area near the center of the ditch segment is no longer extant. Historic maps of the relocation camp show this ditch ending north of the diversion gate; the ditch now continues northward. A smaller irrigation ditch (Resource 31) extends across the northern edge of the nominated area. This unlined ditch is about 11'-wide and has sloping banks (Photograph 22).

Noncontributing Resources

The nominated property contains 15 (48 percent) noncontributing resources (See Table 1). The resources, including six standing buildings, are classified as noncontributing because they were erected after the period of significance. Nearly half of the noncontributing resources are unobtrusive concrete building foundations or slabs for athletics. The noncontributing resources are discussed below.

Cafeteria Building (1955-70, Resource 15, Photograph 23). Located in the east-central part of the site, this roughly 162' X 97' T-shaped, one-story, front gable roof building has shed projections on the north and south. The roof and walls are clad with vertical metal ribbed panels, and the foundation is concrete. Some exterior cladding is missing from the east ends of the north and south walls. The building is noncontributing due to its date of construction after the period of significance.

Storage Building Foundation (1970-94, Resource 16, Photograph 7). Situated southeast of the cafeteria, this concrete slab foundation previously held a one-story, rectangular, front gable metal building. The building was removed as part of an environmental remediation project in 2009-10. The structure is noncontributing due to its date of construction after the period of significance.

Quonset Hut Foundation (1955-70, Resource 22, Photograph 24). Resource 22, at the northwest corner of the school site, consists of the foundation of a 40' X 100' rectangular Quonset hut which burned in 2005. The

¹⁶ Charles A. Popkin, "Adobe Has Its Place, Too," *The Nation's Schools* 34(September 1944): 40.

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concrete kneewall foundation has center openings on the east and west. The foundation is noncontributing due to its date of construction after the period of significance.

Building Foundation (1970-94, Resource 20, Photograph 24). Resource 20 consists of a 15' X 24' rectangular raised concrete foundation, with projecting bolts with nuts along the top and an opening on the north. A 2006 National Park Service survey report noted that the superstructure associated with this foundation "recently burned." The foundation is noncontributing due to its date of construction after the period of significance.

Building Foundation (1955-70, Resource 21). Resource 21 is a 50' X 115' rectangular concrete slab foundation, with an L-shaped concrete area to the west. It lies east of Resource 11. The foundation is noncontributing due to its date of construction after the period of significance.

Basketball Court (1946-94, Resource 17). This 60' X 100' rectangular, concrete basketball court no longer has posts with backboards and hoops; it does have shorter metal poles at the center on the north and south. It is located between Resources 9 and 11. The basketball court is noncontributing due to its date of construction after the period of significance.

Basketball Court (1946-94, Resource 18). This 60' X 120' rectangular, concrete basketball court is located between Resources 10 and 12. It has posts on the east and west but no backboards or hoops. The basketball court is noncontributing due to its date of construction outside the period of significance.

Basketball Court/Volleyball (1945-94, Resource 19). This 60' X 120' rectangular, concrete basketball/volleyball court has a post with a backboard and hoop at its west end. The basketball court is at the southwest corner of the school area, south of Resource 10, and is noncontributing due to its date of construction outside the period of significance.

Sewage Pump House (Post-1945, Resource 23). A small (8' 3" X 12' 3") sewage pump house faces west and has a gable roof with overhanging eaves and exposed rafters, two-over-two-light window openings on the north and south (no glazing), and walls clad with vertical wood panels. The structure is noncontributing due to its date of construction outside the period of significance. The structure is located south of the chainlink fence enclosing the school area and southwest of Resource 19.

Postwar Housing Area. During 1955-70, a housing complex developed in the area between the former school site on the east and the north-south irrigation ditch on the west. The development included mobile homes and modular housing placed around a paved road. Most of the resources in this area have been removed, but six remain: four residences, a concrete block building, and the road. The road (Resource 29) is in the shape of an inverted U, with its two legs connecting to Poston Road on the south. It is paved with asphalt and is about 23' wide. Two of the residences (Resources 24 and 25) are located on the east leg of the road facing east, and the other two (Resources 26 and 27, Photograph 25) are located on the west leg facing west. All of the houses follow the same design: one-story, side gable roofs with asphalt composition shingles, off-center shed-roof open porches, boarded up windows, and walls clad with vertical wood paneling. Resource 24 has been substantially destroyed by fire. Between the two sets of houses is a one-story, L-shaped, painted concrete block building (Resource 28) with a flat roof and boarded up window and door openings on its east wall. This area is located outside the chainlink fence enclosing the school area. All of the resources are noncontributing due to their dates of construction outside the period of significance.

INTEGRITY

The Colorado River Relocation Center school site retains the buildings and structures necessary to convey its historic significance and strongly exemplifies the relocation center life that evacuees faced from 1942 to 1945. Postwar government-sponsored programs resulted in some changes to specific features, such as replacement of windows on the north walls. Some buildings display deterioration due to lack of maintenance, vandalism, and exposure to the elements. A 2001 fire destroyed the upper frame walls, roof, and interior of the auditorium

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building, although the adobe walls of the building remain. Three contributing buildings (a classroom, wood shop, and school office) and one noncontributing building (a storage building) were removed during 2009-10 as part of an environmental remediation project. The concrete foundations remain, reflecting the layout, location, and size of the missing buildings.

Location

The location of the site, in a desert area of western Arizona, reflects the federal government's successful effort to isolate relocated Japanese Americans from the rest of the country's population during World War II. Poston's location was so remote and the desert locale so forbidding, that guard towers were considered unnecessary and the center was unfenced on the west. All of the nominated buildings and structures remain in their original locations within the relocation center.

Design

The original design and layout of the elementary school and its educational function are clearly evident, including the purposeful orientation of the classroom buildings; locations in relationship to each other; thick adobe walls and shallow roof slopes; deep, full-width southern porches; and banks of windows on north walls. The climate of western Arizona, remoteness of the site, wartime material shortages, and utilization of a labor force inexperienced with major construction influenced the design and construction of the buildings. School design concepts of the late 1930s and early 1940s are reflected in the rows of classrooms with large expanses of windows and covered walkways.¹⁷ The school complex additionally represents the design skill of Japanese-born architect Yoshisaku Hirose and serves as an example of the impact of evacuees in shaping the site's built environment. The connecting system of sidewalks elaborates the relationships between buildings and testifies to challenges of the environment. Applied ornament at the top of the porch posts reflects the Japanese aesthetic of the designer (Photograph 13). Most of the postwar resources (concrete slabs and foundations) are unobtrusive.

Setting

After closure of the center in 1945, much of the surrounding area was plowed and used for irrigated agriculture, fulfilling an original goal of the Office of Indian Affairs for the postwar use of the site. Thus, the road grid delineating blocks, pattern of concrete foundations, and resource remnants found at other relocation center sites are not generally present at Poston. However, the Poston I Elementary School site retains its immediate stark, unirrigated setting and is the only extant example of a standing school complex at any of the relocation centers. Within the nominated area, ten of the thirteen original adobe buildings are still standing, as well as the historic concrete sidewalk system. Portions of two irrigation structures developed during the relocation era and later employed by farmers on the reservation are present. One metal building, three concrete slabs for basketball and volleyball courts, and four concrete building foundations (all counted as noncontributing resources) reflect the fulfillment of the original goal of the Office of Indian Affairs for the Colorado River Indian Tribes to utilize the site for educational purposes after the war. The irrigation system and productive fields adjacent to the school site reflect an important legacy of the site's wartime operation and in subtle ways convey the continuing influence of the evacuees upon the lives of those in the surrounding community today.

Materials

The original materials utilized in construction of the school buildings, including the adobe blocks composed of ingredients found on the site and produced by the evacuees, are still present. The reluctance of the government to commit scarce construction materials to such buildings and the resident Native Americans' use of adobe led to the decision to employ materials on the site to manufacture adobe blocks for schools at each of the units at Poston. BIA project construction engineer Charles Popkin wrote that "the whole school area was covered with an acceptable adobe."¹⁸ The school walls are composed of forty-pound adobe bricks originally covered with adobe

¹⁷ Amy F. Ogata, Associate Professor, Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, email message to Thomas H. Simmons, 23 February 2009.

¹⁸ Popkin, "Adobe Has Its Place, Too," 39.

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clay. In the late 1960s the buildings underwent stabilization through the application of a cement-based exterior coating over the adobe. The concrete walkway system linking the buildings reflects the difficulty of living on the site and its climatic conditions, as well as the importance placed on improving access between buildings. Some of the buildings retain their original porches, which have wood posts and concrete decks. Dirt channels and concrete headgates of the irrigation structures remain.

Workmanship

Typical construction at relocation camps did not incorporate a high degree of craftsmanship, but was intended as temporary, low-cost facilities that could be quickly utilized and rapidly removed. This was true at Poston, where employees of the Del Webb Co. erected many of the original facilities following standardized plans. The school buildings stand in stark contrast, having been planned for long-term use. Nonetheless, most of the buildings reflect the simplicity required so persons with relatively little construction experience could erect them. As Popkin noted, none of the evacuees possessed experience on major construction projects, although some had carpentry ability. Therefore, "plans were developed on a purely functional basis."¹⁹ The school buildings continue to display a streamlined solidity and standardization of appearance testifying to their function, location, and era. The large adobe blocks that make up the walls reflect the labor of hundreds of evacuees who toiled in difficult conditions to provide an essential component of the construction. That the buildings were well designed and built solidly resulted in their continued use by the Colorado River Indian Tribes for educational and community purposes until the 1990s.

Feeling

The Poston I Elementary School represents an intact example of a purpose-built relocation center educational complex. As the only remaining complex of buildings at the site, only these resources can provide a tangible link to the important events that took place at this relocation center. Preservation of the complex on its original site, despite the loss or lack of integrity of other relocation center buildings, provides visitors with an understanding of many aspects of the lives of Japanese Americans at Poston and the other relocation centers. The design and appearance of the buildings communicate the sense of pride and importance the evacuees placed on their construction. The site's isolation and desert location also convey an understanding of the sense of being exiled that Japanese Americans experienced. The verdant agricultural fields in the area testify to the importance of the completion of the irrigation system and subjugation of the land that occurred during the relocation period.

Association

Poston has important associations with the history of the relocation of Japanese Americans during World War II. As one of ten relocation centers created by the United States during the war, Poston represents important associations with the larger themes in America's governmental/political, ethnic, and social history that shaped the lives of Japanese Americans and exemplified the dilemma of protecting civil liberties during wartime. The extant buildings reflect Poston's unique history as a center operated by the Office of Indian Affairs, which focused on the construction of permanent schools and irrigation structures by the evacuees that would benefit Native Americans after the war ended. The site provides a direct link to the historic events of the relocation camp era and is sufficiently intact to convey an immediate and tangible sense of these associations to visitors. Moreover, the school buildings offer unique insights into the relocation process as experienced by children.

Integrity of Other Areas at Poston

Poston presents a situation quite different from many of the other World War II relocation centers. While buildings at other centers were moved to other locations or razed, their remote locations preserved their wartime layouts, including road patterns, concrete building foundations, and remnants of evacuee landscaping. At Poston, postwar rebuilding and extension of the irrigation system made intensive agriculture possible throughout the area formerly occupied by the three camps and plowing and other agricultural activities destroyed the World War II

¹⁹ Popkin, "Adobe Has Its Place, Too," 40.

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land use pattern. The Poston elementary school complex is striking as an island in this sea of change. A general discussion of changes to other areas follows.

Poston I. The 1970 USGS map for the area showed the road pattern on the west side of Mohave Road (the main north-south road through the area) missing, with the elementary school complex the only standing buildings in that area. On the east side of the road, the administration housing area and a handful of buildings in the garage area were present, but the military police and personnel housing areas were gone. The sewage treatment plant still stood in the southwest corner of the former center. Aerial photographs from 1994 through 2009 revealed additional changes, including removal of the dwellings in the administration housing area and areas of new development on both sides of Mohave Road. Plowed fields replaced the other components of the camp, including evacuee housing areas, the high school site, poultry and nursery areas, and hospital area. In the former garage area on the east side of the road a half mile east of the elementary school, a somewhat modified machine shop, a re-sided paint shop, and five concrete foundations are found, together with new tanks, water towers, and other buildings. The elementary school complex at Poston I is the only portion of the center with contiguous buildings still possessing historic physical integrity.

Poston II. The Poston II high school area and a part of the road pattern on the east side of Mohave Road still were shown on the 1970 USGS map; the remaining road layout and architecture are gone. According to Burton, the tribe erected the La Pera Elementary School in the 1980s and the school's auditorium, "thought by some to date to the relocation center, was actually built in 1953. Most of the internee residential area is now farm fields. There are post-World War II industrial developments, housing, and churches along Mohave Road."²⁰ Aerial photographs from 1994 through 2009 show La Pera School occupying the former recreation area of the camp, while a sewage treatment center and the 1953 school auditorium fill the former high school site. Plowed fields have replaced the other areas of the center, including all of the residential blocks, garage and administration areas, and nursery and poultry farm. The postwar development on the east side of Mohave Road has obliterated the center's personnel housing area. No portion of Poston II possesses historic physical integrity.

Poston III. The 1970 USGS map for this area no longer displays the relocation center road pattern nor the adobe high school buildings, and some new buildings are present on the west side of Mohave Road. Aerial photographs from 1994 through 2004 show additional new buildings on the west side of the road and former areas of the center now replaced by plowed fields, including all of the residential blocks; garage and administration areas, the nursery and poultry farm, the recreation area, and the high school. A portion of the sewage treatment plant near the southwest corner of the center still remains. No portion of Poston III possesses historic physical integrity.

²⁰ Burton, *Poston Relocation Center, Historic Resources Inventory*, 5.

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SIGNIFICANCE

The Poston Elementary School, Unit 1 is nationally significant as one of ten relocation centers established for the confinement of Japanese Americans during World War II. In the aftermath of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and the entrance of the United States into the war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942. Citing "national security" as its justification, this order authorized the U.S. military to forcibly remove persons of Japanese ancestry from areas designated as military zones on the West Coast. Carried out in the months following Japan's attack, these actions reflected wartime hysteria, racist sentiment, and the military's professed inability to gauge the loyalty of Japanese Americans to the United States. Poston was one of two sites in the country designated temporary reception centers in association with the government's brief volunteer evacuation program of March 1942. As one of the first two relocation centers to open, Poston became a testing site for construction techniques and programs that influenced the development and operation of other centers. Poston was unique in its inclusion of three separate camps, it was the largest center until November 1943, and it received the most persons arriving directly from their homes. On 8 May 1942, the first of 19,392 people passed through its gates, endured a lengthy registration process, and entered the black roofing paper-clad barracks that would be their homes for the foreseeable future.

The NHL focuses on the elementary school complex of Poston I, the largest of the three camps that composed the relocation center. As the largest, most intact, and most cohesive collection of buildings remaining on the site, the Poston I Elementary School is representative of the physical development in the center and is associated with the significant events in its history. Standing buildings are relatively rare at relocation center sites. Poston is the only relocation center that retains a complex of elementary school buildings. After controversy arose over school construction at Colorado's Granada Relocation Center, the War Relocation Authority did not build any other elementary school buildings. Only Poston, whose school would fulfill an important Office of Indian Affairs goal, received authorization to erect such a complex. The schools are notable for their design by an evacuee architect, composition of blocks of adobe manufactured by Japanese Americans on the site, and construction by evacuee laborers. Poston historian and former evacuee Ruth Okimoto judged the completion of fifty-four permanent school buildings at the three units the most important accomplishment of the OIA at the site. The draft National Historic Landmark theme study, *Japanese Americans in World War II*, which examined the historic physical integrity of the country's ten relocation camps, concluded in regard to Poston: "Assuming that the elementary school complex at Poston I retains its ability to convey its national significance, it should be studied for possible NHL designation."²¹ Included within the NHL district are contiguous portions of two irrigation two ditches that represent the historic work of Japanese Americans to bring irrigation water to the center's farms and gardens, another OIA initiative.

Poston is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with politics and government (the Relocation Decision), ethnic heritage (Japanese American History), and social history (History of Minorities in the U.S.). Its unique combination of buildings, history, and related research materials enhances Poston's exceptional significance. It meets the registration requirements specified in the draft National Historic Landmark Theme Study *Japanese Americans in World War II*. Poston represents Property Type 2: "Properties Associated with Relocation, Relocation Centers and Related Facilities." The period of significance for Poston begins in 1942, the year construction started, and ends in 1945, the year the relocation center ceased operations. The year of completion of the Poston I Elementary School, 1943, is also considered a significant date. Thus far, six relocation camps have been designated as National Historic Landmarks: Manzanar Relocation Center in California (1985), Rohwer Relocation Camp Cemetery in Arkansas (1992), Granada (Amache) Relocation Center in Colorado (2006), Tule Lake Relocation Center in California (2006), Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming (2006), and Central Utah (Topaz) Relocation Center in Utah (2007). In addition, the

²¹ National Park Service, National Historic Landmarks Survey, *Japanese Americans in World War II: A National Historic Landmark Theme Study, Draft* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, February 2005), 60.

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Minidoka Relocation Center in Idaho became a National Monument in 2001, and that center and Manzanar are units of the national park system.

Politics and Government

Poston is significant nationally under NHL Criterion 1 as a place where the nation's political and governmental policies stemming from the relocation decision were enacted and directly impacted the lives of American citizens during World War II. Poston is associated with the volunteer evacuation program attempted by the federal government during March 1942 and the subsequent mandatory relocation program. During the voluntary period, the military acquired isolated sites on the Colorado River Indian Reservation in Arizona and in the Owens Valley of California to serve as temporary reception centers where large groups of people might camp during the process of evacuating restricted areas of the West Coast. With the institution of mandatory evacuation, these locations, popularly known as "Poston" and "Manzanar," became the first facilities to open as relocation centers. Thus, their buildings and programs influenced the development of the other centers, as administrators learned what worked and what required modification. Whereas the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) first removed most Japanese Americans from the exclusion zones to one of sixteen temporary assembly centers before sending them to relocation centers, Poston received the largest number of evacuees who came directly from their homes.²² In addition, Poston, designed as the largest of the relocation centers, was the only one with three separate units or camps of development.²³ Duncan Mills, Poston's second project director, summarized this aspect of the importance of Poston's programs and related improvements: "As originally conceived, Poston's operations program was vastly larger than those of the other centers; as executed, it was still much larger."²⁴

Poston represents a unique and complex variation in the administrative history of the relocation camps, as historian Kathryn Leonard observed:

. . . Poston's unique role as the only relocation center planned and administered by the Office of Indian Affairs sets its story apart from that of the other centers. The decisions that surrounded site selection, camp infrastructure and choice of public work projects would not only affect the lives of the Japanese Americans who resided there for the duration of the war, but also the lives of those members of the Colorado River Indian Tribes who grappled with the reality that, virtually overnight, Arizona's third most populous city had emerged in their backyard.²⁵

Okimoto supported this view, adding, "What made the Poston Camp unique was the pivotal role the OIA (known today as the Bureau of Indian Affairs) played in the creation of Poston as well as its daily operation and management."²⁶

The OIA managed Poston for two years under contract to the War Relocation Authority and with the involvement of the Army, a situation that created serious challenges in determining lines of authority, led to

²² Edward Spicer, Asael T. Hansen, Katherine Luomala, and Marvin K. Opler, *Impounded People: Japanese-Americans in the Relocation Centers* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946; reprint ed., Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1969), 86.

²³ Poston was the largest relocation center until November 1943. With the transfer of many people from other centers at that time, the segregation center of Tule Lake became the largest facility, although Poston continued to have the most people of all the "regular" centers. War Relocation Authority, *The Evacuated People: A Quantitative Description*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946; reprint ed., New York: AMS Press, 1975), 18.

²⁴ Duncan Mills, Project Director Colorado River Relocation Center, "Project Director's Narrative Report, January 1944 to March 1946," <http://content.cdlib.org> (accessed 29 January 2009).

²⁵ Kathryn Leonard, "Imagining Poston: John Collier, the Office of Indian Affairs, and the Development of Community Infrastructure at the Colorado River Relocation Center," Manuscript, 13 December 2006, 1.

²⁶ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 6.

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administrative confusion and contradictory policies, and resulted in evacuee frustration and unrest.²⁷ Anthropologist Lane Hirabayashi found, in comparison to the other relocation centers, “politics in Poston were especially complex.”²⁸ As one Native American reflected, the Japanese Americans at Poston lived “on a reservation within a reservation.”²⁹ The OIA conceived an extensive program of permanent development that would benefit Native American residents of the reservation after the war’s end and it utilized Japanese Americans to design and build the complex of adobe schools that constitutes the only remaining group of educational buildings in their original site associated with the relocation. Under direction of the Indian Agency, evacuees also participated in the construction of an irrigation system that prepared a previously undeveloped portion of the reservation for intensive agricultural cultivation by tribal members after the war. In 1944 the WRA gained administrative authority over Poston, continuing its operations, including the dispersal of evacuees and shutdown of facilities, until 1945.

Ethnic History

Poston is exceptionally significant in the nation’s ethnic history. More than nineteen thousand Japanese Americans were confined at Poston for a portion of their lives during 1942-45. The NHL is emblematic of daily life of Japanese Americans in the relocation camps, including the difficulties involved in living at an isolated site in a desert climate, the myriad of government programs developed to maintain control and create an atmosphere of normalcy in the center, and the many ways Japanese Americans adapted their culture and traditions to the place and situation. In the broadest terms, the history of Poston is similar to that of the other camps, yet the response of its residents to the challenges of the relocation process reflects adaptation to specific elements such as climate and site, programs, administration, and population. Thus, Poston’s process of self-government; educational and cultural programs; response to employment, leave, and military service opportunities; celebrations and holidays; and built environment all provide a significant picture of the relocation process. As the second relocation camp to open, Poston operated for one of the longest periods of all the relocation centers, closing on 18 November 1945.

Poston is symbolic of the importance of education in Japanese American culture, even during a period of extreme disruption of normal life. As one peer reviewer noted, archival materials indicate WRA administrators solicited advice from OIA experts regarding the content and structure of the camp educational system. That counsel, along with input from the faculty and graduate students in Stanford University’s School of Education, “oriented the WRA to the view that Americanism and democracy should be the cornerstones of the camp’s educational program.” However, initial construction at Poston failed to include any purpose-built classrooms. The actual impetus to erect school buildings came from the camp residents themselves and symbolized “how truly profound the Issei’s desire was to have adequate educational facilities for their children.”³⁰ The school complex represents the work of a Japanese American architect and design team, as well as the toil of women, men, and children, few with construction experience, who withstood harsh working conditions to produce adobe blocks and erect educational buildings. Okimoto found the remaining school buildings have significance for their ability to teach us an important lesson: “The adobe structures that stand today where Camp I stood in 1945 are a constant reminder of a period of history when the human spirit prevailed, despite the hardship of the

²⁷ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 8.

²⁸ Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, introduction to *Inside an American Concentration Camp: Japanese American Resistance at Poston, Arizona*, by Richard S. Nishimoto, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), xxxv.

²⁹ Donald H. Estes, “The Road to Poston: A Brief Historical Summary,” <http://www.postonalliance.org/assets/nikkeisummary.pdf> (accessed 7 January 2009).

³⁰ Christine Whitacre, Program Manager, Heritage Partnerships Program, National Park Service, Intermountain Region, “Poston Peer Comments,” email message to Tom and Laurie Simmons, 30 August 2011.

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surrounding circumstances. . . . These buildings pay tribute to the community spirit that helped the detainees survive the harsh experiences of WWII and Poston.”³¹

Poston’s harsh environment and hastily-constructed facilities, difficult living and working conditions, and complex administrative operations were among the factors that resulted in its becoming the first site of significant unrest leading to mass protest within the relocation center system in November 1942. As Hirabayashi observed, “Because it was an early and major manifestation of popular discontent, the Poston Incident has been one of the major focuses of the published literature on the camp.”³² As stated in the center’s monthly report, the Poston strike embodied “certain features that have general significance in the problems of governing people whose lives have been greatly dislocated.”³³ The Poston Incident ended peacefully, with no destruction of property or personal injury, whereas a crisis at Manzanar a few weeks later resulted in several injuries and two deaths. Administrative and sociological reports produced at Poston following its incident assisted the WRA and directors of other centers in understanding and identifying potential problems, avoiding violence, and mitigating discontent, and led to adjustments in administrative policy throughout the relocation system.

Social History

Poston is significant nationally in the area of social history as “one of the most intensively studied of all the camps” and the only site of three separate research projects.³⁴ In addition to its own groundbreaking Bureau of Sociological Research, the relocation center became part of the WRA Community Analysis program, as well as serving as a home for fieldworkers of the Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study (JERS). With authorization from OIA Commissioner John Collier, Alexander Leighton established a Bureau of Sociological Research that operated from June 1942 to September 1943 and produced more than 160 reports on topics ranging from mess hall behavior to attitudes toward relocation.³⁵ As Leonard judged, “The portrait of camp life preserved in these researchers’ reports provides an unparalleled account of the problems faced by not only the evacuees, but also the administrators of the relocation center.”³⁶ Leighton also described the significance of this research unit: “Through 1942 Poston was the only Relocation Center to have social scientific observation and analysis allied to its administration and as has been noted, this was due to Indian Service experience.”³⁷

Bureau members compiled research results and observations from Poston into groundbreaking publications, such as Leighton’s 1945 work, *The Governing of Men: General Principles and Recommendations Based on Experience at a Japanese Relocation Camp*, considered one of the classic studies of the relocation program. The Bureau served as the predecessor to the WRA’s Community Analysis Section and provided personnel, information, and methodologies for establishment of the latter program. The Poston sociologists’ role in presenting information and advice to Poston’s administration, especially during a strike in November 1942, received widespread praise. In addition, its reports and analyses of the strike were widely distributed and studied in Washington. As the WRA’s John Embree observed, “The fact that the crisis at Poston, which had a sociological research unit, was settled peacefully and without the calling in of the Army whereas the crisis at Manzanar was met with armed force and resulted in bloodshed,” influenced the creation of the WRA

³¹ Ruth Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert Home: Life on the Colorado River Indian Reservation, Poston, Arizona, 1942-1945,” *News from Native California, Special Report*, 2001, 14 and 19.

³² Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xxxvii.

³³ Colorado River Relocation Center, Monthly Report on the Colorado War Relocation Project, Poston, Arizona, No. 2, November 11 to December 10, 1942, box 3, Wade Head Collection, Mss. 118, Arizona Historical Foundation, Arizona State University, Tempe, Az. [hereafter cited as “Wade Head Collection”].

³⁴ Brian Niiya, ed., *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History*, updated edition (New York: Facts on File, 2001), 337; Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xxxvi-vii.

³⁵ Leighton, “List of Reports.”

³⁶ Leonard, “Imagining Poston,” 4.

³⁷ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 373.

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Community Analysis program.³⁸ Hirabayashi described Richard Nishimoto, an evacuee fieldworker in Poston affiliated with the JERS as “perhaps the most frequently cited author of Japanese descent who was among those subject to mass incarceration by the federal government during World War II and who also wrote on the subject.”³⁹ With Dorothy Swain Thomas, Nishimoto prepared a highly acclaimed 1946 study, *The Spoilage: Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement*, in addition to numerous other surveys, reports, and studies about camp life while residing in the center.⁴⁰ As a peer reviewer observed, the community analysts and fieldworkers produced copious research materials comprising “one of the strongest collections about the WCCA or WRA camps, bar none.” This information will allow generations of researchers to study camp life and how Poston differed from or was similar to the other relocation centers.⁴¹ Colorado River Indian Tribe Museum Director Michael Tsosie asserted that many of the experiences obtained at Poston and the ideas developed as a result of its research studies were utilized by the OIA after the war, particularly in policies relating to Native American anthropology and sociology.⁴²

EXCLUSION AND RELOCATION**The Relocation Decision and Its Implementation**

Following Japan’s 7 December 1941 attack on America’s Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and the United States’ entry into World War II, public opinion against Japan bolstered existing stereotypes and prejudices regarding Japanese Americans living on the West Coast. Addressing perceived national security concerns, the Department of Justice quickly detained more than 1,500 Japanese American community leaders previously identified as potential security threats in the event of war and began searching homes for contraband.⁴³ Despite protests about denial of constitutional rights and an absence of evidence demonstrating actual danger, the government took steps leading to the mass removal of men, women, and children of Japanese descent, including citizens as well as non-citizens. On 19 February 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing the Secretary of War and subordinate commanders to define military areas in the United States from which any or all persons might be excluded and to provide uprooted residents with “such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary.”⁴⁴ Eight days later the U.S. Navy secured the first mass exodus of Japanese Americans, from Terminal Island in the Port of Los Angeles.⁴⁵

On 2 March 1942, Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt of the Western Defense Command initiated steps toward the removal and detention of all persons of Japanese ancestry living along the Pacific Coast and in parts of western Arizona by defining military exclusion zones. “Military Area No. 1” encompassed western California, Oregon, and Washington, and the remainder of those states became “Military Area No. 2.”⁴⁶ The government justified the removal of Japanese Americans on the basis of military necessity and fears about the loyalty of persons of

³⁸ John F. Embree, “Community Analysis—An Example of Anthropology in Government,” *American Anthropologist* 46(July-September 1944)3: 281; Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xliii.

³⁹ Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xxv.

⁴⁰ Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xxviii.

⁴¹ Whitacre, email message to Simmons, 30 August 2011.

⁴² Michael Tsosie, Colorado River Indian Tribes Museum director, Parker, Az., Interview by R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, 8 October 2008.

⁴³ The government transferred many of those detained to internment camps in Montana, New Mexico, and North Dakota in January 1942, while others remained in Justice Department camps. Jeffery F. Burton, Mary M. Farrell, Florence B. Lord, and Richard W. Lord, *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 28.

⁴⁴ Roger Daniels, “Incarceration of the Japanese Americans: A Sixty-Year Perspective,” *The History Teacher*, <http://www.historycooperative.org> (accessed 15 December 2005).

⁴⁵ Burton, et al, *Confinement*, 31.

⁴⁶ Thomas Fujita-Rony, “Arizona and Japanese American History: the World War II Colorado River Relocation Center,” *Journal of the Southwest*, 47(Summer 2005)2, <http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.denverlibrary.org:2048/itx/printdoc.do?contentSet=IAC-...> (accessed 7 March 2009).

