MINIDOKA RELOCATION CENTER, MOTOR VEHICLE AND TIRE SHOP
(Warehouse No. 5)
Minidoka National Historic Site
Hunt Road between S 1400 E and S 1450 E
Hunt
Jerome County
Idaho

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
PACIFIC WEST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
333 Bush Street
San Francisco, CA 94104

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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(Warehouse No. 5)

HABS No. ID-133

Location: The Motor Repair and Tire Shop, now known as Warehouse No. 5, is located in Minidoka National Historic Site, in Jerome County, Idaho. The warehouse is located in the eastern end of the park. It is accessed via Hunt Road, between S 1400 E and S 1450 E. The building is located at latitude: 42.679042, longitude: -114.243559 (Google Earth, WGS84).

Significance: Minidoka Relocation Center is significant for its association with the incarceration of Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants (collectively known as Nikkei) during World War II. It is a reminder of the United States government's forcible removal and confinement of Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants from the West Coast of the United States during this time. The Motor Tire and Repair Shop was one of over 600 buildings that made up the relocation center. It is one of the few extant buildings from the confinement period at Minidoka National Historic Site.

Description: Minidoka National Historic Site is located in Jerome County in south-central Idaho, 21 miles north of Twin Falls and 17 miles east of Jerome, Idaho. The historic site contains 388 acres of the original 34,063-acre Minidoka Relocation Center (the center's developed area occupied about 950 acres). It lies on the Snake River Plain, a semi-arid landscape characterized by sagebrush and irrigated agriculture that stretches for 400 miles across southern Idaho. The region experiences hot, dry summers and cold winters. The warehouse is set at 3970' in elevation.

The Motor Repair and Tire Shop is set in a cluster of buildings in what is known as the warehouse area. It is located at the east end of the park and just north of Hunt Road. It is accessible to visitors via an interpretive trail that leads from the parking area at the main entrance of the historic site, which lies west of the warehouse area. The trail is a 1.6 mile loop that passes many of the extant resources of the historic site.

The warehouse area resources are arranged along a driveway that leads north from Hunt Road. Remaining historic features from the confinement period include the Motor Repair and Tire Shop, a storage shed, six elm trees, and concrete foundation slabs. The Motor Repair and Tire Shop is set at the end of the drive, oriented to the southwest in a circular area that serves as a turnaround for vehicles. To the east of the warehouse is a small, metal-clad storage building that was constructed during the historic period.

Two residential buildings that housed Bureau of Reclamation staff after World War II are set to the south of the warehouse and storage shed, across the drive from each other. These one-story, wood-framed buildings were constructed during the confinement period and may have served as camp staff housing in their original location. Sometime after World War II they were moved and placed onto the foundations of historic warehouse buildings.

Concrete slab foundations of relocation center buildings are set to the west, east, and south of the building cluster. About 65' southeast of the Motor Repair and Tire Shop, along Hunt Road, there is a 112' x 48' concrete foundation that originally supported Warehouse No. 9 (which served as a refrigerated warehouse during the confinement period). The original building was removed after World War II. Elm trees dot the landscape. A wood framed, gabled roof root cellar is set just east of the warehouse area.

The Motor Tire and Repair Shop is 48' x 48' square and is set on a 112' x 48' poured concrete slab foundation. It is metal frame and clad with corrugated metal sheeting. The shallow-pitched side-gable roof is topped with corrugated metal sheeting. The south elevation contains two large wood double vehicle doors. Each door panel has an eight-light fixed pane fixed window. The south elevation also contains three hopper windows with nine lights each. The west and north elevations have no openings. The east elevation has three sets of windows—a set of three nine-light hopper windows, a pair of four light fixed windows, and a pair of six light windows—a and one single bay door. One small room is set inside the building's northeast corner.[1]

The building originally measured 112' x 48'. It was reduced in size after the relocation center closed. The building originally was clad with tarpaper and wood battens, and it contained seven bay doors. It currently is clad with corrugated metal sheeting, and only three bay doors remain. The building retains its original windows and doors.[2]

