

# Manzanar

Manzanar National Historic Site  
California

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



*"We had about one week to dispose of what we owned, except what we could pack and carry for our departure by bus...for Manzanar."* William Hohri

Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941, led the United States into World War II and radically changed the lives of 120,000 men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry living in the United States. The attack intensified racial prejudices and led to fear of potential sabotage and espionage by Japanese Americans among some in the government, military, news media, and public. In February 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the Secretary of War to establish Military Areas and to remove from those areas anyone who might threaten the war effort. Without due process, the government gave everyone of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast only days to decide what to do with their houses,

farms, businesses, and other possessions. Most families sold their belongings at a significant loss. Some rented their properties to neighbors. Others left possessions with friends or religious groups. Some abandoned their property. They did not know where they were going or for how long. Each family was assigned an identification number and loaded into cars, buses, trucks, and trains, taking only what they could carry. Japanese Americans were transported under military guard to 17 temporary assembly centers located at racetracks, fairgrounds, and similar facilities in Washington, Oregon, California, and Arizona. Then they were moved to one of 10 hastily built relocation centers. By November 1942 the relocation was complete.



DOROTHEA LANGE, 1941, NATIONAL ARCHIVES

A sand and dust storm blows across Manzanar. DOROTHEA LANGE, 1942, NATIONAL ARCHIVES



SEATTLE POST INTELLIGENCER, 1942, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS  
Posted evacuation procedures notify Japanese Americans of where they should assemble and what they should bring. Tags identify individuals and belongings.

JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM

DOROTHEA LANGE, 1942, THE BANCROFT LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

DOROTHEA LANGE, 1942, NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Facing uncertain futures, a man and his grandson hold onto each other.



Internees clear land for an agricultural project. DOROTHEA LANGE, 1942, NATIONAL ARCHIVES



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
PHOTO: NATIONAL JAPANESE AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, MEDAL SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION



Pfc. Munemori



A soldier visits his family confined at Manzanar. The banner indicated a family member serving in the military.

## Life at Manzanar

Ten war relocation centers were built in remote deserts, plains, and swamps of seven states; Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming. Manzanar, located in the Owens Valley of California between the Sierra Nevada on the west and the Inyo mountains on the east, was typical in many ways of the 10 camps.

About two-thirds of all Japanese Americans interned at Manzanar were American citizens by birth. The remainder were aliens, many of whom had lived in the United States for decades, but who, by law, were denied citizenship.

The first Japanese Americans to arrive at Manzanar, in March 1942, were men and women who volunteered to help build the camp. On June 1 the War Relocation Authority (WRA) took over operation of Manzanar from the U.S. Army.

The 500-acre housing section was surrounded by barbed wire and eight guard towers with searchlights and patrolled by military police. Outside the fence, military police housing, a reservoir, a sewage treatment plant, and agricultural fields occupied the remaining 5,500 acres. By September 1942 more than 10,000 Japanese Americans were crowded into 504 barracks organized into 36 blocks. There

was little or no privacy in the barracks—and not much outside. The 200 to 400 people living in each block, consisting of 14 barracks each divided into four rooms, shared men's and women's toilets and showers, a laundry room, and a mess hall. Any combination of eight individuals was allotted a 20-by-25-foot room. An oil stove, a single hanging light bulb, cots, blankets, and mattresses filled with straw were the only furnishings provided.

Coming from Los Angeles and other communities in California and Washington, Manzanar's internees were unaccustomed to the harsh desert environment. Summer temperatures soared as high as 110°F. In winter, temperatures frequently plunged below freezing.

Throughout the year strong winds swept through the valley, often blanketing the camp with dust and sand. Internees covered knotholes in the floors with tin can lids, but dust continued to blow in between the floorboards until linoleum was installed in late 1942.

## Overcoming Adversity

Internees attempted to make the best of a bad situation. The WRA formed an advisory council of internee-elected block managers. Internees established churches, temples, and boys and girls clubs. They developed sports, music, dance, and other recreational programs; built gardens and ponds; and published a newspaper, the *Manzanar Free Press*.

Most internees worked in the camp. They dug irrigation canals and ditches, tended acres of fruits and vegetables, and raised chickens, hogs, and cattle. They made clothes and furniture for themselves and camouflage netting and experimental rubber for the military. They served as mess hall workers, doctors, nurses, police officers, firefighters, and teachers.

