

Manzanar



ID Card

WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY
WARTIME CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION
Presidio of San Francisco, California
May 3, 1942

INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY



Living Area:

A person that becomes temporary at a camp of the War Relocation Authority must be located at that First Point of Entry. Those who are not in that camp must be located in that camp. Those who are not in that camp must be located in that camp.

If a family, or in case of grave emergency, is affected by this restriction in the following manner:

except for other disposition of new kinds of household goods, items, automobiles and property.

On, or the person in whose name must of Civil Control Authority to receive further information. War 4, 1942, or hereafter.





In 1942 the United States Government ordered over 110,000 men, women, and children to leave their homes and detained them in remote, military-style camps. Two-thirds of them were born in America. Not one was convicted of espionage or sabotage.

In this booklet, you will read the story of a person who lived this history, in his or her own words.

MARY M. TERAMOTO

Camp: Jerome, AR

Address: 41-3-F



My mother Sawa Taro was born in Hawaii, which made her an American citizen. Her parents returned to Japan when she was 9. My father Asamo Teramoto worked as a tailor in Japan until a depression forced him and his brother to leave.

Asamo worked in the sugar cane fields of Hawaii before coming to the U.S. mainland in 1906. He went back to Japan to marry my mother. A matchmaker in Japan arranged the marriage. Because she had married a Japanese alien, my mother lost her citizenship as decreed by a U.S. law, the Cable Act.

My parents settled in Fowler, California, ten miles south of Fresno, as truck farmers growing grapes and vegetables.

The Alien Land Law prevented Japanese nationals from owning land in California, so my father could only lease his farm. To get around the law, he later purchased another piece of land in the name of a nephew who was a citizen. Besides me, there was my brother George and older sisters Mikiye and Yukiye, who all helped with the growing and harvesting of the crops.

On weekends I attended Japanese language school, sponsored by the Buddhist Church. My parents sent me so we wouldn't lose our culture. I only spoke Japanese to communicate with them.

Not able to become citizens or property owners, many *Issei* (first generation Japanese) wanted to return to Japan. But once they had kids who were products of American culture and the public school system, they chose to settle in rather than uproot us.

If there was any discrimination toward Japanese, I wasn't very aware of it as a youngster. When war came, I was a ninth grader at Fowler High School, involved in the Scholastic Club and freshman student government.

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After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, our lives changed overnight. We were under a curfew, restricted in our movements to within five miles of our home. Some of my school activities took place outside these limits, so I had to obtain special permission to travel with the school group. There was resentment from a few classmates. I didn't feel different at first, but that changed as the headlines gradually became more negative toward Japanese in California.

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), a civil rights group, tried to anticipate problems and assemble people in an organized way for evacuation. The JACL organized a medical staff to give us immunizations before we went to camp. Some people at the time, and even now, are bitter toward the JACL for not standing up for our rights, and opposing the evacuation. Many of the JACL leaders were young, college-aged *Nisei*.

As I remember we had about two weeks to sell and store possessions before evacuation. My father tried to harvest as much of his vegetable crops as he could. All four of us children got up while it was dark so we could

going to different camps. Yukino went to Gila River camp. We had to leave our dog Jackie behind. We learned later it was shot to death soon after we left.

In May 1942, we assembled at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Fowler and were bussed to the Fresno Assembly Center, where we stayed until October 1942. I was anxious to see all my friends there, but it was strange to see all these Japanese together at the fairgrounds.

People tried to organize activities for children, like social dancing. I learned to dance there, and also joined the choir organized by a Japanese American who was a music major in college.

Our family of six was evacuated together to the Jerome, Arkansas camp. The trip to camp was long and arduous. Our train was side-tracked many times because we were a low travel priority. The rail cars were very old, and had gaslights. Shades were drawn.

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Because of blackouts, we were not allowed to look out the window while we were traveling through California.

Getting off the train, the first visible impact was the presence of so many soldiers, and yes, they had guns.

We were quickly whisked off in a truck to our designated block of barracks. Our new address was one room for six people. The older folks started gathering scraps of lumber to make the apartment livable, and gathered coal for the stove.



There was a strong sense of community within each block. We depended upon each other. My brother worked as an electrician in camp while one of my sisters worked in the mess halls.

School was an assortment of barracks. At first, it was only chairs in a row, and very few books. Most of the students were in the top half of schools they came from. Our teachers were very sympathetic to our plight. One social studies teacher from Hope, Arkansas said, "I don't know why you people are in here." She had her students work on projects, and shared them with the people in the town of Hope.

Many teachers came out of retirement from college teaching, since government jobs in the camps paid well. Some were too old to be teaching. We complained to the principal about one teacher. "We're not learning anything," we said. But they refused to replace him.