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Japanese descent. The Army-controlled Wartime Civilian Control Administration (WCCA) was created on 11 March 1942 to establish temporary facilities where those removed from designated areas could be held. Initially, officials made no plans to help people move and expected the relocation would be accomplished through “voluntary” migration outside restricted zones, but only a few thousand participated in the program, which ended on 29 March. The military acquired two substantial, isolated tracts of land, outside Parker, Arizona, and in the Owens Valley, California, intended as “reception centers” for large camps of voluntary evacuees prior to President Roosevelt’s creation of an agency to further implement the relocation.⁴⁷

On 18 March, the president issued Executive Order 9102, establishing the War Relocation Authority (WRA) with Milton S. Eisenhower as its head, and instructed the agency to locate sites appropriate for long-term settlement of excluded persons. On 24 March, the Army issued its first Civilian Exclusion Order, removing Japanese American families from Bainbridge Island, Washington. A total of 108 orders resulted in the mandatory evacuation of more than 120,000 persons from their homes and businesses. The families received six days to dispose of their possessions and pack only what they could carry. These “evacuees” were not able to obtain fair market value for their property and suffered an aggregate economic loss estimated at \$400 million in 1942 dollars.⁴⁸

Under armed guard, the uprooted passed through one of sixty-four local “civil control stations” to be processed before being sent to one of sixteen hastily-built “temporary assembly centers” operated by the WCCA for a period of from six weeks to six months. From the assembly centers they traveled to one of ten relocation centers managed principally by the WRA and established to house the evacuated people for an indefinite period. Poston was unique in being managed by the Office of Indian Affairs. Some people skipped the step of moving to an assembly center and traveled directly to a relocation center. About one-third of the evacuees were Japanese aliens not permitted to become citizens, while two-thirds were American citizens.⁴⁹

Specific site requirements for relocation centers established by the WRA and the military included: a large piece of land that could accommodate at least five thousand persons; inclusion of acreage suited for extensive agricultural development or other types of year-round employment; a location distant from strategic installations, including power lines and reservoirs; a property consisting of federally-owned or purchasable land; and a site with reasonable access to necessary utilities and a railhead.⁵⁰ As historian Harlan D. Unrau judged, the requirement that the relocation centers be located on large tracts of undeveloped land “virtually guaranteed that the sites would be inhospitable.”⁵¹ Ruth Okimoto described the general character of the places selected: “Eight of the 10 camps were eventually constructed in barren and remote desert environments or in remote areas with severe weather conditions; two camps in Arkansas were built on isolated, swampy land.”⁵² Arizona received two centers on Indian reservations: the Colorado River Relocation Center located near the

⁴⁷ Burton, et al, *Confinement*, 34.

⁴⁸ Calculations of the value of this loss based on today’s dollar range from over \$4 trillion to more than \$35 trillion, depending on the indicator used; see <http://www.measuringworth.com>. John Tateishi, *And Justice for All: An Oral History of the Japanese American Detention Camps* (New York: Random House, 1984), xix.

⁴⁹ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 2001, 6.

⁵⁰ The Army stipulated that each center have a population of at least five thousand so that a minimum number of military police would be required. Harlan D. Unrau, *The Evacuation and Relocation of Persons of Japanese Ancestry During World War II: A Historical Study of the Manzanar War Relocation Center*, Historic Resources Study/Special Study: Volume I (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1996), Chapter 5, 1, <http://www.nps.gov/archive/manz/hrs/hrs.html>; US, War Relocation Authority, *WRA: A Story of Human Conservation*, vol. 9 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1975), 20; US Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied, Part II: Recommendations*, June 1983, 151, <http://www.archives.gov/research/Japanese/American/justice-denied> (accessed 4 February 2009).

⁵¹ Unrau, *The Evacuation*, Chapter 5, 2.

⁵² Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 6.

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western edge of the state on the Colorado River Indian Reservation and the Gila River Relocation Center on the Pima Indian Reservation, southeast of Phoenix.⁵³

Poston became the second relocation center to open (after Manzanar), with the first evacuees arriving on 8 May 1942.⁵⁴ It reached its maximum population of 17,814 in early September 1942, becoming the third most populous community in Arizona.⁵⁵ The Colorado River Relocation Center held a unique position within the system because the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) managed it under contract to the War Relocation Authority until the end of 1943.⁵⁶ As one Native American reflected, the Japanese American evacuees lived “on a reservation within a reservation.”⁵⁷ Poston, unique because it consisted of three separate camps, was the largest and most costly of the relocation centers and incorporated the most extensive program of development.⁵⁸ The OIA intended Poston as a center where it would utilize its expertise in working with relocated peoples and minority groups, while at the same time bringing permanent improvement to a portion of the reservation through the use of war emergency funds and evacuee labor. The erection of adobe schools and other facilities, subjugation of the land, construction of a long-promised irrigation system, and completion of a highway and other infrastructure represented lasting achievements that later benefited tribal members.

The Colorado River Indian Reservation Before Poston

The relocation center occupied land in the southern portion of the Colorado River Indian Reservation, whose boundary stretched from western Arizona into eastern California along the Colorado River.⁵⁹ Arizona became a territory of the United States in 1863, during a period when growing numbers of westward travelers and gold prospectors impacted the lifestyles of its native peoples.⁶⁰ In 1864, Arizona Superintendent of Indian Affairs Charles D. Poston asserted: “The rapid influx of population in this region renders it necessary that some provision should be made for the original inhabitants.”⁶¹ Envisioning the undeveloped Parker Valley irrigated and scattered with farms, Poston recommended creation of a reservation for all indigenous peoples living along the Colorado River and suggested the government assist them with construction of an irrigation system that would ensure their self-sufficiency.⁶² He met with Native American representatives in 1864 to negotiate their placement on a reservation extending about forty-five miles east-west, from the La Paz Arroyo in Arizona to

⁵³ Rivers Relocation Center (Gila), south of Phoenix near Maricopa, opened in July and contained two camps with more than thirteen thousand people on a site of about sixteen thousand acres. Built later than Poston, Gila was considered one of the less oppressive camps, with no barbed wire and only one guard tower. With its more attractive barracks with red shingle roofs, white walls, and wood floors, Gila was considered a model center. Eleanor Roosevelt visited Gila in April 1943. Gila is not designated as an NHL.

⁵⁴ Manzanar opened in March 1942 as a temporary assembly center that became a relocation center.

⁵⁵ WRA, *WRA: A Story*, 197.

⁵⁶ Dillon S. Myer, *Uprooted Americans: The Japanese Americans and the War Relocation Authority During World War II* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1971), 4.

⁵⁷ Estes, *Road to Poston*, 3.

⁵⁸ Poston had the largest population of the “regular” relocation camps, while Tule Lake, which became a “segregation center,” was somewhat larger after receiving evacuees from other centers.

⁵⁹ Kathryn Leonard reported, “The current boundaries of the Colorado River Reservation encompass 265,858 acres of land, reflecting three additional Executive Orders (in 1873, 1874, 1876) to enlarge the reservation, as well as several Executive Orders which authorized the Arizona and California Railway’s purchase of land in Parker for railway facilities (1908) and transferred land along the southern boundary out of the public domain for subsequent mining use (1915).” Leonard, “Imagining Poston,” 6.

⁶⁰ Lillquist, *Imprisoned in the Desert*, 407.

⁶¹ Charles D. Poston, “Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs,” 30 September 1864, quoted in U.S Congress, Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of Conditions of the Indians in the United States, Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs*, 71st Cong., 2nd sess., 21 January 1930, Part 6, 2351, <http://www.archive.org> (accessed 9 January 2009) [hereafter cited as Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of Conditions*].

⁶² Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 55.

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Monument Peak in California and containing much of the Parker Valley on the east side of the Colorado River.⁶³

Indigenous groups in the reserved area included the Mohaves, primary occupants of the Parker Valley for at least a millennium, who grew a variety crops using floodwater farming and supplemented these foods with wild plants and game. The Mohaves accepted the reservation with the stipulation that the government build an irrigation system in exchange for their relinquishment of other territory.⁶⁴ Government officials planned to relocate other non-Mohave Indians, whom they referred to as “colonists,” to the reservation and expected an eventual population of ten thousand inhabitants.⁶⁵ On 3 March 1865, Congress established the Colorado River Indian Reservation to “colonize” Indians within its boundaries and “to aid them in opening an irrigating canal so that they may become industrious and self-supporting.”⁶⁶ No appropriations for creation of the reservation or construction on the irrigation system were issued until 1867.

The first appropriation for irrigation improvements on the reservation has been cited as “the inception of efforts by the Government to reclaim and make useful for the purposes of man, the arid lands of the West.”⁶⁷

December 1867 marked the start of this “first [federal] venture in land reclamation by irrigation” with construction of the Grant-Dent Canal in the southern part of the reservation. Indians using shovels and baskets performed most of the work in exchange for wages and rations. Unfortunately, when water was turned into the structure in July 1870, a masonry headgate failed and the canal collapsed, flooding land near the Indian agency. Efforts to enlarge and repair the system in 1871 and 1872 involved a “stupendous undertaking” to extend the canal and construct four tunnels, but ended in failure. Indians working on the construction in difficult conditions were paid only in rations and eventually quit, demanding wages. A subsequent report indicated that “it was found necessary to threaten them with the military arm of the Government in order to compel a resumption of the work.”⁶⁸ Repair efforts in subsequent years brought only short-lived success, and the effort was abandoned.

By the 1870s, famine and epidemics, as well as the failure of irrigation efforts, sharply reduced the number of Native Americans living on the reserved lands.⁶⁹ In 1874 an Executive Order stretched the reservation west of the Colorado River and convinced the semi-nomadic Chemehuevi, who had inhabited the vicinity of present-day Parker since the mid-nineteenth century, to live within its boundaries. Local Indian agents continued to believe that the site could support many more tribal groups. However, most other Indians living along the river and its tributaries eventually received their own reservations, and the anticipated population never arrived. Without the promised irrigation system, many returned to their traditional agricultural practice, farming the bottomlands and floodplain of the river and irrigating with water carried in pots.⁷⁰

Some improvement came at the turn of the century with construction of a steam-powered pumping station that provided water for a small school, the Indian Agency farm, and a limited amount of land.⁷¹ Lack of progress in extending cultivation of the land brought increased pressure to open surplus acreage for non-Indian lease and purchase in conformity with the 1887 General Allotment Act.⁷² In 1908, Congress authorized such uses,

⁶³ Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of Conditions*, 2351.

⁶⁴ Yuma Indians came north to view the designated land, but did not stay. The Hualapias “were induced” to come to the reservation, but returned to their traditional lands within three years. Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of Conditions*; Leonard, “Imagining Poston,” 6; Lillquist, *Imprisoned in the Desert*, 407.

⁶⁵ Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of Conditions*, 2355.

⁶⁶ Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of Conditions*, 2352.

⁶⁷ Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of Conditions*, 2352.

⁶⁸ Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of Conditions*, 2352.

⁶⁹ Jay Cravath, Education Program Manager CRIT Education Department, “The Colorado River Indian Reservation: A Brief Historical Summary,” 1-2 and “History of Colorado River Indian Tribes,” <http://www.postonalliance.org/generalHistory/crit.htm> (accessed 17 December 2008)

⁷⁰ Leonard, “Imagining Poston,” 6-7.

⁷¹ Cravath, “Colorado River Indian Reservation,” 2-3; Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of Conditions*, 2353.

⁷² Donald L. Parman, “Indians of the Modern West,” in Gerald D. Nash and Richard W. Etulain, eds., *The Twentieth Century*

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although the OIA did not want to permit the sale of lands to outsiders until it developed irrigation that allowed the largest possible agricultural use by Indians and ensured their supremacy to associated water rights.⁷³ In 1912, installation of a new pumping plant led the OIA to identify about 20,000 acres of land for tribal use and file an associated water appropriation claim.⁷⁴ During 1918-20, about eight thousand acres came into production, but the number declined sharply in subsequent years. In 1930, a report regarding the conditions on the Colorado River Indian Reservation noted, "None of this early [irrigation] work is of any benefit to the Indians at the present day."⁷⁵

John Collier and the Indian New Deal

During the 1930s, legislation and federal programs popularly known as the "Indian New Deal" enabled the Office of Indian Affairs to actively assist the tribes in preserving their culture and managing their lands and resources. This new role for the agency grew from the ideas and leadership of John Collier (1884-1968), who received appointment as commissioner in 1933 and was described as the "best equipped man who ever occupied the office" by Interior Secretary Harold Ickes.⁷⁶ Biographer Kenneth R. Philp judged Collier as the "clearest symbol" of the dramatic change in United States Indian policy during the 1930s away from the assimilation philosophies favored since the 1880s.⁷⁷

Collier's eventual impact on the development of the relocation center at Poston was profound. As Katherine Leonard observed,

At Poston, both the social and the built environment were largely the product of Commissioner John Collier, whose interest in administering the camp stemmed from the intersection of his charge to provide for the economic development of the Indian reservations in the desert southwest and his personal philosophical interest in the promotion of democratic social institutions through scientific study and community analysis.⁷⁸

Born in Atlanta, orphaned as a child, and educated at Columbia University and in Paris, Collier's early career focused on the importance of reestablishing America's sense of community and social responsibility. Described as "energetic, persistent, ingenious, and inventive," he became affiliated with efforts related to immigrants, education, and American Indians. Collier conducted social work with the People's Institute in New York City; founded and directed the Training School for Community Workers and edited its *Civil Journal*; started the Home School with his wife; served as president of the National Community Center Conference; directed California's adult education program; taught sociology and psychology in San Francisco; and became the executive secretary of the American Indian Defense Association and editor of *American Indian Life* magazine.⁷⁹ As head of the OIA, Collier gathered highly-trained professionals with expertise in fields such as anthropology, the arts, health, planning, law, and natural resources to serve as his advisors. Leonard analyzed, "Anthropologists, in particular, found favorable employ as consultants for the New Deal-era OIA and played a prominent role in assisting the agency with tribal surveys in anticipation of drafting tribal constitutions"⁸⁰ Collier added a planning office to the agency to ensure sound practices for utilization and conservation of reservation natural resources and was highly successful at obtaining funds from New Deal programs for

West: Historical Interpretations (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 149; Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 7.

⁷³ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 8.

⁷⁴ Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of Conditions*, 2353 and 2356; Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 8.

⁷⁵ Committee on Indian Affairs, *Survey of Conditions*, 2354.

⁷⁶ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 10-11.

⁷⁷ Kenneth R. Philp, *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform: 1920-1954* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977), ix.

⁷⁸ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 2.

⁷⁹ Philp, *John Collier's Crusade*, 14, 15, 19, and 20.

⁸⁰ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 12.

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reservation improvements. Policy reform came rapidly, the most significant arriving in June 1934 with passage of the Indian Reorganization Act.⁸¹

Collier's years in office (1933-45) resulted in advancement of tribal government and infrastructure improvements at the Colorado River Indian Reservation, but some state it came at some cost to the associated tribes and resulted in little that contributed to their enduring prosperity or self-sufficiency.⁸² Completion of Parker Dam by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1934-38 diverted water from the Colorado River to California and controlled fluctuations in the river, but inundated the Chemehuevi's bottomland farms with the waters of the associated reservoir, Lake Havasu.⁸³ A Constitution and By-laws of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, approved 13 August 1937, established their jurisdiction, but also included an OIA provision for colonization (the introduction of other tribal groups in the future), despite the disapproval of existing members. In 1940, the Tribal Council instituted a code of law and ordinances and created a judicial system for the reservation. Headgate Rock Dam, about one mile northeast of Parker, was completed in 1941, and a mile-long canal from the dam linked with the existing irrigation system.⁸⁴ With this development came further OIA pressure on the Colorado River Indian Tribes to allow new colonization as justification for improvement of the southern part of the reservation, while the agency sought a means of continuing its record of progress during a period of declining funding.⁸⁵

The Concept of a Relocation Center on a Reservation

On 15 November 1940, the OIA produced a confidential report, "A Program for the Utilization of the Colorado River Indian Reservation," which became a "blueprint" for agency officials as they drew up plans for Poston Relocation Center, according to Okimoto.⁸⁶ The document indicated the 1,200 Mohaves and Chemehuevis in residence were utilizing only a small part of the northern area of the reservation and reaffirmed the goal of bringing new inhabitants and development to fulfill the original intent of the reservation. In early 1942, hearing of War Department plans to locate relocation centers on large tracts of isolated and undeveloped land, Indian Affairs reasoned that securing such an installation could result in development of an irrigation system and subjugation of the land through the use of evacuee labor and war emergency funds.⁸⁷ Housing and schools created for relocated Japanese Americans could be made available to Indian colonists after the war. Facing declining budgets that, in part, reflected Congressional opposition to Collier's philosophies and reduced the effectiveness and productivity of his agency, the commissioner "directed his zeal for preserving the culture of minority groups toward the Japanese Americans," according to biographer Kenneth Philp.⁸⁸

Kathryn Leonard found that the Indian Service actively worked to secure a relocation camp for the reservation in the months after Pearl Harbor. OIA Agriculture and Conservation Counselor Dr. G.P. Clements wrote on 18 February 1942: "It seems to me that the temporary internment of the Japanese on the reservation would enable the Indian Department to put the ground in shape for agricultural occupation by the Indian on removal of the Japanese, possibly without any expense for that preparation."⁸⁹ Within two weeks, Collier and OIA Chief

⁸¹ Parman, "Indians of the Modern West," 156; Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 13.

⁸² Parman, "Indians of the Modern West," 157.

⁸³ Cravath, "Colorado River Indian Reservation," 2-3; Joseph Miller, rev., and Henry G. Alsberg, ed., *Writer's Program, Works Projects Administration, Arizona: The Grand Canyon State: A State Guide* (New York: Hastings House, 1956), 371; Bureau of Reclamation, "Parker Dam," <http://www.usbr.gov/dataweb/dams> (accessed 9 January 2009) and "Parker Dam and Powerplant," <http://www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam/parkerdam.html> (accessed 9 January 2009).

⁸⁴ Miller and Alsberg, *Arizona*, 371; Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 8.

⁸⁵ Collier continued to serve as commissioner until 1945.

⁸⁶ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 7.

⁸⁷ As Okimoto noted, for the OIA "subjugation of the land" referred to "digging irrigation ditches, building canals, leveling the land, and preparing the land for receiving water and planting crops." Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 7.

⁸⁸ Philp, *John Collier's Crusade*, 208.

⁸⁹ Clements quoted in Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 16.

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Planner J.C. McCaskill drafted a memorandum to Secretary Ickes, urging the Interior Department to consider administering the internment program on lands it managed, emphasizing the skills of Department employees and specifically the OIA's "long experience in handling a minority group."⁹⁰

Collier proposed that the agency manage seven relocation centers, including ones on both the Gila River and Colorado River reservations in Arizona. He later noted that Secretary Ickes did not pursue the idea, so the Indian Office offered to operate one of the largest centers and assume full responsibility for the entire project.⁹¹ On 6 March, Collier requested the help of Reclamation Agronomist A.L. Walker in convincing the Department of War to agree to OIA management of a camp on the Colorado River Indian Reservation.⁹² The commissioner suggested the Indian Office would prefer "to do a constructive job of supplying these people with useful work, providing education—particularly of a civic nature—health, and other services, and rehabilitating them subsequently to the war"⁹³

On 9 March, representatives of the OIA, Department of Interior, and War Department met in Los Angeles to discuss location of a camp in the Parker area. Nine days later, War Department representatives inspected the Colorado River Reservation for potential location of a "reception center" to facilitate removal of Japanese Americans from Military Area No. 1.⁹⁴ Poston and Manzanar became the only sites designated as reception centers during the government's short-lived and unsuccessful voluntary relocation program. Manzanar, which the WCCA operated briefly as the Owens Valley Reception Center, soon became one of sixteen temporary assembly centers and received its first evacuees on 23 March. It subsequently served as a relocation center. In early May, Poston received its first evacuees. A small assembly center opened at Mayer, Arizona, and soon sent its occupants to Poston.⁹⁵

On 21 March, three days after the creation of the War Relocation Authority, Milton Eisenhower wrote to Collier to summarize his understanding of the preliminary agreements with the OIA regarding how the center on the Colorado River would operate.⁹⁶ He indicated the Army, with input from the OIA, would build necessary housing and other facilities and transport the evacuees to the site. The WRA would develop general plans for the center's program and policies with the cooperation of the OIA, which would manage the project and employ most of the staff.⁹⁷ Eisenhower advised Collier to "draw together, from among the competent personnel of your bureau, a project organization which will supervise, on the ground, the irrigation, health, educational, and all other phases of a well-rounded public work and community project."⁹⁸

The commissioner and his staff immediately began planning for the Colorado River Relocation Center, giving it the highest priority. Collier described his "complete rapport" with Director Eisenhower, and noted that methods to be used for all other Native American colonies the agency hoped to create would be forged at Poston.⁹⁹ OIA Field Officer Walter Woehlke suggested that the evacuee camps be located so as to create a foundation for Indian communities after the war, a concept favored by the agency. Woehlke and McCaskill advised that four or

⁹⁰ Collier quoted in Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 16.

⁹¹ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 17.

⁹² Some OIA officials raised questions about the advisability of the agency becoming involved with Japanese American relocation. See Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 17-18.

⁹³ Collier quoted in Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 17.

⁹⁴ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 8; Unrau, *The Evacuation and Relocation*, Chapter 3.

⁹⁵ Mayer operated only twenty-seven days and had a maximum of 245 people. Unrau, *The Evacuation and Relocation*, Chapters 3 and 4.

⁹⁶ It is interesting to note that Vice President Henry A. Wallace suggested the president "give Collier the job of handling the War Relocation Authority because of his experience in community living," according to Kenneth Philp, *John Collier's Crusade*, 208-209.

⁹⁷ M.S. Eisenhower, Director, War Relocation Authority, Letter to John Collier, OIA Commissioner, 21 March 1945, reprinted in Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 27.

⁹⁸ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 48-49.

⁹⁹ John Collier, OIA Commissioner, Letter to Nell Findley, USO Director, 21 April 1942, Wade Head Collection, MSS 118, box 1, folder 1.

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five separate community centers would “fit the needs of the Indian colonization program.”¹⁰⁰ Alexander Leighton later reported, “No definite plans were made concerning the fate of the evacuees after the war. It was felt that if they were successful in cultivating the Parker Valley, some, at least, might obtain long-term leases from the Indians.”¹⁰¹

To the position of project director at Poston, Collier appointed Wade Head (1908-1997), who since 1939 had served as superintendent of the Papago Indian Reservation in Arizona. There he received praise for his improvement of their cattle business and the implementation of self-government. Head worked previously as a school principal in Oklahoma, led an agricultural school in the Philippines, and served as a mining company personnel officer.¹⁰² John Collier described the project director as “one of our broadest most resourceful field men, who has worked with Japanese in the Philippines several years and is [an] ideal team worker and staff leader.”¹⁰³ Dr. Alexander Leighton, who led the Bureau of Sociological Research at Poston, noted Head’s “general appearance suggested coolness and self-possession . . . increased by his calm, kindly, yet distant manner.”¹⁰⁴ On 9 April, the project director and other administrators occupied their offices at the relocation center site.¹⁰⁵

On 14 April 1942, WRA Director Milton S. Eisenhower and Interior Secretary Ickes signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the operation of a relocation center to house approximately twenty thousand people at the Colorado River Indian Reservation. As outlined in the document, the WRA held responsibility for establishing the general program policy, funding, security and public relations, and the OIA would oversee the administration, staff, and public work projects.¹⁰⁶ The WRA and the War Department would supervise “the construction of such housing and related facilities as may be needed for immediate accommodation of the evacuees,” while the OIA would erect other permanent buildings of the camp that could later be used by the tribal members. The center would be as self-supporting as possible and include provisions for its own agricultural production, as well as manufacturing facilities to aid the war effort.¹⁰⁷ The document contained important additional stipulations requested by John Collier:

The development and operation of the relocation project on the Colorado River Reservation, particularly in so far as it involves the subjugation of the land and the development of irrigation facilities, will materially enhance the value of the land and the benefits from this increased value will accrue to the Indians as the owners of the land when the evacuees are removed after the end of the war. All permanent improvements that cannot be removed without seriously injuring the land on which they are located, or the improvements themselves, will be left on the land when the relocation project is discontinued. It is contemplated that the value of such improvements left on the land will be fair and equitable compensation to the Indians for use of their land. It is understood that, if the value of such improvements shall not in the judgment of the parties be adequate as such compensation, the War Relocation Authority will pay to the Indians at the time the project is terminated such additional sum as the parties hereto may agree upon to provide such compensation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁰ Leonard observed that the concept of multiple camps “was undoubtedly influenced by the OIA’s intention of settling Indian colonists from multiple tribes onto the southern portion of the reservation.” Leonard, “Imagining Poston,” 17.

¹⁰¹ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 50.

¹⁰² Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 49 and 82.

¹⁰³ Collier, Letter to Findley, 21 April 1942, Wade Head Collection.

¹⁰⁴ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 83.

¹⁰⁵ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 49 and 58.

¹⁰⁶ War Relocation Authority Director and Secretary of the Interior, Memorandum of Understanding, 14 April 1942, box 1, folder 4, Wade Head Collection.

¹⁰⁷ WRA and DOI, Memorandum, 14 April 1942; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 52.

¹⁰⁸ WRA and DOI, Memorandum, 14 April 1942.

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In April 1942, Collier wrote to Colorado River Tribal Council Chairman Henry Welsh to discuss compensation for use of reservation land, indicating it would be returned improved and ready for agricultural development.¹⁰⁹ As Okimoto found, the Colorado River tribal leaders “were upset and adamantly opposed to the Poston Camp and the colonization program.”¹¹⁰ However, they faced a dilemma. Objection to the plans of the OIA and the WRA could result in permanent loss of the proposed project site through condemnation. Approval of the government’s intended use would represent tacit acceptance of a program they believed was wrong. The Tribal Council chose not to respond to the proposal.¹¹¹ Agnes Savilla, a member of the Mohave tribe, stated that most Native Americans had no advance knowledge that a relocation center was coming to the reservation. She remembered her reaction upon learning of the facility being built for the Japanese Americans: “The white man is treating them like he treated us.”¹¹²

Once they arrived, Japanese Americans at Poston had very little contact with Native Americans living in the area. As George Yoshida recalled, “I didn’t meet any or see them during our daily lives.”¹¹³ Tribal members residing on the reservation were told, “It’s part of the war effort. Don’t ask questions. Do your patriotic duty and accept it.”¹¹⁴ Sporting events provided one of the few opportunities for interaction between the two groups.¹¹⁵ Michael Tsosie’s family rented horses to evacuees and traded fish for sugar and flour.¹¹⁶ As Ruth Okimoto remembered,

. . . we lived as strangers during those years, each group struggling with their own issues. Except for the high school basketball games and a few stories I’ve heard from CRIT members of how their parents or relatives traded their chickens for vegetables grown in Poston, there appeared to be little contact between the neighbors.¹¹⁷

Specific initial goals of the development project at Poston included clearing and leveling the land; completing the buildings comprising three living areas and providing electricity and water; extending the main irrigation canal fourteen miles from Parker to the center and constructing laterals; beginning agricultural production; and building a highway from Parker to the center to allow the transportation of people and supplies.¹¹⁸ Collier and the WRA envisioned evacuees completing the large irrigation system, farming to produce food needed in the center and for the war effort, pursuing industrial activities, and organizing their own school, health, cultural, and governmental systems.¹¹⁹ The commissioner hoped the Japanese Americans would turn the center into “a national asset” and establish long term residency.¹²⁰

Construction of the Relocation Center

The relocation center occupied a previously untamed, undeveloped, and isolated site in the southern part of the Colorado River Indian Reservation. The closest town, Parker, traced its roots to an 1871 post office designated to serve the reservation’s Indian agency, one mile distant in Silver City. Agency facilities included government

¹⁰⁹ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 8.

¹¹⁰ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 9.

¹¹¹ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 9.

¹¹² Joan Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu, *Imperial Valley Nisei Women: Transcending Poston* (Syracuse: New Persephone Press, 2006), 2.

¹¹³ George Yoshito, Seattle, Wa., Interview by Alice Ito and John Pai, 18 February 2002, Densho, <http://www.densho.org>.

¹¹⁴ Tsosie, Interview.

¹¹⁵ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 14 June and 6 August 1942.

¹¹⁶ Teresa Watanabe, “Indians Laud WWII Japanese Americans Who Developed Their Land,” *Los Angeles Times*, 19 February 2009, <http://www.latimes.com> (accessed 8 July 2009).

¹¹⁷ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 23.

¹¹⁸ Mills, “Project Director’s Narrative Report,” 3.

¹¹⁹ John Collier, OIA Commissioner, Letter to Russell G. Charlton, Adjutant General Selective Service, 23 May 1942, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head Collection.

¹²⁰ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 55.

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offices, a hospital, houses, garages, a machine shop, and dormitories.¹²¹ The post office name honored Ely Samuel Parker (1828-1895), a Seneca-Iroquois Indian from New York who became a tribal leader, studied law, worked as an engineer, served with Ulysses S. Grant during the Civil War, and became the first Native American commissioner of the Office Indian Affairs in 1869.¹²² The tracks of the Arizona and California Railway (a subsidiary of the AT&SF system) reached the area in 1907, and the post office moved to be near the line.¹²³ In 1909, the railroad's surveyor, Earl H. Parker (no relation to the commissioner), surveyed and laid out the townsite, and selected its name.¹²⁴ Parker functioned as a service and supply center for nearby mining and agricultural operations.¹²⁵

Alexander Leighton described the town and vicinity as it was in 1942:

Parker, Arizona, sits in the desert, a stopping place on the highway between Wickenburg and Needles. Formerly a mining town, it is today a vestige of the old West with stores, saloons and rooming houses strung along covered sidewalks and a main street, and is surrounded by rubbish and decay which the desert bleaches, but does not absorb.¹²⁶

Building materials for the relocation center arrived via train in Parker, where trucks loaded them for transportation to the relocation center. The location was so isolated and undeveloped that trucks required towing in by tractor (due to sand depths) to bring the first materials for construction.¹²⁷

The War Department estimated the Colorado River facility would be the most expensive of the ten centers to build at about \$9,365,000.¹²⁸ The OIA transferred engineers and other professionals from its Colorado River Indian Irrigation Project to speed completion.¹²⁹ Like the other relocation centers, the development was designed as a self-contained community with its own living facilities, hospital, offices, schools, recreational sites, warehouses, churches, and other features. The barracks at Poston featured a double roof design, presumably intended to mitigate the effects of strong sunlight and desert temperatures. The War Department held responsibility for construction of the basic evacuee facilities, administrative offices, and staff housing, as well as the hospital and support facilities such as sheds and warehouses. The WRA and OIA agreed that construction of other buildings and structures would use mostly evacuee labor. The center received a post office named "Poston," honoring the early Arizona Indian commissioner.

On 27 March 1942 work began on the first and largest of the three camps, Poston I, which included the administrative headquarters and hospital.¹³⁰ Contractor Del Webb, who erected the evacuee living areas, had settled in Phoenix for his health in 1927 and operated one of the major construction companies in the state. His business received several large-scale government projects during the war years, starting with Fort Huachuca in southern Arizona. Webb soon acquired a reputation for "fast efficient work."¹³¹ Five thousand men working in double shifts completed Poston I within three weeks, after which the company signed a contract for further

¹²¹ The site of the original post office was about four miles south of the current railroad depot location according to Steve Whisel of the Arizona Railway Museum. Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 54; Steve Whisel, Arizona Railroad Museum, Email to R. Laurie Simmons, 10 March 2009.

¹²² Gerry J. Gilmore, "Seneca Chief Fought Greed, Injustice," <http://www.pentagon.gov/specials/nativeam02/injustice.html> (accessed 8 January 2009); Parker Area Tourism Committee, "General Eli Samuel Parker," <http://parkerareatourism.com/community/history/parker.html> (accessed 8 January 2009).

¹²³ Parker Area Tourism Committee, "CRIT Reservation History," at <http://parkerareatourism.com> (accessed 8 January 2009).

¹²⁴ Steve Whisel, Arizona Railway Museum, Email to R. Laurie Simmons, 10 March 2009.