Professionals were paid \$19 per month, skilled workers received \$16, and non-skilled workers got \$12. Many pooled their resources and created a consumer cooperative that published the *Manzanar Free Press* and operated a general store, beauty parlor, barbershop, and bank.

*"...one of the hardest things to endure was the communal latrines, with no partitions; and showers with no stalls."*

—Rosie Kakuuchi

## Loyalty and Service

About 5,000 Japanese Americans were serving in the U.S. Army when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941. The U.S. military soon called for another 5,000 volunteers from the mainland and Hawaii. In January 1942, however, the Selective Service reclassified Japanese Americans as "enemy aliens" and stopped drafting them.

Emotions were intense during 1942 as the United States entered the war and Japanese Americans were moved to the relocation centers. Various protests and disturbances occurred at some centers over political differences, wages, and rumors of informers and black marketing. At Manzanar two people were killed and 10 were wounded by military police during the "Manzanar Riot" in December 1942.

Tensions intensified in 1943 when the government required internees to answer a "loyalty questionnaire." They were asked if they would serve in combat and if they would swear unqualified allegiance to the United States. Some older internees answered "no" because they were not

## Medal of Honor Winner

Pfc. Sadao S. Munemori, shown above, whose mother and siblings were interned at Manzanar, joined the U.S. Army one month before Pearl Harbor. After being trained in military intelligence, Munemori decided to join the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. A month before the war in Europe ended, Munemori was killed when he threw himself on a grenade in Italy to spare fellow soldiers. He was the only Japanese American to be awarded the Medal of Honor during World War II.

allowed to become U.S. citizens. Others refused to serve while their families were behind barbed wire. Those who answered "yes" were considered "loyal" and became eligible for indefinite leave outside the West Coast military areas. Those who answered "no" were sent to a segregation center at Tule Lake, Calif.

In January 1944 the draft was reinstated for Japanese Americans. Most of those who were drafted or volunteered joined the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Combined with the 100th Infantry Battalion of the Hawaiian Territorial Guard, the 442nd fought with distinction in North Africa, France, and Italy. With 9,846 casualties, the 100th/442nd had the highest casualty rate and was the most highly decorated Army unit for its size and length of service. Nearly 26,000 Japanese Americans served in the U.S. military during World War II.

## Chronology

**1869** First known Japanese immigrants to U.S. settle near Sacramento.

**1913** Alien Land Law prohibits Japanese aliens from owning land in California and imposes a three-year limit on leasing of land.

**1924** Immigration Exclusion Act halts Japanese immigration to U.S.

**1941** U.S. enters World War II after Pearl Harbor attack Dec. 7.

**1942** Executive Order 9066 of Feb. 19 authorizes relocation and/or internment of anyone who might threaten the U.S. war effort.

### War Relocation Centers



**1943** U.S. Army forms 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a segregated unit for Japanese Americans that serves with 100th Infantry Battalion in Europe.

**1944** Supreme Court upholds constitutionality of evacuation based solely on national ancestry while separately ruling that loyal citizens cannot be held against their will.

**1945** World War II ends with Japan's surrender Aug. 14. Manzanar War Relocation Center closes Nov. 21.

**1952** Walter-McCarran Immigration and Naturalization Act allows Japanese aliens to become naturalized citizens.

**1972** Manzanar designated a California Registered Historical Landmark.

**1988** U.S. Civil Liberties Act grants a \$20,000 payment and an apology to 82,000 former internees.

**1992** Manzanar National Historic Site established March 3.

**2001** Minidoka Internment National Monument designated Jan. 17 in Idaho. National Japanese American Memorial dedicated June 29 in Washington, D.C.

**2004** Manzanar National Historic Site Interpretive Center opens April 24.



American soldiers of the 442nd Central Postal Directory, 1944, NATIONAL ARCHIVES

# Remembering Manzanar

Manzanar National Historic Site was established to preserve the stories of the internment of nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II and to serve as a reminder to this and future generations of the fragility of American civil liberties.

Relocations recur throughout the history of Manzanar and the Owens Valley. The Paiute and early settlers as well as Japanese Americans all were uprooted from their homes.

American Indians began utilizing the valley almost 10,000 years ago. About 1,500 years ago the Owens Valley Paiute established settlements here. They hunted, fished, collected pine nuts, and practiced a form of irrigated agriculture.

