



Name of Property: Poston Elementary School, Unit 1, Colorado River Relocation Center
City, State: Parker, Arizona
Period of Significance: 1942-1945
NHL Criterion: 1
NPS Theme: IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
 6. Military Institutions and Activities
Previous Recognition: None
National Historic Context: 2011 *Japanese Americans in World War II Theme Study* (draft)

NHL Significance:

- Poston Elementary School, Unit 1, Colorado River Relocation Center is nationally significant for its association with Japanese American history during World War II. The Poston Elementary School, Unit 1, Colorado River Relocation Center (Poston), was the second of ten relocation centers established for the confinement of Japanese Americans during World War II. Following President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s signing of Executive Order No. 9066 in 1942, more than 19,000 Japanese Americans were confined at from 1942 to 1945.
- Unlike other relocation centers that were solely operated under the administrative control of the War Relocation Authority (WRA), Poston was managed for nearly two years by the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA), under contract with the WRA. The role that OIA played in the initial planning and daily administration of Poston resulted in a plan unique among the relocation centers. The OIA sought to utilize Poston’s war emergency funds and evacuee labor to make permanent improvements to the reservation that would benefit Native American residents following the war.
- Poston is the only relocation center that retains an above-ground complex of elementary school buildings. Several of the relocation centers did not have buildings dedicated to elementary education, due to a policy shift by the WRA. After controversy erupted over construction of the elementary school at the Granada Relocation Center, centers that did not already have elementary school buildings were not allowed to build them. The educational facilities at Poston were designed and built by the interned Japanese Americans using the preferred local material, adobe bricks.



Integrity:

- The Poston Elementary School, Unit 1, historic district retains many of the original buildings and structures from the period of significance. The proposed NHL district consists of 31 resources. The 16 contributing resources include classroom buildings, an auditorium, concrete foundations, and sidewalks. These resources were constructed within the period of significance and retain a high level of physical integrity. The 15 noncontributing resources were built after the period of significance and consist of a cafeteria building, basketball courts, a pump house, and the remains of a post-war housing facility (four houses, a concrete block building, and a road).
- Several buildings in the historic district exhibit deterioration due to lack of maintenance and vandalism.
- The setting of Poston, Unit 1, lacks the integrity of other relocation centers; therefore, the surrounding landscape is not included in the nomination. Although it is generally farmed, above-ground evidence, such as foundations and roads, has been obscured. Units II and III at Poston do not have sufficient integrity to be considered for NHL designation.

Owner of Property: Colorado River Indian Tribes

Acreage of Property: 22 acres

Origins of Nomination:

- The Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) initiated the first draft of the NHL nomination. In 2008, NPS provided funding through the Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program to complete the nomination.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- The designation of this site as an NHL will help Americans understand the history of Japanese American confinement during World War II.
- Poston continues to capture the interest of the Japanese American community, including various internee and preservation groups. The Poston Community Alliance, composed of former Poston internees, descendants, and members of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, has demonstrated a great deal of interest in the property.
- The Colorado River Indian Tribes issued a tribal resolution on August 2, 2004, setting aside lands for the preservation, restoration, and interpretation of the Poston (Unit 1) site.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 11/18/11):

Dianne Kiyomoto, Board Member, Poston Community Alliance, Inc.
Wendy Maruyama
Marlene Shigekawa, Lafayette, California
Eldred Enas, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Tribal Resolution
Robert Iwamasa, Former Internee
Terri Bryson



Craig Yoshihara, Senior Pastor, United Japanese Christian Church, Clovis, California
Vincent Luu, President, Asian Pacific Student Alliance, San Diego State University, California
Ernest Kazato, M.D.
Roy Kakuda, Former Internee
Keigo Obata, Former Internee, Fresno, California
Paul Morinishi, Corona, California
David Osako, Northridge, California
Lori Matsuoka Walton
Ted Namba, President, Asian Chamber of Commerce of Arizona, Glendale, Arizona
Craig Yoshihara, Senior Pastor, United Japanese Christian Church, Clovis, California
Sandy Kawai-Miyake
Lynette Kanegae
Gail Milholland
Kiyo Sato-Nunneley
Chris McDoniel, Tucson, Arizona
Sophia Huynh, Asian Pacific Student Alliance, San Diego State University, California
Robert Shintaku, Fresno, California
Ruby Teruko Iwamasa, Midland, Michigan
Kaitlin, Endo, Secretary, Nikkei Student Union at San Diego State University, California
Tak Kohatsu, Co-Chairperson, Poston Reunion 2011 Committee
Colleen Hayashi, Yorba Linda, California
Robert M. Wada, Fullerton, California
Sandy Miyake
Richard Y. Karasawa
Roberta Barton, Fresno, California
Dr. and Mrs. Hayao Arakawa, Fresno, California
Robert Iwamasa, Midland, Michigan
Keigo Obata, Fresno, California
Pete L. Okamura, Sacramento, California
Sabrina Okamura-Johnson, Sacramento, California

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Odo moved, Dr. Murtagh seconded; unanimous approval.

Advisory Board Recommendation: