



Timeline: Manzanar 1942-1945

March 17, 1942: Construction of Owens Valley Reception Center begins.

March 21, 1942: First 81 “evacuees” arrive at Manzanar as volunteers to help prepare the camp for thousands of Japanese Americans slated to arrive in April.

April 11, 1942: The first issue of the *Manzanar Free Press*, written and produced by internees, is printed on a mimeograph press.

April 16, 1942: Kenji Ogawa is the first of 541 babies to be born at Manzanar.

April 19, 1942: Kimiko Wakamura and Howard Kumagai are married in Block 9 by Reverend Preston. They are the first of 188 couples to be married at Manzanar.

April 26-28, 1942: Manzanar’s population doubles in three days, from 3,309 to 7,101.

May 2, 1942: The first Manzanar library opens in an internee’s living quarters with a gift of 17 books and 80 magazines. Eventually, Manzanar’s libraries grow to include more than 24,000 volumes and 157 magazine subscriptions.

May 16, 1942: While collecting scrap wood, Hikoji Takeuchi, age 20, is shot by a military policeman. He is seriously injured but eventually recovers.

May 22, 1942: Construction begins on a 540,000 gallon reservoir to be filled with water diverted from Shepherd Creek.

June 1, 1942: Administration of Manzanar is transferred from the Wartime Civilian Control Administration (WCCA) to the War Relocation Authority (WRA). Owens Valley Reception Center becomes Manzanar War Relocation Center.

June 10, 1942: Internees are employed to produce camouflage nets at Manzanar in support of the U.S. war effort.

June 1942: The Children’s Village orphanage is established. By the end of the month, it is home to 62 orphans. Eventually, the orphanage will house 101 children from newborns to teenagers.

July 22, 1942: The *Manzanar Free Press* expands from a mimeographed sheet to a four page printed newspaper. The new 250-bed hospital opens. The hospital includes x-ray facilities, a pharmacy, surgery, and medical, dental, and optometry clinics.

September 14, 1942: 1,001 students in grades 1 through 6 enroll in elementary school classes held in barracks throughout the camp. Block 16 is later converted to the elementary school block.

September 22, 1942: Internee population reaches peak of 10,046.

October 1, 1942: The Manzanar Cooperative Enterprises is established. The cooperative includes check cashing services, a general store, a barber shop, a beauty parlor, and mail order service. It grows into a million dollar per year enterprise.

October 15, 1942: Manzanar High School opens with 1,376 registered students in grades 7 through 12. The students came from 206 different high schools.

November 7, 1942: Ester Naito is granted the first release for “permanent relocation” as part of the early WRA relocation program. She leaves Manzanar on November 15 for Chicago, Illinois.

November 15, 1942: The first two volunteers for the Army leave Manzanar for Camp Savage, Minnesota. Forty others eventually volunteer.

November 1942: Construction of the last four of eight guard towers is completed. The Manzanar Cooperative begins showing motion pictures in the outdoor theater in the firebreak between blocks 20 and 21.

November 24, 1942: Ralph P. Merritt becomes the third Project Director at Manzanar and remains until after the end of the war.

December 5, 1942: Fred Tayama, a Japanese American Citizen’s League (JACL) leader, is assaulted in his apartment by six men. JACL members were believed to be supporters of the Administration and informants.



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December 6, 1942: Manzanar Riot. Military police fire into a large crowd gathered at the police station demanding the release of Harry Ueno, arrested for allegedly assaulting Fred Tayama. Seventeen year-old James Ito is killed instantly eleven other internees are wounded.

December 10, 1942: 65 internees, including Fred Tayama, are sent to Cow Creek, a former Civilian Conservation Corps camp in Death Valley for their own protection until they are able to relocate away from the exclusion zones.

December 11, 1942: Jim Kanegawa, 21 years old, dies of complications from a wound received during the Manzanar Riot.

December 21, 1942: Funeral services are held for James Ito and Jim Kanegawa in the woods beyond Lacey ranch, 1 ½ miles south of Manzanar.

January 9, 1943: 16 internees involved in the riot are sent to the WRA isolation center near Moab, Utah. Moab was established for dissidents and “chronic troublemakers” from all ten War Relocation Centers.

February 10, 1943: Registration of all internees 17 years of age and older commences at all ten War Relocation Centers. The internees are required to complete a 30 question loyalty questionnaire titled the “War Relocation Authority Application for Indefinite Leave Clearance.” Those who answer “yes” to questions 27 and 28 are found eligible for relocation outside the exclusion zones. Those who answer “no” are considered disloyal and scheduled for segregation to Tule Lake Segregation Center.

February 24, 1943: Bainbridge Islanders leave Manzanar for Minidoka War Relocation Center in Idaho.

March 16, 1943: 85 students graduate in the first Manzanar High School graduation.

October 9, 1943: The first 257 internees are sent to Tule Lake Segregation Center from Manzanar.

December 1943: The beef cattle project begins with the purchase of 199 cows. The herd is slaughtered in December 1944.

December 31, 1943: Construction of the chicken ranch is completed. It includes a combination office and slaughter house, 48 hen houses, 16 brooder houses, and an incinerator. By June, the chicken ranch houses 8,539 chickens.

January 20, 1944: Selective Service inductions of Japanese Americans resume.

February 19, 1944: Cornerstone ceremony is held to initiate construction of the high school auditorium/gymnasium. The ceremony was originally scheduled for February 12, which is the date engraved on the cornerstone.

February 21 - 26 1944: Remaining internees scheduled for segregation leave Manzanar for Tule Lake. A total of 2,165 Manzanar internees are segregated.

April 30, 1944: Construction of the hog farm is completed. The hog farm is located ½ mile south of the center. By June, the farm houses 469 hogs.

June 1944: Block 16 is set aside for the elementary school. Until 1944, elementary school classes were held in the recreation buildings of many blocks.

June 18, 1944: More than 1,000 people attend graduation ceremonies for 177 high school students in the new auditorium.

January 2, 1945: The West Coast exclusion order is lifted and Japanese Americans can return to their former communities.

February 1, 1945: Mess halls begin closing as the camp population drops. Seven mess halls are closed by the end of the month.

May 29, 1945: The Manzanar elementary school and high school classes meet for the last time.

August 1, 1945: Ralph Merritt receives Administrative Notice 289 requiring the scheduled relocation of all remaining Manzanar residents.

September 15, 1945: A large contingent of Terminal Islanders leave Manzanar for temporary housing facilities in a trailer park near their former homes. They are never allowed to return to Terminal Island.

October 9, 1945: Administration begins establishing departure dates for internees remaining at Manzanar.

November 21, 1945: The last internee, a four year-old boy, leaves Manzanar at 11:00 a.m.



Manzanar guardtower