History: The Minidoka Relocation Center was utilized for the incarceration of Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants during World War II. When the United States entered World War II in 1941, almost 113,000 people of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of whom were American citizens, were living in West Coast states. In February of 1942, at the urging of West Coast governors and politicians, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which allowed the U.S. military to remove all persons of Japanese descent, including American citizens, from areas along the West Coast. At the time, political leaders and the military justified the forced removal as a military necessity, but most historians see the removal of Japanese Americans as part of a long history of anti-Asian prejudice in the United States.[3]

In 1942, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) was created to remove the Japanese immigrant (Issei) and Japanese American (Nisei and Sansei) population en masse from the West Coast. Political leaders had initially believed that persons of Japanese descent (and German and Italian aliens) would voluntarily move away from the designated military areas, but the assets of most Issei had been frozen with the onset of war, and most did not have the financial resources to move to another state. Several thousand did manage to move further east, out of the restricted zones, but many others who tried were

[1] Cortney Cain Gjesfjeld, "Minidoka National Historic Site Cultural Landscape Report" (draft), April 3, 2017, National Pak Service Pacific West Regional Office files.
[2] Gjesfjeld, 2014; National Park Service, *Minidoka Internment National Monument: General Management Plan*, (Seattle: National Park Service Pacific West Regional Office, 2006), 155.
[3] Barbara Wyatt, *Japanese Americans in World War II: National Historic Landmark Theme Study* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2012), 18-24; Roger Daniels, *Prisoners without Trial: Japanese-Americans in World War II*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 3-5.

denied entry into inland states. With no due process or instances of sabotage or espionage, people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast were forced to leave their homes and businesses. They were allowed to take with them only items that they could carry, and they were given little time to arrange for care and disposal of property and personal items. Americans of German or Italian descent did not face the same mass evacuation.[4]

In the spring of 1942, Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans living along the West Coast were told to report to assembly centers, which were often hastily converted stables at fairgrounds or racetracks where unsanitary conditions were the norm. They were then sent into one of ten WRA camps in Idaho, California, Arizona, Arkansas, Utah, Colorado, or Wyoming. One of the ten camps was the Minidoka Relocation Center. The relocation centers were set in bleak, remote areas, fenced with barbed wire and guarded by armed soldiers. In nearly all of the camps, detainees endured a harsh climate that included hot summers, cold winters, and constant wind and dust. Detainees lived in small one-room apartments in wood barracks, with little privacy or comfort, within a larger barrack that was shared with other families. Families of up to six people lived in the apartment during their time in camp. Life inside camps was harsh, with overcrowding, poor medical care, and food shortages.[5]

Minidoka camp construction began in June 1942. The Morrison Knudsen Company was contracted to build the camp; they employed 3,000 workers, which provided a huge financial windfall to the economically depressed region. The company had built the relocation center at Tule Lake, California, earlier that year, and they constructed 1,439 buildings at that camp in 30 days using large numbers of workers and assembly line techniques. They used the same methods at Minidoka in order to construct the relocation center in a short amount of time. The company established a mill and lumber yard at the site. Workers cut wood at the mill and assembled roof trusses, gable ends and wall sections into prefabricated sections before the sections were moved to the individual building site. The dust and lava rock (which required blasting in order to create utility trenches) made construction challenging. In addition, the Department of Defense often diverted supplies and construction materials to other wartime projects, and as a result, buildings lacked wood siding (tarpaper was used instead) and adequate drainage systems.[6] When the first detainees arrived at Minidoka in August of 1942, the camp was only about 75 percent complete.