¹²⁵ Parker Area Tourism Committee, "CRIT."

¹²⁶ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 54.

¹²⁷ "Points to be brought out in a statement to the Committee," 16 June 1943, box 3, Wade Head Collection.

¹²⁸ U.S. War Department, *Japanese Evacuation*, 273; Unrau, *The Evacuation and Relocation*, Chapter 5, 4.

¹²⁹ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 8.

¹³⁰ Poston I was also called "Unit I," "Camp I," or "North Poston." At its peak, Poston I held about 9,500 people.

¹³¹ Margaret Finnerty, *Del Webb, A Man, A Company* (Flagstaff, Az.: Heritage Publishers, Inc., 1991), 32.

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construction (See Figure 7).¹³² Poston II and III were finished four weeks later.¹³³ Builders set a record at Poston III by erecting sixteen buildings in twenty-two minutes.¹³⁴ Although the government designated the camps I, II, and III, the evacuees soon nicknamed them “Toasten,” “Roasten,” and “Dustin.”

Planners expected Poston I to house ten thousand inhabitants, while Poston II and III were planned to accommodate about five thousand persons each. By April the site was a “scene of intense activity,” and Wade Head found the Army “extremely anxious that we bring in evacuees as soon as possible.”¹³⁵ Webb employee Bob Johnson recalled that plans for the barracks specified pine, but that wood was in short supply so workers used redwood for many walls. Although the builders believed redwood would not shrink, Johnson spent the night in a barracks and found himself covered in dust in the morning. He then realized cracks developing between the boards would require battens.¹³⁶ The Arizona Historical Foundation archives a film of Poston under construction that documents some of the mass production techniques and building materials used by Webb.¹³⁷ Historian Thomas Fujita-Rony observed,

In effect, the U.S. government was creating a city overnight in a remote area where there were few of the materials and resources normally used for a construction project of this scale. It thus required an outpouring of energies, especially to locate goods, equipment, and personnel to build and staff the facilities.¹³⁸

Completing an entire community like Poston represented the type of project that made Webb famous. After the war, the company pioneered construction of large planned developments such as Sun City, utilizing the expertise gained working on government projects. As his biographer, Margaret Finnerty, noted, “Webb was an expert at building something in the middle of nothing.”¹³⁹

Leighton recalled “speed was the keynote” of the construction, and confusion among government agencies resulted in problems at the outset:

The necessity for speed, the lack of precedent, and the trouble securing men and material imposed by war conditions plunged the project from the start into a welter of gravest difficulties. Lines of authority and responsibility were not clear between the War Relocation Authority, the Indian Service, the Office of Emergency Management, the contractors, the Wartime Civil Control Authority and the Army.¹⁴⁰

The immense rush that marked the setting up of Poston reduced the efficiency of its construction. For example, Leighton reported that “freight cars were sent by hundreds to Parker where there was no siding to accommodate them and no means of unloading them, and they had to be scattered in the country around wherever temporary space could be found.”¹⁴¹

As one of the first two centers erected, Poston became a test case for the design of relocation facilities. WRA and Indian Affairs officials repeatedly expressed concern about the fast, inexpensive construction completed by Del Webb. The Army had no experience constructing housing for women, children, and the elderly, and the

¹³² Finnerty, *Del Webb*, 42.

¹³³ Poston II officially opened on 3 July 1942 with 450 Salinas Valley evacuees. *Official Daily Press Bulletin* 5 July 1942, 1; Finnerty, *Del Webb*, 41-42.

¹³⁴ Jeffery F. Burton and Mary M. Farrell, “Poston Relocation Center,” Draft National Register of Historic Places Nomination, July 2006, 42.

¹³⁵ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 55; Wade Head, Project Director, Letter to John Collier, OIA Commissioner, 24 April 1942, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head Collection.

¹³⁶ Finnerty, *Del Webb*, 42.

¹³⁷ “Strangers in a Strange Land,” 16mm color film, 1942, Box 5, Wade Head Collection.

¹³⁸ Fujita-Rony, “Arizona and Japanese American History.”

¹³⁹ Finnerty, *Del Webb*, 89.

¹⁴⁰ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 55 and 58.

¹⁴¹ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 58.

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temporary Theater of Operations type buildings originally designed for soldiers lacked qualities necessary for long term use by families.¹⁴² In early May 1942, E.R. Fryer, WRA Regional Director, told Wade Head an inspection of Poston “resulted in many modifications in the type of construction originally planned for WRA projects. The Army Engineers will use the modified TO [Theater of Operations] type, which approaches the Standard barracks type which you have for administrative quarters.”¹⁴³ Head subsequently wrote to another colleague, “Our construction in Camp No. 1 and No. 2 is miserable and every day as the lumber seasons more, it becomes worse. I hope you make every effort possible to get [modified] TO type construction in Camp No. 3.”¹⁴⁴

Head also suggested future camps include facilities for cooking in the evacuee apartments, reasoning that “to prepare for this would be inexpensive and would be a great morale booster.”¹⁴⁵ He reported “a very poor grade of roofing” being used on Poston buildings and estimated it would last for a year at most. The project director proposed several specific improvements for future construction, including building roofs with three layers and asphalt shingles, specifying narrower spacing of rafters, and eliminating power and telephone lines across recreation areas.¹⁴⁶ He reasoned that related people should not be sent to different centers, stating “it is very important we make an effort to keep the families together.”¹⁴⁷

At the end of May, after inspection of Poston I and the two other units underway, the poor quality of construction led Acting Chief of Planning and Development J.C. McCaskill to recommend postponing the erection of a fourth camp.¹⁴⁸ He suggested eliminating the need for contractors by employing evacuee laborers to build “simple adobe houses,” believing such construction could be completed in a timely, less costly manner with “a net result so much better.”¹⁴⁹ Although Poston never received adobe houses, eventually several buildings were erected of adobe using Japanese American labor, most notably schools.

Arrival of the Evacuees

On 8 May, a small advance contingent of young evacuee volunteers came to the center to assist with preparations for the large number of relocated people who would soon begin to arrive.¹⁵⁰ A total of about 250 people donated their services, including specialists in various fields who helped establish programs related to specific aspects of center life. Volunteers also cleaned the newly completed barracks and performed a variety of jobs associated with the registration and settlement of incoming residents.¹⁵¹ Administrators, impressed by these young people, often turned to them for advice and information in the months ahead.¹⁵² On the day the volunteers reached Poston, Wade Head wrote, “We are extremely anxious to begin receiving evacuees for several reasons, but, mainly, due to the hot weather coming on; they should be arriving in order to become acclimated before the heat becomes too severe.”¹⁵³ The center began receiving one thousand people each day by

¹⁴² Standards and details for relocation center construction were issued after work at Poston was underway. Unrau, *The Evacuation and Relocation*, Chapter 5, 4.

¹⁴³ E.R. Fryer, WRA Regional Director, Letter to Wade Head, Project Director, 8 May 1942, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head Collection.

¹⁴⁴ Wade Head, Project Director, Letter to “Cy,” 12 May 1942, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head Collection.

¹⁴⁵ Wade Head, Project Director, to Letter to E.R. Fryer, 14 May 1942, box 1, folder, 1, Wade Head Collection.

¹⁴⁶ Head to Fryer, 14 May 1942, box 1, folder, 1, Wade Head Collection.

¹⁴⁷ Head to “Cy,” 12 May 1942, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head Collection.

¹⁴⁸ The fourth and fifth camps were never built.

¹⁴⁹ J.C. McCaskill to J. Collier, 27 May 1942, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head Collection, also quoted in Leonard, “Imagining Poston,” 20.

¹⁵⁰ “Notes,” 16 June 1943, box 1, folder 5, Wade Head Collection; Spicer, et al, *Impounded People*, 76.

¹⁵¹ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 61; Elizabeth Colson, E.H. Spicer, and A.H. Leighton, Colorado River Relocation Center, Bureau of Sociological Research, “A Brief History of Poston I (First Nine Months),” May 1943, 2, <http://content.cdlib.org> (accessed 29 January 2009).

¹⁵² Spicer, et al, *Impounded People*, 76-77.

¹⁵³ Wade Head, Project Director, Letter to E.F. Cress, WRA Deputy Director, 8 May 1942, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head

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the end of the month, and administrators faced a multitude of questions and problems resulting from the speed and complexity of the project.¹⁵⁴ “Great confusion” existed as 3,500 contractor’s laborers continued to work at building the “frontier town” at the same time that evacuees settled in.¹⁵⁵

Poston Demographics

During its three-and-a-half years of operation, 19,392 persons came into the custody of the Colorado River Relocation Center (See Figure 10). Poston received 11,738 people via direct evacuation (those who arrived directly from their homes rather than going through an assembly center).¹⁵⁶ Coming mostly from eastern California (Military Area No. 2), this group represented the largest number of direct evacuees of any of the relocation centers.¹⁵⁷ The Mayer, Pinedale, Salinas, and Santa Anita assembly centers transferred 6,020 persons to Poston, with the last two providing the largest numbers of evacuees.¹⁵⁸ Another 268 people transferred from other permanent relocation centers (of which 31 were from Tule Lake). The remainder of evacuees arrived from the Department of Justice (469), voluntary residents (27), institutions (69), or came from the WCCA via seasonal work (8).¹⁵⁹

Nearly all (98.4 percent) of the Poston evacuees were former California residents; the remainder came from Arizona. Four Southern California counties contributed nearly 7,800 evacuees to Poston: Los Angeles, 2,750 persons; San Diego, 1,883; Orange, 1,636; and Imperial, 1,512. Counties in the Central Valley and central coast supplied over 6,000 residents: Tulare, 1,952; Fresno, 1,590; Monterey, 1,506; and Santa Cruz, 1,222. Evacuees sent to Poston came from cities of various sizes, including 43 percent from cities of less than 5,000 in population and 13 percent from cities of 1,000,000 or more. More than two-thirds (67.4 percent) of Poston residents were U.S. citizens.¹⁶⁰

As scholars Karen J. Leong and Dan Killoren found, one military zone split Arizona in two and one street could divide those who remained free from those who were evacuated. Nearly all of the Arizona evacuees came from Maricopa County (the Phoenix area). Some Japanese Americans went directly to Poston, and others in the southern part of the state were confined at the Mayer Assembly Center at first. Mayer, in Yavapai County northwest of Phoenix, forwarded 246 evacuees to Poston. Those who lived east of the military exclusion line and remained free still faced substantial prejudice and in the 1990s successfully claimed reparations. When Poston released its evacuees, many received temporary assistance from the Japanese American community in Arizona and others became permanent residents of the state.¹⁶¹

Poston recorded 793 births and 300 deaths during its operation.¹⁶² The first baby born at the center, who received the name “Frank Poston Kuwahara,” arrived on 25 May 1942.¹⁶³ From Poston, 1,827 people transferred to other centers, the largest number being 1,437 going to Tule Lake. Indefinite leaves (for purposes such as employment, education, community invitation, or to join other family members) drained 16,530

Collection.

¹⁵⁴ Wade Head, Project Director, Letter to John Collier, OIA Commissioner, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head Collection; Collier to Charlton, 23 May 1942.

¹⁵⁵ “Points to be brought up,” 16 June 1943, box 3, Wade Head Collection; *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 20 May 1942, 1.

¹⁵⁶ War Relocation Authority, *WRA: A Story*, 22.

¹⁵⁷ Gila River, Tule Lake, and Manzanar also received direct evacuees. Unrau, *The Evacuation and Relocation*, Chapter 4, 1 and Chapter 5.

¹⁵⁸ Vincent Tajiri, Ray C. Franchi, and Paul Takeda, *Through Innocent Eyes: Writings and Art from the Japanese American Internment by Poston I Schoolchildren* (Los Angeles: Keiro Services Press and the Generations Fund, c. 1990), 116.

¹⁵⁹ WRA, *The Evacuated People*, Tables 3 and 4, 11-14.

¹⁶⁰ WRA, *The Evacuated People*, Table 19, 61-66.

¹⁶¹ Karen J. Leong and Dan Killoren, “Enduring Communities—Japanese Americans in Arizona,” <http://www.discovernikkei.org/forum> (accessed 2 October 2008); WRA, *The Evacuated People*, Table 19, 61-66.

¹⁶² WRA, *The Evacuated People*, Tables 3 and 4, 11-14.

¹⁶³ *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 26 May 1942, 1.

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individuals from the center's population. While living at Poston 368 men joined the armed forces.¹⁶⁴ Some 136 people were sent to Department of Justice internment facilities and 20 were transferred to institutions. Poston became the largest of the regular relocation centers with 17,814 persons at its peak on 2 September 1942; Tule Lake became a segregation center and had a slightly larger peak population after receiving people transferred from other locations.¹⁶⁵ If evacuees on short-term and seasonal leave are included, Poston did not attain maximum population until 1 January 1943, when 18,030 persons were counted. The center's population declined thereafter. Table 2 shows trends in Poston's population during its years of operation.¹⁶⁶ The facility remained active 1,301 days; only Tule Lake had a longer existence.

Japanese Americans React to Poston's Environment and Facilities

Kiyo Sato remembered that her spirits soared when her family learned they would be placed on an Indian reservation: "Rivers to fish in, grounds to hunt on. We had studied about the Indians in our United States History class. How good of the Indians to invite us to their reservation!"¹⁶⁷ Many of the earlier evacuees traveled the entire way to the relocation center by bus, stopping at Blythe, Arizona, for an hour to consume sandwiches and coffee before completing their journey.¹⁶⁸ Some people also drove their own cars to the site.¹⁶⁹ Those traveling to Poston by train came in groups of about five hundred persons, disembarked at Parker, and completed the journey in a government-operated bus or truck. Gene Sogioka reported only three buses were available to transport people, requiring long waits in town.¹⁷⁰ Some buses got stuck in the deep dust of the unpaved road to Poston.¹⁷¹ Shizuko S. Tokushige recalled an unpleasant experience with a military guard:

At Parker, Arizona, we were transferred to buses. With baggage and carryalls hanging from my arm, I was contemplating what I could leave behind, since my husband was not allowed to come to my aid. A soldier said, "Let me help you, put your arm out." He proceeded to pile everything on my arm. And to my horror, he placed my two-month-old baby on top of the stack. He then pushed me with the butt of the gun and told me to get off the train, knowing when I stepped off the train my baby would fall to the ground. I refused. But he kept prodding and ordering me to move. I will always be thankful a lieutenant checking the cars came upon us. He took the baby down, gave her to me, and then ordered the soldier to carry all our belongings to the bus and see that I was seated and then report back to him.¹⁷²

Masami Honda described the journey from Parker to the relocation center:

The bus trip to Poston III was long and dusty. So dusty that the sky was blotted out completely. At first we tried to keep the windows of the school bus that was transporting us closed, but it was so hot—over 110 degrees that people, especially the older people, and the kids, were getting sick.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁴ "Summary of Colorado River Relocation Center Final Accountability Roster, November 28, 1945," Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 116.

¹⁶⁵ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 29; Niiya, *Encyclopedia*, 337.

¹⁶⁶ WRA, *The Evacuated People*, Tables 5 and 6, 17-18.

¹⁶⁷ Kiyo Sato, *Dandelion Through the Crack: The Sato Family Quest for the American Dream* (Nevada City, Ca.: Willow Valley Press, 2007), 167.

¹⁶⁸ Bailey, *City in the Sun*, 64.

¹⁶⁹ The 8 September 1942 *Poston Chronicle* contained information about traffic ordinances and speed limits for cars in the center.

¹⁷⁰ Deborah Gesensway and Mindy Roseman, *Beyond Words: Images from America's Concentration Camps* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), 147.

¹⁷¹ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 10.

¹⁷² Shizuko S. Tokushige quoted in U.S., Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, 1982), 151.

¹⁷³ Honda quoted in Matthew T. Estes and Donald H Estes, "Hot Enough to Melt Iron: The San Diego Nikkei Experience 1942-1946, <http://www.jahssd.org> (accessed 7 January 2009).

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John W. Powell, assistant chief of community services, described the scene that awaited evacuees:

Imagine, first, a flat brown plain, from which the flood-fattened mesquite has been torn up by the roots, leaving gritty brown talcum-powder dust a foot deep over all the baking treeless miles, shimmering under the 120-degree heat of Arizona. Now project upon that desolation a square mile of black tarpaper barracks, a hundred feet long by twenty wide, placed row on row in mathematical monotony.¹⁷⁴

Ruri Tsuchiya Ishimaru recalled, “No air conditioning. There was nothing but sand. No trees, no grass, just bare. Tared roof, a big army barracks. There were no birds, but lots of ants on the ground. It was so hot...”¹⁷⁵

Kiyo Sato also described the setting: “There are no trees, no plants, no grass, only dry dirt, sand and sagebrush in all directions as far as the eye can see.”¹⁷⁶

Newcomers were sent immediately to the mess halls, where they received cold water, salt tablets, and wet towels.¹⁷⁷ The tired evacuees still faced a “grueling” registration process that consumed about two hours. Leighton recalled that the project director stated this “intake” process “was one of the things he would remember longest out of the whole experience at Poston. He thought the people looked lost, not knowing what to do or what to think.”¹⁷⁸ They waited in line to show their papers and sign forms before climbing into Army trucks that dropped them and their baggage at assigned barracks.¹⁷⁹ Leighton further described the conditions: “Mess halls were unfinished, there was lack of refrigeration for meat, plumbing was incomplete, the hospital was not built, there was danger of failure of the water supply and other matters on which life would depend.”¹⁸⁰ Evacuee Jack Matsuoka commented, “Before we could move in, we had to evict the former tenants, the scorpions.”¹⁸¹

John Collier foresaw that the contractor’s “reckless tearing up of ground” would hinder planned improvement of the land. Some blamed this rough treatment for the frequent dust storms, or “Poston zephyrs.”¹⁸² Many considered Poston’s climate the harshest of all relocation camps. By June, temperatures soared above one hundred degrees in the shade.¹⁸³ As Kiyo Sato observed, the desert never seemed to lose its heat, and finding a cool place was “the only thought of the prisoners, day and night.”¹⁸⁴ After a month in the center, one young evacuee described conditions:

Our mouths are always gritty, and the rooms including the mess halls cannot be kept clean even by closing all the doors and windows because there are so many cracks in the walls and floors. From about 1:30 p.m. daily, the wind rises, and often we can’t see [a] half mile ahead due to the dust cloud. Each step we take we stir up dust. Dust settles on the typewriter and is noticeable even while writing a letter.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁴ John W. Powell, “America’s Refugees: Exodus and Diaspora,” 14 April 1943, 3, Mss. 42, box 19, folder 12, Special Collections, University of Arizona, Tucson, Az.

¹⁷⁵ Ishimaru quoted in Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu, *Imperial Valley Nisei Women*, 61.

¹⁷⁶ Sato, *Dandelion*, 171.

¹⁷⁷ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 64 and 90.

¹⁷⁸ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 66.

¹⁷⁹ Powell, “America’s Refugees,” 3.

¹⁸⁰ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 58.

¹⁸¹ Jack Matsuoka, *Poston, Camp II, Block 211: Daily Life in an Internment Camp* (San Mateo, Ca.: Asian American Curriculum Project, Inc., 2003), 34.

¹⁸² Leonard, “Imagining Poston,” 21; Bailey, *City in the Sun*, 86.

¹⁸³ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 92; Donald H. Estes and Matthew T. Estes, “Letters from Camp: Poston—The First Year,” *Journal of the West*, 38(April 1999): 27.

¹⁸⁴ Sato, *Dandelion*, 194.

¹⁸⁵ Evacuee quoted in Spicer, et al, *Impounded People*, 72.

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On 28 May 1942, Director Head issued a communication to residents in an attempt to dispel rumors that they were in a concentration camp by stating, "Poston has been set aside as a relocation center, and what it develops into is entirely dependent upon the colonists themselves." He encouraged everyone to do their part to make Poston a model community. Acknowledging the less than desirable living conditions, Head promised evacuees would have access to supplies and equipment to make barracks partitions, furniture, and landscaping. Accredited schools, college extension courses, athletic programs, stores, and theaters were all planned, as well as an evacuee municipal council.¹⁸⁶

During a visit toward the end of June 1942, John Collier addressed the evacuees as "fellow citizens and fellow Americans," and observed that they were "in the middle of a tragedy." He remarked that his impression of their situation was one "of great physical discomfort, hardship, and of perfectly marvelous human spirit throughout the colony," and indicated their uprooting "was loaded with injustice." The commissioner assured evacuees that the staff would assist them in any way they could and protect the residents' liberties as much as possible. He indicated Japanese Americans and administrators should assume a four- to six-year occupation of the site and develop it accordingly. Collier concluded by announcing that the "great social experiment" at Poston would be recorded in a scientific manner. Accordingly, he had secured the services of Dr. Alexander Leighton, a scientist and sociologist from Johns Hopkins Medical School, who would "make studies . . . that the whole world will read when the scientific record is done."¹⁸⁷

Housing Blocks. As at the other centers, evacuee areas at Poston were divided into grids of blocks (See Figure 6). Each block accommodated 250 to 300 people.¹⁸⁸ As Aiko Tanamachi Endo described, "Each block was organized like an army camp, and there would be barracks where people would stay. In each block there would be a mess hall and a recreation hall. The recreation hall had a block office at one end where you took your problems and picked up your mail."¹⁸⁹ Each block included a paid evacuee manager and an assistant who held responsibility for the general welfare of the residents, including the distribution of supplies, maintenance of facilities, and supervision of improvements. The managers served as liaisons between the administration and the residents, attended centerwide meetings, and dealt with the problems of occupants.

Barracks. Each barracks contained living quarters that varied in dimension according to the number in a family.¹⁹⁰ Measuring 20' X 100', the gabled, double-roof barracks had vertical board walls. Black asphalt-impregnated roofing paper secured with battens covered the walls and roofs. A barracks typically contained four apartments (each 20' X 25'), although in some cases the buildings were divided into six apartments to house married couples or small families. At first, limited housing stock resulted in instances where two couples shared one room, small families shared with unrelated individuals they did not know, and single men lived in undivided barracks.¹⁹¹ Leighton described the housing provided for evacuees as having "bare boards, knot-holes through the floor and into the next apartment, heaps of dust, and for each person an army cot, a blanket and a sack which can be filled with straw to make a mattress. There is nothing else. No shelves, closets, chairs, tables, or screens."¹⁹²

The interior walls were unfinished, and Mastipave (similar to linoleum) eventually covered the original board floors to reduce air and dust infiltration.¹⁹³ The buildings did not have continuous concrete foundations, as they

¹⁸⁶ Wade Head, Project Director, "Memorandum to Colorado River Relocation Project Residents," 28 May 1942, reprinted in Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 110-111.

¹⁸⁷ John Collier, "Speech Given at Colorado River Relocation Center," 27 June 1942, folder 1, box 1, Wade Head Collection.

¹⁸⁸ Spicer, *et al*, *Impounded People*, 66.

¹⁸⁹ Endo quoted in Fujita-Rony, "Arizona and Japanese American History."

¹⁹⁰ Tajiri, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 91; Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 11.

¹⁹¹ Spicer, *et al*, *Impounded People*, 99.

¹⁹² Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 65;

¹⁹³ Ellen Yukawa noted, "Eventually they gave us linoleum to put down on the floor because it was just a wood floor with knotholes and scorpions used to come up through the holes." Joanne Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed: True Stories of the Japanese American Incarceration During World War II and a Librarian Who Made a Difference* (New York: Scholastic Nonfiction, 2006), 117.

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did at some other relocation centers; instead, they were supported by a series of wood post piers on individual concrete foundation pads.¹⁹⁴ Kiyō Sato found the barracks provided little relief from the heat: “The sun pounds mercilessly on the black tarpapered barracks, radiating its heat inside like an oven.”¹⁹⁵ When mail order products began arriving, many people obtained electric fans that were set under troughs on which water dripped, creating an air cooler.¹⁹⁶ Buildings such as offices, hospitals, warehouses, and administration facilities received government-purchased coolers.¹⁹⁷ In September 1942, the Parker Lumber and Supply Company advertised for sale about 350 air coolers obtained from Sears, Roebuck.¹⁹⁸

Former evacuee Terry Grimesey Jansen recalled the barracks “had one door . . . it had bare walls with the studs showing. It was not finished in any way. Wooden floors, real rough looking. We used the studs to put things on as there were [sic] no furniture except for our straw covered cots.”¹⁹⁹ Evacuees were invited to fill mattress casings with straw for their beds and build furniture and shelves from scrap lumber. Descriptions of the living quarters of the other relocation centers contained in the April 1943 camp magazine indicate that Poston’s were among the most basic.²⁰⁰

Sociologist Don Elberson recalled that he learned not to enter the barracks with the families when they arrived: “It was too terrible to witness the pain in people’s faces, too shameful for them to be seen in this degrading situation.”²⁰¹ Louise Ogawa initially preferred the Santa Anita Assembly Center to her Arizona quarters: “This camp is so far away from civilization that it makes me feel as if I was a convict who is not allowed to see anyone.”²⁰² Evacuees were allowed to bring only the personal effects and bedding that they would use immediately upon arrival. Other baggage could be shipped by freight at a later date.²⁰³ Tetsuyo Hirasaki reported the residents needed to purchase many essentials to make their quarters livable and lives bearable: “Brooms, buckets, baby food, fresh fruit, spoons and forks (there are none in the mess hall), and soap for mess hall dish washing.”²⁰⁴

Beginning in October, bonfires became one of the defining features of Poston, dotting the center as the days grew colder and temperatures dipped below freezing. Supply Officer H.H. Townsend reported seeing 118 bonfires one morning, with children, women, older people, and workmen standing around them. He noted such fires would proliferate unless heating stoves arrived for the barracks, as the buildings had no form of wallboard or insulation.²⁰⁵ In November, Townsend indicated kerosene and oil burning stoves had been shipped, but no kerosene was available in the area, and no oil had been purchased.²⁰⁶ Promised additional clothing or clothing allowances that could have provided warmer outerwear had not been distributed. As Alexander Leighton found,

¹⁹⁴ *Poston Official Daily Information Bulletin*, 3 June 1942; Randall Henderson, “Refuge on the Colorado,” *The Desert Magazine* (September 1942):6.

¹⁹⁵ Sato, *Dandelion*, 173.

¹⁹⁶ Matsuoka, *Poston, Camp II*, 90.

¹⁹⁷ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 2 August 1942, 1.

¹⁹⁸ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 15 September 1942, 1.

¹⁹⁹ Terry Grimesey Jansen website, <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/8420/terry.html#tjac> (accessed 31 March 2009).

²⁰⁰ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 53-62.

²⁰¹ Elberson quoted in Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed*, 112.

²⁰² Estes and Estes, “Letters from Camp,” 23.

²⁰³ Unrau, *The Evacuation and Relocation*, Chapter 5, 5.

²⁰⁴ Estes and Estes, “Letters from Camp,” 25.

²⁰⁵ Townsend grew increasingly unhappy about what he considered the administration’s lenient control of the evacuees. He testified about his concerns before the Dies Committee after the Poston Incident. H.H. Townsend, Supply and Transportation Officer, Memorandum, 15 October 1942, box 1, folder 6, Wade Head Collection; National Park Service, *Japanese Americans*, 216; Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed*, 148; Thomas Nakayama, ed., *Transforming Barbed Wire: The Incarceration of Japanese Americans in Arizona During World War II* (Phoenix: Arizona Humanities Council, 1997), 10.

²⁰⁶ H.H. Townsend, Supply and Transportation Officer, Memorandum, 2 November 1942, box 1, folder 6, Wade Head Collection.

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the elderly, sick, and very young, especially those who could not buy additional blankets and coats, suffered.²⁰⁷ Finally, in December 1942, the stoves arrived.²⁰⁸

After adjusting somewhat to the primitive and communal quality of their living quarters, evacuees began creating more comfortable and attractive barracks. Those who possessed sufficient funds could order their furniture shipped from home or purchase items through mail order catalogs. Most people turned to the piles of leftover wood from the center's construction to create tables, chairs, and other necessities.²⁰⁹ Chizuko de Queiroz remembered,

Out of scrap lumber my dad and brothers made all our furniture and wooden *getas* for our feet. They nailed tin can lids, that they got from the mess hall, over holes in the barracks floors and walls to keep out scorpions, mice, and bugs. We also rolled newspapers to fill the cracks between the wall boards to try to keep the sand out.²¹⁰

Porches that families added at entrances to the barracks became popular places to relax and lent individual character to the buildings' monotonous exteriors.²¹¹ Some residents dug cellars 4' - to 6'-deep under their barracks and stayed there when temperatures rose or dust storms came.²¹² De Queiroz's family used buckets to remove dirt under their living space and create an art studio.²¹³

Latrine, Laundry, and Ironing Buildings. Lack of privacy became a major problem of camp life. Many families quickly hung sheets or blankets to divide their assigned barracks space into separate areas.²¹⁴ The center of each housing block contained separate men's and women's latrines, which had no partitions for showers or toilets. Ellen Yukawa and Elaine Hibi Bowers wrote about the embarrassment women faced when using these facilities. Some waited for darkness to shower, while others wore swimming suits.²¹⁵ Yukawa's father built partitions for the latrine in their block, and women with children placed mail orders for chamber pots.²¹⁶ Laundry buildings, also in the center of each block, included boiler rooms that heated water for cleaning clothes, showering, and mess hall needs.²¹⁷ Ironing buildings, added south of the laundry buildings at the center of the blocks in July 1942 were equipped with twelve ironing boards and a number of electrical outlets.²¹⁸

Mess Halls. Large rectangular mess halls in the southwest corner of each block accommodated 250 persons seated at long wooden tables with benches. The buildings contained serving counters, ranges, and hot water heaters. Most of the food not grown at the center came from the Army Quartermaster in Los Angeles.²¹⁹ The staff of each mess hall included a head cook and several assistants, and a cooking school for chefs and culinary aides opened in June 1942.²²⁰ The average cost of feeding each person totaled thirty-seven cents per day.²²¹

At the mess hall, many young people sat with their peers rather than their families, disrupting the traditional custom of meal-sharing.²²² Jack Matsuoka found, "You almost never got to eat with your own family or friends

²⁰⁷ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 154.

²⁰⁸ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 5 December 1942, 2.

²⁰⁹ *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 13 May 1942, 1.

²¹⁰ *Getas* are traditional Japanese platform sandals made of wood. Chizuko Judy Sugita de Queiroz, *Camp Days, 1942-45* (Santa Ana, Ca.: Edinger Publishing, 2004), 10.

²¹¹ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 28.

²¹² Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu, *Imperial Valley Nisei Women*, 25; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 109.

²¹³ de Queiroz, *Camp Days*, 18.

²¹⁴ Powell, "America's Refugees," 4.

²¹⁵ Nakayama, *Transforming Barbed Wire*, 10.

²¹⁶ Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed*, 118.

²¹⁷ Estes and Estes, "Hot Enough to Melt Iron," 7.

²¹⁸ *Poston Official Daily Information Bulletin*, 3 July 1942.

²¹⁹ Henderson, "Refuge."

²²⁰ *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 6 June 1942, 1.

²²¹ Henderson, "Refuge."

²²² Sato, *Dandelion*, 203.

