

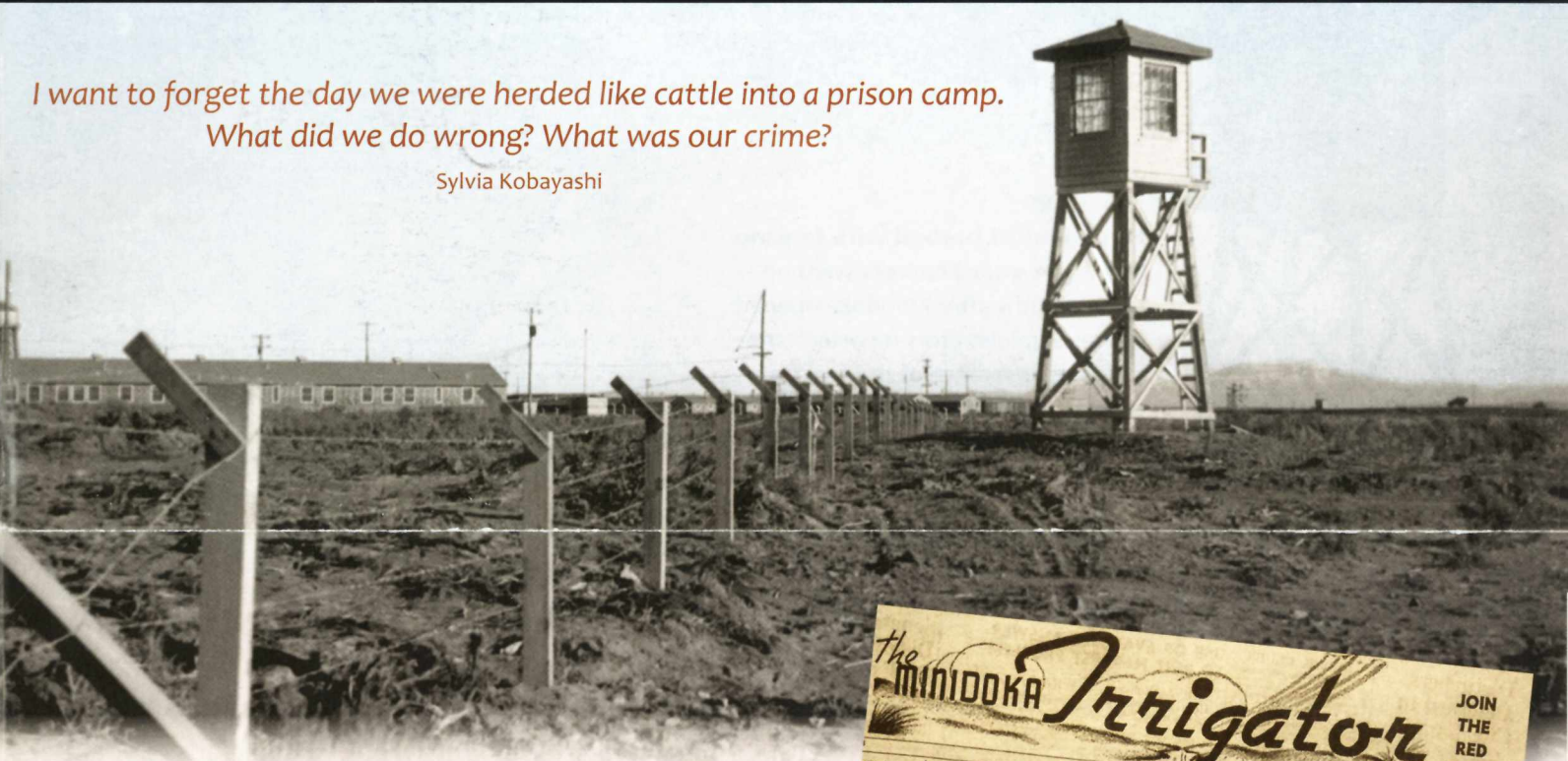


MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND INDUSTRY, SEATTLE

DENSHO, MAYENO FAMILY COLLECTION

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



JAPANESE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF OREGON



Aliens, Citizens Need Permits For Traveling

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

NEWSPAPER HEADLINES—DENSHO

SATURDAY, JULY 24, 1943

Evacuee Property Transferred to Gov. Warehouse

All property stored in the Seattle Buddhist Church has been removed to a government warehouse, and is being checked in as fast as possible, Evacuee Property Officer Clyde W. Linville said this



In less than six months, the US War Relocation Authority forced over 110,000 people from war exclusion zones into 10 incarceration centers.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES / FRANCIS STEWART

FREEDOM DENIED

STUNNED FRIGHTENED UNCERTAIN

February 19, 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, eventually depriving over 120,000 people of their freedom. All were Nikkei, people of Japanese ancestry. Two-thirds were American citizens. Most had to close businesses or shut down farms. All had to leave their homes. They boarded trains and buses first to temporary detention centers and later to incarceration centers. For the rest of World War II, most would remain behind barbed wire.