Miners and ranchers moved into the valley in the early 1860s and homesteaded Paiute lands raising cattle, sheep, fruit, wheat, and other crops. The military was called in and forcibly relocated nearly 1,000 Owens Valley Paiute to Fort Tejon in 1863. Many Paiute returned to the Owens valley and worked on local ranches.

The town of Manzanar—the Spanish word for “apple orchard”—developed as an agricultural settlement beginning in 1910. Farmers grew apples, pears, peaches, potatoes, and alfalfa on several thousand acres surrounding the town.

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power began acquiring water rights in the valley in 1905 and completed the Los Angeles Aqueduct in 1913. Land buy-outs continued in the 1920s, and by 1929 Los Angeles owned all of Manzanar’s land and water rights. Within five years, the town was abandoned. In the 1930s local residents pinned their economic hopes on tourism. With the onset of World War II tourism diminished.

In 1942 the U.S. Army leased 6,200 acres at Manzanar from Los Angeles to establish a center to hold Japanese Americans during World War II. Though some valley

residents opposed the construction of the internment camp, others helped build it and worked here. Among these were a few Owens Valley Paiute whose own families had been exiled earlier from these lands.

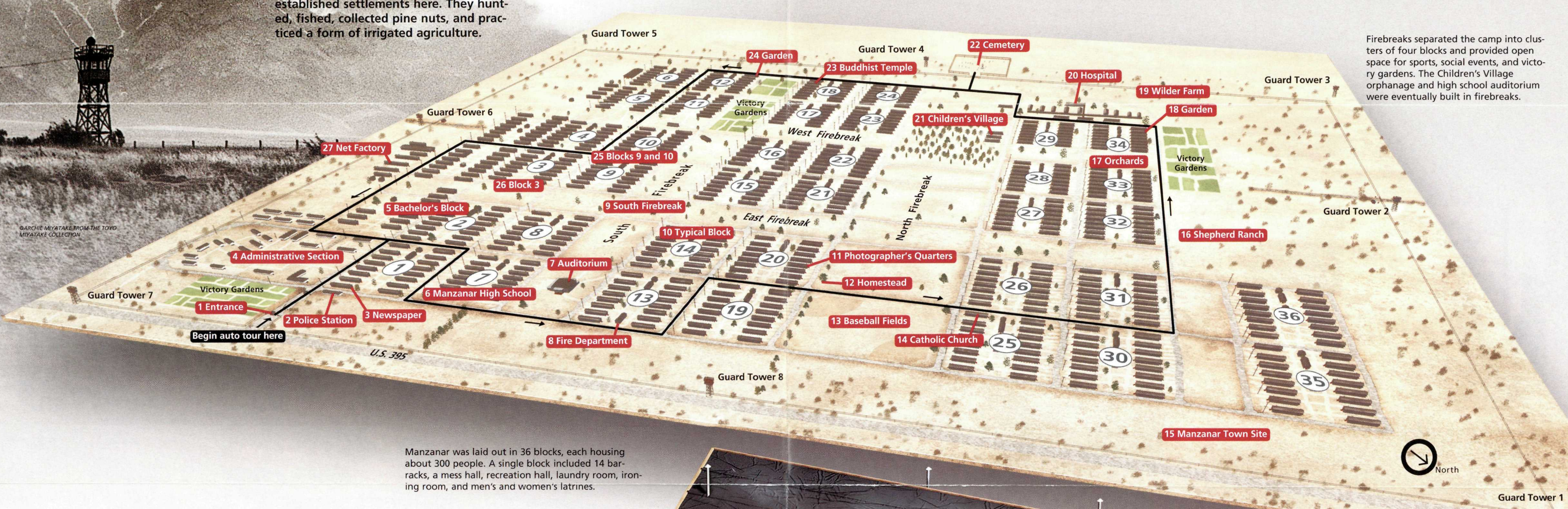
Manzanar National Historic Site is 200 miles north of Los Angeles on U.S. 395. Lodging and food facilities are in Independence and Lone Pine. The Eastern California Museum in Independence has several exhibits related to Manzanar.

For more information, write to: Superintendent, Manzanar National Historic Site, P.O. Box 426, Independence, CA 93526-0426; or visit the [www.nps.gov/manz](http://www.nps.gov/manz) website.

Manzanar is one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. Visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov) to learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America’s communities.