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because of the crowds. Whatever table manners you might have had were soon forgotten. Lightning-fast hands and long arms helped you get more to eat.”²²³ Fusa Tsumagari described the growing generation gap: “We don’t see each other often enough, and we’ve stopped eating together as a family. Young folks associate with young folks. Older people have only themselves for company.”²²⁴

Recreation Halls. The southeast corner of each block contained a recreation hall similar in construction to the barracks. The buildings housed such activities as ping pong and table games and also accommodated various special activities of the camp as a whole. In 1942, the *Poston Official Information Bulletin* listed the activities assigned to individual recreation halls, including Boy Scouts, Girl’s Club, library, dramatic center, music program, sewing center, older people center, sports equipment center, and dance classroom. Until the adobe school buildings were completed, recreation halls would also be used for classrooms.²²⁵

Hospital. Poston General Hospital opened in Poston I on 17 May 1942, and outpatient clinics operated in Poston II and III. The evacuee staff included doctors, nurses, nurses’ aides, pharmacists, dentists, and other workers. Two OIA nurses received assignments to the center, providing needed assistance during the first months, and Dr. Alexander Leighton served as the first Director of Public Health.²²⁶ In June 1942, the hospital occupied a permanent, 235-bed building costing \$252,882.²²⁷ Health workers at Poston dealt with illnesses ranging from heat exhaustion and dehydration, dysentery, measles, and influenza to tuberculosis and other chronic or terminal diseases.²²⁸

Churches. By the second week of operation, Japanese Americans offered four separate church services in one of the recreation halls.²²⁹ Historian Paul Bailey found that each unit in Poston included several religious leaders and “many internees visited all sects in rotation.”²³⁰ Evacuee Paul Nagano recalled that Christians in Poston I created one ecumenical church led by a board of ministers and sent missionaries to start churches in the other units. The leaders in Poston I divided the camp into four parishes, each containing a certain number of blocks with its own minister. The parishes worked inter-denominationally to provide vacation Bible school, choirs, Sunday services, and other church activities. Periodically, all the faithful came together for special services.²³¹ Catholic priests from California also visited Poston and conducted masses.²³² Nagano noted that “in the midst of their oppression and suffering” some in Poston “made the desert bloom, as it were.”²³³

Studying Poston’s religious life, George Yamaguchi found that *Nisei* organized many Buddhist activities and undertook the associated financial responsibilities of the church during the war.²³⁴ He noted that many members of the older generation were afraid to participate in the church after experiencing FBI raids and the evacuation, and “a large number of people changed from Buddhism to Christianity.”²³⁵ *Nisei* evacuees assumed leadership of the Buddhists in Camp I, where the first Young Buddhist Association meeting convened on 6 June 1942; its membership quickly grew to more than six hundred people.²³⁶ In the fall of 1942, residents erected a Buddhist

²²³ Matsuoka, *Poston, Camp II*, 44.

²²⁴ Tsumagari quoted in Estes and Estes, “Letters from Camp,” 25-26.

²²⁵ *Poston Official Daily Information Bulletin*, 3 June 1942.

²²⁶ Elizabeth Vickers, “Nursing in a Relocation Center: Pioneering with WRA at Poston, Arizona,” *The American Journal of Nursing*, 45(January 1945)1: 26.

²²⁷ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 19. Other sources report 250 beds.

²²⁸ Bailey, *City in the Sun*, 93.

²²⁹ *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 14 May 1942, 1.

²³⁰ Bailey, *City in the Sun*, 93.

²³¹ George Yamaguchi found that this sect consolidation later broke down. Yamaguchi, “Buddhist Organization.” box 1, folder 5, Spicer Papers, Special Collections, University of Arizona, Tucson, Az.

²³² *Official Information Bulletin, Relocation Center, Poston, Arizona*, 7 June 1942, 1.

²³³ Paul Nagano, Interview by Stephen Fugita and Becky Fukuda, 25 May 1999, Seattle, Wa., Densho.

²³⁴ The term *Nisei* refers to a child of Japanese immigrants who is born and educated in the United States. Yamaguchi, “Buddhist Organization.”

²³⁵ Yamaguchi, “Buddhist Organization.”

²³⁶ *Official Information Bulletin, Relocation Center, Poston, Arizona*, 7 June 1942, 1.

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temple in Poston I, and similar buildings in the other two camps soon followed.²³⁷ Bailey observed that the first “bright-colored temple with its shrine and classrooms shone like a red and yellow jewel amid the raw pine and tarpaper world of Poston.”²³⁸

Administrative Housing. Top staff members at Poston lived in “well-built little family houses also supplied with Government furniture.”²³⁹ It was impossible not to notice that housing and offices for the administrative staff were “vastly superior,” having buildings with white board siding and cooled air.²⁴⁰ One evacuee child, Millicent Ogawa, noted the difference between the staff and evacuee residential areas and found a message: “White people are good so they live in white houses, and we are bad so we live in black ones.”²⁴¹

Military Police and Fence. Five hundred U.S. soldiers stationed at the center lived in a compound at the eastern edge of Unit 1 and had little contact with the evacuees. Members of the military police patrolled the relocation site outside the fenced area, controlled the road entering the center and checked visitor’s permits, regulated travel between the three units, and watched over the areas where contractors stored materials.²⁴² Poston had no fence until November 1942. The three-wire fence surrounded the center on three sides; the western edge remained open since anyone leaving in that direction faced the unforgiving desert.²⁴³ Chizuko Judy Sugita de Queiroz found the situation confusing: “Being locked up behind barbed wire, with armed guards, made me feel sad—like maybe I wasn’t really a good American.”²⁴⁴ At the same time the lack of a fence on the west provided evacuees with the small freedom of taking walks and exploring the landscape.²⁴⁵ Unlike some of the other centers, no guard towers were erected at Poston.²⁴⁶

Landscaping. At the end of May, OIA Planner J.C. McCaskill reported engineers were “working feverishly” to get irrigation water to Poston I to help with dust control that would boost morale and public health. Preparations for landscaping were underway and McCaskill believed, “Two months from now you will not recognize the place.”²⁴⁷ A hose connected to a spigot outside each barracks provided water to damp down the dust around the building and for the daily washing of floors.²⁴⁸ Kiyuji Aizumi, an *Issei* woman from San Diego, recorded her stark impression of Poston’s landscape:

Extreme heat that can melt iron. No trees, no flowers, no singing birds, not even the sound of an insect. All at once a strong wind began to blow, sandy dust whirled into the sky, completely taking the sunshine and light from us. That night a full moon shone in the wilderness.²⁴⁹

Grass planting began to ameliorate the effects of the bleak landscape and dust in the barracks areas, and a crew of evacuees led efforts to plant Bermuda grass and advise residents on its care.²⁵⁰ By August 1942, evacuee-

²³⁷ Bailey, *City in the Sun*, 94.

²³⁸ Bailey, *City in the Sun*, 94.

²³⁹ Spicer, et al, *Impounded People*, 84.

²⁴⁰ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 107.

²⁴¹ Millicent Ogawa quoted in de Queiroz, *Camp Days*, 12.

²⁴² Henderson, “Refuge.”

²⁴³ Ralph M. Gelvin, Assistant Project Director Colorado River Relocation Center, Memorandum, 17 June 1943, box 1, folder 6, Wade Head Collection.

²⁴⁴ de Queiroz, *Camp Days*, 34.

²⁴⁵ Spicer, et al, *Impounded People*, 84.

²⁴⁶ Burton and Farrell, “Poston Relocation Center.”

²⁴⁷ McCaskill to Collier, 27 May 1942; *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 30 May 1942, 1.

²⁴⁸ Powell, “America’s Refugees,” 4.

²⁴⁹ The term *Issei* refers to a first generation Japanese immigrant in the United States. Aizumi quoted in Estes and Estes, “Hot Enough to Melt Iron,” 4.

²⁵⁰ *Poston Official Information Bulletin, Relocation Center*, 16 May 1942, 1.

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planted flowers, grass, gardens, and fish ponds were present.²⁵¹ Jack Matsuoka remembered shallow depressions “dug in empty lots to catch the rain and cut down on dust.”²⁵²

Block residents established landscaped open spaces in their living areas, including the several-acre “Wade Head Park” in Poston I, Block 6, the third such area to be established in the center.²⁵³ Volunteers from four blocks in Poston I landscaped “Poston National Park,” which included a bridge across a canal.²⁵⁴ Block 19 created a “Miniature Park” with a fish pond, and a diminutive lighthouse, bridge, houses, and an island as features (Figure 11).²⁵⁵ Other beautification projects for the center grounds included obtaining roses, flowering vines, flower seeds, shrubs, and trees.²⁵⁶ The Nursery Department acquired mulberry, eucalyptus, and Palos Verde trees to plant in administration and agricultural building areas.²⁵⁷ Evacuees also installed more than sixteen thousand Chinese Elm trees delivered from the Shiprock Indian Reservation in New Mexico.²⁵⁸

POSTON RESIDENTS DESIGN AND BUILD ADOBE SCHOOLS

Initial construction at Poston did not include buildings specifically designed as schools for the more than five thousand students in residence. War Department construction omitted “refinements” such as function-specific educational buildings, assuming simple facilities like barracks would be sufficient.²⁵⁹ Milton Eisenhower indicated any permanent construction planned for future schooling of Indians on the reservation would be the responsibility of Indian Affairs.²⁶⁰ In May 1942, OIA Planner J.C. McCaskill noted the center had no schools and quoted Nell Findley, Chief of Community Services, who reported that older people at Poston were “more concerned about schools for their children than any other one thing. It would add greatly to their security to see school buildings begin to rise on the project.”²⁶¹ In June, Wade Head reiterated the “quite serious” problem of the lack of educational facilities, adding, “We don’t have a damned book, building, desk, or a teacher as yet, which means we have quite a long way to go.”²⁶²

Although the WRA intended to erect schools at the other relocation centers as soon as building materials became available, the completion of instructional facilities proved controversial. Some local politicians decried the use of critical construction materials to educate evacuees. As a result of negative public opinion regarding schools at Camp Amache in Colorado in early 1943, the agency limited school development to high schools and special-use buildings, such as auditoriums, shops, and science facilities.²⁶³ Recreation halls and barracks were modified for instructional use for all other classroom needs.

From the beginning, authorities at Poston considered school buildings “one of the most essential construction features” of the center.²⁶⁴ With an eye to furthering its goal of developing the reservation for postwar uses, the OIA quickly embarked on a major project to erect elementary and junior/senior high schools at the three units, using evacuee designs and labor and mostly local materials. By the time the WRA altered its own school

²⁵¹ Spicer, et al, *Impounded People*, 102.

²⁵² Matsuoka, *Poston, Camp II*, 96.

²⁵³ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 22 July 1942, 1.

²⁵⁴ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 24 June 1942, 1.

²⁵⁵ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 10 October 1942, 4.

²⁵⁶ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 25 June 1942, 2.

²⁵⁷ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 7 July 1942, 1.

²⁵⁸ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 28 November 1942, 1.

²⁵⁹ Unrau, *The Evacuation and Relocation*, Chapter 5, 2.

²⁶⁰ Leonard, “Imagining Poston,” 19.

²⁶¹ McCaskill to Collier, 27 May 1942.

²⁶² Wade Head, Project Director, Letter to Carl Hartman, 23 June 1942, box 1, folder 2, Wade Head Collection.

²⁶³ Ruth E. McKee, “History of WRA to June 30, 1944,” 117, manuscript, Spicer Papers, Ms. 042, box 19, folder 4, Special Collections, University of Arizona.

²⁶⁴ Moris Burge, Acting Project Director, “Advance Budget Estimates,” box 3, Wade Head Collection.

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building program, work already was underway on modern permanent elementary school buildings at Poston.²⁶⁵ Thus, the Colorado River project became the only relocation center to complete such facilities. Erecting schools in the three camps became the biggest project completed by Poston's Construction and Maintenance Department.²⁶⁶ School planning extended into the fall of 1942. Willard W. Beatty, director of Indian education for the OIA, took an interest in construction of the schools at Poston and spent several weeks at the center, "since it was understood that upon the termination of the camp as a war-time center the buildings would revert to the Indian service for school use."²⁶⁷

Construction Engineer Charles A. Popkin recruited an architectural designing and drafting unit composed of evacuees to create the schools: "All of the original designing and plot plan layout was done by this unit, under the direction of the project construction engineer." Principal among this group was architect Yoshisaku (or Yoshisako) Hirose, who the *Official Daily Press Bulletin* of 11 November 1942 identified as the schools' designer. Born in Nagasaki, Japan, in 1882, "Yos" Hirose came to the United States in 1903. He attended the Armour Institute of Technology (now the Illinois Institute of Technology) in the early 1910s and received a B.S. in architecture in 1915, preparing a thesis study entitled "A Hotel in Japan." The 1915 college yearbook noted that "Hirose has been with us for four years, and in that time has obtained the honor and respect of the entire class. He is a good student and an accommodating, good-hearted fellow at all times." By 1918, Hirose resided in Los Angeles, where he worked as a draftsman, engineer, and architect for the next two decades. His wife, Susanna, a native of Hungary who also immigrated to the United States in 1903, worked as a dressmaker. The architect is credited with the design of the Koyasan Buddhist Temple in downtown Los Angeles. He died in California in 1963.²⁶⁸

Charles A. Popkin, a longtime engineer/architect with the OIA, served as Poston's construction engineer. Born in New Jersey in 1887, Popkin graduated from Union College, Schenectady, New York. The 1910 Census listed him in Yellowstone National Park, where he worked as an architect for a hotel company. In 1916, Popkin moved to Sapulpa, Oklahoma, a town about fifteen miles southwest of Tulsa, and started an architectural practice. His designs included schools (Sapulpa High School), hospitals, and churches; he served for ten years as the architect for the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma. During the 1930s, he worked for the Office of Indian Affairs in Muskogee, Oklahoma. After the war, Popkin continued to work for Indian Affairs on such projects as Celilo Falls in Oregon and later as a consulting engineer in New Mexico. He settled in Albuquerque in 1952 and died there in 1977 at the age of ninety.²⁶⁹

Professor Amy Ogata, scholar of postwar American elementary schools, found the design of the Poston elementary schools followed late 1930s and early 1940s ideas for such composition, incorporating "long rows of classrooms with large windows and covered walkways that were probably already in use in warm climates." She noted adobe construction was not common for this type of "high profile" design, but reflected wartime

²⁶⁵ McKee, "History," 117.

²⁶⁶ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 11.

²⁶⁷ Popkin, Charles A., "Adobe Has Its Place, Too," 34; *The Nation's Schools* (September 1944): 39-40; Leighton, *The Governing of Men*, 101.

²⁶⁸ Y. Hirose, Toyo Kisen Kaisha, "Passenger List District and Port of San Francisco, California," 31 October 1903, <http://www.ancestry.com>; Popkin, "Adobe Has Its Place, Too," 40; Yoshisaku Hirose, World War I draft registration card, 12 September 1918; Armour Institute of Technology, *Bulletin*, May 1914; *Cycle* (college yearbook), Armour Institute of Technology, 1915; Los Angeles city directories, 1929 and 1939; U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population, manuscript returns, Los Angeles County, California, 1920; *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 11 November 1942, 3.

²⁶⁹ Charles A. Popkin obituary, *Albuquerque Tribune*, 6 October 1977, G-8 and 7 October 1977, D-1; U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population, manuscript returns, Uinta County, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, 1910 and Creek County, Oklahoma, 1920 and 1930; Margaret E. Popkin obituary, *Albuquerque Journal*, 5 October 1969, F-8; Tulsa Foundation for Architecture, Charles A. Popkin profile, <http://www.tulsaarchitecture.com> (accessed 21 December 2008); Charles Adrian Popkin, World War I draft registration card, 5 June 1919; Katrine Barber, *Death of Celilo Falls* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 145.

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limitations on materials. Ogata judged the buildings “a strange hybrid between modernist ideas and a hacienda-style building that would have been appropriate for the climate.”²⁷⁰

Leighton reported the OIA decided to utilize adobe bricks instead of wood boards as in the barracks for several reasons: the evacuees themselves could do the construction; the buildings would be cooler in hot temperatures; the use of adobe would produce “structures of fine appearance;” and, the buildings would benefit the evacuees during their stay and remain after the war as assets for the Indians or their lessees.²⁷¹ Added considerations included the fact that adobe was not critical to the war effort and the ingredients were available on the site. Quite early in the process the OIA settled on the material as appropriate for school construction. Popkin talked with local Indians about their use of adobe plaster in their dwellings of woven withes and discovered that good clay existed at the planned elementary school site in the firebreak west of Blocks 19 and 30 in Poston I. Planners adopted an adobe block 12” wide, 18” long, and 4” thick and weighing about 40 pounds, as those dimensions permitted walls of either 12” or 18” thickness. Pure adobe clay was found to be too rich and cracked when it dried; experimentation revealed that a mixture of 40 percent adobe clay, 60 percent sand, and straw yielded the best block.²⁷²

In an article in *The Nation's Schools*, Popkin discussed factors influencing the design of the school buildings, including the desert setting, high summer temperatures, and the evacuees' lack of experience on major construction projects:

. . . the buildings had to be of an extremely simple type. Every operation was carefully studied and the plans were developed on a purely functional basis. No attempt was made to develop a traditional architectural style or form.

While we were developing our basic building material and the plans for the buildings, temperatures rose as high as 128°. Since the sunshine is unusually strong and brilliant in this part of the country, it was felt that the classrooms should be oriented so that none of the direct rays of the sun would strike their windows. The buildings were, therefore, oriented in accordance with a graphic astronomical chart and were placed 70 degrees west of north with windows on the north and the entrances protected by porches on the south. They were spaced so that the shadows from adjoining structures would not interfere with their light.

The architecture resulting from the need to meet local weather conditions is of the type commonly called “ranch style.”²⁷³

Popkin received a request from the Office of Indian Affairs for copies of the Poston adobe school plans, which the agency intended to publish to promote the construction of such schools in areas with similar climates in Central and South America.²⁷⁴

By June 1942, an adobe plant opened at Poston I, using clay scraped from the school site and sand transported from a nearby bank (See Figures 13 and 14). Concrete mixers combined the ingredients with water and then discharged the adobe on a platform. Popkin described the steps in producing the blocks:

Pallets were made upon which the blocks were cast in a removable form. The adobe mixture was deposited within the form and worked into the corners and edges by hand puddling. By removing

²⁷⁰ Amy F. Ogata, Associate Professor, Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, emails to Thomas H. Simmons, 15 and 23 February 2009; Amy F. Ogata, “Building for Learning in Postwar American Elementary Schools, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 67(December 2008)4: 560-591.

²⁷¹ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 100-101.

²⁷² Popkin, “Adobe Has Its place, Too,” 39-40; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 101.

²⁷³ Popkin, “Adobe Has Its Place, Too,” 40.

²⁷⁴ Dr. Willard Beatty, Director of the Educational Department, had just returned from an eight-week visit to those areas. *Poston Chronicle*, 4 July 1943, 1.

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the form with a rapid, even motion the edges were left sharp and even. The adobe blocks were left on the pallet in the sun and at the end of twenty-four hours were sufficiently dry to turn up on edge on the ground to dry.²⁷⁵

OIA administrators expected evacuees to make the adobe blocks and build the schools, but Poston residents filled the project jobs slowly. The *Poston Chronicle* called for volunteers in January 1943 and encouraged increased production by printing the brick tally accomplished by the workers of each residential block. At first, the evacuees did not favor the adobe construction, considering it an unfamiliar and inferior building material.²⁷⁶ Work in the adobe plant also met with some controversy because it was arduous and the materials damaged hands and clothing difficult to replace on a \$12 monthly salary.²⁷⁷ In summer, people toiled in temperatures of between 115 and 124 degrees. The evacuees also suspected that the buildings might be intended for use by tribal members or as hospitals for soldiers rather than for their children. These feelings and the lack of adequate equipment and supplies discouraged many from adobe employment.²⁷⁸ Okimoto found that only women and girls applied to produce adobe initially; men were “shamed” into working on the project.²⁷⁹

Although an adobe plant opened at Poston II in July 1942 and a second factory was underway at Poston I in August, production of adobe blocks progressed at a frustratingly slow pace. School builders needed an estimated 700,000 blocks for the three units of Poston. Actual construction of buildings had not started by the opening of the 1942-43 school year. In November, the foreman of the adobe plant at Poston I found the facility “sorely in need of manpower” and reported daily output of just nine adobe blocks per worker. In early November, Charles Popkin told representatives from all three Poston units that the center submitted a request to Washington for \$350,000 in construction priorities for school building work.²⁸⁰

On 11 November 1942, John Collier ceremoniously broke ground for construction of the Poston I elementary school. The elementary school complex, as designed, contained thirteen buildings: an office, auditorium, library, wood shop, crafts and supplies building, and eight classrooms. Collier told those gathered, “When I started out from Washington, I was told that we could not build our schools. Upon arriving here, I found that regardless of no priority rating the material necessary for the construction work was made. . . . The brain work and the hand work has been completed by you people.” Examining the architectural drawings, the *Press Bulletin* opined that “the school building follows modernistic designs and will be a beautiful structure when completed.” First tasks at the elementary school site entailed pouring concrete perimeter foundations for the buildings.²⁸¹

In late December 1942, the War Production Board granted high priorities to Poston for the purchase of school construction materials. School Superintendent Dr. Miles E. Carey told the *Poston Chronicle* the completion and use of the school buildings would probably be the most important thing to occur at the center. He suggested the new classrooms would put students in a proper mood for learning, stimulate interest in studies, and free up space in recreation halls for community and adult activities. Despite the AA4 priority rating for \$340,000 worth of materials, it still proved difficult to secure Douglas fir for building rafters; school buildings, particularly at relocation centers for Japanese Americans, were viewed as less important than other projects.²⁸²

Workers laid the first adobe blocks at the Poston I elementary school in late January 1943. When actual construction began, it became somewhat easier to recruit adobe plant workers, both daily paid workers as well as volunteers. The adobe block plant at the elementary school site averaged 100 to 150 workers and produced as

²⁷⁵ Popkin, “Adobe Has Its Place, Too,” 40.

²⁷⁶ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 104.

²⁷⁷ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 11.

²⁷⁸ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 105.

²⁷⁹ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 11.

²⁸⁰ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 15 August 1942, 1, 8 September 1942, 2, 7 November 1942, 3, and 8 November 1942, 1.

²⁸¹ Priority ratings assessed the relative importance of construction projects to the war effort and determined their access to scarce construction materials. *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 10 November 1942, 3 and 12 November 1942, 1.

²⁸² *Poston Chronicle*, 29 December 1942, 2, 8 January 1943, 1 and 18 April 1943, 1.

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many as 1,200 blocks daily. By late April 1943, the plant produced more than 200,000 adobe blocks. It then closed and workers transferred to the adobe plant at the Poston I high school site.²⁸³

School construction in Poston II and III trailed that of Poston I. The two smaller camps were projected to each have a sixteen-building facility combining elementary, junior high, and high school grades. Groundbreaking ceremonies for the Poston II school complex occurred on 11 January 1943, and Project Director Head exhorted residents to complete the buildings before summer. Charles Popkin estimated 170,000 adobe blocks were needed for the Poston III buildings; Poston II, with the same planned layout, would require a similar number. An appeal went out to Poston III residents to work in that camp's adobe facility.²⁸⁴ On a business trip to Portland, Oregon, in April 1943, Popkin discussed the importance of education to the center's residents and showed photographs of evacuees working on the school project to George Carpenter, an administrator at the War Production Board. The photographs of women toiling in the adobe block plant deeply impressed Carpenter, who secured the needed lumber for the schools' completion.²⁸⁵

Even students participated in the creation of the schools.²⁸⁶ Itsuo Endo reported he and fifteen other classmates made adobe bricks after school every day: "Workers taught us how to make the mixture of dirt and hay—we just put in the forms—flattened it out and put it in the sun to dry."²⁸⁷ Another high school student wrote, ". . . it's worth all the sore muscles and dirty hands to know that we're doing our best toward the new school."²⁸⁸ After a windstorm blew off the roofs of three school buildings, students, teachers, parents, and laborers from outside the center worked together to repair the buildings and to complete the final construction details. Instead of starting the school year in a barrack, the students of Poston III volunteered to help complete the buildings and then attend classes six days a week until the lost time was made up.²⁸⁹

Evacuees made substantial progress on the school buildings during the spring and summer of 1943. By the fall of 1943 buildings in all three units experienced at least partial use and most of the adobe elementary buildings were complete at Poston I.²⁹⁰ As the high school/junior high buildings were not yet ready, half of the elementary students and two-thirds of the secondary pupils attended classes in the adobe buildings, while the remainder studied in recreation halls in housing blocks. Enough adobe buildings were available at Poston II to house the secondary students, but completion extended to September 1944. The planned assembly hall/auditorium was dropped.²⁹¹ Poston III's high school opened in October 1943. The school complex was not finished until early 1944, with the assembly hall/auditorium dedicated in August.

As the buildings rose, Japanese Americans viewed the schools in Poston I with a great sense of pride. Evacuees regarded the completion of the high school auditorium in December 1943 as a major accomplishment, and the school yearbook commented, "Isn't it grand?"²⁹² The school project continued until March 1945, with fifty-four buildings completed.²⁹³ The administration considered finishing schools, even at such a late date, as critical for maintaining evacuee morale.²⁹⁴ The schools did not reopen at Poston or any other relocation center in the fall of 1945, as plans for closure of all the centers were underway.

²⁸³ *Poston Chronicle*, 25 April 1943, 1.

²⁸⁴ *Poston Chronicle*, 1 January 1943, 5, 7 January 1943, 3, 9 January 1943, 13 January 1943, 1, 24 January 1943, and 26 February 1943.

²⁸⁵ *Poston Chronicle*, 29 December 1942, 2, 8 January 1943, 1 and 18 April 1943, 1.

²⁸⁶ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 11.

²⁸⁷ Oppenheimer, *Dear Miss Breed*, 167.

²⁸⁸ Oppenheimer, *Dear Miss Breed*, 169.

²⁸⁹ Oppenheimer, *Dear Miss Breed*, 201; Poston III High School, *Campus Echoes*, 1944, Arizona Historical Foundation, Arizona State University, Tempe, Az.

²⁹⁰ Some construction on the Poston I Elementary School buildings extended into March 1944, according to one report.

²⁹¹ Mills, "Project Director's Narrative Report," 3.

²⁹² Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu, *Imperial Valley*, 35.

²⁹³ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 12.

²⁹⁴ Hirabayashi quoted in Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 98; Moris Burge, Acting Project Director, "Advance Budget

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Operation of Poston Schools

While the Office of Indian Affairs planned its school construction project, agency officials proceeded with creation of the center's educational program.²⁹⁵ Willard W. Beatty stayed in Poston for several weeks after the center opened to organize the school program and approve the building plans being prepared by the architect.²⁹⁶ Wade Head sought "a person of outstanding ability" to lead the Poston Education Department and selected Miles E. Cary, who had received a Ph.D. from Ohio State University and served as principal of Honolulu's McKinley High School.²⁹⁷ Head noted, "If he is as good as they say he is, he should be able to organize a good school program, something we have been wanting for a long time."²⁹⁸ Cary encouraged the center's teachers to work toward "a world in which a man, regardless of pigmentation, would be treated with respect."²⁹⁹ During the summer of 1942, a graduate seminar at Stanford University recommended a general outline for the curriculum. Because most evacuee students came from California schools, the educational plan of that state served as a model.³⁰⁰

The OIA recruited teachers from Indian schools, missionaries who had worked in Japan, and other eligible educators. It could not offer salaries as high as the WRA paid in other centers, but did provide better wages than local schools.³⁰¹ Still, Poston experienced difficulty securing and retaining instructors.³⁰² Young Japanese Americans received training as teachers at a summer school in Poston in 1942.³⁰³ Miles Cary contacted about seven hundred outside teachers during the first school year and traveled around the region, partially at his own expense, talking to potential instructors. Although more than enough candidates applied for the positions available, less than the anticipated number arrived at Poston, and two left as soon as they saw the center.³⁰⁴

During the first year, the teaching staff included 87 "Caucasians" and 122 evacuee instructors.³⁰⁵ The administration admitted that a number of the outside hires were above retirement age and almost no recent graduates of teachers' colleges applied.³⁰⁶ The teaching staff experienced varied reactions to life at the center; some felt comfortable enough to live in the evacuee barracks area and send their children to Poston schools. Some teachers assisted in the construction of the adobe classrooms.³⁰⁷ Extension courses for new teachers continued during the school year, followed by another summer training session in 1943.³⁰⁸ High school student Sumiko Ikeda observed, "Many of the teachers are evacuees like the students—some of them so young that at times it is hard to distinguish between students and teachers."³⁰⁹

Estimates," box 3, Wade Head Collection.

²⁹⁵ E.R. Fryer and L.W. Adams, Memorandum to Director WRA and Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 2 April 1942, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head Collection.

²⁹⁶ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 100; McCaskill to Collier, 27 May 1942.

²⁹⁷ Dr. Arthur L. Harris succeeded Cary. Wade Head, Project Director, Letter to Lucy W. Adams, WRA Chief of Community Services, 30 April 1942, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head Collection; Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 95; Miles E. Cary, Director of Education Colorado River Relocation Center, Memorandum, 16 June 1943, box 1, folder 11, Wade Head Collection.

²⁹⁸ Wade Head, Project Director, Letter to Carl Hartman, 23 June 1942, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head Collection.

²⁹⁹ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 25.

³⁰⁰ Cary, Memorandum, 16 June 1943.

³⁰¹ Thomas James, *Exile Within: The Schooling of Japanese Americans, 1942-1945* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 51.

³⁰² Planner J.C. McCaskill suggested to Commissioner John Collier, "We have accepted the idea of paying personnel in Alaska a grade higher than in the states. The same should apply to Parker." McCaskill to Collier, 27 May 1942; Hirabayashi in Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 96.

³⁰³ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin* 3(9 August 1942)16: 1; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 101.

³⁰⁴ James, *Exile Within*, 50.

³⁰⁵ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 26.

³⁰⁶ James, *Exile Within*, 50.

³⁰⁷ James, *Exile Within*, 53.

³⁰⁸ Myer, *Uprooted Americans*, 51.

³⁰⁹ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 47.