Over 13,000 people were incarcerated in Idaho at Minidoka 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 examples of American injustice, racial prejudice, and resilience—and explore how to ensure this never happens again.

DECADES OF PREJUDICE

1880–1942 FEAR HOSTILITY PROPAGANDA EXCLUSION

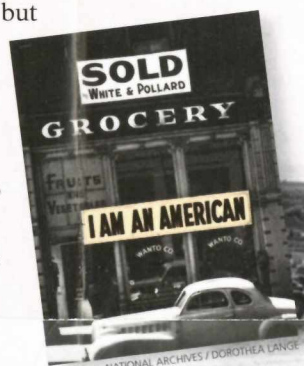
Before 1941 During the 1800s, Japanese began immigrating to the West Coast of the United States seeking work and a better life. Mostly men, they did work others did not want, like stoop labor in fields and hauling rocks in mines. Over time, many started businesses and families. But some Americans were 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 in the United States would have these rights, but not their parents.

December 7, 1941 Imperial Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Fears of a West Coast invasion increased. Incarceration survivor Louise Kashino says, “They were the enemy to us, just like everybody else felt.” Newspapers published rumors such as Nikkei 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 Nikkei 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 grocer asserts his rights but soon must close like other Nikkei shopkeepers. Most had to sell at a fraction of their stores' value. Some 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 and incarcerated under EO 9066. The Bainbridge Islanders were first sent to Manzanar Relocation Center in California. By February 1943, most had transferred to Minidoka, joining incarcerated from Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and California.

BEHIND THE FENCE

1942–44 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 several months while Minidoka was built. Sylvia Kobayashi says of arriving at the incarceration center, “I can't forget the feeling of total rejection, the feeling of not belonging, the feeling of complete emptiness.”

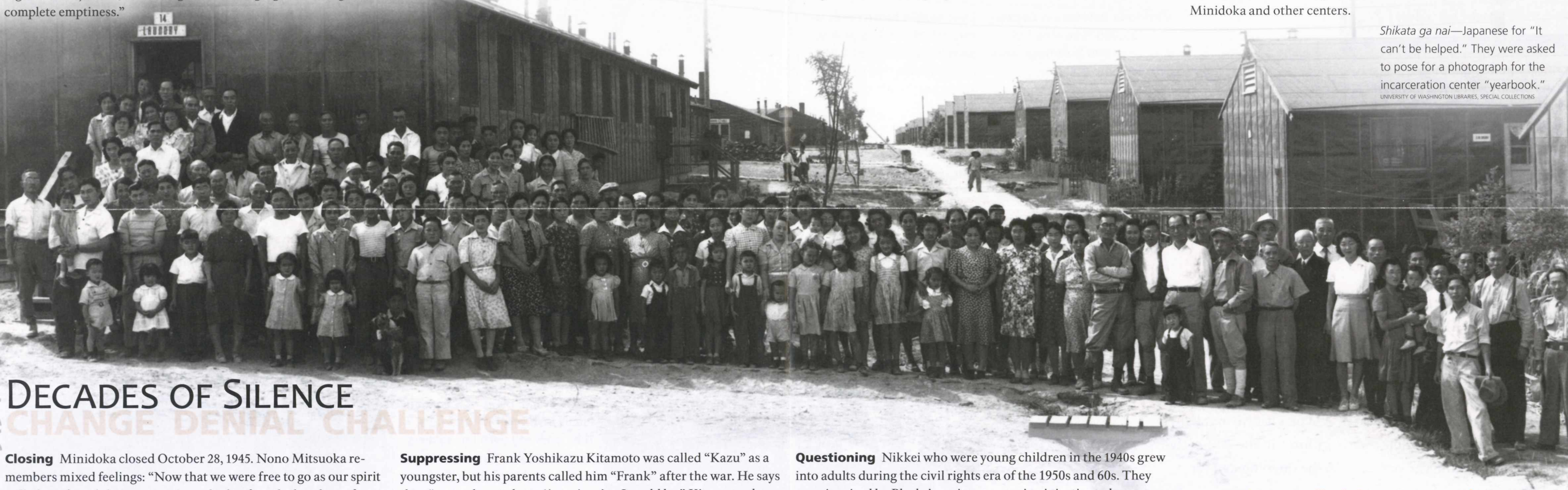
Adjustment Minidoka was not finished when Nikkei arrived in August 1942. Some incarcerated completed the barracks, mess halls, and other buildings. Everyone had to use open-pit toilets until the sewage treatment plant was completed in February 1943. Living conditions gradually improved, but it still felt like a prison.