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Firebreaks separated the camp into clusters of four blocks and provided open space for sports, social events, and victory gardens. The Children’s Village orphanage and high school auditorium were eventually built in firebreaks.



Manzanar was laid out in 36 blocks, each housing about 300 people. A single block included 14 barracks, a mess hall, recreation hall, laundry room, ironing room, and men’s and women’s latrines.

## Touring the Historic Site

When Manzanar War Relocation Center closed in 1945, most of the buildings were sold as scrap lumber or moved to private property throughout the Owens Valley. Besides the original sentry posts and auditorium, most of what remains consists of foundations, concrete slabs, and garden features. The National Park Service adaptively restored the auditorium as an interpretive center with exhibits and a film. Eventually two barracks, a mess hall, a guard tower, and some rock gardens will be reconstructed or restored.

While taking this one-way auto tour, imagine what daily life was like when 10,000 people of Japanese ancestry lived here. Stop occasionally and walk through the site. Please do your part to protect Manzanar. Do not disturb, collect, or remove any artifacts or natural features.

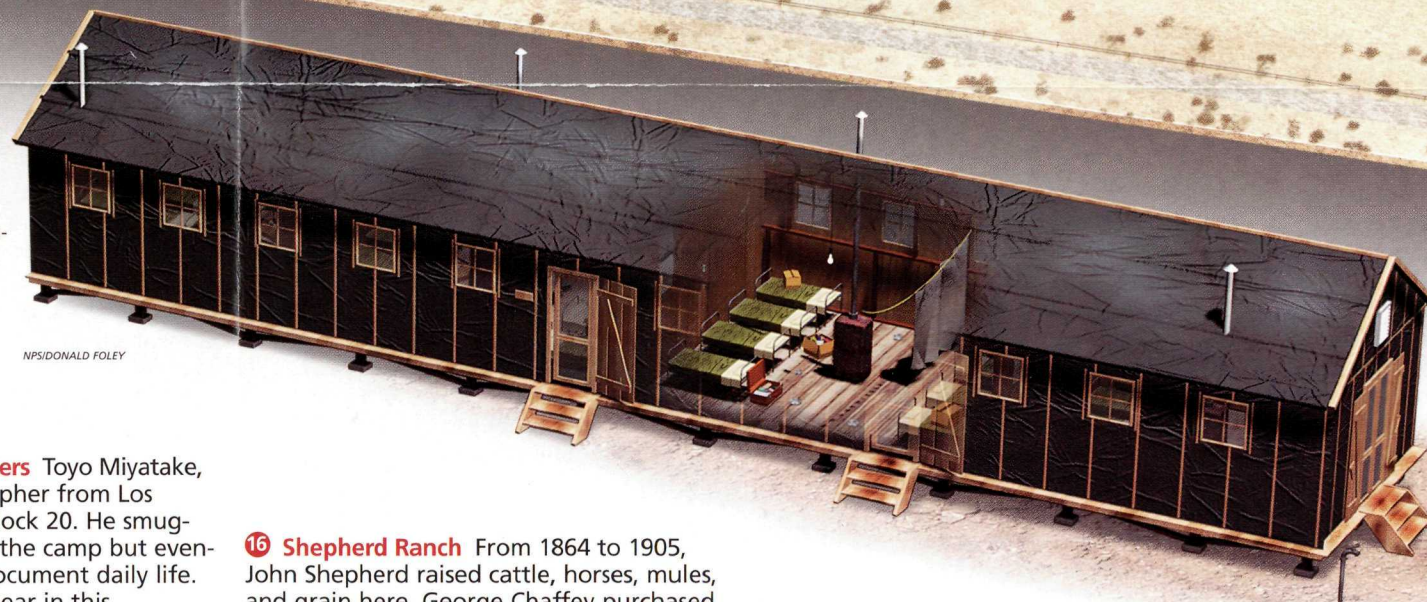


A military policeman checks a vehicle at the entrance. ANSEL ADAMS, 1943, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

- 1 Entrance** Stonemason-internee Ryozo Kado built the military police sentry post and internal police post in 1942.
- 2 Police Station** Internees gathered here December 6, 1942, to protest the jailing of Harry Ueno, who was accused of beating a fellow internee. Two internees were killed and 10 were wounded when military police fired on the crowd. The incident became known as the “Manzanar Riot.”

