



I want to forget the day we were herded like cattle into a prison camp.
What did we do wrong? What was our crime?

Sylvia Kobayashi



Aliens, Citizens
Need Permits
For Traveling

Incarcerates soon began publishing the weekly *Minidoka Irrigator* to share news and events from inside and outside the camp.

NEWSPAPER HEADLINES—CHENKO



In less than six months, the US War Relocation Authority moved over 110,000 people from war exclusion zones into "camps."

NATIONAL ARCHIVES / FRANCIS STEWART

FREEDOM DENIED

STUNNED FRIGHTENED UNCERTAIN

February 19, 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, depriving over 110,000 people of their freedom. All were of Japanese ancestry (known as Nikkei). Two-thirds were American citizens, half were children. They closed their businesses, shut down their farms, and packed their suitcases. They boarded trains and buses first to detention centers and later to prisons. For the rest of World War II, most would remain behind barbed wire.

Over 13,000 people were imprisoned in Idaho at Minidoka War Relocation Center, known locally as Hunt Camp. Now a national historic site, Minidoka traces the history of Japanese Americans from immigration in the 1800s to the commemorations of today. The park's stories link with other stories of American injustice, racial prejudice, resilience and recovery—and explores how to ensure this never happens again.

DECADES OF PREJUDICE

1880-1942
FEAR HOSTILITY PROPAGANDA EXCLUSION

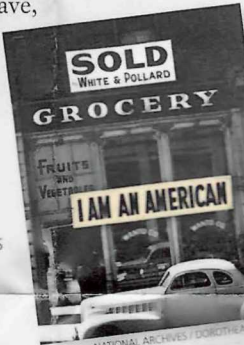
Before 1941 During the 1800s, Japanese began immigrating to the West Coast of the United States seeking work and a better life. Mostly men, they did work others did not want, such as stoop labor in fields and hauling rocks in mines. Over time, many started businesses and families. But some Americans were suspicious of these immigrants who looked different and were of a different culture. Leaders passed and enforced laws preventing Japanese immigrants from becoming citizens or owning land. Children born here would have these rights, but not their parents.

December 7, 1941 Imperial Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Fears of a West Coast invasion increased. Former incarcerated Louise Kashino said, "They were the enemy to us, just like everybody else felt." Newspapers published rumors such as Japanese residents were signaling enemy ships from shore. The FBI found no truth to the rumors, but President Roosevelt listened to military advisors who insisted Nikkei were a true threat. He signed Executive Order (EO) 9066, which allowed the military to force people out of exclusion zones (*map at right*). Some Germans and Italians had to leave, but only Japanese endured mass removal from their homes.

I never swore any allegiance to Japan, I've always been an American and pledged allegiance to our flag all my life.

Gene Akutsu

A Japanese grocer announces his loyalty, but soon closes like other Nikkei shopkeepers. Most had to sell at a fraction of their stores' value. Others were lucky—friends took care of their businesses.



March 30, 1942 Near Seattle, Washington, over 200 Nikkei living on Bainbridge Island said tearful goodbyes to their friends. They were the first people forced from their homes under EO 9066. (Japanese on Terminal Island, California, were forced out before EO 9066 was issued.) The Bainbridge Islanders were first sent to Manzanar War Relocation Center in California, but most moved to Minidoka in February 1943. They joined over 7,000 people from Seattle, 2,300 from Oregon, and 200 from Alaska.

BEHIND THE FENCE

1942-1944
SUFFERING ANGER RESILIENCE

Transition Joan Morishima Seko's family was sent to a detention center hastily arranged at a fairgrounds. She recalls "staying in a stall with my parents [that] had housed horses before." They lived there for several months while Minidoka was built. After arriving at the camp, Sylvia Kobayashi says, "I can't forget the feeling of total rejection, the feeling of not belonging, the feeling of complete emptiness."

Adjustment Minidoka was not finished when Nikkei arrived in August 1942. Some incarcerated helped complete the barracks, mess halls, and other buildings. The sewage treatment plant was not completed; everyone had to use open pit toilets until February 1943. Camp conditions gradually improved but it was still a prison.

Conflict Minidoka earned a reputation for being a quiet camp, even during the "loyalty crisis" of early 1943. As a first step toward allowing incarcerated out of the camps, the US Government sent a "loyalty questionnaire" asking incarcerated to pledge their loyalty to the United States. Most Nikkei were deeply offended. Why were they still being questioned about their loyalty? Had they not shown their love for America by accepting imprisonment, unjust as it was?

