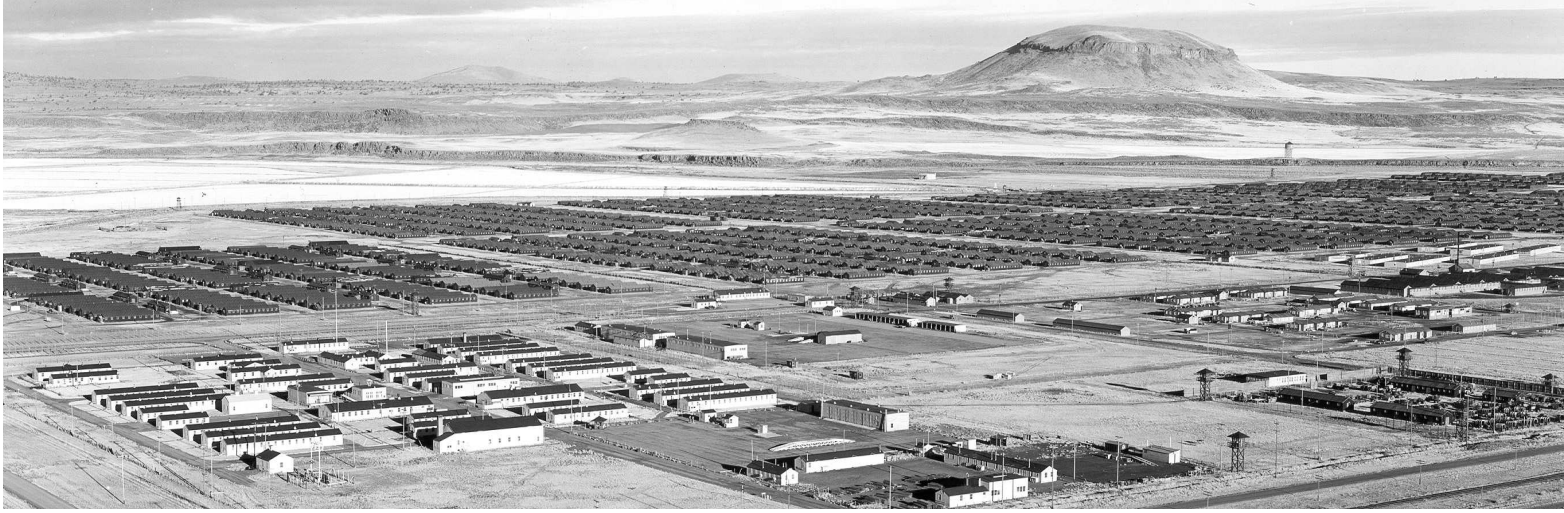




## Tule Lake Segregation Center



Tule Lake Segregation Center, 1946

### War and Injustice

After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the lives of 110,000 men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast changed drastically. Their constitutional rights were violated when they were imprisoned in ten war relocation centers\* run by the War Relocation Authority. Many were forced to give up their homes, farms, businesses, and personal property, in addition to their freedom.

*\*These camps were officially called "war relocation centers," while newspapers and some locals referred to them simply as "Jap camps," or "internment camps." President Roosevelt and other officials on occasion referred to them as "concentrations camps."*

### Executive Order 9066

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the Secretary of War "to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all person may be excluded ... the Secretary of War is hereby authorized to provide for residents of any such area who are excluded therefrom, such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary..."

#### Assembly Centers

Following the Executive Order, American citizens and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry living in

Washington, Oregon, California and Arizona were ordered to evacuate their homes and businesses and report to 17 temporary assembly centers located at fairgrounds, racetracks, and other makeshift facilities.

At assembly centers, a family usually lived in a single horse stall for up to 100 days with straw filled bags for beds. These horse stalls were hastily cleaned out before being used as living quarters, but the stench remained. Shortages of food and other materials and deplorable sanitation conditions were common at many of the centers. From assembly centers, internees were then sent to one of ten war relocation centers.

### Ten War Relocation Centers

The relocation centers were located in isolated areas away from local populations. They were designed to be self-contained communities, complete with hospitals, post offices, schools, warehouses, offices, factories, residential areas and farm areas. Ten war relocation centers were constructed: two each in California, Arizona, and Arkansas, and one each in Wyoming, Idaho, Colorado and Utah.

The layout of the centers varied, but certain elements were fairly consistent. The perimeter was defined by guard towers and barbed wire fences. There was generally a main entrance and auxiliary routes to farming areas outside the main center. Main roads in the centers were occasionally paved, but most were dirt roads that were commonly dusty or muddy depending on the weather.

### Tule Lake War Relocation Center

The Tule Lake center was designed as a series of blocks. The first 40 blocks each had fourteen residential barracks, a mess hall, a recreation building, a men's latrine, two women's latrines, an ironing room and a laundry room.

Each residential barrack was divided into four to six family rooms, ranging in size from 16 feet by 20 feet, to 24 feet by 20 feet, and sided with only tarpaper. The relentless winds of the Tule Lake Basin drove dirt and dust through the walls.

Each family occupied one room, which was furnished with a single light bulb, a coal stove, and up to eight

army cots. Meals were served in community mess halls, which disrupted traditional family life and the strong influences of parents over their children. Latrines were set up military style with no dividers between toilets or showers.

#### Camp Life

Though conditions were harsh, internees tried to keep life in the camps as normal as possible. Harvest festivals, dances, and baseball were common recreation activities. Recreation buildings were converted into stores, canteens, a beauty parlor, a barber shop, judo halls, Buddhist temples, a Catholic church, and three other churches.