Construction of camp infrastructure and buildings was largely completed by February 1943. A guard tower, military police building, and reception building stood at the entrance. The camp included an administrative area, military police buildings, hospital area, a sewage treatment plant, and warehouse area. Rows of barracks buildings, organized into two residential areas with a total of 35 “blocks,” occupied the north, northeast and east edges of the camp’s developed area. The camp eventually contained around 600 buildings. The buildings were simple structures of wood frame, wood battens and tar paper; they were inexpensive to build and meant to have a relatively short life

[4] Wyatt, 24-28; Tetsudan Kashima, *Judgment without Trial: Japanese-American Imprisonment during World War II* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 3-5.
[5] Wyatt, 22 and 35-36: Kashima, 3-5.
[6] Susan M. Stacy, “Minidoka Relocation Center Warehouse,” HABS No. ID-131, Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), National Park Service, U.S Department of the Interior, 2005, 7-9.

span. Agricultural operations, including a hog farm, a chicken farm and vegetable fields were set to the east and north of the camp. Detainees created ornamental gardens and ball fields at the camp.[7] 13,000 detainees (with a peak population of about 9,500) were housed at the Minidoka Relocation Center during the three years that the camp was open.

The warehouse area was located to the east of the administrative area, and was connected to that area by a road. The warehouse area contained 17 buildings during the confinement period, including the Motor Repair and Tire Shop (Warehouse No. 5) and the refrigerated warehouse (which rested on what is now known as the Warehouse No. 9 foundation). The warehouses were arranged in three curvilinear rows of five or six. Smaller storage buildings were set to the south of the warehouses.[8] The warehouse buildings each measured 48' x 112'. Six mature elm trees remain in the warehouse area from the incarceration period.

The Motor Repair and Tire Shop, like other warehouse buildings, originally sat on a concrete slab foundation with a 6" stem wall. Wood framing was attached to the stem wall. The warehouse was originally was clad with tarpaper, nailed to the wood frame and secured by wood battens set 3' apart; there was no insulation. Two rows of five interior posts, set 18'6" apart, supported the roof and created six bays on the sides (there were also three bays on the ends of the warehouse buildings). The asphalt shingle roof was a very low angled gable roof, with a central roof beam that was elevated about a foot higher than the other beams. There were no rain gutters.[9]

Wood pedestrian doors and seven wood double sliding bay doors offered pedestrian and vehicle access to the building. Each sliding bay door had two sets of 8-pane (4-over-4) windows. The doors were constructed of horizontal boards with a diagonal board on the outside for bracing. There were windows on two sides of the warehouse. Three sets of 9-pane windows were set above the tops of the sliding bay doors on two sides of the building.[10]

Other buildings, including a lavatory, gasoline station, sign shop, building materials shed, and motor dispatcher's office occupied the perimeter of the warehouse area. At the end of September 1943, the warehouse was converted from a motor repair and tire shop into a heavy equipment shop.[11]

Other warehouse area buildings present during the confinement period included No. 2 (property office and receiving warehouse); Nos. 3, 4, 8, 15, 16 (storage warehouses); No. 6 and 7 (steward's storage warehouses); No. 10 (steward's office and receiving warehouse); Nos. 11 and 12 (storage warehouse and co-op warehouse); Nos. 14 and 18 (motor repair shops); No. 19 (engineers' warehouse); No. 20 (carpenter, plumber, and electrician Shops); Nos. 21 and 22 (workers' mess hall and sign shop); No. 23 (gas

[7] Gjesfjeld, 15-16 and 26-29.
[8] Stacy, 10.
[9] Stacy, 16.
[10] Stacy, 16-17.
[11] Gjesfjeld, 53, 234, and 285.

station); No. 25 (lavatory); building 29 (building material shed); and No. 42 (root cellar).[12]

Detainees lived at the camp until October of 1945. In December of 1944, the War Relocation Authority lifted the evacuation order that preceded the removal of Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants from the West Coast. Most detainees had left by September of 1945; the camp officially closed in October of that year. In 1946, the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) resumed management of the land that had housed the camp. Many buildings were sold and relocated; others were offered to homesteaders who had won a lottery for farmsteads carved out of USBR lands on and around the former camp site. A portion of the warehouse area was retained by the USBR, and the agency's American Falls Reservoir District No. 2 (AFRD) occupied the site and used the buildings for staff housing, maintenance and administrative functions. The corrugated metal siding was probably added to the warehouse at this time. Also at this time, two residences were moved from other parts of the camp, where they had likely been used as staff housing, onto warehouse foundations associated with buildings #6 and #9. These buildings were used as residences for USBR employees.[13]

In 2001, Minidoka Internment National Monument was created from 72.75 acres of the camp site; in 2008 the monument became Minidoka National Historic Site. Lands owned by the USBR and the Bureau of Land Management were transferred to the National Park Service; the AFRD vacated the site in 2005. There are extant features associated with two-thirds of the original buildings set in the warehouse area. In 2018, the NPS began to rehabilitate the warehouse building to serve as a visitor contact station.