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First School Year, 1942-1943. Poston schools opened at the beginning of October 1942 “with no tables, chairs, books, paper, or blackboards.”³¹⁰ During the first year, the school population totaled an estimated 5,390 in twelve grades.³¹¹ Educational services included a nursery school and kindergarten for four- and five-year olds. For the first year, recreation halls were partitioned into classrooms. Seventh grader Sheryl Ritchie recalled students covering knot holes in the floors and walls with tin cans and painting one wall green to serve as a blackboard.³¹² Californian Sumiko Ikeda remarked, “Being used to going to one of the best school systems in the world, it’s difficult to accustom oneself to a system such as we have in Poston.”³¹³

At first, children entering school needed to bring their own chairs to sit on, as well as a board to use in place of a desk.³¹⁴ Mas Hashimoto had a little stool with a canvas back and recalled, “We carried those stools around all over, it becomes, like kids have backpacks today, well, we carried the stools and we sat down, and the teacher would teach. And we didn’t have books, paper, pencils and such for the longest time.”³¹⁵ Leighton observed, “The situation was very wearing on the teachers, causing a number to become ill and leave the Project, while the children and their parents looked on the schools as a jerry-built organization from which they would receive neither education nor credit acceptable anywhere in the country.”³¹⁶ Mary Mitamura Sanbonmatsu added, “When we went to camp we had to study from these little [mimeographed] sheets of paper instead of a book. It didn’t exactly make us feel gung-ho about school and really getting into college.”³¹⁷ When two Poston high schools failed to receive state accreditation due to problems such as inadequate facilities, lack of supplies, and unqualified teachers, doubts about the quality of education seemed justified.³¹⁸

With its extreme variation in temperatures, Poston was considered one of the most difficult assignments for teachers.³¹⁹ English instructor Ray Franchi described the school facilities as “Nil, virtually nil. There were no desks for the children. They were sitting on apple and orange crates. We didn’t have pen and ink. They were using pencils with a poor supply of paper. There was no heat that first winter, I taught with my overcoat on.”³²⁰ Sumiko Ikeda described students bringing containers of hot charcoal to school to warm themselves: “It wasn’t unusual to see a student with a notebook under one arm and a can suspended in a wire in the other hand walking from class to class!”³²¹

The school program had two major aims: maintenance of state standards and preparation for relocation into a normal life.³²² Historian Lane Hirabayashi found that “Poston’s educators generally adhered to the WRA’s vision regarding the role of camp schools in the socialization of Japanese American youth.”³²³ However, Jack Matsuoka recalled, “To the children in a school in a relocation camp behind barbed wire the morning pledge of allegiance to the stars and stripes somehow sounded hollow.”³²⁴ Required subjects for high school students

³¹⁰ Myer, *Uprooted Americans*, 49.

³¹¹ The number of students declined steadily, as graduates attended colleges or obtained work outside the camp and families pursued resettlement. By the third year, about 3,600 children enrolled in school. *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 4(28 August 1942): 1.

³¹² Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 46.

³¹³ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 47 and 97.

³¹⁴ Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu, *Imperial Valley Women*, 31.

³¹⁵ Mas Hashimoto, Interview by Tom Ikeda, 30 July 2008, Watsonville, Ca., Densho, <http://www.densho.org>.

³¹⁶ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 147.

³¹⁷ Sanbonmatsu quoted in Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu, *Imperial Valley Women*, 32.

³¹⁸ Poston III’s high school received accreditation in the spring of 1944 and changed its name to “Parker Valley High School.” Despite major improvement in facilities, equipment, and supplies, Poston I’s high school did not receive accreditation until April 1945, just months before it closed.

³¹⁹ McKee, *History*, 119.

³²⁰ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 10.

³²¹ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 47.

³²² McKee, *History*, 120.

³²³ Lane Hirabayashi, “The First Year: High School in Poston’s Unit I,” in Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 97.

³²⁴ Matsuoka, *Poston, Camp II*, 120.

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included English, Social Studies, Physical Education, and elective courses, as well as part-time work.³²⁵ Vocational classes included agriculture and automobile mechanics, and WRA Director Dillon S. Myer believed the latter was “probably essential to the maintenance of the trucks and cars which were required for center operations.”³²⁶

Until new high school buildings were completed, secondary students in Poston I attended class in recreation halls scattered around the unit’s square-mile of development in about thirty different buildings.³²⁷ As Ikeda noted, “The requisites for going to high school are mostly good feet as it is the usual daily practice to walk at least four to as high as nine miles a day going to one’s different classes.”³²⁸ The wind, dust, and rain storms, as well as the extreme temperatures added to the challenges involved in moving between classes.³²⁹ Thin walls that did not reach the ceiling separated rooms and created a noisy environment, making concentration almost impossible.”³³⁰ Textbooks for high school courses did not arrive until after Christmas 1942. By the following summer, Poston schools acquired 79,000 texts, with 50,000 donated by twelve California school districts.³³¹

School Activities. Extra-curricular activities at Poston schools included student council, yearbook, clubs, and sports (touch football, basketball, baseball and volleyball).³³² An active Parent-Teachers Association provided supervision and support. Clubs proliferated, including such groups as Radio Club, Boys’ Cooking Club, Agriculture Club, Glee Club, Junior Red Cross, YMCA Girl Reserves, Hi-lighters, and others.³³³ Students published school newspapers and yearbooks, including *Kampus Krier* and *Desert Daze*.³³⁴ As Okimoto pointed out, Native American students on the reservation also wrote about the relocation center for their newspaper, the *Colorado River Star*. One scholar asserted Japanese American gardening demonstrated what could be raised on the land and the possibilities for its future.³³⁵

As part of an innovative pen pal program conceived by Red Cross Director Paul Takeda and implemented by English teacher Ray Franchi, students described aspects of their lives in the center through writings and drawings that were compiled into albums distributed by the Red Cross to its chapters across the country.³³⁶ The sponsors hoped the books would provide the outside world with more information and understanding about the evacuees and the relocation center. A brief poem penned by Poston I schoolchildren in 1943 captured the poignancy of the situation:

To Our Fellow Americans,
 Deep from out this lonely desert’s vastness,
 We, the Japanese-American Youth,
 Innocent of wrong,
 Firm in our Hope and our Faith,
 Cherishing forever the ideals of our Native Land,
 Striving to build in the wilderness,
 Struggling to build our Destiny,
 Extend to you

³²⁵ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin* 3(12 August 1942)18: 1.

³²⁶ Myer, *Uprooted Americans*, 51.

³²⁷ Gelvin, Memorandum, 17 June 1943; *Poston Press Bulletin* 4(2 October 1942)32: 2.

³²⁸ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 47.

³²⁹ Hirabayashi, “The First Year: High School in Poston’s Unit I,” in Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 95.

³³⁰ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 47.

³³¹ Gelvin, Memorandum, 17 June 1943.

³³² Poston III High School, *Campus Echoes*, 1944-1945.

³³³ Poston III High School, *Campus Echoes*, 1944-1945.

³³⁴ Hirabayashi in Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 97.

³³⁵ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 13.

³³⁶ Other teachers and a student editorial board assisted Franchi.

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our
Fellowship.³³⁷

Poston's high schools held their first graduation ceremony in the center in June 1943. Students enjoyed a variety of activities before commencement, including a prom and a ditch day when seniors gathered at the Colorado River, sang songs, hiked, ate, and played baseball. At graduation "all the girls wore sheer, cotton pastel dresses," and students "received high school diplomas bearing the buffalo seal of the Department of the Interior."³³⁸ However, Jack Matsuoka recalled the graduates displayed "no tears, no laughter, no emotion."³³⁹ Graduates in 1944 selected an American flag as their class gift and received a Buddhist blessing. Their class motto was: "The past, forever gone; the future still our own."³⁴⁰

Student Relocation. The National Japanese Student Relocation Council formed in Philadelphia in May 1942 to assist *Nisei* students with the college application process and help them obtain scholarships to avoid interruption of their education. The Council advised students about college choices, raised educational funds, and lobbied colleges to admit evacuee students. Poston created its own Student Relocation Council to assist with the process of securing college educations for eligible evacuees.³⁴¹ The process of leaving family and friends for an unfamiliar place made the relocation challenging. When a Michigan college accepted Kiyoko Sato, she had second thoughts about departing because she feared outside prejudice and had adjusted to the rhythms of relocation center life:

No one is hateful here. We are considerate of each other. Nobody steps over a piece of trash. We pick up every piece of paper and every little piece of scrap wood. No one locks everything. We wash and wear the same few clothes. Children can wander off anywhere and know that somebody will help them find their barrack home.³⁴²

JAPANESE AMERICAN EMPLOYMENT AT POSTON

The OIA believed getting the evacuees busy soon after their arrival at the center would send a positive signal to the rest of the country and also accomplish their envisioned development program.³⁴³ The agency anticipated that much of its staff assigned to Poston on a temporary basis would return quickly to their regular work and be replaced by Japanese Americans.³⁴⁴ In the first weeks of the center, residents signed agreements to join the work corps at Poston, with the intent that everyone over the age of sixteen who wanted a job would be provided employment.³⁴⁵

General WRA employment policies instituted at the other relocation centers also regulated work at Poston. Evacuee workers received \$12 per month for general labor, \$16 per month for clerical duties, and \$19 per month for professional employment. At Poston, the exceedingly hot temperatures made those who toiled outside question whether their jobs should have lower rates of pay than those who sat in cooled offices.³⁴⁶ Most people felt there should be no variation in wages, and this feeling eventually resulted in the rate of \$16 becoming the prevailing pay for all labor, except for workers "whose service was regarded as especially important for the general welfare."³⁴⁷

³³⁷ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 19.

³³⁸ Oppenheimer, *Dear Miss Breed*, 182-183.

³³⁹ Matsuoka, *Poston Camp II*, 128.

³⁴⁰ Oppenheimer, *Dear Miss Breed*, 219.

³⁴¹ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 15 July 1942, 1; Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed*, 163.

³⁴² Sato, *Dandelion*, 207.

³⁴³ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 49.

³⁴⁴ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 50.

³⁴⁵ Spicer, *et al*, *Impounded People*, 88.

³⁴⁶ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 106.

³⁴⁷ *Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 25 August 1942, 1; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 132; Spicer, *et al*, *Impounded People*, 95.

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During the summer of 1942, a two-month delay in paying some wages and the perceived condescending attitude of some non-evacuee bosses resulted in considerable dissatisfaction among workers. In addition, some residents believed the young volunteers who helped set up the center received all the “good” jobs.³⁴⁸ These factors led to lack of interest in employment, delays in construction projects due to an absence of manpower, and a growing evacuee involvement in protest actions designed to protect shared interests.³⁴⁹ Evacuee reaction to unpopular decisions and policies included work slowdowns, political actions, passive refusal to comply, and strikes. Of these, the Poston Incident (discussed below) was the most significant.

Varieties of Employment

Community Enterprises. At the urging of the administration, Poston residents formed the center’s only commercial venture, known as “Community Enterprises.” The business operated stores that sold “toilet articles, refreshments, clothes, shoes, newspapers, and all the other things people need over and above physical shelter and food.”³⁵⁰ Main Street Store in Poston I opened on 11 May 1942, with limited stock. During the first two months, sales in the center totaled about \$43,000.³⁵¹ By September 1942, Community Enterprises included two stores, three cold drink huts, beauty and barber shops, and shoe, radio, and watch repair shops.³⁵² Profits from the business went to the Japanese Community Fund, which organized recreational and civic activities. Evacuees could also order items by mail, and Elaine Hibi Bowers recalled “the Sears catalogs became lifesavers for ordering supplementary articles.”³⁵³ Possessions from home could also be shipped to Poston, if arrangements could be made. The Yasutaro Hibi family sent for their piano, and daughter Elaine continued her music lessons.³⁵⁴

Irrigation Construction. The OIA originally viewed construction of a relocation center in the Parker Valley as a way to complete its Colorado River irrigation project using war-related funds and evacuee labor. The 1942-43 budget for the center provided \$1 million for irrigation construction, including building a main canal from near Parker to Poston, extending it six miles south of Poston I to the other two camps, and developing lateral ditches.³⁵⁵ All irrigation water for Poston was to be diverted from the Headgate Rock Diversion Dam a few miles outside of Parker. An additional \$400,000 was allotted for improving drainage and \$200,000 for flood control.³⁵⁶

The engineering staff quickly found the evacuees would not provide enough manpower to complete the job due to the low wages offered for the hard work in the heat and dust. The OIA suggested hiring outside laborers or contractors to finish the project, which they believed would prove beneficial well beyond the Japanese American occupation of the site. However, the WRA was not concerned with the long-term implications of the project and believed it should be completed with evacuee labor or abandoned.³⁵⁷ In November 1942, the *Press Bulletin* reported that the laterals and canals between Units I and II were being readied for a large flow of water for irrigation purposes.³⁵⁸ By April 1943, evacuees completed more than forty miles of canals, laterals, and sub-canals, and the irrigation system was finished the following year.³⁵⁹

³⁴⁸ Spicer, et al, *Impounded People*, 90.

³⁴⁹ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 19 June 1942, 1.

³⁵⁰ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 97.

³⁵¹ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 2 August 1942, 1.

³⁵² Henderson, “Refuge.”

³⁵³ Bowers quoted in Nakayama, *Transforming Barbed Wire*, 10.

³⁵⁴ Nakayama, *Transforming Barbed Wire*, 11,

³⁵⁵ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 16 October 1942, Ag1.

³⁵⁶ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 16 October 1942, Ag1; *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 3.

³⁵⁷ Mills, “Project Director’s Narrative Report,” 3.

³⁵⁸ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 4 November 1942, 1.

³⁵⁹ *Poston Chronicle*, 9 May 1943, 1; Mills, “Project Director’s Narrative Report,” 3.

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Industry. Government planners included at least one industrial operation in each relocation camp that would contribute to the community or the war effort. All three units eventually featured adobe brick manufacturing facilities. Although the people of all units voted against proceeding with a camouflage net project, such processing facilities were established.³⁶⁰ Most in the administration also saw little community benefit in the camouflage operation and it only operated from the fall of 1942 to May 1943.³⁶¹ By the spring of 1943, Camp I's projects included charcoal production and the making of slippers, artificial flowers, and embroidery and monograms. Residents of each camp operated tofu factories.³⁶² Poston residents also worked on a Navy program to build ship models to facilitate identification training. The factories paid their workers with an incentive system, rewarding them monetarily as production rose.³⁶³ The WRA soon determined enterprises not contributing directly to the community were undesirable and ended manufacturing and industry in the centers.³⁶⁴

Agricultural Program. Poston opened with plans for large-scale agricultural production of a variety of fresh vegetables and meat, including chickens, fish, and hogs, that would feed residents and possibly other populations.³⁶⁵ As Wade Head reported, "The task of supplying this camp with food alone will be tremendous," the cost averaging approximately \$10,000 per day.³⁶⁶ OIA planners envisioned Poston with the capacity to farm 20,000 to 25,000 acres of land, with some estimates of potential cultivation as high as 90,000 acres.³⁶⁷ Once the Japanese Americans left, the productive fields could be utilized by tribal members. However, actual conditions reduced these arable figures dramatically. Immediately, the lack of equipment necessary to subjugate the land and create an irrigation system became a problem, despite attempts to secure machinery.³⁶⁸ At the end of May 1942, H.A. Mathiesen, the center's agricultural director, initiated an eighty-acre farm project with an evacuee crew to plant watermelons and fresh vegetables west of Poston I, and \$10,000 worth of seeds were ordered for use after irrigated water arrived in July.³⁶⁹

After the WRA's second director, Dillon S. Myer, assumed office in June 1942, he initiated a program of leaves for outside work, resulting in the loss of many of the able-bodied men who might have pursued agricultural jobs at the center.³⁷⁰ Still, attempts were made to fulfill the OIA's original plans. Head nurseryman Frank Kuwahara supervised the planting of about sixty thousand guayule plants shipped from Salinas, California.³⁷¹ Guayule, a plant native to the Chihuahua desert, was an experimental crop also grown at Manzanar for the production of rubber that could assist the war effort. The crop at Poston failed due to the heat. By 15 July, bulldozers cleared the first vegetable field of mesquite trees and crews of evacuees leveled it. The first crops planted were those that could supply the mess halls. However, acres of tomatoes, the first large-scale crop planted, died in the extreme heat.³⁷² In addition, material for the proposed chicken ranches did not arrive, and soon evacuees began growing their own produce.³⁷³

³⁶⁰ Colson, Spicer, and Leighton, *A Brief History*, 18-19.

³⁶¹ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 142; Niiya, *Encyclopedia*, 337.

³⁶² *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 14 and 15.

³⁶³ US Commission on Wartime Relocation, *Personal Justice Denied*, 168.

³⁶⁴ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 146.

³⁶⁵ Spicer, et al, *Impounded People*, 78; US, War Relocation Authority, Administrative Instruction 14, 15 February 1943, Edward H. Spicer Collection, Ms042, box 1, folder 1, Special Collections, University of Arizona.

³⁶⁶ Wade Head, Project Director, Letter to John Collier, OIA Commissioner, 24 April 1942, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head Collection.

³⁶⁷ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 22.

³⁶⁸ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 22.

³⁶⁹ *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 27 May 1942, 1 and 26 June 1942, 1.

³⁷⁰ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 24.

³⁷¹ *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 18 June 1942, 1; Henderson, "Refuge."

³⁷² *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 29 July 1942, 1.

³⁷³ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 146.

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A Department of Fish Culture headed by John Marumoto envisioned a large operation providing additional food for the center.³⁷⁴ In July 1942, the unit announced eighty acres parallel to both sides of the irrigation canal would be used for the propagation of fish. Large square ponds with water 2' - to 3' -deep would hold fish at all stages of life, using stock from the Colorado River and government hatcheries.³⁷⁵ Fish ponds stocked with bass, catfish, perch, and carp were discussed.³⁷⁶ The high temperatures at Poston thwarted the planned large scale fish farming. However, many residents also established their own fish ponds.

By August 1942, an evacuee staff was preparing the center's agricultural plans.³⁷⁷ Shigeru Imamura, formerly of California's Imperial Irrigation District, served as "water-master for the vital irrigation project."³⁷⁸ Work on taming the land proceeded slowly, with crews of evacuees working by hand in high temperatures to remove the existing vegetation. After toiling for a month, the laborers were informed that they had not completed the proper paperwork to be paid their promised \$12 salaries, the lowest offered for work in the center.³⁷⁹ The workers requested a guarantee that they would receive payments for improvements completed and that the center would benefit from the crops.³⁸⁰ Thenceforth, evacuees resisted working on large-scale irrigation and agriculture projects, and the administration hired additional outside labor.³⁸¹

Director Myer's decision to limit Poston's agricultural production in early 1943 and his previously announced intent to institute a general program of evacuee relocation "effectively undermined Collier's original plan of utilizing camp labor to improve reservation lands," according to Kathryn Leonard.³⁸² A maximum cultivation of five thousand acres became the new target, with some land for growing food and most for raising forage crops to support hogs and dairy cows.³⁸³ Alexander Leighton reported irrigation served only Poston I by February 1943 and there was no cultivation of the center's agricultural acreage. In April 1943, five hundred evacuees from the three units worked in agriculture, which included truck crops, poultry, swine, nursery and landscaping, and fish culture.³⁸⁴

That spring, planned truck crops for Poston I's 132 available acres included "tomatoes, cucumbers, uri, squash, chard, Japanese pumpkin, daikon, corn, radish, eggplant, cantaloupe, beans, and sweet potatoes."³⁸⁵ Poston II, whose farmers were two-thirds *Issei*, grew produce for the center on eighty acres at the Indian Day School Project, including onions, carrots, spinach, tomatoes, cabbage, corn, and three types of melons.³⁸⁶ Poston III, the youngest camp, still lacked irrigation water and had about twenty-five acres planted in tomatoes, cabbage, eggplants, and melons.³⁸⁷ By June, evacuees raised more than 900 tons of vegetables, more than 23,000 chickens, and 625 hogs.³⁸⁸ Eventually, the center included more than 1,400 acres of vegetables and 800 acres of field crops.³⁸⁹ Figure 2 shows the locations of Poston's agricultural fields. WRA farms lay west and northwest of Poston I, north of Poston II (on both sides of the north-south road), and north of Poston III. A hog farm was located north of Poston II, with chicken farms west of Poston I, north of Poston II, and north of Poston III.

³⁷⁴ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 29 July 1942, 1.

³⁷⁵ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 1 July 1942, 1.

³⁷⁶ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 8 July 1942, 1.

³⁷⁷ Spicer, et al, *Impounded People*, 78.

³⁷⁸ Henderson, "Refuge."

³⁷⁹ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 23.

³⁸⁰ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 105.

³⁸¹ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 23.

³⁸² Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 29.

³⁸³ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 25.

³⁸⁴ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 13.

³⁸⁵ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 13.

³⁸⁶ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 13.

³⁸⁷ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 14.

³⁸⁸ "Colorado River War Relocation Project, Poston, Arizona," 17 June 1943, box 3, Wade Head Collection.

³⁸⁹ Poston Internment Camp & The Restoration Project, "Some Interesting Facts About Poston," 5 September 2008, <http://postonupdates.blogspot.com/2008.09/poston-trivia.html> (accessed 30 March 2009).

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Harvey Suzuki headed the center's Truck Crops and Firebreak Gardening unit, assisted by the advice of men who had experience with arid country farms. The purpose of organized gardening was to produce fresh vegetables for local consumption that would supplement outside sources.³⁹⁰ *Issei* volunteers completed most of the work in these plots, knowing that the products would be used in the associated block mess halls.³⁹¹ When the garden products began appearing at meals, residents enjoyed a more diverse and appetizing selection of foods.

Officials anticipated most evacuees would plant vegetable gardens between the barracks and blocks; by August 1942 these plantings were known as "victory gardens."³⁹² The residents planted small gardens in each block with seeds of their own and from the Agriculture Department. Most of the older people had brought some kind of seeds with them to the center, including vegetables such as daikon radish, Napa cabbage, carrots, and lettuce.³⁹³ These gardens showed immediate success, and Alexander Leighton recommended abandoning the concept of large scale, long-term agriculture in favor of such smaller projects. He noticed the evacuees seemed more willing to work on limited projects with rapid results.³⁹⁴ Kiyo Sato recalled evacuee-raised plants had appeared all over the Pinedale Assembly Center and one of her *Issei* neighbors dug up her plants and put them in small cans to carry to the relocation center.³⁹⁵ She remembered an older person at Poston planting radishes, which taught the residents things could grow in the desert: "More vegetables appear between the barracks. Soon colorful zinnias and cosmos add color to the drab surroundings. Purple morning glories climb the sides of the black tar-papered walls with vigor."³⁹⁶

Radishes, among the first plants to sprout, were watered by hand and grew in little patches around the barracks.³⁹⁷ Nancy Iwami observed,

And as the people settled, the water was there so they would make little trenches or something and put water around there, plant. Japanese were very good, they planted vegetables wherever there was water. It grew because the land was so fertile, it only needed water. Watermelons just grew overnight. The first time I ever saw peanuts grow, and that was in Poston.³⁹⁸

Vegetables grown in the small gardens included Napa cabbage, radishes, daikon, onions, cucumbers, tomatoes, squash, beets, watermelons, corn, lettuce, and green beans. A variety of flowers, including sweet peas, hollyhocks, morning glories, gladiolas, ivy, and native plants, also grew in the blocks during the first summer.³⁹⁹ In September 1942, block managers urged Postonians to "grow as much as possible between the barracks, to insure ample produce at all times."⁴⁰⁰

Outside Jobs. Employers in other parts of the state invited evacuee workers to assist with agricultural operations since the war created a shortage of manpower to harvest crops. The WRA encouraged residents to work on those enterprises beginning in September 1942. Projects included such tasks as tomato and cotton picking and sugar beet topping.⁴⁰¹ One of the first opportunities was cotton picking in the Parker Valley at the prevailing outside wage. However, instead of allowing the workers to keep their earnings, which were higher than those paid in Poston, the OIA planned to place a portion of the money in a trust fund intended for projects that would

³⁹⁰ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 16 October 1942, Ag-2.

³⁹¹ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 26.

³⁹² *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 18 June 1942, 1 and 5 August 1942, 1.

³⁹³ Sato, *Dandelion*, 188.

³⁹⁴ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 25.

³⁹⁵ Sato, *Dandelion*, 158.

³⁹⁶ Sato, *Dandelion*, 188.

³⁹⁷ Henderson, "Refuge."

³⁹⁸ Nancy Iwami, Interview by Megan Asaka, Watsonville, Ca., 29 July 2008, Densho.

³⁹⁹ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 5 August 1942, 1.

⁴⁰⁰ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 13 September 1942, 1.

⁴⁰¹ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 16 September 1942, 1 and 19 September 1942, 1.

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benefit the entire center. Many workers then refused to participate in the work program, viewing it as “un-American.” When administrators redesigned the fund to provide specifically for projects such as school construction and churches, the concept found greater acceptance.⁴⁰²

Evacuees from Poston worked harvests in Arizona, Utah, Nebraska, Idaho, and Colorado. Although they enjoyed the freedom on the outside, threats and intimidation were common. The Grandview Hotel in nearby Parker famously posted a sign on its door reading “Japs Keep Out—You Rats.” Such reactions to Japanese American attempts to work outside the camp perplexed George Taketa: “On the way to the farms, we were harassed and cursed. Here we were, helping out the war effort, harvesting sugar beets, being paid a minimal wage, and being treated in this manner.”⁴⁰³

SELF-GOVERNMENT AND THE POSTON INCIDENT

The federal agencies involved at Poston initially encouraged the evacuees to create their own government. Hirabayashi found “. . . Poston was unusual in that its key administrator, Wade Head, tried to maximize self-governance in an effort to lessen the effects of alienation.”⁴⁰⁴ Self-government was also seen as a way to educate the evacuees about American democracy.⁴⁰⁵ Initially, the administration appointed many of the volunteer evacuees to serve as block managers, who were responsible for maintaining and solving problems in their living area.⁴⁰⁶ In May 1942, the Civic Planning Board, a committee representing evacuees interested in furthering the community, formed to work on the details of self-government for the residents.⁴⁰⁷ On 23 June, after weeks of meetings and drafting documents, the Board voted to submit the constitution they had drafted to the project director. The evacuee-created document provided for a government with executive, legislative, and judicial branches; established voting rights; and allowed both *Issei* and *Nisei* evacuees to hold office.

Three days later, the WRA released its own detailed guidelines for evacuee self-government; in effect, nullifying the Civic Planning Board’s work. The WRA scheme prohibited *Issei* from serving as representatives on the proposed Community Councils. Alexander Leighton noted the WRA completed its plan two weeks before Poston’s draft constitution, but no one informed the Board, who felt their effort had been wasted. He commented, “One of the major frustrations of leadership at Poston by administrative order had taken place.”⁴⁰⁸

With assistance from Project Attorney Theodore H. Haas, Poston I established a Temporary Community Council on 21 July 1942. Evacuees elected one representative from each block, except for those not yet “settled.” WRA instructions restricted membership to American citizens who were twenty-one years or older.⁴⁰⁹ In August, a group of older men in Poston II held meetings to discuss their lack of confidence in the *Nisei* and the growing rift between generations.⁴¹⁰ As Hirabayashi indicated, giving power to the young *Nisei*, some of whom older residents judged lacking in the expertise needed for effective leadership, was unacceptable to the *Issei* and created one of the situations leading to further unrest in the center.⁴¹¹ Elections followed in Poston II on 1 September and Poston III on 11 September.⁴¹² The new governing bodies established committees to investigate and advise about aspects of camp life such as “Law and Order” and “Food and Housing.”⁴¹³ In

⁴⁰² A military order ended the evacuees’ cotton picking locally. Leonard, “Imagining Poston,” 26; and Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 136 and 142.

⁴⁰³ Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed*, 131.

⁴⁰⁴ Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xxxvii.

⁴⁰⁵ Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xxxix.

⁴⁰⁶ Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xxxvii.

⁴⁰⁷ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 7.

⁴⁰⁸ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 95.

⁴⁰⁹ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 30 June 1942, 1.

⁴¹⁰ Spicer, et al, *Impounded People*, 115-116.

⁴¹¹ Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xxxix.

⁴¹² *Press Bulletin*, 10 September 1942, 1 and 16 October 1942, Legal -1.

⁴¹³ *Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 7 August 1942, 14: 1; *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 7.

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September 1942, the Poston II Housing Committee found that “the present housing condition was detrimental to health, sanitation, welfare and safety of the residents” and recommended improvements such as better flooring, screens for windows and doors, wall and ceiling linings, and additional blankets.⁴¹⁴

For Poston’s OIA administrators, community building and self-government became the “guiding star.”⁴¹⁵ “They carried the message that they wished to make the best kind of community possible out of Poston’s dry dust.” The administration envisioned things such as a democratic government, progressive schools, and productive fields.⁴¹⁶ However, for most of the evacuees, relocation and their detention at Poston seemed a violation of democratic ideals. In addition, many of the *Issei* resented their exclusion from the Council and felt the young elected representatives were a “puppet government.”⁴¹⁷ In September 1942, an *Issei* Advisory Board composed of elected representatives from each block provided its thoughts and judgment to the Council and the project director and gave the older generation a voice in community government.⁴¹⁸ In October, a Constitutional Convention convened.⁴¹⁹

“A Feeling of Desolation in the Midst of Isolation”: The Poston Incident

The first mass evacuee protest against the policies of the federal government at any relocation center occurred at Poston during November 1942.⁴²⁰ The incident resulted from growing discontent over a number of unresolved problems at the center, as described by its sociological observers: “The excessive heat, the crowded living quarters, the utter lack of privacy in every aspect of life, the real inadequacy of the food, the lack of essential equipment in the hospital, the unfamiliar and sometimes destructive dust-storms—all these created an atmosphere of resentful dissatisfaction. And this was fed by the uncertainty of the future.”⁴²¹ Other factors mentioned included a fear of the FBI based on its treatment of Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor; the evacuees’ dislike of informers; the residents’ belief that no Japanese American could get a fair trial in a state court; concern that jobs were awarded unfairly; and the government’s failure to keep its promises in a timely manner and provide everyone with a voice in decisions made in the community.⁴²²

WRA Director Dillon S. Myer judged that the first four relocation centers (Manzanar, Poston, Tule Lake, and Gila River) opened before policies of the agency were completely formulated. He admitted, “This fact undoubtedly had a bearing on the later crises and turmoil in these centers. At the time of moving in, the centers were bare, dusty, dirty, unfinished, and isolated. As a result, life there has been described as having begun with a feeling of desolation in the midst of isolation.”⁴²³

Leighton believed a fundamental problem at Poston was the division of responsibility between the WRA and the OIA, which led to confusion over which agency controlled each aspect of camp life. This lack of clarity resulted in delays in acquiring necessary supplies and equipment, lengthy waiting periods for compensating evacuees for their work, and conflicting proclamations regarding center policies. For example, on 12 November 1942, Myer visited Poston and announced the agency’s new policy of relocating people outside the camps as soon as possible, as well as its intention to stop industrial work at the centers aside from the projects that

⁴¹⁴ Linoleum and wall and ceiling lining materials arrived in November 1942, as did screens for windows. *Poston Press Bulletin*, 29 September 1942, 1 and 3 November 1942, 1.

⁴¹⁵ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 103.

⁴¹⁶ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 102; *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 7.

⁴¹⁷ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 123.

⁴¹⁸ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 124.

⁴¹⁹ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 8 October 1942, 1.

⁴²⁰ Japanese Americans and Poston administrators called the protest an “incident,” while others called the disturbance a “strike.” *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian*, 21 November 1942, 1, <http://www.santacruzpl.org> (accessed 2 February 2009).

⁴²¹ Colson, Spicer, and Leighton, *A Brief History*, 9.

⁴²² Colorado River Relocation Center, Monthly Report, November 11 to December 10, 1942, 3-4.

⁴²³ Myer, *Uprooted Americans*, 59.

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directly served the residents.⁴²⁴ The Director did not realize that only weeks before, OIA Commissioner John Collier indicated the evacuees would receive support in establishing a stable community and in initiating projects to increase irrigation and land development. Collier remarked the residents might be using the developed land for many years.⁴²⁵

Events Leading to the Strike. The Federal Bureau of Investigation occasionally entered Poston and made arrests, resulting in a widely held belief among evacuees that informers (called *enu*, or “dogs”) lived in the community and accused innocent people of crimes. Gangs of men sometimes assaulted suspected informers in the middle of the night.⁴²⁶ Such an action precipitated the ten-day Poston Incident that occurred in Unit I.