Conflict In early 1943, the US Government required incarcerated to answer a survey that ultimately tested their loyalty. The government saw this as a first step toward allowing incarcerated out of the centers, but most Nikkei were deeply offended. They had not done anything wrong or been charged with a crime. And yet they were being tested on their loyalty.

Minidoka administrators tried to calm fears and frustrations by explaining that answering “yes” could help them leave the incarceration center early or—for young men—enlist in the army. Those who answered “no” or refused to answer risked being sent to the maximum-security Tule Lake Segregation Center in northeastern California. Other disruptions like labor strikes would occur later at Minidoka and other centers.

Shikata ga nai—Japanese for “It can't be helped.” They were asked to pose for a photograph for the incarceration center “yearbook.”

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.” A few people could return to their prewar lives. But most Nikkei found their homes and businesses gone. Many had to rebuild their livelihoods back on the West Coast and in new communities across the country.

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 incarceration. 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 civil rights era of the 1950s and 60s. They were inspired by Black Americans exposing injustice to learn more about their own families' incarceration. Roger Shimomura, who was a youngster at Minidoka, asked to interview his father for a high-school project. His father refused, saying, “We don't talk about that in this house so don't bring it up again.” But over time the older incarceration survivors began to tell their stories.

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

Lawrence Matsuda

HOPE, AWARENESS, ACTION

1970–today JUSTICE FREEDOM REMEMBRANCE

Some Nikkei had been working since the war to right the wrongs committed against them. Several decades later, 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 political leadership.” This report was quoted again in the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which provided a presidential apology and reparation payments to over 82,000 incarceration survivors.

Today, some former incarceration sites hold a pilgrimage where survivors, descendants, and allies remember the incarceration and continue healing. Nikkei around the country also commemorate February 19—the day that FDR signed EO 9066—as a national day of remembrance.

Over 80 years ago, more than 120,000 people were incarcerated by the United States because they looked like the enemy. Nikkei have broken their silence so that all could learn from their experience. They continue to speak out to ensure history is not repeated. They say *nidoto nai yoni*—Let it not happen again.



Minidoka pilgrims often wear tags like those worn during the forced removal.



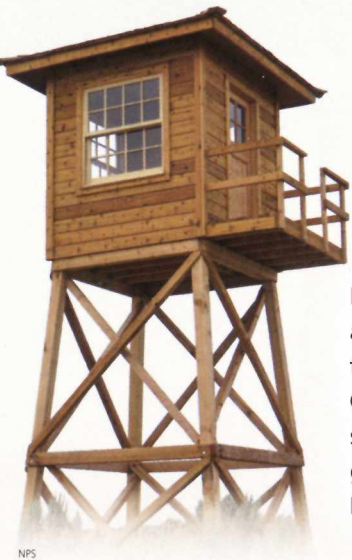
In 2004, pilgrims hung origami cranes on a parasol in memory of the people incarcerated at Minidoka.



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Frank Kitamoto

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.

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 store. 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 local farmers 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 the center. Such efforts helped build relationships between the Idaho residents and the incarcerationees.