Minidoka administrators tried to calm fears and frustrations by explaining that answering "yes" could help them leave the camp early or—for young men—enlist in the army. Those who answered "no" or refused to answer risked being sent to the heavily guarded Tule Lake War Segregation Center in northeastern California. Other disruptions would occur later at Minidoka, but it remained calmer than other centers.

Shikata ga nai—Japanese for "It can't be helped." Incarcerates pose for the camera even though they are deprived of freedom and privacy.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

DECADES OF SILENCE

1945-70
CHANGE DENIAL CHALLENGE

Closing Minidoka closed October 28, 1945. Nono Mitsuoka remembers mixed feelings: "Now that we were free to go as our spirit willed, we found that once again we had to face the breakup of a community which had become sort of home." Some people could return to their prewar lives. Some were welcomed into different communities. Others found their homes and businesses gone and few people willing to help. They rebuilt their lives, their livelihoods, and their communities through tenacity and hard work.

Suppressing Frank Yoshikazu Kitamoto was called "Kazu" as a youngster, but his parents called him "Frank" after the war. He says they "wanted me to be as 'American' as I could be." Kitamoto also explains that most Nikkei wanted to forget the camps. They "didn't want to bring back painful memories and were concerned about what other people would think... They had struggled to recover from the incarceration experience and reestablished their business, etc. and were afraid of a public backlash."

Questioning Nikkei who were young children in the 1940s grew into adults during the nation's turbulent civil rights era. They saw similarities between the African American experience and their own. When Roger Shimomura, who was a youngster at Minidoka, asked to interview his father for a high-school project, his father replied "We don't talk about that in this house so don't bring it up again." But over time the incarcerated began to tell their stories.

Dad never talked about it, none of it.
I never heard him say the word "Minidoka."

Larry Matsuda

HOPE, AWARENESS, ACTION

1970-today
JUSTICE FREEDOM REMEMBRANCE

Some Nikkei had been working since the war to right the wrongs committed against them, and they finally saw progress. In 1976, President Gerald Ford formally terminated EO 9066. He said, "We have learned from the tragedy of that long-ago experience forever to treasure liberty and justice for each individual American, and resolve that this kind of action shall never again be repeated." A congressional commission released a report in 1983 that stated: "The broad historical causes which shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of government leadership." This report was quoted again in the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which provided a presidential apology and reparation payments to 82,000 former incarcerated.

Today most of the former camps have a reunion or pilgrimage honoring the sacrifices of Japanese American incarcerated. Japanese Americans around the country also commemorate February 19—the day that FDR signed EO 9066—as a "national day of remembrance."

This is not just a Japanese American story but an American story with implications for the world.

Frank Kitamoto

Over 70 years ago, more than 110,000 people were imprisoned by the United States because they looked like the enemy. They broke their silence so that all could learn from their experience. They continue to speak out because they know that this could happen again. They say *nidoto nai yoni*—Let it not happen again.

In 2004, pilgrims hung origami cranes on a parasol in memory of loved ones and as symbols of the incarcerated's ability to rebuild their lives.



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Minidoka pilgrims often wear a tag like incarcerated did during evacuation.

MINIDOKA PILGRIMAGE PLANNING COMMITTEE



Walking in Their Footsteps



Five miles of barbed wire fencing and eight guard towers went up three months after Minidoka opened. Center administrators reported “the sudden appearance of the fence was greatly resented by the residents.” Much of the fence soon came down and the towers were not staffed.



It is unendurably hot and dusty, though eventually I'll get used to it.

Hanaye Matsushita

Incarcerees turned the **desert into farmland**. They produced enough food to share with other camps. After the war, Minidoka lands were subdivided and awarded to land-lottery winners. This agricultural legacy of Minidoka continues today.

LIFE IN HUNT CAMP

Yoshi Uchiyama Tani remembers “the sense of community that developed as we tried to make the most of our situation.” Incarcerees organized churches, recreational activities, and a consumer cooperative. They also planted gardens to bring beauty and familiar food back into their lives.