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[12] *Minidoka Internment National Monument: General Management Plan,* 148.
[13] Gjesfjeld, 159.

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Historian: Christy Avery, National Park Service, Pacific West Regional Office-Seattle, 2018

Project Information: This HABS documentation was done under a Memorandum of Agreement between the Idaho State Preservation Officer and the National Park Service as mitigation for the NPS plan to rehabilitate Warehouse No. 5 for use as a visitor center for Minidoka National Historic Site, and the plan to utilize the foundation of Warehouse No. 9 as part of a new fire suppression system with a 30,000 gallon tank and a small pump house.

Appendix: Figures

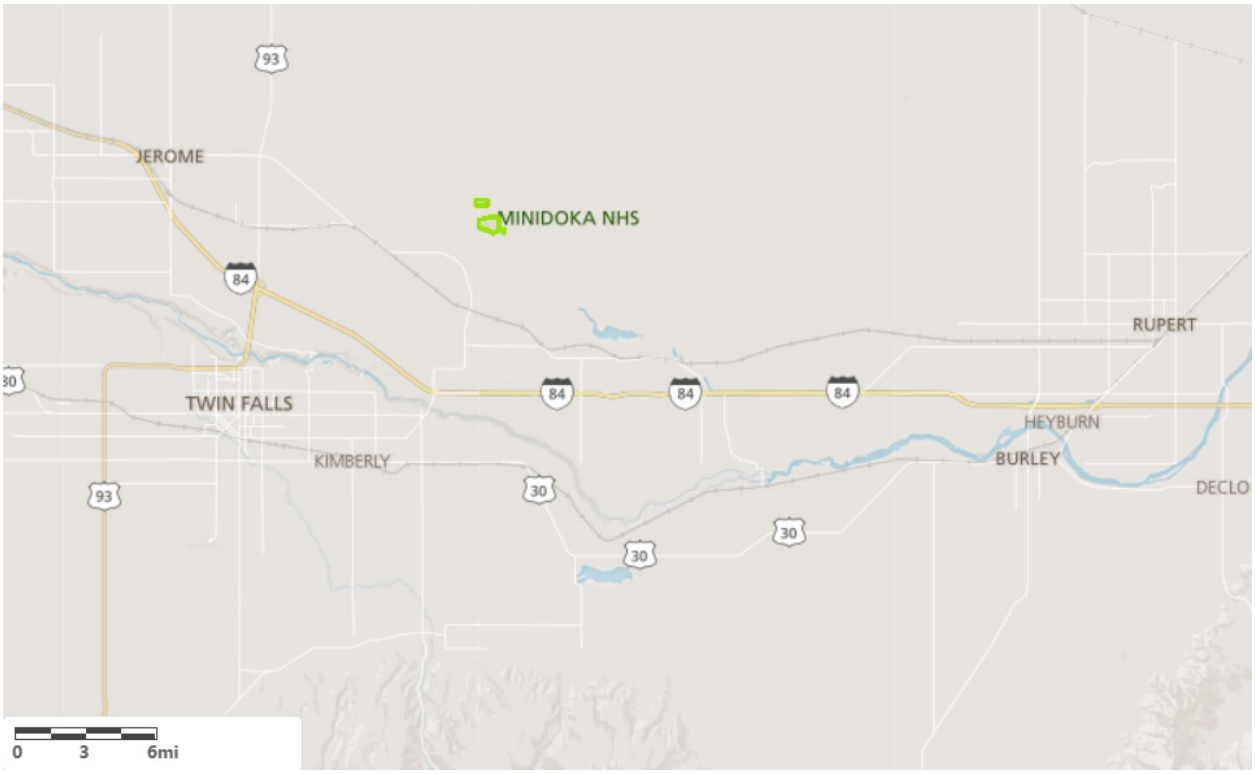

Fig. 1. Minidoka National Historic Site location map. National Park Service map.