On 14 November 1942, a group of men entered a barracks at night and severely beat an evacuee councilman, Kay Nishimura, who was suspected of being an informer. Nishimura, who was said to have enemies even before arriving at Poston, nearly died.⁴²⁷ Police interviewed fifty persons and detained two for further examination, George Fuji and Isamo Uchida. The FBI, called in to assist in the investigation, arrived on 16 November to interview the two men. Both suspects were single *Kibei* males in their twenties and popular in the community; one was a judo expert.⁴²⁸ The men were jailed, and rumors grew that they would be removed from camp for trial.⁴²⁹

On 17 November a delegation of *Issei* met with the project director to attest to the good character of the suspects, offer evidence of their innocence, and request their release. The director referred them to the FBI, who would not consider letting the men go until their investigation was complete. The delegates felt they were treated rudely, and the evacuee community of Poston I held meetings in the blocks to plan their next move. A large demonstration in front of the jail to demand the release of the suspects followed.⁴³⁰ The next day, a crowd of about one thousand evacuees appeared in front of the jail demanding the prisoners’ freedom and calling for a general strike. The Community Council reviewed the situation and also recommended freeing the men, feeling that this was an internal problem and it should be handled within the camp.⁴³¹

Unaware of the degree of unrest among residents, Wade Head and Associate Project Director Ralph Gelvin had departed for a WRA meeting in Salt Lake City, leaving Assistant Director John K. Evans in charge. He appeared before the crowd and at a meeting of the Council and the *Issei* Advisory Board, urging the people to disperse and trust the administration to handle the case fairly. Evans stated the FBI would not remove the prisoners before the project director returned. Feeling their advice was ignored, the Community Council and block managers resigned en masse and called for a strike.

The Assistant Director met with his principal staff, the FBI agents, and two Army representatives to discuss whether to call in the military to disperse the crowd. Leighton later recalled that everyone present felt the unrest might stem from a pro-Japan plot to cause property destruction and discredit the government.⁴³² The FBI agents indicated they could not continue their investigation until the crisis ended, and the Army officers stated that if called in they would take complete charge of the center until order returned. The staff weighed bringing in the military against such issues as the potential for bloodshed, loss of the trust of the evacuees, and the fact that it would not solve the underlying causes of the incident. The Assistant Director decided not to bring in the

⁴²⁴ Myer, *Uprooted Americans*, 61.

⁴²⁵ Myer, *Uprooted Americans*, 61-62.

⁴²⁶ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 148-149.

⁴²⁷ Colorado River Relocation Center, Monthly Report, November 11 to December 10, 1942.

⁴²⁸ The term *Kibei* refers to a person, born in the United States to Japanese immigrant parents, who received education in Japan.

⁴²⁹ Colorado River Relocation Center, Monthly Report, November 11 to December 10, 1942, 1; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 162.

⁴³⁰ Colorado River Relocation Center, Monthly Report, November 11 to December 10, 1942; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 164-165, 2.

⁴³¹ Colorado River Relocation Center, Monthly Report, November 11 to December 10, 1942; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 170-171.

⁴³² Colorado River Relocation Center, Monthly Report, November 11 to December 10, 1942; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 171.

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military, but requested they patrol the area outside Poston I, guard the motor pool, and stop travel between the three units.⁴³³

During the crisis, residents formed an Emergency Executive Council and made arrangements to continue basic services to the community. Every block sent pickets to watch the jail around the clock, but no attempt was made to free the prisoners. A unit of the military police misunderstood its orders and entered the center with a weapon carrier and a jeep, whereupon the administration requested their removal. Delegates from Poston II and III attempted to mediate between the evacuees of Poston I and the administration, but found their efforts unsuccessful. The Assistant Director talked with evacuee representatives and told them one man, Uchida, would face an assault charge and a trial in Yuma County and the other would be released. In response, residents insisted on the Uchida trial taking place at Poston.⁴³⁴

The next day Japanese music played continuously in Poston I, and residents set up a stage for entertaining the crowd in front of the jail. Groups lit bonfires and flew flags displaying their block numbers (See Figure 9).⁴³⁵ By 18 November, Evans and his aides decided the residents' demands for release of the suspect and holding the trial at Poston had merit based on their conformity with the concept of self-government. The staff also hoped to turn the unity and evacuee leadership displayed during the incident into a community benefit. They hoped the strike would release some of the tension at the center and lead to progress. Evans notified the OIA in Washington, which discussed the issue with the WRA and Departments of War and Interior and authorized him to proceed to negotiate a compromise. Poston II's Council Chairman agreed to convey the administration's new position to the residents of Poston I.⁴³⁶

As the strike continued, the feeling of evacuee unity decreased and hopes for a peaceful settlement grew. Wade Head returned on 22 November and began his own investigation of the situation, meeting with Japanese American representatives and concluding there were varied factors leading to the incident.⁴³⁷ Negotiations on 23 and 24 November resolved some of the concerns on both sides, the Emergency Executive Council received some recognition, and the suspect was released to the custody of his attorneys. The strike ended on 24 November with a mass meeting at the jail and Wade Head's indication that no one was to blame and "we're all just people together." The crowd dispersed quietly and, as Leighton recalled, there arose a hope that "tomorrow camp life would start reborn and better."⁴³⁸

The incident resulted in no property destruction or personal injury. The compromise reached included several points of agreement: government intelligence agencies could enter the center at any time; a joint committee would work on labor difficulties; and Isamu Uchida would be released from jail to his attorneys and stand trial before a court of evacuees.⁴³⁹ In addition, military guards patrolling around the camp boundaries were withdrawn. The administration declared all jobs in Poston I vacant and encouraged residents to apply for the positions they were qualified for and wanted.⁴⁴⁰ Director Head praised Units II and III for remaining calm and demonstrating leadership during the crisis. Poston administrators later posited that the cause of the strike was a

⁴³³ Colorado River Relocation Center, Monthly Report, November 11 to December 10, 1942, 2 and 6; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 171-176, 2.

⁴³⁴ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 178-189.

⁴³⁵ Colorado River Relocation Center, Monthly Report, November 11 to December 10, 1942.

⁴³⁶ Colorado River Relocation Center, Monthly Report, November 11 to December 10, 1942; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 191-203.

⁴³⁷ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 7(25 November 1942)9: 1 and 7(26 November 1942)10: 1.

⁴³⁸ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 203-210.

⁴³⁹ In December the suspect was taken to the Yuma County jail, but the U.S. Attorney declined to try the case and the suspect was released. Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 227.

⁴⁴⁰ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 7(26 November 1942)10: 1-3.

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“general boiling over” of problems stemming from the evacuation program and not simply due to the jailing of Uchida.⁴⁴¹

Impact of the Incident. Within weeks, a crisis at the Manzanar Relocation Center resulting from the beating of an alleged informant and the arrest of a suspect led its project director to call in the military, which released tear gas into a crowd and eventually fired shots, resulting in two dead, nine wounded, and a number of persons transferred to other locations.⁴⁴² After the Poston and Manzanar incidents, the WRA met with key staff to review its community government and internal security policies and made three important decisions: to allow *Issei* to serve on community councils; to make limited revisions to the internal security policy; and to recruit an anthropologically-trained community analyst for each center. Dillon Myer acknowledged, “These analysts both at the centers and at national headquarters proved most helpful to the project directors and to key staff members in Washington, keeping them informed regarding the current problems and thinking of the evacuees during the next three years of our existence.”⁴⁴³

The Poston Incident drew national attention to the relocation center as well as the programs of the WRA and OIA. Newspapers across the nation carried stories about the unrest and its resolution. In May 1943, the House Special Committee on Un-American Activities (the Dies Committee), heard the testimony of Harold H. Townsend, former Supply Officer at Poston, who asserted that actions of the relocation center staff led to evacuees’ unrest. Project Director Head prepared a detailed rebuttal of Townsend’s testimony, and the committee’s final report was considered temperate in its recommendations.⁴⁴⁴ Leighton acknowledged the protest did not solve the problems that caused it, but believed the action did highlight the issues needing attention. The center’s sociologists also found that the strike “demonstrated that one could unite with the rest of the community for a common purpose, and throughout the camp there was a new feeling of confidence.”⁴⁴⁵

Following the strike and resignation of the representative council, new groups formed to govern the community and provide suggestions and advice. An election held according to WRA regulations in December 1942 resulted in a second Temporary Council.⁴⁴⁶ The councils became the “basic political organization,” collaborating with the *Issei* Advisory Boards.⁴⁴⁷ Leighton observed that “for all practical purposes the two bodies were one.”⁴⁴⁸ Poston’s representatives worked on issues such as communication, juvenile delinquency, gambling and drinking, securing staff for the hospital, and finding laborers for the adobe school buildings. A charter developed in 1943 provided for a central government for the three units.⁴⁴⁹

STUDIES OF JAPANESE AMERICANS AT POSTON

Poston is notable as “one of the most intensively studied of all the camps” and the only site of three separate research projects.⁴⁵⁰ John Collier and Assistant Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman included Poston in a major project to study internees in the camps and after relocation sponsored by the Navy, Office of Indian Affairs, and the War Relocation Authority.⁴⁵¹ Collier involved the agency because he possessed “extensive experience in the administration of many different kinds of communities” and could see the benefit of such research.⁴⁵² Alexander Leighton, trained as a psychiatrist and as an anthropologist with experience studying

⁴⁴¹ Gelvin, Memorandum, 17 June 1943.

⁴⁴² Myer, *Uprooted Americans*, 63-65.

⁴⁴³ Myer, *Uprooted Americans*, 279-280.

⁴⁴⁴ Leonard, “Imagining Poston,” 25.

⁴⁴⁵ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 210; Colson, Spicer, and Leighton, *A Brief History*, 15.

⁴⁴⁶ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 66.

⁴⁴⁷ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 213.

⁴⁴⁸ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 223.

⁴⁴⁹ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 66.

⁴⁵⁰ Niiya, *Encyclopedia*, 337; Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xxxvi-vii.

⁴⁵¹ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, vii.

⁴⁵² Leighton, *Governing of Men*, vii.

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Navajo and Eskimo peoples, came to head the research office at Poston, arriving on 26 June 1942.⁴⁵³ Edward Spicer, a respected anthropologist with experience analyzing the Yaqui Indians, became Leighton's assistant.⁴⁵⁴ As Leighton noted, Collier "believed that research and observation through applied psychology and social anthropology should accompany the enterprise from its beginning, since the problems presented by the Japanese relocation were a challenge to democratic principles and an opportunity to gain experience and improve methods."⁴⁵⁵

Leighton identified the importance of the research unit: "Through 1942 Poston was the only Relocation Center to have social scientific observation and analysis allied to its administration and, as has been noted, this was due to Indian Service experience."⁴⁵⁶ When he arrived no specific plans existed for the work of the sociological office or its role in the administration.⁴⁵⁷ After undertaking a preliminary survey of the center and consulting with Collier, the goals of the research project emerged: aiding the administration through analysis of evacuee attitudes to center life and the impact of policies that governed it; gathering general data of value in administering communities in occupied areas; and training Japanese American field workers in social analysis for use in occupied areas of the Pacific during and after the war. Leighton established the Bureau of Sociological Research, which acted in a special advisory capacity to the project director.⁴⁵⁸ Bureau staff collected data principally through observation, interviews, record collecting, public opinion polls, and personality studies.⁴⁵⁹ Leighton's staff included Spicer, Elizabeth Colson, David H. French, and about two dozen evacuee research assistants.⁴⁶⁰

The social observers received some of the credit for providing advice and information leading to the satisfactory conclusion of the Poston Incident.⁴⁶¹ Conrad Arensberg, described as one of the "most renowned ethnographers of the time," produced a widely-read report examining Poston's management problems following its strike, and the research bureau also completed a detailed discussion of the events.⁴⁶² The value of Poston's sociological research unit, especially in terms of analyzing the causes of the November incident and aiding its peaceful resolution, spurred the WRA to develop its own department of social research, which placed "community analysts" in each camp.⁴⁶³

As the WRA's John Embree noted, the unrest at Poston and Manzanar "created apprehension" in the WRA's Washington office and the other centers that similar problems might arise and resulted in the belief that better understanding of the Japanese Americans was vital.⁴⁶⁴ The agency studied "the course Collier took in regard to scientific work at Poston," and assigned Embree, an anthropologist, to organize such a department.⁴⁶⁵ In January 1943 he visited Poston, requesting the staff's collaboration in creating the program. The Poston analysts provided information and loaned Edward Spicer, who assisted by surveying another center and preparing it for a social analysis section. The WRA proposed creating a Community Analysis Section in each center, an idea favored by the project directors and authorized in February 1943.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁵³ Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xliii.

⁴⁵⁴ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 373; Orin Starn, "Engineering Internment: Anthropologists and the War Relocation Authority," *American Ethnologist*, 13(Nov. 1986)4: 702.

⁴⁵⁵ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, vii.

⁴⁵⁶ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 373.

⁴⁵⁷ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 378.

⁴⁵⁸ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 378-379.

⁴⁵⁹ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 388.

⁴⁶⁰ Starn, "Engineering Internment," 702; Niiya, *Encyclopedia*, 337.

⁴⁶¹ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 374.

⁴⁶² Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 374; Starn, "Engineering Internment," 702

⁴⁶³ Embree, "Community Analysis," 279.

⁴⁶⁴ Embree, "Community Analysis," 280.

⁴⁶⁵ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 374.

⁴⁶⁶ Embree, "Community Analysis," 281.

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In September 1943, Poston's Bureau of Sociological Research ended its fieldwork in preparation for the transfer of administrative control of the center to the WRA. Leighton then completed a period of project evaluation and report preparation to fulfill one of the original goals of the OIA project. Fieldwork at Poston subsequently became a task of the WRA's Community Analysis Section, whose mission included "evaluation, analysis of unrest, and prediction."⁴⁶⁷ Spicer accepted a WRA job in Washington, eventually becoming Senior Community Analyst.⁴⁶⁸ In 1945, Leighton published *The Governing of Men: General Principles and Recommendations Based on Experience at a Japanese Relocation Camp*, considered one of the classic studies of the relocation program.

During 1942-45, social scientists affiliated with the University of California-Berkeley conducted a third project at Poston to study the relocation program. Sociologist Dorothy Swaine Thomas headed the Japanese Evacuation and Resettlement Study (JERS), an independent, well-funded, multidisciplinary investigation with the goals of deriving general information about the effects of relocation and identifying ways to benefit displaced populations after the war. Evacuee fieldworkers who lived in four relocation centers included Tamie Tschiyama and Richard Nishimoto at Poston. Lane Hirabayashi described Richard Nishimoto (1904-1956), as "perhaps the most frequently cited author of Japanese descent who was among those subject to mass incarceration by the federal government during World War II and who also wrote on the subject."⁴⁶⁹ With Dorothy Swain Thomas, Nishimoto prepared a highly acclaimed 1946 study, *The Spoilage: Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement*, in addition to numerous other surveys, reports, and studies about camp life while residing in Poston.⁴⁷⁰

CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

Celebrated Japanese American artist Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) voluntarily moved to Poston with plans to establish an arts and crafts program in early May 1942. Following the announcement of Executive Order 9066, Noguchi became affiliated with "Nisei Writers and Artists Mobilization for Democracy," a San Francisco-based group that spoke against the evacuation. In April 1942, he visited John Collier to discuss the group's concept of an art program for the relocation centers. The commissioner invited the artist to help create "an ideal cooperative community" at Poston that included an arts and crafts movement. Noguchi hoped to convince Japanese American artists who were not evacuated to stay at other camps, but he was the only one willing to be so incarcerated, according to biographer Masayo Duus.⁴⁷¹

Noguchi drove into Poston I on May 12, 1942, when volunteer evacuees were present to help set up the camp. He started a wood carving and carpentry shop, although only his own tools were available and he had to scavenge for wood. The artist reported his work at the center consisted mostly of the design and development of park and recreation areas, a field in which he later achieved recognition. According to Duus,

He turned out plans for parks, baseball fields, swimming pools, a cemetery, and even an irrigation system. He was eager to build the 'ideal community' that he and John Collier had talked about. It was an opportunity to carry out projects he had earlier proposed to the WPA.⁴⁷²

In June, Noguchi revealed his design for an amphitheater with seating for three thousand persons, using dirt excavated for a swimming pool in the construction.⁴⁷³ He also prepared a landscape plan for the center,

⁴⁶⁷ Starn, "Engineering Internment," 705.

⁴⁶⁸ Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 374-375.

⁴⁶⁹ Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xxv.

⁴⁷⁰ Hirabayashi, Introduction, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, xxviii.

⁴⁷¹ Another artist, Ryoji Kato, who had art studios in Laguna Beach, California, and Estes Park, Colorado, was evacuated to Poston and obtained release to return to Estes Park. He decided to stay in Poston, where he taught Japanese flower arranging, to help beautify the center and "do his share with the rest of the residents." *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 8 August 1942, 1.

⁴⁷² Masayo Duus, *The Life of Isamu Noguchi: Journey Without Borders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 170.

⁴⁷³ *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 13 June 1942, 1.

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described as “a beautifully designed sketch of the Poston of the future with parks, gardens, and vine-covered cottages.”⁴⁷⁴

An Art Department organized in June and began holding daily classes using donated supplies.⁴⁷⁵ In August, an Art Society met at Noguchi’s quarters and selected him as its temporary chairman. Members included “sculptors, painters, cartoonists, wood craftsmen, designers, flower arrangement experts, commercial artists, jewelry designers, block printers, pottery makers, portrait painters, and toy making specialists.” Plans for an adobe Art Center to display the works of members were formulated.⁴⁷⁶ In October, the *Press Bulletin* published an editorial discussing “The Value of Art.”⁴⁷⁷

Despite these positive signs that art occupied an important place at the center, Noguchi quickly became disillusioned with life at Poston. Within two weeks of his arrival he wrote to photographer Man Ray,

This is the weirdest, most unreal situation—like in a dream—I wish I were out. . . . Here time has stoped [sic] and nothing is of any consequence, nothing of value, neither our time nor our skill. . . . Our preoccupations are the intense dry heat, the afternoon dust storms, the food.⁴⁷⁸

The artist managed to find beauty in the desert landscape, describing “the fantastic heat, the cool nights, and the miraculous time before dawn. I became leader of forays into the desert to find ironwood roots for sculpting.”⁴⁷⁹

Noguchi’s dreams of a “rebirth of handicraft and the arts which the *Niseis* have so largely lost in the process of Americanization,” withered at Poston, which he found “one of the earth’s cruelest spots.” Duus notes that Noguchi’s mixed ancestry, cowboy boots, privileged celebrity status, attractiveness to women, and assignment to a room by himself made other evacuees distrust him. The artist wrote Collier about being “extremely despondent for lack of companionship” and soon asked permission to leave. Questions about his loyalty, due to childhood years spent in Japan, prevented Noguchi’s departure until November 1942.⁴⁸⁰ He returned to New York, creating the work *My Arizona* to mark his relocation camp experience.⁴⁸¹ In early 1943, Noguchi wrote about the relocation camps for the *New Republic*, one of the few early articles that “publicly denounced the relocation of Japanese-Americans so openly and so clearly.”⁴⁸²

An arts and crafts movement did flourish at Poston, providing the outlet for creativity and productivity in the traditional forms that Noguchi envisioned. Within weeks of the first evacuees’ arrival, the center’s information bulletin announced a meeting of all persons interested in landscape sketching and painting.⁴⁸³ Many residents wanted to document their experiences and the conditions at Poston, but cameras were forbidden. Milestone events in the lives of the evacuees, such as births and weddings, and the day-to-day life of the residents could not be recorded.⁴⁸⁴ Thus, paintings and drawings took the place of photographs. Frank Kadowaki painted small oils of the barracks and residents, as well as the dust storms.⁴⁸⁵ Gene Sogioka, who had studied at the Chiouard Art Institute and had worked as an animator at Walt Disney Studios, painted more than 150 watercolors of everyday life at the request of Alexander Leighton.⁴⁸⁶ The Arizona Historical Foundation possesses five

⁴⁷⁴ Henderson, “Refuge.”

⁴⁷⁵ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 16 October 1942, Ind.4

⁴⁷⁶ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 13 August 1942, 1.

⁴⁷⁷ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 9 October 1942, 2.

⁴⁷⁸ Noguchi quoted in Duus, *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, 169-175.

⁴⁷⁹ The Noguchi Museum, “Isamu Noguchi on His Life and Work,” <http://www.noguchi.org> (accessed 13 February 2009).

⁴⁸⁰ Duus, *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, 169-175.

⁴⁸¹ Amy Lyford, “Noguchi, Sculptural Abstraction, and the Politics of Japanese American Internment,” *Art Bulletin*, 85(March 2003)1: 141-142.

⁴⁸² Duus, *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, 175.

⁴⁸³ *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 24 May 1942, 1.

⁴⁸⁴ Spicer, et al, *Impounded People*, 84.

⁴⁸⁵ Nakayama, *Transforming Barbed Wire*, 14.

⁴⁸⁶ Gesensway and Roseman, *Beyond Words*, 151; *New York Times*, 1 March 1988.

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watercolor paintings of Poston by artist Kakunen Tsuruoka. As Chizuko de Queiroz found, “My drawing and painting solidified my self-confidence, and I made the decision then to be an artist.”⁴⁸⁷

Allen H. Eaton, who studied the art of the relocation centers, found small bird carving started at Poston, where it reached its zenith. Carving birds and animals became popular in other camps, including Gila River, but Poston’s production was superior in quality and quantity. Some of the evacuee artists found inspiration for their bird designs in illustrations from *National Geographic* magazine, which experienced a surge in orders for back issues from Arizona. Carvers searched the landscape for pieces of wood and ingeniously salvaged wire for bird legs and feet from the margins of window screens.⁴⁸⁸

As at the other centers, flower arranging became a popular artistic expression and way to pass the time. Due to the center’s limitations, the flowers were mostly paper and vases were fashioned of wood found in the area.⁴⁸⁹ Toyoko Kubota observed that the *Issei* went to the mountains to acquire rocks, petrified wood, iron wood, and mesquite to turn into a vase “or some kind of artistic and antique looking article.”⁴⁹⁰ Chizuko de Queiroz’s father carved wooden birds, created ironwood sculptures, and fabricated jewelry inlaid with stone using mail-order lapidary tools.⁴⁹¹ Many women worked on crafts such as sewing, knitting, and crocheting projects.⁴⁹² Sewing schools opened in each unit, although everything had to be made by hand until sewing machines could be acquired. A fashion show of evacuee designs in August 1942 “was the biggest thing that happened in Poston at that time.”⁴⁹³

CELEBRATIONS, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE, AND RECREATION

John Powell of Poston’s Community Services Department described the atmosphere at the center as “astonishingly American. Every block has its baseball and basketball teams. Sunday and Wednesday see dozens of church services, prayer meetings, bible classes . . . The Buddhist young people carry on ardent forums and socials.”⁴⁹⁴ The first communitywide celebration recognized the 4th of July, which also marked the opening of the irrigation canal into the center. To commemorate the occasion, the residents held a “Water Festival” with flag-raising ceremonies and dedicated a “Pioneer Grove” of thirteen mulberry trees planted in a circle near the firehouse as the “first trees in this section of the Great American Desert.”⁴⁹⁵ During the evening a large gathering of people attended an evacuee pageant that featured a historical panorama beginning with the arrival of the first Indians in the Parker Valley and extending to the coming of the Japanese Americans.⁴⁹⁶ The audience and cast closed the evening by singing “God Bless America.”⁴⁹⁷

In August and September 1942, Buddhists held O-bon festivals with thousands of participants enjoying memorial and religious services, decorations, refreshments, displays, dances, merchandise, speeches, and entertainment.⁴⁹⁸ On 17 and 18 October 1942, Poston I hosted a “county fair” planned and staffed by about five hundred evacuees.⁴⁹⁹ Residents selected a Fair Queen and held a Coronation Ball. Sumie Tabuchi reported the event included a number of displays of arts and crafts, including works categorized as “home economics, woodwork, school projects, toys, paintings, and handmade flowers.” Items such as *getas*, vases, trays, canes,

⁴⁸⁷ de Queiroz, *Camp Days*, foreword.

⁴⁸⁸ Allen H. Eaton, *Beauty Behind Barbed Wire* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publisher, 1952), 28-29.

⁴⁸⁹ Sato, *Dandelion*, 194; Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 28.

⁴⁹⁰ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 85.

⁴⁹¹ de Queiroz, *Camp Days*, 19.

⁴⁹² Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 28.

⁴⁹³ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 44.

⁴⁹⁴ Powell, “America’s Refugees,” 9.

⁴⁹⁵ Wade Head, Project Director, “Remarks,” 4 July 1942, box 1, folder 1, Wade Head Collection; Colson, Spicer, and Leighton, “A Brief History,” 6; *Watsonville Register-Pajaronian*, 6 July 1942, 2, <http://www.santacruzpl.org> (accessed 2 February 2009).

⁴⁹⁶ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 5 July 1942, 1; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 100; Sato, *Dandelion*, 193.

⁴⁹⁷ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 7 July 1942, 1.

⁴⁹⁸ *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 21 August 1942, 3-4 and 23 August 1942, 1.

⁴⁹⁹ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 74.

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and ink stands were featured.⁵⁰⁰ Agricultural products reflecting accomplishments of the first summer received attention, as did displays of Poston's "wildlife," which included turtles, rattlesnakes, scorpions, coyotes, and fish.⁵⁰¹ Also exhibited were scale models of facilities to be built at the center in the future.⁵⁰² The *Arizona Farmer-Producer* covered the fair the following year, reporting: "There wasn't enough livestock to mention and the field crop exhibits didn't amount to much. But when it comes to vegetables and vegetable seeds, those evacuees can show Caucasian farmers things that most of us never suspected."⁵⁰³

Social events initiated both by the administration and the evacuees offered a wide range of activities that altered the monotony of daily life. A Girls' Club and other groups organized games, dances, picnics, and shows. Concerts offering the best of local musicians were given frequently. Community Enterprises provided popular outdoor movies beginning in July 1942 and eventually built an outdoor theater for films, meetings, and talent shows.⁵⁰⁴ Jack Matsuoka noted, "Winter came to Poston, Arizona, but that didn't stop the regular Wednesday-night movies. Theater was outdoors, so you had to take along your own heat."⁵⁰⁵

Christmas was the "highlight of the first winter" for Matsuoka: "We found a tamarack tree at one of the desert water holes. Everyone made paper ornaments, and we stood our simple Christmas tree in the mess hall."⁵⁰⁶ Other evacuees searched the desert for local holly, mistletoe, and green plants to decorate the barracks, and church choirs practiced carols.⁵⁰⁷ In several large cities the Society of Friends gathered thousands of gifts for evacuees, and other groups sent handmade toys.⁵⁰⁸ Poston III sponsored a Christmas bazaar. Despite a dust storm, most blocks had parties with appearances by Santa Claus and dancing. On New Year's Day 1943, celebrations included the making of *mochi* (a type of rice cake), block parties, and a festival in Unit II featuring exhibits, concessions, and a "Sport-O-Cade," with athletic contests for both sexes ranging from marbles to basketball to table tennis.⁵⁰⁹ Postopia, "a miniature model of the future Poston," and a cactus weighing six hundred pounds were featured attractions.⁵¹⁰

Libraries. Libraries in each unit offered residents the opportunity to borrow books from the large collection donated by several California libraries, charitable organizations, and individual citizens. The first library started in Poston I within two weeks of the camp's opening. A book on mechanical refrigeration was the most popular item loaned during the early days.⁵¹¹ OIA administrators allowed Japanese books, magazines, and newspapers at the center.⁵¹² During the first six months, evacuees checked out more than six thousand books and magazines.⁵¹³ Books rented at five cents per week until they were paid for and then circulated without charge.⁵¹⁴

Some residents also maintained ties to their California libraries. Clara Breed, a librarian at a branch of the San Diego Public Library, exchanged letters with a number of children she met before their relocation to Poston. Her young correspondents wrote about life at the camp, and Miss Breed sent the children books, small gifts, and

⁵⁰⁰ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 74.

⁵⁰¹ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 75.

⁵⁰² Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 136.

⁵⁰³ *Arizona Farmer-Producer*, 17-31 July 1943.

⁵⁰⁴ *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 50.

⁵⁰⁵ Matsuoka, *Poston, Camp II*, 50 and 80.

⁵⁰⁶ Matsuoka, *Poston, Camp II*, 82.

⁵⁰⁷ Colson, Spicer, and Leighton, "A Brief History," 16-17.

⁵⁰⁸ Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed*, 144.

⁵⁰⁹ *Mochi* are rice cakes that play an important role in Japanese culture, especially on New Year's Day.

⁵¹⁰ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 27 December 1942, 1; *Poston Chronicle*, 1 January 1943, 1 and 3; *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 35.

⁵¹¹ *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 22 May 1942, 1 and 5 June 1942, 1.

⁵¹² *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 24 July 1942, 1.

⁵¹³ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 71.

⁵¹⁴ Estes and Estes, "Letters from Camp," 30.

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other requested items. She wrote articles about the conditions in relocation centers for library journals and drew national attention to the camps.⁵¹⁵

Newspapers and Magazine. On 12 May, people hired to report Poston's news entered "a barren and dust-covered barracks" and found "two empty barrels, bridged by a wooden board" that served as a desk for a single typewriter and a ream of paper.⁵¹⁶ A brief newsletter (*Official Information Bulletin*) came out the following day and each day thereafter until 23 October 1942, although paper shortages limited early production to a few dozen copies posted on bulletin boards by block managers and administrators.⁵¹⁷ Eventually, these deficiencies were corrected, and the three camp units alternated publication of the mimeographed *Press Bulletin* (on 22 December 1942 renamed *Poston Chronicle*) at a subscription rate of thirty cents per month.⁵¹⁸ The newspaper became an important means of communication, providing news of local and national events and reprinting official announcements.⁵¹⁹ Evacuees depended on the publication; as one remarked, "The only voice we had was the camp newspaper."⁵²⁰ On 1 September 1942, members of the press erected the first adobe building in the center, the Press Club, which received a ceremonious dedication.⁵²¹ In April 1943, residents received *Poston Notes and Activities*, a magazine produced by center residents with contributions from the nine other camps. Henry Mori served as editor, assisted by the *Poston Chronicle* staff, which included respected *Nisei* writer Hisaye Yamamoto, whose short stories about Japanese life received national attention after the war.⁵²²

Recreation. Evacuees played basketball, softball, baseball, volleyball, and football, with eight ballfields available for games. Wrestling, badminton, ping pong, and boxing were popular sports.⁵²³ Jack Matsuoka observed, "Enthusiasm for sports helped make camp life more bearable and kept many of the young people from becoming too restless and discontented."⁵²⁴ Teams formed in each block and almost everyone participated or watched the games. Other athletic opportunities included *judo* classes, held twice daily for more than 450 people in Poston I, and *sumo* wrestling.⁵²⁵ Jio Sugidono recalled creating a golf course on the desert land: "Like the, we call it green, it's all sand, but we smooth it out . . ." Most of the golf clubs came through mail order from J.C. Penney.⁵²⁶

Swimming was a popular outdoor activity, and each unit had at least one swimming pool created by widening the irrigation canal. Volunteers worked to improve the basic water structures and a team of lifeguards ensured the safety of swimmers.⁵²⁷ Evacuees judged Camp III's swimming pool in Poston Square Garden the best structure, being concrete-lined and with "blue, clear water," whereas Camp II's swimming facility was described as a "big mud hole."⁵²⁸

⁵¹⁵ Clara Breed saved the letters she received from children at Poston, which are compiled in Joanne Oppenheim's *Dear Miss Breed: True Stories of the Japanese American Incarceration During World War II and a Librarian Who Made a Difference* (2006).