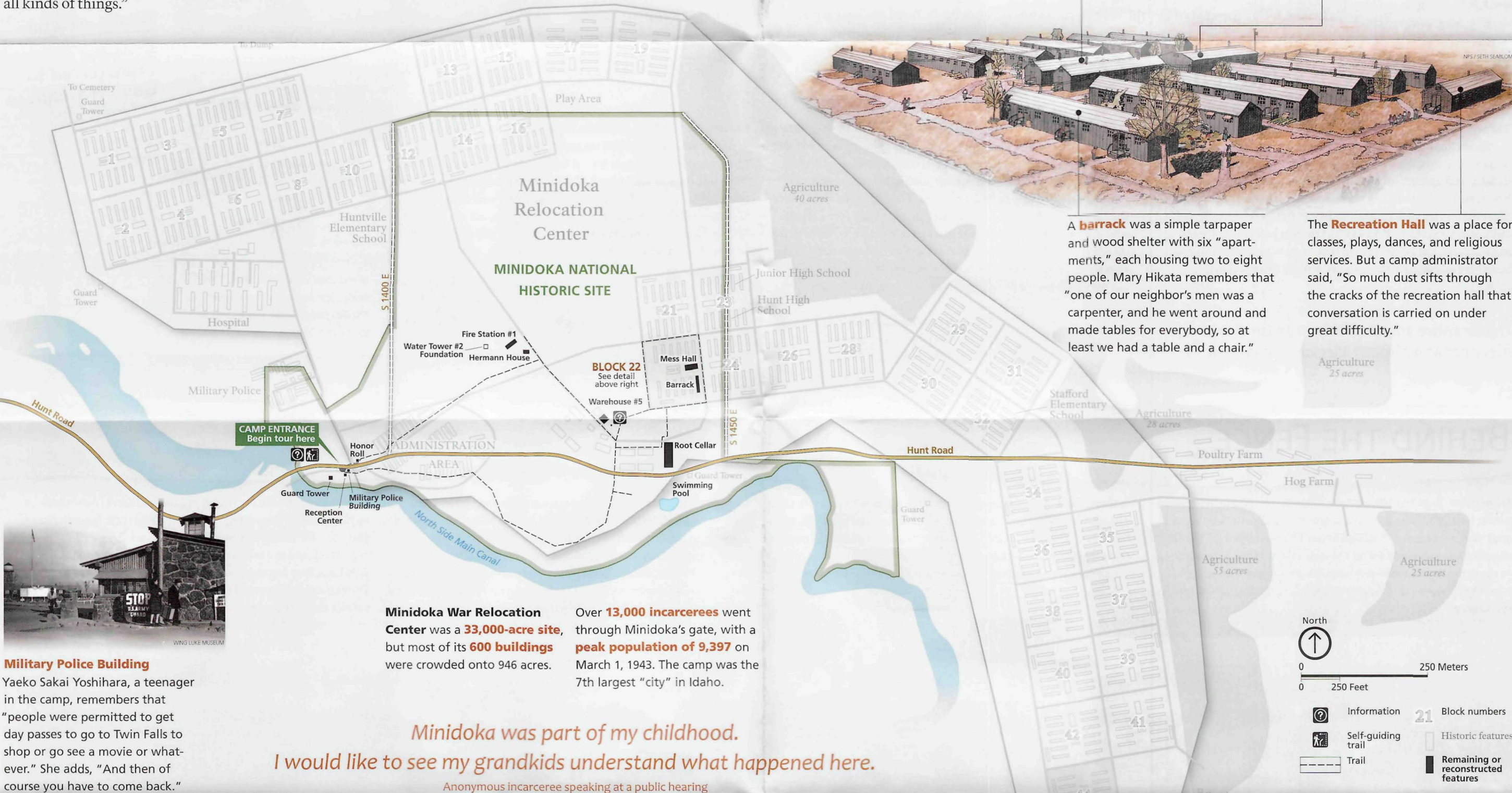
Children were busy making new friends. Hisa Matsu-daira, who had come from a farm far from other kids, says, “So you step out the door here and here they all are. I played a lot. . . . We played marbles, jacks, jump-rope . . . all kinds of things.”

Incarcerees helped camp neighbors too. The Amalgamated Sugar Company wrote, “Thousands of volunteer victory workers from Hunt have helped to thin, cultivate and harvest sugar beets . . . thus precious crops have been saved.” In August 1943, Minidoka firefighters helped subdue a wildfire 60 miles from camp. Such efforts helped many Idaho residents better understand these people imprisoned by prejudice.

Block 22 As you walk around Block 22, envision all twelve barracks in place plus three other buildings, with 300 people moving about. Imagine walking to the entrance, to the schools, or to visit friends in blocks 1 or 44. (Block 1 is about 3 miles from Block 44.)