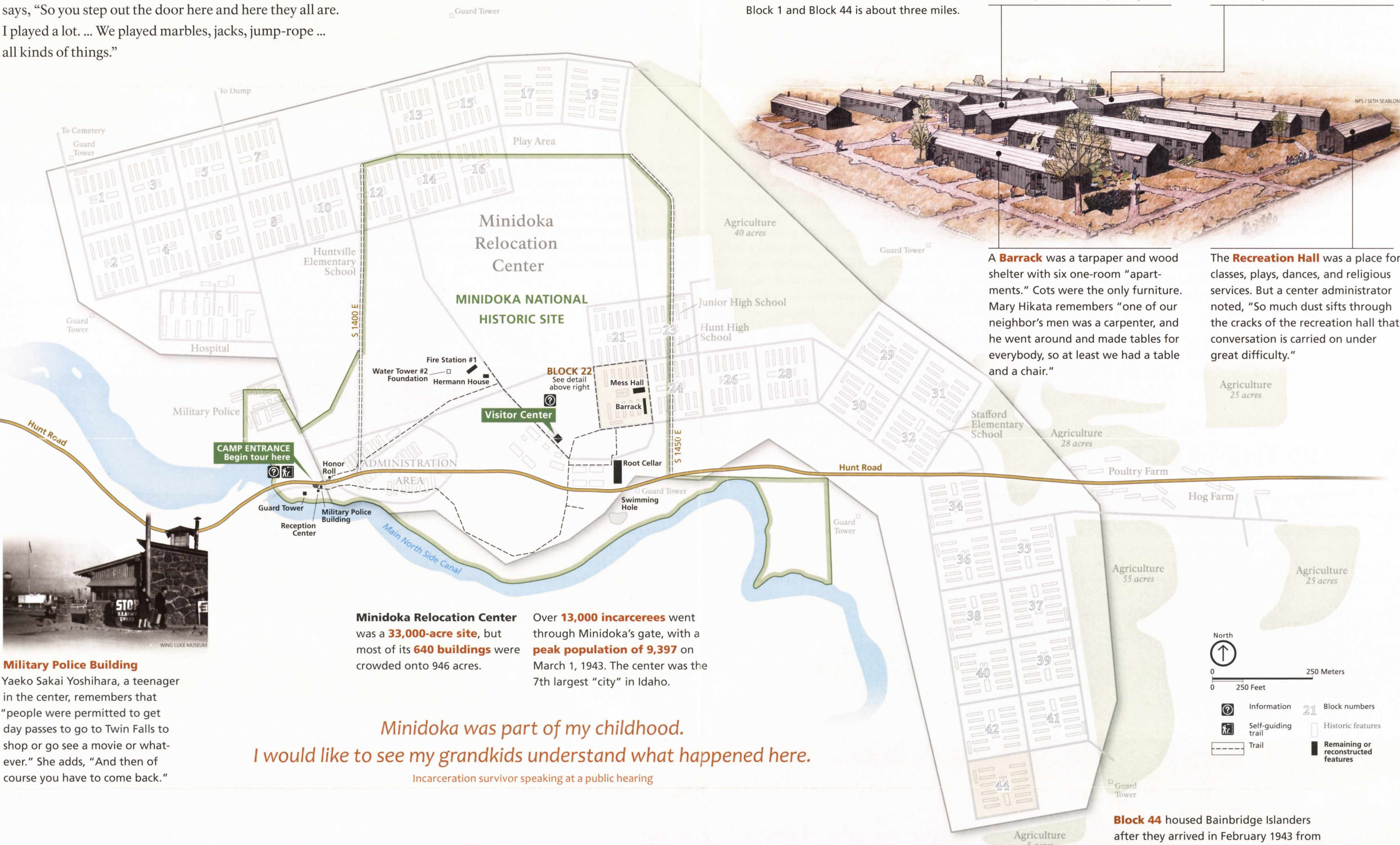
It is unendurably hot and dusty, though eventually I’ll get used to it.

Hanaye Matsushita

Incarcerees turned the desert into farmland. They produced enough food to share with other centers. After the war, Minidoka lands were subdivided and awarded to white World War II veterans. This agricultural legacy surrounds the site today.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES



Military Police Building
Yaeko Sakai Yoshihara, a teenager in the center, 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 Relocation Center was a 33,000-acre site, but most of its 640 buildings were crowded onto 946 acres. Over 13,000 incarcerationees went through Minidoka’s gate, with a peak population of 9,397 on March 1, 1943. The center was the 7th largest “city” in Idaho.

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

Incarceration survivor speaking at a public hearing

VISITING MINIDOKA TODAY

Thousands of men, women, and children were incarcerated on this remote land from 1942 to 1945. Although very little of the center physically remains, the stories of its occupants are preserved here for you to discover. As you visit Minidoka, listen for their voices. Their legacy endures in the still-active farms that surround the park and in the ongoing call for civil liberties.

Minidoka National Historic Site, near Jerome, Idaho, is open year-round during daylight hours for you to walk its 1.6-mile trail. Exhibits identify historic structures and provide insight into center operations and community life.

The visitor center offers a 30-minute film and interactive exhibits about incarceration experiences here. Call ahead or check the park website for visitor center hours, Junior Ranger and other programs, and activities.

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. • Federal law protects all natural and cultural features; do not disturb or damage.

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

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

Minidoka National Historic Site
1428 Hunt Road
Jerome, ID 83338
208-825-4169
www.nps.gov/miin

Follow us on social media.
Emergencies call 911



The Congressional Gold Medal (far left) was awarded to 19,000 Japanese American soldiers in World War II. Many of them had family in incarceration 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.



Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial
A unit of Minidoka National Historic Site, this memorial honors the Japanese Americans of Bainbridge Island, Washington. They were the first to be removed from their homes and incarcerated during World War II under Executive Order 9066. The memorial is open dawn to dusk; staffing is limited. A film and the Junior Ranger booklet are available online and at Klondike Gold Rush—Seattle. For more information about visiting the site, go to: www.nps.gov/miin www.nps.gov/klse www.bijac.org