⁵¹⁶ *Poston Notes and Activities*, 11.

⁵¹⁷ *Poston Notes and Activities*, 11; Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 97.

⁵¹⁸ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 44-45.

⁵¹⁹ *Poston Official Information Bulletin*, 1942; *Poston Press Bulletin*, 1942; *Poston Chronicle*, 1942; *Poston Notes and Activities*, 12

⁵²⁰ Bailey, *City in the Sun*, 105.

⁵²¹ *Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 7 August 1942, 1; *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, 12.

⁵²² *Poston Notes and Activities*, April 1943, copy from the files of R. Fuchigami; Niiya, *Encyclopedia*, 416.

⁵²³ Lillquist, *Imprisoned*, 432.

⁵²⁴ Matsuoka, *Poston, Camp II*, 98.

⁵²⁵ *Poston Notes and Activities*, 40; Lillquist, *Imprisoned*, 432.

⁵²⁶ Jiro Sugidono, Interview by Tom Ikeda, 28 July 2008, Densho.

⁵²⁷ In 1945, laboratory analysis of the water in some of the pools of Units I and II revealed it was contaminated and unsafe for swimming. John W. Powell, Acting Chief of Community Services, "Affidavit," 16 June 1943, Arizona Historical Foundation, Arizona State University, Tempe, Az.; *Poston Chronicle*, 4 August 1945, 2.

⁵²⁸ Hashimoto, Interview; *Poston Chronicle*, 22 September 1943, 3.

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Grace Ikemura remembered fishing on the Colorado River, overnight camping, and picnics in the mountains.⁵²⁹ When evacuees returned home with fish, they needed a place to put them and began making ponds. Elaine Hibi Bowers recalled her brothers bringing bass from the river to a pond her father built in front of their barracks. When the family left Poston, they provided a fish dinner for the entire block.⁵³⁰ Toyoko Kubota stated, “If you went around to each block, you would invariably see at least a couple of such ponds.”⁵³¹

LEAVES, RESETTLEMENT, AND MILITARY SERVICE

Poston officials recognized the likelihood that evacuees would need to leave the center on a short term temporary basis for activities such as seeing medical specialists, negotiating property arrangements, visiting relatives in other camps, and conducting business.⁵³² Residents also received seasonal leave permits to pursue employment of limited duration. In addition, under Dillon S. Myer the WRA instituted a system of leaves of indefinite duration, reversing Milton Eisenhower’s policies that had assumed the evacuees would stay in the centers until the end of the war. Myer reported he visited Poston and Tule Lake shortly after taking office and became convinced by the living conditions that “something should be done about moving evacuees to locations outside of the centers as soon as possible.”⁵³³ In September 1942, he established a relocation policy granting indefinite leaves that encouraged movement of Japanese Americans into jobs available in the Midwest and East. At a November 1942 meeting of western WRA directors in Salt Lake City, local citizens asked agency officials for authorization to recruit evacuee workers for the local federal ordnance plant. Myer later recalled that the idea appeared to represent acceptance of the evacuees and helped him decide to “go all-out in our relocation program.”⁵³⁴

The WRA embraced the goal of resettling the evacuees and closing the camps, basing its policies on the fact that living in such situations was bad for them. It also believed the country needed the residents’ skills and manpower, Congress was likely to discontinue funding for the centers, concentrating evacuees in camps made them vulnerable to campaigns against them, and ending the centers during the war made relocation possibilities for jobs and housing more successful.⁵³⁵ Director Myer hoped to resettle about 75,000 Japanese Americans in 1943, and field offices and subsidiary stations to assist the effort opened across the country.

In January 1943, Wade Head announced that leave clearance would be speeded up, allowing the placement of hundreds of evacuees in jobs.⁵³⁶ When asked if they were planning to depart from Poston, 75 percent of *Issei* residents responded negatively, while 63 percent of the *Nisei* population responded affirmatively.⁵³⁷ In early March, the administration required all Poston residents to register for the resettlement program although they were not forced to relocate at that time. To allay fears about outside life, evacuees were assured they could return to the center if their relocation proved unsuccessful.⁵³⁸ In April 1943, Dillon Myer traveled to Poston to explain to block managers why evacuees should exit.⁵³⁹ At the same time, he praised the progress made on the adobe school buildings, subjugation of the land, agricultural production, and camouflage net manufacturing. Many of the younger residents left to pursue college educations, jobs outside the center, or military service. As

⁵²⁹ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 81.

⁵³⁰ Nakayama, *Transforming Barbed Wire*, 12.

⁵³¹ Tajiri, *et al*, *Through Innocent Eyes*, 85.

⁵³² US, WRA, *The Relocation Program: A Guidebook for the Residents of Relocation Centers* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, May 1943; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1975), 1.

⁵³³ Myer, *Uprooted Americans*, 6.

⁵³⁴ Myer, *Uprooted Americans*, 134.

⁵³⁵ Myer, *Uprooted Americans*, 192; WRA, *WRA: A Story*, 183.

⁵³⁶ Estes and Estes, “Hot Enough to Melt Iron,” 23.

⁵³⁷ Toshio Yatsushiro, Iwao Ishino, and Yoshiharu Matsumoto, Colorado River Relocation Center, Sociological Research Bureau, “The Japanese-American Looks at Resettlement,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Summer 1944): 188-201.

⁵³⁸ *Poston Chronicle*, 16 April 1943, 1.

⁵³⁹ *Poston Chronicle*, 24 April 1943, 1 and 2.

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the population dwindled, the OIA was forced to scale down plans for the camp and struggled with finding enough labor for remaining projects.

Together with the WRA, the Army developed a "Leave Clearance Questionnaire," to evaluate the threat individual evacuees posed to national security and their eligibility for service or leaves. Each person within the center over the age of seventeen was required to complete the questionnaire. Controversial questions 27 and 28 attempted to determine whether the respondent was "loyal" to America and a candidate for relocation or military service, or "disloyal" and eligible for transfer to the Tule Lake Segregation Center or return to Japan.⁵⁴⁰ The questions confused and angered both the *Issei*, who could not become citizens, and the *Nisei*, who felt their loyalty was being questioned. Divisions between the generations over how to respond to the questionnaire added to the tense atmosphere at Poston, and, as Ruth Okimoto noted, "caused a deep rift and divided the Japanese American detainee community during the war and for many years thereafter."⁵⁴¹ At Poston, 93.7 percent of the respondents affirmatively answered question 28, which required swearing allegiance to the United States and agreeing to defend the country.⁵⁴² A total of 1,437 persons evaluated as disloyal or unsympathetic to the cause of the United States, including those who answered "No-No" to the loyalty questions, as well as those simply labeled dissidents, and their families, were sent to the segregation center at Tule Lake, California. People who indicated that they were not loyal to America, wanted repatriation to Japan, and would commit sabotage if given the opportunity were sent to Leupp Citizen Isolation Center, Arizona, or allowed to leave for Japan.

Military Recruitment and Draft Resistance

Although thousands of *Nisei* served in the United States military before Pearl Harbor, the Army reclassified Americans of Japanese descent as 4-C or "aliens not acceptable to the armed forces" in January 1942. On 30 June 1942, the government required *Nisei* men aged eighteen to twenty years to register for selective service although they were not subject to military call.⁵⁴³ The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and federal officials such as Dillon Myer worked for reinstatement of the draft for *Nisei*, believing service would prove loyalty.⁵⁴⁴ In November 1942, the War Department announced that *Nisei* with a high school education who spoke fluent English and Japanese and were physically fit could volunteer. Recruiters for the Military Intelligence Service Language School visited the center in that month seeking recruits, but the strike taking place in Poston I thwarted that effort and only seven men left for Camp Savage in Minnesota.⁵⁴⁵ The center later started a Japanese Language School attended by about six hundred men and women in order to train people who wished to join the Military Intelligence Service.⁵⁴⁶

In January 1943, the Selective Service System changed the draft status of *Nisei* men from 4-C to 1-A.⁵⁴⁷ *Nisei* were encouraged to voluntarily enlist in the Army, and plans to form an all-*Nisei* combat unit were announced.⁵⁴⁸ Recruiters visited Poston in early February seeking to register all eligible males and encourage them to sign up.⁵⁴⁹ Nobu Shimahara discussed the reasons some were reluctant to volunteer: "At Poston, a lot of

⁵⁴⁰ Burton and Farrell, "Poston Relocation Center," 45.

⁵⁴¹ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 13.

⁵⁴² Niiya, *Encyclopedia*, 337.

⁵⁴³ At Poston, about 375 men registered and about 91 *Nisei* in the age group did not. *Poston Official Daily Press Bulletin*, 12 July 1942, 1.

⁵⁴⁴ After the JACL took a stance in support of opening the draft to *Nisei*, some of its leaders who resided in Poston were beaten. The Poston Judicial Committee found some men accused in the assaults guilty and they were sent to Yuma for trial, and after pleading guilty received prison sentences.

⁵⁴⁵ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 17 November 1942, 7: 1; Eric L. Muller, "A Penny for Their Thoughts: Draft Resistance at the Poston Relocation Center," *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 68(Spring 2005)119: 126.

⁵⁴⁶ Gelvin, "Memorandum," 17 June 1943.

⁵⁴⁷ *Poston Chronicle*, 10 January 1943, 1.

⁵⁴⁸ *Poston Chronicle*, 29 January 1943, 1; Muller, "A Penny," 122-123.

⁵⁴⁹ *Poston Chronicle*, 5 February 1943, 1.

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young guys like myself didn't make [a] quick rush for Army enlistment. A lot of *Nisei* in camp were still sore about the evacuation and the slowness of their government in recognizing our rights."⁵⁵⁰ Legal scholar Eric L. Muller found that "far fewer *Nisei* volunteered from the relocation camps in the spring of 1943 than the JACL predicted, but an enthusiastic response from young men in Hawaii guaranteed enough manpower to launch the all-*Nisei* unit."⁵⁵¹ The fine performance of the unit led the War Department to reconsider its position on the draft, and *Nisei* became eligible for induction on 20 January 1944.

Muller determined Poston had the largest number of draft resisters of any camp, with 107 men who refused to submit to either the pre-induction physical or induction.⁵⁵² This figure represented one-third of all evacuee resisters in the centers.⁵⁵³ One *Nisei* stated, "If they draft us, I'll go, but I wouldn't know what I was fighting for, not after being treated this way."⁵⁵⁴ Many *Issei* parents, who already had lost their homes, possessions, and jobs, could not face the possibility of losing their children.⁵⁵⁵ Some evacuees thought those put in the centers should not face the draft as well, and many supported the rights of men who refused to serve.⁵⁵⁶ Administrators feared evacuee concerns about the draft might result in another incident, as described by Muller: "...within just a few weeks, Poston was in a headlong rush into large-scale draft resistance that caught the camp's administrators by surprise."⁵⁵⁷ Beginning in April 1944, resisters were tried and received varying prison sentences. In October 1946, about one hundred resisters, who had left the center a year earlier, received fines of one penny and were released. President Harry Truman pardoned all the Japanese American resisters on 24 December 1947.⁵⁵⁸

A total of 611 eligible men entered the armed forces while living at Poston, the most of any relocation center; others volunteered or were inducted after leaving the center.⁵⁵⁹ The all-*Nisei* 442nd Regimental Combat Team combined with the 100th Infantry Battalion of the Hawaii National Guard to become the most decorated unit of its size in American history. Poston women also volunteered for service, joining the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, Women's Army Corps, the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps, and the Army and Navy Nurse Corps.⁵⁶⁰ More than 1,200 men and women's names are found on the camp's honor roll of those who served the country. Twenty-four Poston men were killed in action. Many of the parents of servicemen and women remained at Poston until the end of the war. Jack Matsuoka wondered, "What does an officer say when he must award, posthumously, a Silver Star for bravery to parents confined behind barbed-wire fences in Poston, War Relocation Center Camp II, U.S.A.?"⁵⁶¹

WRA ADMINISTRATION AND THE CLOSING OF POSTON

During 1943, Dillon Myer dealt with Congressional concerns about allegations Poston's staff had encouraged Japanese nationalism and other anti-American behavior resulting in the Poston Incident. Both the WRA and the OIA realized the lack of clear lines of authority had created inconsistent management and delays in securing supplies and equipment.⁵⁶² Some criticized John Collier for focusing too much on the future use of the site to the detriment of its current inhabitants.⁵⁶³ In June 1943, Interior Undersecretary Abe Fortas directed

⁵⁵⁰ Bailey, *City in the Sun*, 141.

⁵⁵¹ Muller, "A Penny," 123.

⁵⁵² Muller, "A Penny," 121.

⁵⁵³ Muller, "A Penny," 123.

⁵⁵⁴ Evacuee quoted in Muller, "A Penny," 132.

⁵⁵⁵ Muller, "A Penny," 134.

⁵⁵⁶ Muller, "A Penny," 133 and 144.

⁵⁵⁷ Muller, "A Penny," 139 and 142.

⁵⁵⁸ Burton and Farrell, "Poston Relocation Center," 46; Muller, "A Penny," 153.

⁵⁵⁹ WRA, *The Evacuated People*, Table 49, 128; Lillquist, *Imprisoned*, 440.

⁵⁶⁰ *Poston Chronicle*, 4 March 1943 and 22 September 1943, 2; Estes and Estes, "Hot Enough to Melt Iron," 22.

⁵⁶¹ Matsuoka, *Poston, Camp II*, 149.

⁵⁶² Leighton, *Governing of Men*, 239.

⁵⁶³ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 29.

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Reclamation Counsel Howard R. Stinson to investigate conditions at the relocation center. Stinson suggested operating Poston differently from the other facilities had been unwise, and he recommended the OIA withdraw as the administrative agency while retaining its supervision of irrigation development and practices, land subjugation, and permanent building construction.⁵⁶⁴ The WRA and Interior Department signed a second Memorandum of Understanding stipulating the WRA would receive administrative authority for the Colorado River Relocation Center. OIA personnel would receive the opportunity to transfer to the WRA, and the two agencies would cooperate in the disposition of property when the center closed. The WRA also agreed to assume responsibility for removal of the evacuees.⁵⁶⁵

In the closing days of his administration in December 1943, Wade Head summarized the major accomplishments of the OIA at Poston, praising the agency's personnel for their "loyalty to the traditions of the Indian Service." He cited the evacuees' assumption of leadership positions as a major achievement, and noted the beginning of real agricultural production. Head concluded, "We speak often of the transformation of this desert waste to a working living community. This transformation has been accomplished, and I believe we can look to the future of Poston with pride and great hope."⁵⁶⁶

On 1 January 1944, the OIA ceased its operation of the center. From the beginning, the division of responsibilities at Poston between the WRA and OIA had resulted in contradictory proclamations and confusion about lines of authority. John Collier later asserted much of the major discord between his agency and WRA stemmed from the arrival of Dillon Myer, whom he saw as abandoning a verbal understanding made with Milton Eisenhower to operate Poston "in the spirit of the Indian New Deal." He believed Myer instituted a philosophy that ensured the relocation camps became "places of unmitigated misery."⁵⁶⁷ Collier reported that during his first inspection tour at Poston, Myer viewed the Japanese American gardens and commented, "This is the worst thing I have come on in all my inspections of the camps."⁵⁶⁸

The Indian Service withdrew from Poston having accomplished major goals, including construction of an irrigation system in the southern part of reservation; completion of a paved highway from the center to Parker and of other roads and bridges; preparation of some land for agricultural use; production of some of the center's food; and construction of fifty-four adobe school buildings.⁵⁶⁹ Historian Thomas Fujita-Rony found the government reported the estimated 1946 value of the physical plant and structures at Poston at \$12 million. The irrigation system then included a main canal almost seventeen miles long. The government had spent more than \$900,000 on roads and bridges associated with the center, including the more than twenty-one-mile main road from Parker to Camp III.⁵⁷⁰

Poston's Final Period as a Relocation Center

Poston's second project director, Duncan Mills, found the early months of 1944 "uneasy." A combination of anxieties among the residents, administrative problems, and changes at the center increased tension. Some people expected further movement of individuals to the segregation center at Tule Lake. The transfer of administrative responsibilities from the OIA to the WRA disturbed residents satisfied with the Indian Service and resulted in the loss of some administrators, including the project director, associate project director, project attorney, and chief administrative officer. Reopening the draft for *Nisei* in January 1944 also caused controversy. The new administration faced the task of ending the large construction program, understanding and

⁵⁶⁴ Leonard, "Imagining Poston," 30.

⁵⁶⁵ WRA and DOI, "Memorandum of Understanding Between the Director of the War Relocation Authority and the Secretary of the Interior to Supersede Memorandum Adopted on 14 April 1942, box 1, folder 4, Wade Head Collection.

⁵⁶⁶ Wade Head, Project Director, Letter to John Collier, OIA Commissioner, 1 December 1943, box 2, folder 5, Wade Head Collection.

⁵⁶⁷ John Collier, *From Every Zenith: A Memoir and Some Essays on Life and Thought* (Denver: Sage Books, 1963), 302.

⁵⁶⁸ John Collier, *From Every Zenith*, 302.

⁵⁶⁹ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 14.

⁵⁷⁰ Fujita-Rony, "Arizona and Japanese American History."

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improving project coordination and practices, and conducting an intensive study about the barriers to relocation.⁵⁷¹

In meeting his new staff, Mills found Poston included more African American employees than any other relocation center. He indicated that during 1944 the number of blacks increased to about fifteen, all of whom were professionals, including teachers, nurses, and a “sanitarian.” In 1945, several black welfare and relocation workers joined the staff. During the latter part of that year, the evacuee janitorial staff at the center was replaced by African Americans. Mills also reported local members of the Navajo tribe were brought in as laborers during the closing months of the center.⁵⁷²

Despite efforts to streamline the resettlement process, many evacuees still preferred to remain at the relocation center. A survey of residents taken in April 1944 revealed that more than 70 percent still “were not considering relocation outside of Poston.”⁵⁷³ Reasons for their reluctance to leave included inadequate monetary assistance, inability to find jobs and homes, and fear of outside hostility.⁵⁷⁴ Negative responses to the resettlement program by some West Coast residents added validity to the evacuees’ fears.

On 17 December 1944, the Western Defense Command rescinded the military order expelling persons of Japanese descent from the West Coast, effective 2 January 1945. At Poston remaining residents heard the announcement with a mixture of surprise, approval, and uncertainty. Many of those who had no property or jobs waiting seemed content to stay at the center awhile.⁵⁷⁵ The next day, the Supreme Court’s in *Ex Parte Endo* (323 U.S. 284, 1944) found “admittedly loyal” citizens could not be deprived of their liberty, a decision that effectively resulted in the closing of the relocation camps.⁵⁷⁶ The WRA announced all relocation centers would cease operation on or before 2 January 1946.

Evacuee researcher Richard Nishimoto found the announced closings “shattered the sense of security in the camps.”⁵⁷⁷ Administrators immediately began planning for the shutdown of Poston and scheduling meetings with evacuees.⁵⁷⁸ Residents attended a meeting with the project director, who indicated no one would be allowed to remain for more than another year and plans for leaving should be made with government assistance.⁵⁷⁹ With their previous lives destroyed, some evacuees resisted the idea of preparing to leave, fearing threats of intimidation and violence in addition to not having homes or jobs on the outside.⁵⁸⁰ Some still believed Poston would be maintained as a permanent camp or that an area would be turned over to the evacuees when the center closed.⁵⁸¹ Others wanted help with the process of starting a new life and assurances that their safety would be maintained.⁵⁸²

Hugo W. Wolter, WRA Liaison Chief observed, “Poston had a difficult time because of the idea that Poston would remain a permanent colony of Japanese somewhat similar to the Indians on the reservation. This was not a haphazard development. It had been fostered by a number of the project staff.”⁵⁸³ Ellen Yukawa recalled, “My

⁵⁷¹ Mills, “Project Director’s Narrative Report.”

⁵⁷² Mills noted that recreational opportunities in Parker for “non-white” staff were few, including a local movie theater, a restaurant, and a bar. Mills, “Project Director’s Narrative Report,” 9.

⁵⁷³ Estes and Estes, *Hot Enough*, 25.

⁵⁷⁴ Estes and Estes, *Hot Enough*, 25.

⁵⁷⁵ Oppenheim, *Dear Miss Breed*, 233-236.

⁵⁷⁶ Niiya, *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History*, 18-19 and 70.

⁵⁷⁷ Richard S. Nishimoto, *Inside an American Concentration Camp*, ed. Lane Ryo Hirabayashi (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 170.

⁵⁷⁸ Mills, “Project Director’s Narrative Report,” 11.

⁵⁷⁹ Estes and Estes, “Hot Enough to Melt Iron,” 29.

⁵⁸⁰ Nishimoto, *Inside an American Concentration Camp* 173.

⁵⁸¹ Hugo W. Wolter, Head of Liaison Section, “Report of the Center Liaison Section,” 29 November 1945, 3-4, Spicer Papers, Ms 042, box 1, folder 6.

⁵⁸² Nishimoto, *Inside an American Concentration Camp* 175.

⁵⁸³ Wolter, “Report of the Center Liaison Section,” 13.

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dad always said, ‘They put me in here—they’re going to have to kick me out!’ The camp was getting emptier and emptier. I remember my mom saying, ‘Well, when are we going to leave?’ And my dad said, ‘When they close the place.’”⁵⁸⁴ Ruri Tsuchiya Ishimaru expressed the feelings of those who preferred to stay, noting the effort people had expended to develop Poston: “When we had to leave, lots of people didn’t want to move because everything [was] so centered. We had a beautiful auditorium. We had a Japanese garden. When the trees grow, the birds come.”⁵⁸⁵

Community representatives, responding to evacuees’ concerns about leaving, proposed a meeting with delegates from other centers to discuss the issues. Other centers simultaneously conceived similar plans, and Topaz Relocation Center in Utah became the site of an All Center Conference.⁵⁸⁶ At Poston, administrators formulated a plan for consolidation of facilities leading to camp closure. A special committee of evacuees and WRA employees assisted in determining which mess halls would close or be consolidated. Nothing that would require harvesting after 1 July 1945 was planted in the community gardens. The construction programs ended and facility maintenance was reduced.⁵⁸⁷

On 6 January 1945, the first family of evacuees left Poston to return to California, accompanied by extensive publicity. Staffs of the Relocation and Welfare offices expanded to assist with efforts to leave the center. On 22 January, representatives of the OIA visited to discuss plans for moving Hopi families to the area as soon as housing and farm lands became available.⁵⁸⁸ When the resident population in a block reached a low number its mess hall closed, despite some continued objections. In February, evacuee scouting parties returned to their former home cities to survey conditions.⁵⁸⁹ In May, the center returned lands not required for its operation to the OIA, and a bus service began carrying evacuees between Poston and Parker.⁵⁹⁰

Japanese Americans viewed the closing of schools as a critical issue. On 15 March 1945, the Poston Parent Teacher Association protested the process and began planning for evacuee-run schools in the event their objections were unsuccessful. Residents also asked the Arizona State Department of Education to provide schools at the center when the WRA stopped its education program. However, the state responded that the Poston schools did not fall under its jurisdiction. When the administration announced plans to close the schools widespread discontent among young people still in the center resulted in some vandalism.⁵⁹¹ Poston’s three high schools conducted their final graduation ceremonies during 28 May to 2 June, and all schools except for those of nursery age children and special classes ended on 4 June.⁵⁹²

On 10 June, the project director announced Poston II and III would close no later than the first day of October. The following month, the WRA announced the entire center would cease operations by 30 November. Administrators scheduled special trains to carry evacuees to California, Chicago, and Seabrook Farms. By August 1945, the number of people in Poston II and III was so low and the amount of evacuee property to be moved was so large that it required outside labor.⁵⁹³ The end of the war heightened activity and “the relocation tide” increased substantially.⁵⁹⁴ Poston II closed on 28 September and Poston III on 30 September. Poston I

⁵⁸⁴ Oppenheimer, *Dear Miss Breed*, 231.

⁵⁸⁵ Ishimaru quoted in Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu, *Imperial Valley Women*, 64.

⁵⁸⁶ Nishimoto, *Inside an American Concentration Camp* 172.

⁵⁸⁷ Estes and Estes, “Hot Enough to Melt Iron,” 29.

⁵⁸⁸ Mills, “Project Director’s Narrative Report,” 12.

⁵⁸⁹ Estes and Estes, “Hot Enough to Melt Iron,” 30.

⁵⁹⁰ Estes and Estes, “Hot Enough to Melt Iron,” 29.

⁵⁹¹ “Signs of Dissolution,” typescript with notes, 22 May 1945, box 5, folder 3, Spicer Papers, Special Collections, University of Arizona, Tempe, Az.

⁵⁹² Estes and Estes, “Hot Enough to Melt Iron,” 29.

⁵⁹³ Mills, “Project Director’s Narrative Report,” 9 and 13-18.

⁵⁹⁴ Mills, “Project Director’s Narrative Report,” 19.

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closed on 28 November 1945 and remaining staff began the process of closing offices, cleaning up the blocks, and shipping records to Washington.⁵⁹⁵

Native Americans Utilize Poston

During their stay at Poston, Japanese Americans experienced very little interaction with Native Americans living in the area. As George Yoshida recalled, "I didn't meet any or see them during our daily lives."⁵⁹⁶ Tribal members residing on the reservation were told, "It's part of the war effort. Don't ask questions. Do your patriotic duty and accept it."⁵⁹⁷ Sporting events provided one of the few opportunities for interaction between the two groups. For example, in June 1942, 4,500 people watched the center's "All-Stars" play softball with the "Parker Indians." The students also brought their musical band.⁵⁹⁸ Michael Tsosie recalled his family rented horses to evacuees and traded fish for sugar and flour.⁵⁹⁹ As Ruth Okimoto remembered, ". . . we lived as strangers during those years, each group struggling with their own issues. Except for the high school basketball games and a few stories I've heard from CRIT members of how their parents or relatives traded their chickens for vegetables grown in Poston, there appeared to be little contact between the neighbors."⁶⁰⁰

After the Supreme Court's ruling in *Ex Parte Endo*, the OIA and Interior Department took steps to establish a Native American colonization program for Poston outlined in "Ordinance No. 5—Reserving a Portion of the Colorado River Indian Reservation for Colonization." On 3 February 1945, the Colorado River Tribal Council approved the ordinance, which divided the reservation into northern and southern reserves and allowed colonization by other Native Americans living on tribal land with inadequate water resources.⁶⁰¹ In May 1945, the WRA returned control of two thousand acres of land to the OIA, which recruited Indians living in certain areas to move to Poston. The agency promised farmland, water, and housing as incentives.⁶⁰² The WRA agreed to an OIA plan to move Hopi families into Poston II. On 1 September 1945, seventeen families of Hopi colonists moved into the Poston II area, the only camp set aside for colonization.⁶⁰³

At that time, several hundred evacuees still lived in the center while making plans for departure.⁶⁰⁴ Military police continued to man a guardhouse and checked the identification of visitors. The Japanese Americans greeted the Indians with a welcoming committee, entertainment, and luncheon at Poston I.⁶⁰⁵ Arriving at Poston II, the colonists found more than one thousand evacuees in residence and began sharing the public facilities. Project Director Mills observed that the Native Americans and the evacuees "mingled quite harmoniously."⁶⁰⁶ Some of the barracks housed both Indian and Japanese American families, and when they departed some evacuees gave the colonists useful household items. The Hopis were saddened that the government simply buried many of the possessions the former occupants left behind.⁶⁰⁷

POSTON IN THE POSTWAR ERA

In the immediate postwar years, the OIA debated what to do with the relocation center and had problems finding companies to raze buildings and salvage materials.⁶⁰⁸ Native Americans, who had been told to stay away while the relocation center operated, explored the site after the evacuees left. Many found the landscaping

⁵⁹⁵ WRA, *The Evacuated People*, 17; Mills, "Project Director's Narrative Report," 25-27.

⁵⁹⁶ George Yoshito, Seattle, Wa., Interview by Alice Ito and John Pai, 18 February 2002, Densho.

⁵⁹⁷ Tsosie, Interview.

⁵⁹⁸ *Poston Press Bulletin*, 14 June and 6 August 1942.

⁵⁹⁹ Watanabe, "Indians Laud."

⁶⁰⁰ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 23.

⁶⁰¹ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 15.

⁶⁰² Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 15.

⁶⁰³ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 15; Burton and Farrell, "Poston Relocation Center," 47.

⁶⁰⁴ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 16.

⁶⁰⁵ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 16.

⁶⁰⁶ Mills, "Project Director's Narrative Report," 18.

⁶⁰⁷ Okimoto, "Sharing a Desert," 16.

⁶⁰⁸ Fujita-Rony, "Arizona and Japanese American History."

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beautiful and took cuttings from the relocation center plants to establish at their own homes and elsewhere. Sections of remaining wood barracks were put on trucks and moved or torn down for materials. As Michael Tsosie concluded, “The impact of the camp was dramatic, while its effects afterward were subtle but continuous.” Having existing infrastructure available for postwar programs “laid the foundation for the tribe to jump-start its standard of living and thrive financially.”⁶⁰⁹

The Tribal Council continued to oppose additional colonization and hoped to secure the barracks for returning soldiers after the war. However, Navajo colonists and those of other tribes arrived in 1947. Many families lived in the former relocation camp barracks until subjugation of the southern reserve advanced. The colonists utilized the irrigation system, farmlands, housing and other facilities, as well as the running water and electricity. Although these improvements represented better conditions than some had known, others were appalled at the living situation the Japanese Americans endured.⁶¹⁰ The Indians considered the school buildings especially important, because their children had been forced to attend boarding schools previously.⁶¹¹

The government eventually sold most of the barracks for \$50 each to anyone seeking purchase. Former barracks are located up and down the river in the vicinity of Parker today, although many have modifications suiting contemporary standards of living.⁶¹² The colonization program continued for ten years, and members of several other tribes came to live in Poston, although many eventually returned to their former homes. In the mid-1950s the resident tribes were able to end the colonization program.⁶¹³

The OIA and the tribes undertook large scale irrigation improvements in the postwar era, making the desert area of the three Poston camps bloom and providing the main agricultural income for reservation residents. The expansion built on the improvements made by the Japanese Americans, although Dwight Lomayestewa concluded the OIA and Indians had to entirely rebuild the irrigation system to enable production of commercial crops.⁶¹⁴ With few exceptions agricultural activities changed the face of the Poston area, with plowed agricultural fields obliterating the street layout, recreational areas, and other features of the three built-up areas of the camps. A comparison of current aerial photographs to historic USGS maps and the 1945 War Relocation Authority maps of Poston illustrate these dramatic changes.