At first, everyone dreaded going to the **Latrine** because the toilets and showers were in open rooms. Resourceful women made stalls out of cardboard or held up sheets for each other to provide some privacy.

The **Mess Hall** symbolized the changes in their lives. Yaeko Sakai Yoshihara recalls, “When we ate, we ate with friends. And so we didn’t eat with our families. It kind of broke down that family unit.”



Military Police Building
Yaeko Sakai Yoshihara, a teenager in the camp, remembers that “people were permitted to get day passes to go to Twin Falls to shop or go see a movie or whatever.” She adds, “And then of course you have to come back.”

Minidoka War Relocation Center was a **33,000-acre site**, but most of its **600 buildings** were crowded onto 946 acres. Over **13,000 incarcerated** went through Minidoka’s gate, with a **peak population of 9,397** on March 1, 1943. The camp was the 7th largest “city” in Idaho.

Minidoka was part of my childhood. I would like to see my grandkids understand what happened here.

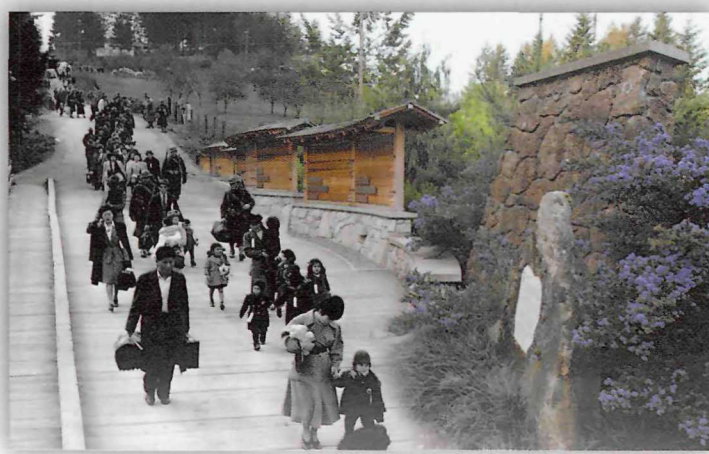
Anonymous incarcerated speaking at a public hearing

VISITING MINIDOKA TODAY

This remote land teemed with thousands of men, women, and children between 1942 and 1945. As you visit Minidoka, listen for their voices. Perhaps you will hear echoes of people and events in your own life. Look in the distance to the enduring legacy of the still-active farms. Exhibits along the 1.6-mile trail identify the historic structures and landscape, describe camp life, and explain how the center operated.



The Congressional Gold Medal (far left) was awarded to 19,000 Japanese American soldiers in World War II, many of whom had family in war relocation centers. The honor roll (left) lists soldiers from Minidoka. They served in many branches of the military, including the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, 100th Battalion, Military Intelligence Service, Women’s Army Corps, and Army Nurse Corps.



Minidoka National Historic Site is a developing national park unit, managed by Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument in Hagerman, Idaho. The historic site, near Jerome, Idaho, is open year-round during daylight hours. Information is available at both locations. Call ahead or check the park website for hours, programs, and activities. Information about the unit on Bainbridge Island, Washington, is at far right.

Safety and Regulations
Wear sturdy footwear, a hat, and sunscreen. • Bring water. • In winter, check road conditions to the site. • Pets are not allowed on the trail. • Check the park website for firearms regulations.

Accessibility
We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to the Hagerman Visitor Center, call, or check our website.

The National Park Service cares for other sites where Japanese Americans were incarcerated: Manzanar National Historical Site and Tule Lake Unit in California, and Honouliuli National Monument in Hawaii.

Minidoka National Historic Site
PO Box 570
Hagerman, ID 83332
208-933-4100
www.nps.gov/miin

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Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial
This memorial on Bainbridge Island, Washington, is part of Minidoka National Historic Site. It honors the first Japanese Americans forced from their homes under Executive Order 9066 (see *other side of the brochure*).

The memorial is a joint effort of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial Association, the Bainbridge Island Historical Museum, the Bainbridge Island Metropolitan Park and Recreation District,

the City of Bainbridge Island, and the National Park Service. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park-Seattle Unit provides National Park Service administrative assistance.

For visiting information or tours, contact the Bainbridge Island Historical Museum at 206-842-2773 or go to bainbridgehistory.org or bijac.org.