## Loyalty & Segregation

In an effort to recruit Japanese American men for the military and reintegrate Japanese Americans back into predominantly white communities, a loyalty questionnaire was distributed to each of the centers in February 1943.

The questionnaire included basic questions to gain background information and two prospective questions which were used to determine if internees were loyal or disloyal to the U.S. government.

Question 27 asked draft-age males: *“Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?”* For others, including the Issei\* and women, it asked *“If the opportunity presents itself and you are found qualified, would you be willing to volunteer for the Army Nurse Corps or the WAAC?”*

Question 28 asked: *“Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attacks by foreign or domestic forces, and foreswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?”*

On the surface, the loyalty questions seemed innocent

enough, but for foreign-born Japanese, who for 17 years prior to WWII were not allowed by law to become citizens of the United States, they were being asked to give up their citizenship to Japan and become nationless people, having no legal ties to any country. For their Nisei\*\* children, who were citizens by birth, the question became a decision between country and family. Many Nisei felt pressure from their parents to answer with the family, even if it meant expatriating and moving to a country they had never seen.

For these reasons as well as poor management in the administration of the questionnaire, 42 percent of the Tule Lake population refused to answer or answered no to questions 27 and 28, deeming them “disloyal.” Since Tule Lake had the largest disloyal population it was decided that all disloyals from the centers would be sent to Tule Lake, segregating them from “loyals.” Those at Tule Lake who had answered yes to the questions were asked to move to other war relocation centers to make room for the incoming disloyals, but of the 8,500 original internees who stayed at Tule Lake some 4,000 were deemed “loyal.”

This mix of “loyals” and “disloyals” would later lead to internal conflicts and prejudice within the center.

\*Issei – the first generation of immigrants from Japan, most of whom came to the U.S. between 1885 and 1924. Issei were not allowed to become U.S. citizens until 1952.

\*\*Nisei – second generation Japanese Americans, U.S. citizens by birth, born to Japanese immigrants (Issei).

## Tule Lake Segregation Center

In 1943, the Tule Lake War Relocation Center was converted into a high security segregation center. As “disloyals” arrived, the population at Tule Lake rose from 15,276 to 18,789 within just a few months. Though additional barracks were built and the camp was expanded, the center housed almost 4,000 over its intended capacity.

Concentrating the “disloyals” into one center to control them created discontent, which grew as additional troops were assigned to Tule Lake and security increased. Soon a lighted 7 foot high chain link fence topped with barbed wire was added, military tanks arrived on site, and the number of guard towers around the center was increased from six to nineteen. The farm areas were also surrounded by a warning fence, a security fence and sixteen guard towers.

As a segregation center, Tule Lake was a mix of “loyals” with no intention of leaving the United States, pro-Japan internees who wished to repatriate or

expatriate as soon as possible, and many whose feelings fell somewhere between these extremes. Internal friction between groups as well as with the U.S. Army resulted in harassment, beatings, riots, mass demonstrations, and military intervention.

### Martial Law and Imprisonment

As discontent grew within the segregation center, the Army took control of the center in 1943, declaring martial law on November 13, which lasted until January 15, 1944.

During 1944 the stockade area was designated. The stockade consisted of a 250 foot by 350 foot area enclosed by fences and guard towers. Within the stockade were four barracks, a mess hall, a latrine, and Army tents that were used as unheated punishment quarters for some stockade prisoners. To the north of the stockade stood the six cell concrete jail, which was built by internees to imprison up to 24 men. At its peak over 100 men were imprisoned there.

## Renunciation

In July 1944, President Roosevelt signed Public Law 405, which allowed United States citizens to renounce their citizenship in times of war. By December, only 600 internees had applied for renunciation, but that number would soon grow as many at Tule Lake felt this law was directed at them and saw it as their only option.

Within the center, groups were organized to prepare young men for future life in Japan. The Hokuku Dan was established for men 16 to 35 years old, while the Hoshi Dan was for men over 36 years old. Internee sponsored Japanese schools taught the Japanese language, history, religion, geography, ethics and songs.

As rumors spread that those at Tule Lake would not be welcomed anywhere outside the center, that they would not find jobs, and that young men would be shipped off to war and families would be separated, the number of those who applied for repatriation grew. Justice Department officials blamed the pro-Japan groups for the rumors and fears, and hoped the immediate arrest and removal of key Hoshi Dan and Hokuku Dan leaders would calm the hysteria.

On December 27, 1944, 70 leaders were arrested and turned over to the Department of Justice and transferred to the Santa Fe internment camp. Soon after, the administration banned all pro-Japanese activities. This led 6,000 citizens to apply for repatriation. Only a small minority of the renunciants truly wanted to resettle in Japan; most renounced out of fear and threats from the pro-Japan groups.

### Closing the Tule Lake Center

By the end of 1945, the other nine centers had closed and the Tule Lake “loyals” had relocated on their own, with the WRA providing minimum assistance. In October 1945, Tule Lake was transferred from the WRA to the Department of Justice with the goal of repatriating all renunciants to Japan by November 15<sup>th</sup>. Lawsuits were filed to delay the deportations, and the Department of Justice agreed to hold hearings for anyone who wanted to rescind their renunciation. Over 3,000 asked for a hearing. As a result, only 406 were on the list for deportation. The Tule Lake center officially closed on March 18, 1946.

It was determined by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, established by Congress in 1980, that “Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity, and the decisions that followed from it – exclusion, detention, the ending of detention and the ending of exclusion – were not founded upon military considerations. The broad historical causes that shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria and the failure of political leadership.”