From 1949 to 1980, the Colorado River Indian Tribes and the Parker School district utilized the adobe schools of Poston II, which became known as Poston Elementary School; the old buildings were demolished after construction of the La Pera School in the 1980s. The Poston I Elementary School buildings also served the tribes and the Parker School District, and the auditorium was the scene of a variety of community and sports events. In the late 1960s, the Job Corps created a program to train Arizonans in Poston I, during which the adobe school buildings of the unit were stabilized.⁶¹⁵ Other uses for the adobe buildings included a children’s summer camp, an alcohol rehabilitation program, and storage. Michael Tsosie, Colorado River Indian Tribes Museum Director, observed that after the relocation center closed, the elementary school buildings functioned as a kind of community center and some of the infrastructure developed during the war is still used.⁶¹⁶

Poston Memorial Monument

In 1982, the Congressional Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians rejected the rationale that the relocation of Japanese Americans was based on military necessity and found the “broad historical causes that shaped the decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.” While a handful of individuals still defended the relocation decision, the commission concluded

⁶⁰⁹ Watanabe, “Indians Laud.”

⁶¹⁰ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert Home,” 17.

⁶¹¹ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 17.

⁶¹² Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 18.

⁶¹³ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 15.

⁶¹⁴ Leonard, “Imagining Poston,” 33.

⁶¹⁵ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 19.

⁶¹⁶ Tsosie, Interview.

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that “the personal injustice of excluding, removing, and detaining loyal American citizens is manifest. Such events are extraordinary and unique in American history. For every citizen and for American public life, they pose haunting questions about our country and its past.”⁶¹⁷ In August 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed legislation providing a review of convictions, pardons for those who did not cooperate with the relocation, and tax-free reparations to each of sixty thousand surviving Japanese American evacuees.⁶¹⁸ President George Bush offered a formal apology the following year.

In the summer of 1992, a committee of volunteers erected a Poston Memorial Monument to mark the site of the relocation center and serve as a reminder of its history. The Colorado River Indian Tribal Council authorized use of an acre of land adjacent to Mohave Road near Poston I for the memorial. Ted Kobata, a semi-retired construction contractor, and Colorado River Indian Tribes Planning Director Ron Moore researched, negotiated, and planned for the monument, assisted by members of the Poston Memorial Monument Committee. Architect Ray Takata and civil engineer Stephan Hamamoto designed the commemorative area, which includes a thirty-foot concrete pillar symbolizing “unity of spirit.” The hexagonal base of the structure represents a Japanese stone lantern, and twelve small encircling pillars create a working sundial. Former evacuees and their families donated funds, landscaping labor, and materials, including palm trees, an irrigation system, and a water fountain. The monument was dedicated on 6 October 1992. In 1995, volunteers added a kiosk in the style of a Japanese lantern with bronze plates summarizing the history of the Japanese Americans at Poston and the Colorado River Indian Tribes. As Ruth Okimoto wrote, “These two disenfranchised groups of people not only shared a desert home for a brief period of time, but also now share their histories for the public to observe, read, and appreciate.”⁶¹⁹

The Poston Relocation Center continues to be a part of the Colorado River Indian Tribes Reservation. Far from its 1942 appearance as an isolated and undeveloped swatch of desert, today much of the surrounding area is verdant and productive farmland. In 1999, the Tribal Council began studying the concept of restoration of a small part of Poston for educational and historical purposes. The group passed a resolution initiating the recognition, restoration, and future redevelopment of the center in 2001 and set aside forty acres of the reservation. Representatives of the tribes and an ad hoc group of former Poston evacuees worked together on the project, holding meetings and workshops in Arizona and California.⁶²⁰ In August 2001, fire damaged the Poston I Elementary School auditorium, planned as the centerpiece of the Poston Relocation Project. In 2003, the CRIT restarted the project by gathering stakeholders to envision the future and form relationships that will result in the restoration of the school buildings and record the histories of the two communities who have lived at Poston.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁷ Commission on Wartime Relocation, *Personal Justice Denied*, 35; Don T. Nakansihi, “Surviving Democracy’s ‘Mistake’: Japanese Americans and the Enduring Legacy of Executive Order 9066,” *Amerasia Journal* 19(1993): 8.

⁶¹⁸ Linda M. Rancourt, “Remembering Manzanar,” *National Parks* (May/June 1993): 24.

⁶¹⁹ Okimoto, “Sharing a Desert,” 22.

⁶²⁰ Cravath, “History of CRIT.”

⁶²¹ *Poston Restoration Project Newsletter*, July 2003.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register.
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency (National Park Service, National Archives-Laguna Niguel)
- Local Government
- University (University of Arizona, Arizona State University, University of California-Bancroft Library)
- Other (Specify Repository):

POSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, UNIT 1

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 22 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	11	739508	3764449
B	11	739748	3764449
C	11	739754	3764077
D	11	739511	3764076

The coordinates above (in NAD 83) describe the polygon constituting the boundary of the nominated area.

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area, delineated on the included to scale sketch map, is situated in Section 35, Township 8 North, Range 21 West, Gila and Salt River Meridian. The nominated area is bounded on the east by the west edge of the paved road lying east of the school complex; on the south by the north edge of Poston Road; on the west by the west edge of the north-south ditch lying west of the school complex; and on the north by the north edge of the east-west ditch lying north of the school complex.

Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to focus on the Poston I Elementary School complex and include contiguous extant resources associated with the Colorado River Relocation Center (Poston) that retain historic significance and integrity.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS PROGRAM
September 9, 2011

CURRENT PHOTOGRAPHS

Common Photographic Label Information:

Name: Colorado River War Relocation Center (Poston)
Location: Parker vicinity, La Paz County, Arizona
Photographer: Thomas H. Simmons
Digital Images Data: **CD-ROM with TIFF images on file with NPS in Washington DC**

Information Different for Each View:

Photograph Number, Description of View, Photograph Date, and Camera Direction

Photo Number	Description of View and Photograph Date	Camera Direction
1	The north and west walls of the south three classroom buildings (Resources 6, 7, and 8, left to right). Date: September 2008.	SE
2	The north and west walls of the four northern classrooms (Resources 1 through 4, left to right), with the School Cafeteria (Resource 15) and School Auditorium (Resource 13) in the upper right. Date: November 2010.	SE
3	The south and east walls of the northern three classrooms (Resources 1, 2, and 3, right to left). Date: September 2008.	NNW
4	Classroom (Resource 2), south and east walls, with another classroom (Resource 1) to the right. Date: November 2010.	NW
5	Classroom (Resource 2), north and west walls, with another classroom (Resource 3) to the right. Date: November 2010.	SE
6	Classroom (Resource 6), south wall, with the School Library (Resource 12) to the left and the School Cafeteria (Resource 15) to the right. Date: November 2010.	NW
7	Classroom (Resource 6), north wall, with the concrete foundations for Resources 16 and 5 in the foreground. Date: November 2010.	SSW
8	Classroom (Resource 8), view down covered porch, with the School Crafts and Supplies Building (Resource 10) in the distance. Date: November 2010.	WNW
9	Classroom (Resource 8), south and east walls, with resources 6, 7, and 15 to the right). Date: November 2010.	NW
10	Classroom (Resource 8), north and part of west walls. Date: November 2010.	SE
11	School Crafts and Supplies Building (Resource 10), south and east walls. Date: November 2010.	NW
12	School Crafts and Supplies Building (Resource 10), north wall. Date: November 2010.	SE
13	Porch double post tie with shaped ends at the east end of south wall of the School Crafts and Supplies Building (Resource 10). Date: November 2010.	NNE

Photo Number	Description of View and Photograph Date	Camera Direction
14	School Office concrete foundation (Resource 11) with classrooms in the background (Resources 1 through 4, left to right). Date: November 2010.	NE
15	School Library (Resource 12), south and west walls, with the School Auditorium (Resource 13) in the background. Date: November 2010.	NE
16	School Auditorium (Resource 13), west and south walls, with a portion of the concrete walkway (Resource 14) in foreground and the School Cafeteria (Resource 15) to the right. Date: November 2010.	NE
17	Adobe detail on south wall of School Auditorium (Resource 13). Date: September 2008.	N
18	School Auditorium (Resource 13) dedication plaque (on the west wall at the southwest corner). Date: November 2010.	E
19	Central walkway (Resource 14), with classrooms (Resources 6, 7, and 8) in right foreground and the School Cafeteria (Resource 15) in the distance to the right. Date: November 2010.	N
20	North-south ditch (Resource 30) from diversion gate. Date: September 2008.	S
21	Diversion gate of the north-south ditch (Resource 30). Date: September 2008.	NW
22	East-west ditch (Resource 31). Date: September 2008.	E
23	School Cafeteria (Resource 15) with classrooms in the distance (Resources 1 through 4). Date: September 2008.	NE
24	Concrete foundations (Resource 20, left, and Resource 22, right). Date: November 2010.	NW
25	Houses (Resource 24 to left and Resource 25 to right) in the post-war housing area to the west. Date: September 2008.	NW

TABLES AND FIGURES

Number	Description of Table or Figure and Source
Table 1	Resources within the Nominated Area
Table 2	Colorado River Relocation Center, Trends in Resident Population, 1942-1945
Figure 1	The Colorado River Relocation Center's regional location is shown on the upper map. Poston is 229 miles east of Los Angeles, 131 miles west of Phoenix, and 169 miles south of Las Vegas. The lower map shows the location of the three units at Poston relative to Parker, Arizona, the nearest railhead. SOURCE: Leighton, <i>The Governing of Men</i> , 56 and 57.
Figure 2	The full extent and major components of the Colorado River Relocation Center are shown in this 2002 map. SOURCE: Burton, <i>Confinement and Ethnicity</i> , 218.
Figure 3	The detailed layout of Poston I is illustrated on this June 1945 War Relocation Authority map of the camp. North is to the left. SOURCE: War Relocation Authority, Poston-Unit I Area, Exhibit C, Drawing CR-X 3, 26 June 1945.
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Figure 5	The detailed layout of Poston III is illustrated on this June 1945 War Relocation Authority map of the camp. North is to the left. SOURCE: War Relocation Authority, Poston-Unit III Area, Exhibit F, 26 June 1945.
Figure 6	A typical evacuee housing block at Poston contained fourteen barracks, a mess hall, a laundry, an ironing building, separate men's and women's lavatories, and a recreation hall. SOURCE: Spicer, et al, <i>Impounded People</i> , 70.
Figure 7	Del Webb Co., the general contractor for the erection of the evacuee quarters at the Colorado River Relocation Center, developed techniques for rapid, large-scale construction. SOURCE: Clem Albers photograph, number 20-1713a, 10 April 1942, National Archives at College Park, Still Picture Records Section, accessed at www.archives.gov .
Figure 8	In addition to barracks, Poston buildings housed support and service functions, such as the police department and barber shop shown here. SOURCE: Wade Head Collection, Photograph FP-HEA-90, Arizona Historical Foundation, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.
Figure 9	Poston buildings utilized by OIA and WRA workers, such as the main Administration Building shown here, displayed more substantial and attractive construction materials than the evacuee barracks. SOURCE: Wade Head Collection, Photograph FP-HEA-40, Arizona Historical Foundation, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.
Figure 10	Nine-year-old Ayako Nakamura (left) and six-year-old June Ibe were two of the more than 19,000 Japanese Americans who lived at Poston between 1942 and 1945. SOURCE: Francis Stewart photograph, 4 June 1942, War Relocation Authority photograph number D-587, accessed at the California Digital Library, www.cdlib.org .

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Figure 12	Located in Block 4 at Poston I, this impressive theater built by camp residents reflected elements of traditional Japanese design and was used for meetings, variety shows, and pageants. SOURCE: Wade Head Collection, Photograph FP-HEA-3, Arizona Historical Foundation, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.
Figure 13	Poston women and men undertook the arduous task of manufacturing hundreds of thousands of adobe bricks needed in the construction of the relocation center's schools. The wood forms in the foreground were used to mold the individual bricks which weighed forty pounds each. SOURCE: Francis Stewart photograph, 4 January 1943, War Relocation Authority photograph, accessed at the California Digital Library, www.cdlib.org .
Figure 14	A mixture of 40 percent adobe , 60 percent sand, and straw was found to produce the most durable bricks. In this image, hand-formed adobe bricks are drying in a covered shed. SOURCE: Francis Stewart photograph, 4 January 1943, War Relocation Authority photograph, accessed at the California Digital Library, www.cdlib.org .
Figure 15	Poston's School Auditorium (center), the largest building in the elementary school complex, is flanked by the School Office to left and Library. Covered walkways connected the buildings and provided protection from the elements. SOURCE: Wade Head Collection, Photograph FP-HEA-79, Arizona Historical Foundation, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.
Figure 16	One of the adobe classroom buildings is nearing completion in this view. Japanese American architect Yoshisaku Hirose designed the school classrooms with bands of multi-light windows sheltered by wide overhangs on the north walls. Note the window-mounted evaporative coolers. SOURCE: Pauline Bates Brown photographer, War Relocation Authority, 18 August 1943, accessed at the California Digital Library, www.cdlib.org .
Figure 17	The deep porches on the south walls of the classroom buildings provided shelter from the relentless desert sun and sudden storms. Louvered areas above the doors aided ventilation. SOURCE: Pauline Bates Brown photographer, War Relocation Authority, 18 August 1943, accessed at the California Digital Library, www.cdlib.org .
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Photograph 1



Photograph 2



Photograph 3



Photograph 4



Photograph 5



Photograph 6



Photograph 7



Photograph 8



Photograph 9



Photograph 10



Photograph 11



Photograph 12



Photograph 13



Photograph 14



Photograph 15



Photograph 16



Photograph 17



Photograph 18



Photograph 19



Photograph 20



Photograph 21



Photograph 22



Photograph 23



Photograph 24

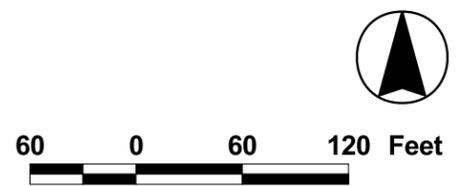


Photograph 25

POSTON NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK SKETCH MAP



Black dashed line is the NHL boundary. Resources in white (solid and outlines) are contributing, while black are noncontributing. Outlines indicate foundations. Resource numbers are in black. White numbers with arrows show photo location and camera direction.



**Table 1
RESOURCES WITHIN THE NOMINATED AREA**

Resource Number	Historic Name of Resource	Resource Type	Year Built	Contributing Status
1	Elementary School-Classroom Building	Building	1943	Contributing
2	Elementary School-Classroom Building	Building	1943	Contributing
3	Elementary School-Classroom Building	Building	1943	Contributing
4	Elementary School-Classroom Building	Building	1943	Contributing
5	Concrete foundation (Elementary School-Classroom Building)	Structure	1943	Contributing
6	Elementary School-Classroom Building	Building	1943	Contributing
7	Elementary School-Classroom Building	Building	1943	Contributing
8	Elementary School-Classroom Building	Building	1943	Contributing
9	Concrete foundation (Elementary School-Wood Shop)	Structure	1943	Contributing
10	Elementary School-Crafts and Supplies	Building	1943	Contributing
11	Concrete foundation (Elementary School-Office)	Structure	1943	Contributing
12	Elementary School-Library	Building	1943	Contributing
13	Elementary School-Auditorium	Building	1943	Contributing
14	Elementary School-Sidewalks	Structure	1943	Contributing
15	School Cafeteria	Building	1955-70	Noncontributing
16	Concrete foundation (Storage Building)	Structure	1970-94	Noncontributing
17	Basketball Court (south of school wood shop)	Structure	1945-94	Noncontributing
18	Basketball/Volleyball Court (south of school library)	Structure	1945-94	Noncontributing
19	Basketball Court (south of crafts and supplies building)	Structure	1945-94	Noncontributing
20	Concrete Foundation (north of school wood shop)	Structure	1970-94	Noncontributing
21	Concrete Foundation (east of school office)	Structure	1955-70	Noncontributing
22	Concrete Foundation (Quonset Hut)	Structure	1955-70	Noncontributing
23	Sewage Pump House	Structure	Post-1945	Noncontributing
24	Residence	Building	1955-70	Noncontributing
25	Residence	Building	1955-70	Noncontributing
26	Residence	Building	1955-70	Noncontributing
27	Residence	Building	1955-70	Noncontributing
28	Concrete Block Building	Building	1955-70	Noncontributing
29	Road through Housing Area	Structure	1955-70	Noncontributing
30	Irrigation Ditch (north-south)	Structure	1942	Contributing
31	Irrigation Ditch (east-west)	Structure	1942	Contributing

Table 2
Colorado River Relocation Center
Trends in Resident Population, 1942-1945

DATE	RESIDENT POPULATION
1 June 1942	7,281
1 July 1942	8,755
1 August 1942	13,262
1 September 1942	17,818
1 October 1942	17,847
1 November 1942	17,877
1 December 1942	17,965
1 January 1943	18,039
1 July 1943	16,995
1 January 1944	14,295
1 July 1944	12,725
1 January 1945	11,710
1 July 1945	9,386
1 November 1945	1,088

NOTE: The resident population excludes persons on short term and seasonal leave. SOURCE: U.S. War Relocation Authority, *The Evacuated People: A Quantitative Description*, Table 6, 18.



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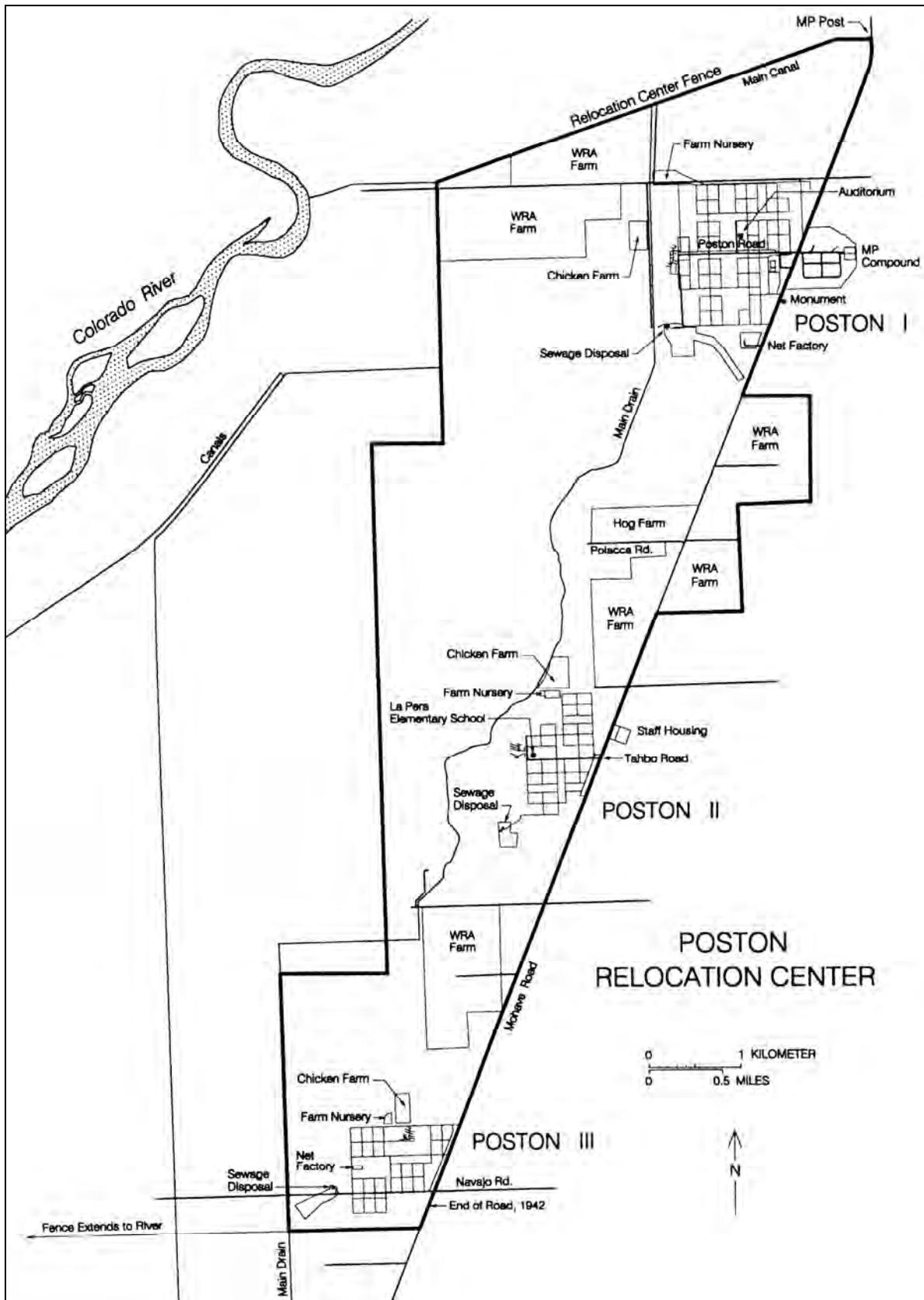


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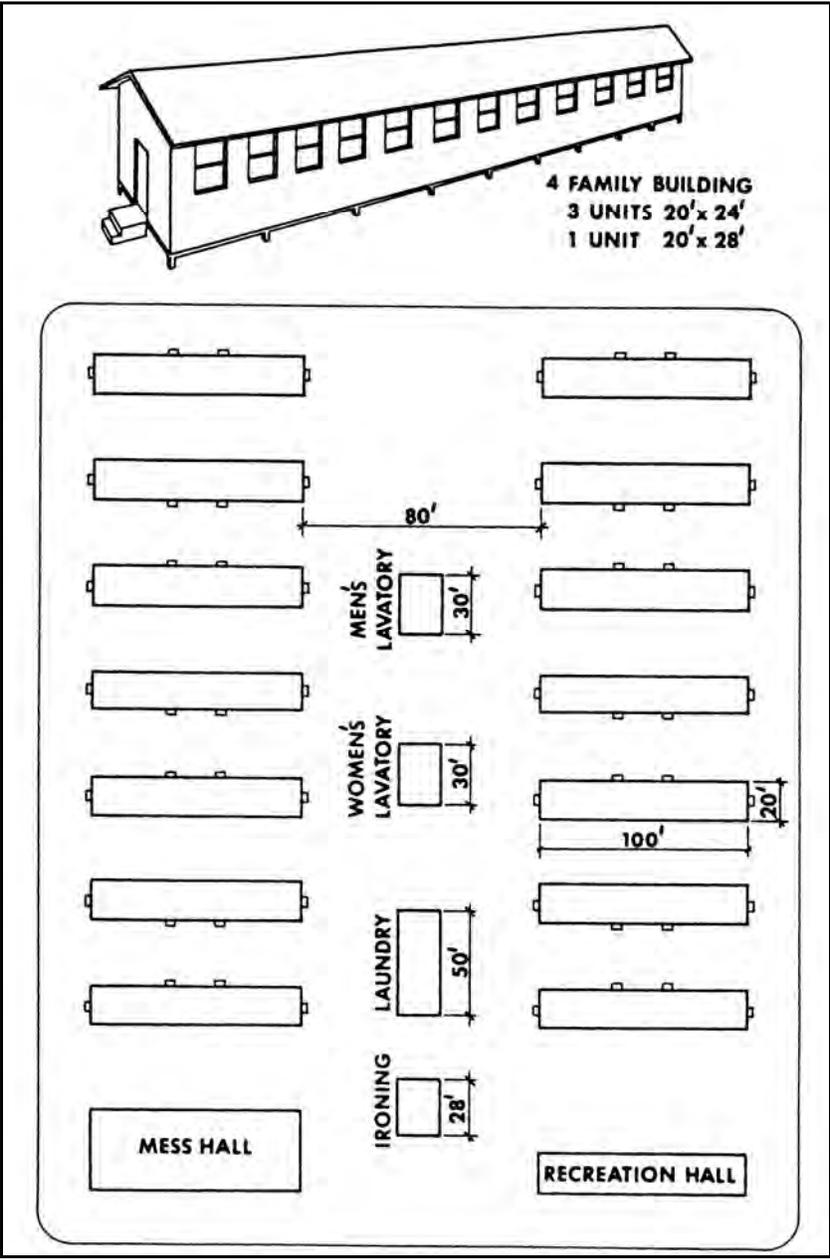


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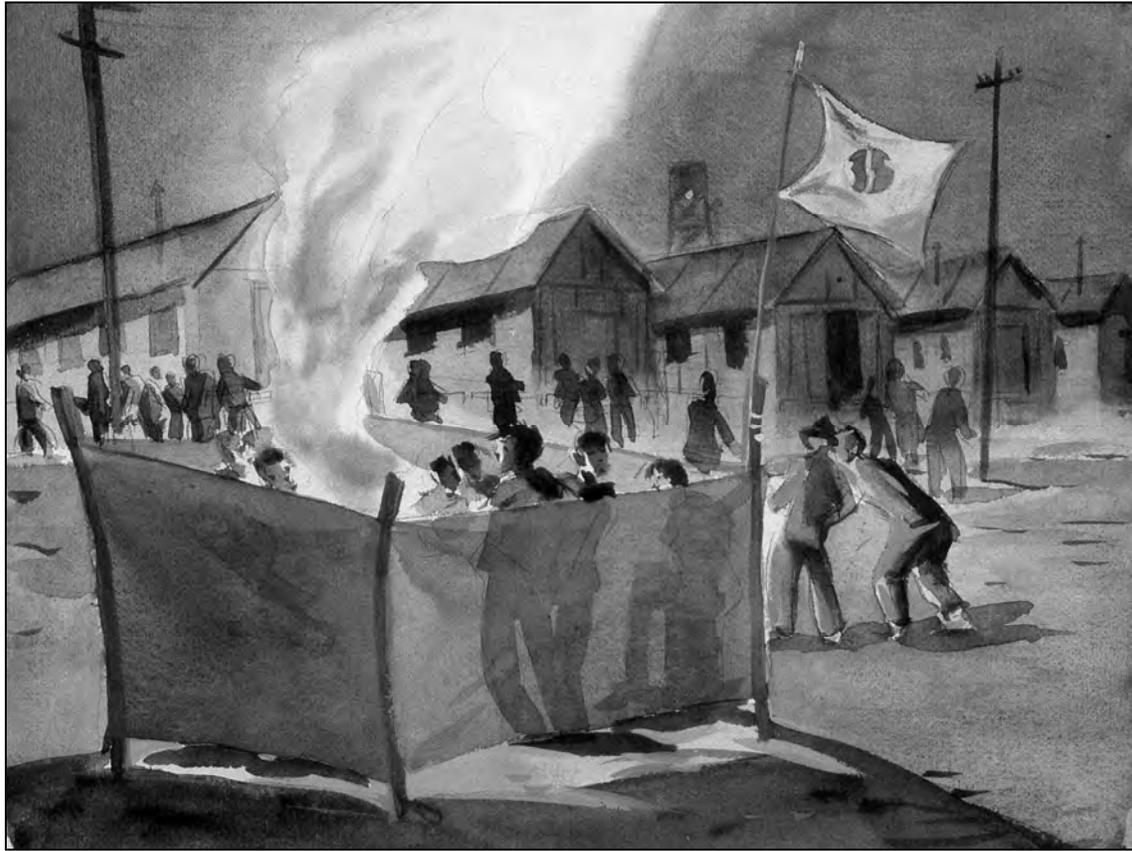
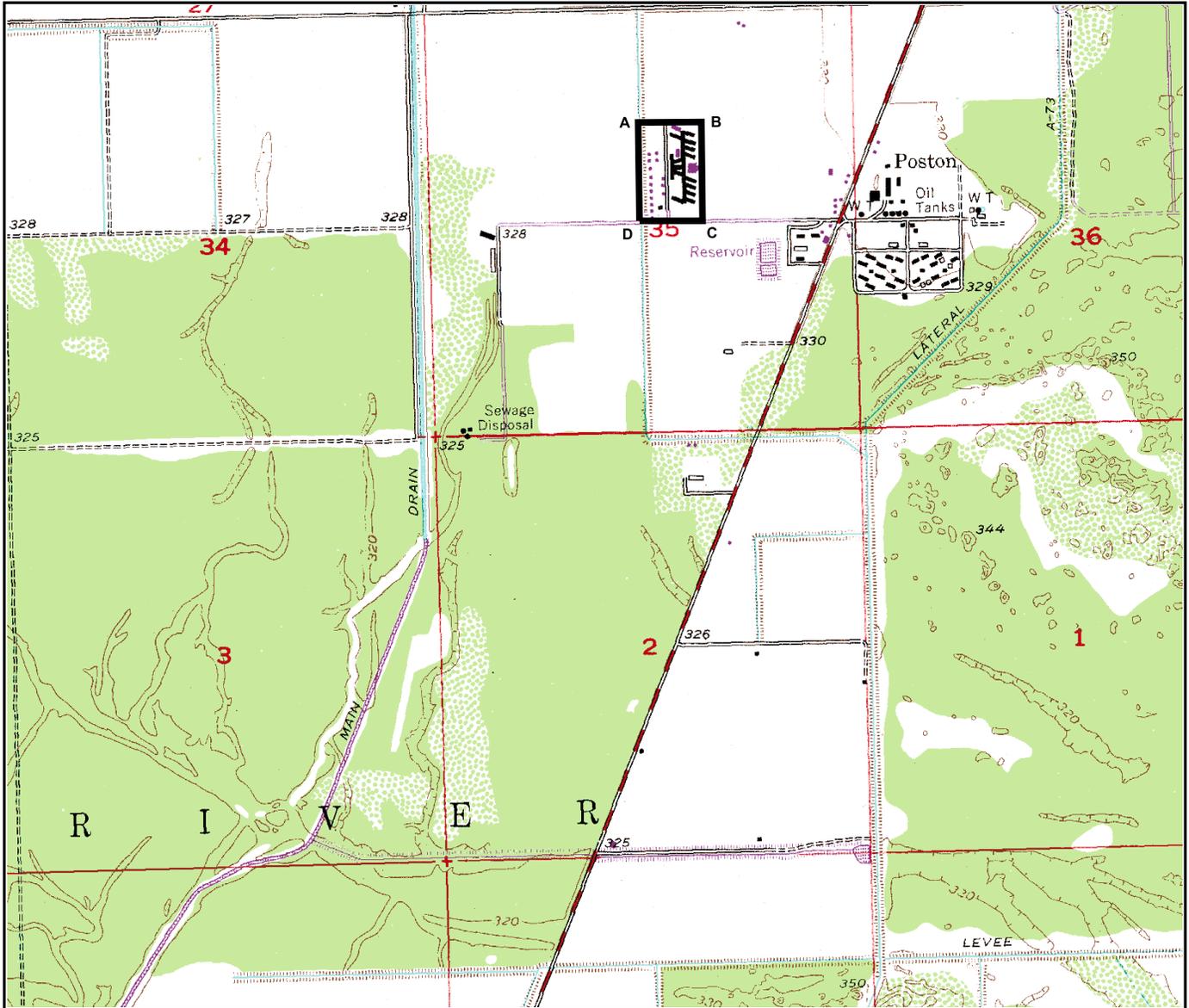


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POSTON NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK LOCATION MAP



Sketch Map. The nominated area is indicated by polygon ABCD. Extract of Parker, Arizona, USGS quadrangle map (1955, PR1970).

1000 0 1000 Feet