Fig. 2. The warehouse area, January 2018. The pink denotes concrete pads or other remnants of historic features. Orange indicates an existing structure.

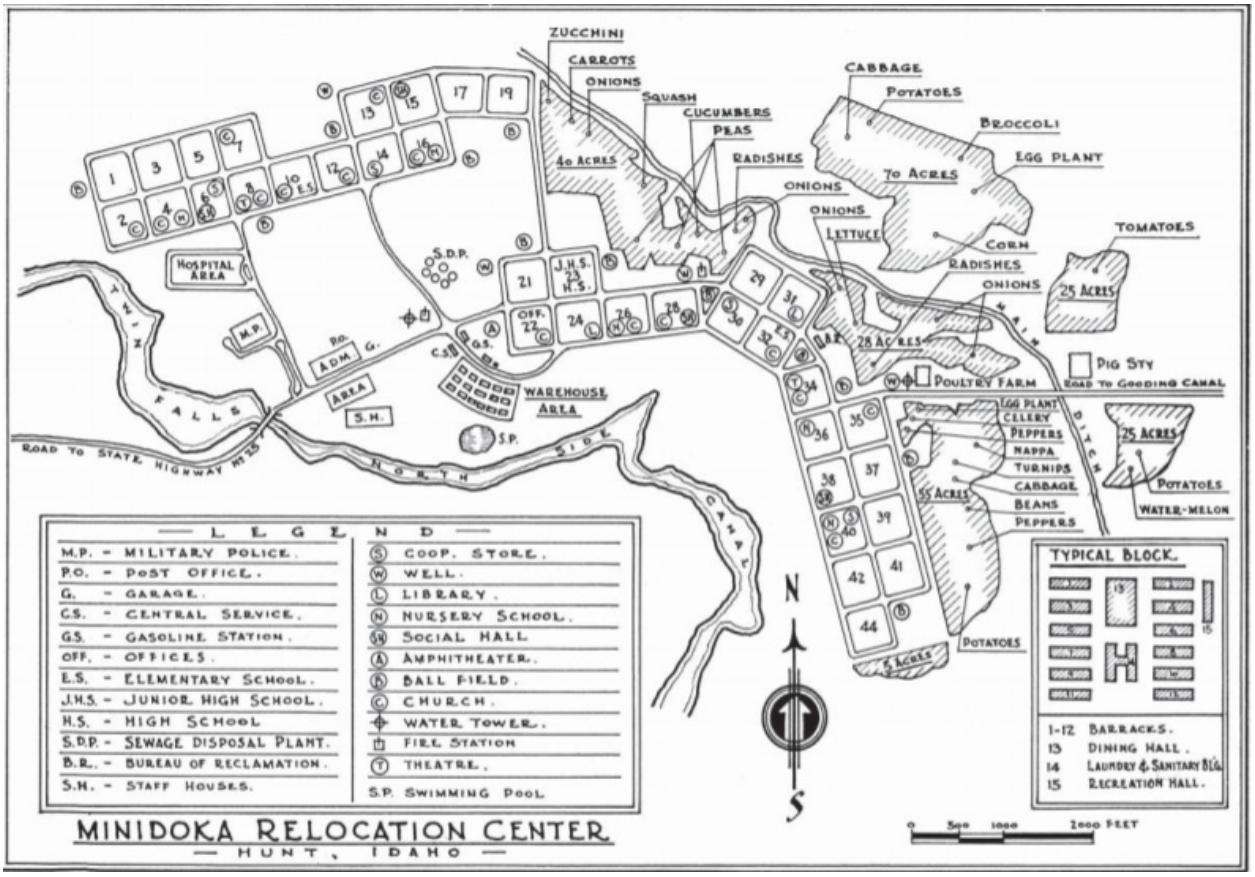

Fig. 3. Minidoka Relocation Center, 1943. Warehouse area visible in center. War Relocation Authority map (*Minidoka Irrigator*, September 25, 1943, 3).