- 3 Newspaper** Internees published the *Manzanar Free Press* in Building 1 in the southeast corner of this block. The newspaper was self-supporting through subscriptions and advertising.
- 4 Administrative Section** Offices and housing for the War Relocation Authority (WRA) staff and their families were located here, along with a post office and town hall.
- 5 Bachelor’s Block** Block 2 residents included about 100 Japanese Americans who volunteered to help build the center in March 1942.
- 6 Manzanar High School** The school, located here in Block 7, opened in October 1942 and graduated classes in 1943, 1944, and 1945.
- 7 Auditorium** Constructed by internees in 1944, this building housed a gymnasium and a stage for plays, graduation ceremonies, and other social functions. Today it serves as an interpretive center.
- 8 Fire Department** The fire department, in the center of Block 13 near A Street, responded to occasional fires caused by short circuits and kitchen mishaps.
- 9 South Firebreak** Tennis, volleyball, and basketball courts were located in this area, one of two east-west firebreaks.
- 10 Typical Block** Building locations in Block 14 are marked to illustrate the layout of a typical block. A historic mess hall was moved here in December 2002. The National Park Service plans to eventually restore additional buildings to this block.

Each 20-by-100-foot barracks was divided into four rooms. Up to eight people were assigned to each room.



NPS/DONALD FOLEY

In 1942 the War Relocation Authority (WRA) hired internee crews to install wallboard and linoleum flooring to “weatherize” the barracks. Most people eventually improved their own barracks with partitions, furniture, and landscaping.

- 11 Photographer’s Quarters** Toyo Miyatake, a professional photographer from Los Angeles, lived here in Block 20. He smuggled a camera lens into the camp but eventually was allowed to document daily life. A few of his photos appear in this brochure.
- 12 Homestead** The Kemp/Lenbeck Farm was located near the locust trees in the early 1900s.



Baseball was a popular pastime. ©ARCHIE MIYATAKE FROM THE TOYO MIYATAKE COLLECTION

- 13 Baseball Fields** Two of the larger baseball fields were situated here in the North Firebreak between Blocks 19 and 25.
- 14 Catholic Church** Roman Catholic internees attended services at the St. Francis Xavier parish in the Block 25 Recreation Building.
- 15 Manzanar Town Site** The center of the town of Manzanar, established in 1910, was 350 yards to the east. The town had about 25 homes in the mid-1920s, when Los Angeles was purchasing water rights in the area.

- 16 Shepherd Ranch** From 1864 to 1905, John Shepherd raised cattle, horses, mules, and grain here. George Chaffey purchased Shepherd’s holdings in 1905, established the town of Manzanar, and promoted the growing of apples.



John Shepherd built this elaborate home here in 1873. EASTERN CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

- 17 Orchards** South of the tour road are more than 100 remaining fruit trees planted by Chaffey’s Owens Valley Improvement Company around 1910.
- 18 Garden** Immediately south of the tour road at H Street is Block 34’s mess hall garden, one of the most elaborate gardens in the relocation center.
- 19 Wilder Farm** Romeo Wilder and his family raised apples here from 1908 to 1925. He named Manzanar in 1908. Remains of the Wilder home are located about 50 feet west of the tour road.

- 20 Hospital** Stone and concrete steps, a pond, and floor slabs of the hospital laundry, heating room, and morgue can be seen west of the tour route.
- 21 Children’s Village** One hundred and one children of Japanese ancestry were housed in an orphanage 125 yards south-east of the tour road.
- 22 Cemetery** Fifteen of the 150 people who died at the relocation center were buried here; most of the others were cremated. Six burials remain today. Relatives removed the other nine after the war.
- 23 Buddhist Temple** One of three Buddhist temples was located here. The other two were in Blocks 13 and 27.
- 24 Garden** Residents of Block 12 built an elaborate garden next to their mess hall, as did residents of several other blocks.
- 25 Blocks 9 and 10** Some of the first internees, from Terminal Island near San Pedro, Calif., were housed here.

- 26 Block 3** Two hundred and twenty-seven Japanese Americans from Bainbridge Island, near Seattle, arrived by train April 1, 1942, and lived in this block.



Internees who made camouflage netting for the military had to be U.S. citizens. DOROTHEA LANGE, 1942, NATIONAL ARCHIVES

- 27 Net Factory** Internees produced camouflage netting for the U.S. military in 1942 at a factory southwest of the intersection of D and Manzanar Streets.