I was happy to be learning, no matter what the environment, and I enjoyed being with friends and

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dancing at the recreation hall. I joined Girl Scouts and our block girls club.

Coming from a farm, I had lived a relatively sheltered life. Living so close among strangers made me feel very visible, and I wanted to withdraw at first. As activities were organized and new friends made, it

was more comfortable. Yet we constantly thought about “when we get out.” Our goal was just to get out.

When the guards were no longer in the “watch towers,” it made me feel less as a prisoner, even though we were still confined. A greater sense of normalcy and more freedom of expression returned to our lives.

I got mumps in camp, and that kept me out of school for many days, resulting in a failing grade in one subject. During this time I was very depressed, but a schoolteacher, formerly a missionary in the Orient, said, “God never gives us more than we can handle.” I’ve found this to be true. It is how we handle life’s problems, good or bad.

When Jerome closed we were transferred to the Rohwer Relocation Camp.

Father, mother, one sister and I left Rohwer in October 1945. We were the next to last family to leave. The only people who stayed were the women due to give birth, who could not travel.

We returned to California to find our farm in shambles. We had no money, but due to the generosity of those Japanese Americans who returned before us, we managed to get through the first winter. The next spring

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was much brighter. We took it day by day, working our heads off until we accumulated enough money to buy fruit trees, then a tractor.

People viewed us with curiosity at first, but gradually accepted us. Camp left one with a feeling, "I'm just as

good as the next person," and wanting to show the people outside that "I'm human too." Only among ourselves did we discuss camp, and we were too busy trying to re-establish ourselves to dwell on the negative.

I moved to Los Angeles and became an apparel designer, working in the lingerie field for forty years.

My mother reapplied for citizenship once the law was passed granting Asians the right to become naturalized citizens. She went to the high school to learn the Constitution. The JACL encouraged *Issei* and others to attend citizenship classes.

Our Japanese culture had a lot to do with how we coped with our camp experience. Our *Issei* parents taught us that there are things you can control in your life, and other things you can't, like camp. I'm able to accept life for what it is.

Having been a victim of "intolerance," the meaning of "tolerance" is well embedded in my mind. Tolerance can introduce you into a wide-open world of knowledge and experiences, which would be closed to you if your mind was closed.

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JEROME

Location: Chicot and Drew Counties, Arkansas

Environmental

Conditions: Jerome War Relocation Center is located 12 miles from the Mississippi River at an elevation of 130 feet. The area was once covered with forests, but is now primarily agricultural land. The Big and Crooked Bayous flow from north to south in the central and eastern part of the former relocation center.



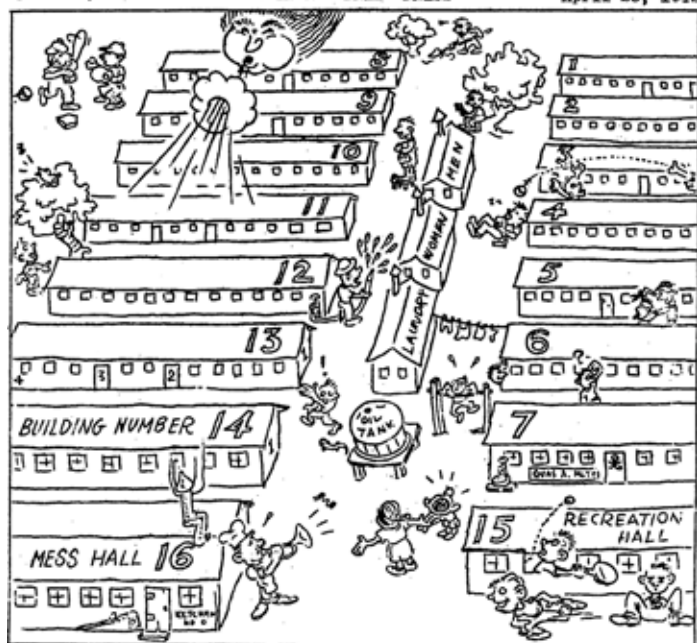
Acreage: 10,000

Opened: October 6, 1942

Closed: June 1944

Max. Population: 8,497 (November 1942)

Demographics: Most people interned at Jerome War Relocation Center came from Los Angeles, Fresno, and Sacramento counties in California. Most came to Jerome via the Santa Anita and Fresno assembly centers. 811 people came from Hawaii.



LIFE IN A MANZANAR BLOCK

Wind and Dust

This wind and dust I have to bear
 How hard it blows I do not care.
 But when the wind begins to blow --
 My morale is pretty low.

I know that I can see it through
 Because others have to bear it too.

So I will bear it with the rest
 And hope the outcome is the best.

-- George Nishimura, age 16 (1943)



Manzanar Cemetery, Winter 2002.

This booklet was developed by the park rangers at Manzanar National Historic Site in partnership with the individuals profiled and their families.



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