

Camp Layout



In the early months of 1942, following America’s entry into World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the U.S. Army to remove nearly 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry from their homes and communities on the West Coast; 80,000 of whom were American citizens. Tule Lake was one of ten remote War Relocation Centers to which they were sent. Enclosed by barbed wire, the 7,400 acres center contained barracks, mess halls, and other buildings to house the 18,789 incarcerated Japanese Americans and 1,200 military and civilian staff who lived there between May of 1942 and March of 1946.

Typical Block

Construction of the Tule Lake War Relocation Center began on April 15, 1942, and was designed to house 12,000 people. By September 1942 the population had reached 15,276. In 1943 Tule Lake became a segregation center and expanded to accommodate 15,000, but despite attempts to accommodate all those sent to the center it nevertheless became overpopulated as it reached a peak population of 18,789.

The Tule Lake War Relocation Center had 74 residential blocks divided into eight wards. Each ward was separated by a 200-foot-wide firebreak and most wards comprised of nine blocks. The exceptions to this were Ward 6, having only six blocks, and Ward 8, having thirteen blocks.

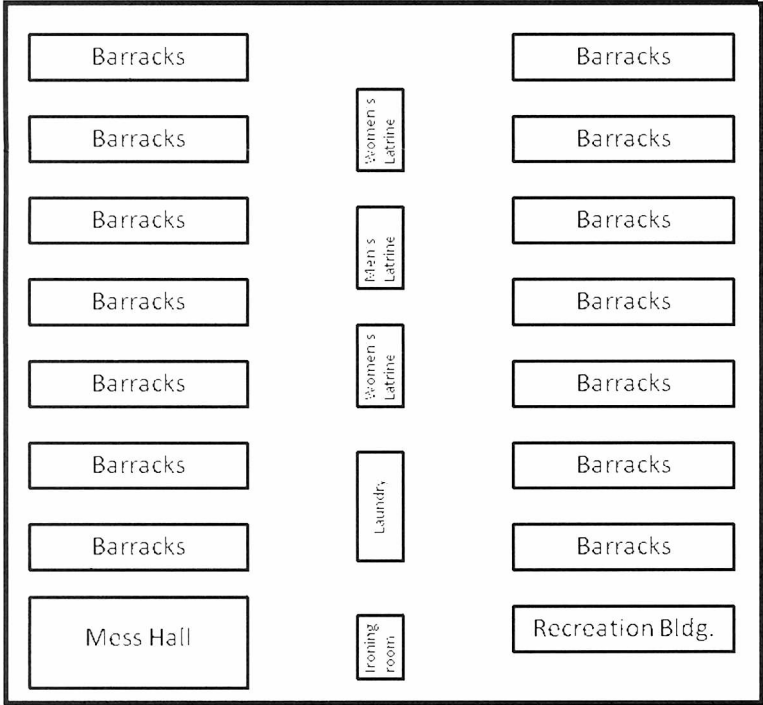
Each block had 14 residential barracks, (20ft wide by 100ft long) which were typically divided into four to six rooms. WCCA policy was to allot a space of 200 square feet per couple. However, many families, regardless of family size, were housed in either 16ft by 20ft, 20ft by 20ft, or 24ft by 20ft room. Blocks

typically had men’s and women’s latrines and showers, laundry and ironing rooms, a recreation building, and a mess hall. Each block housed approximately 300 people and was set up in an attempt to create a basic community unit.

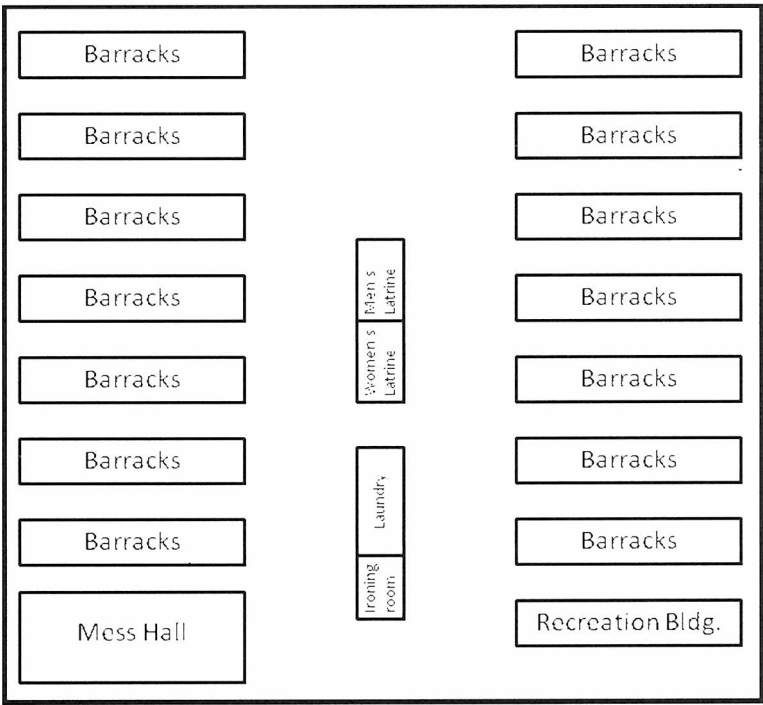
Each room was furnished with a single light bulb hung from the ceiling, a coal burning pot-bellied stove, and up to eight cots. One outdoor faucet provided water for each barrack. The recreation buildings were used for offices, stores, canteens, beauty parlors, barber shops, judo halls, and churches.

After the Tule Lake Segregation Center closed in 1946 the barracks were dispersed throughout the Tulelake basin and turned into houses by homesteaders. Many of the other buildings are no longer on the site, but concrete slabs of the latrines and guard towers can still be found.

Outside of the residential barracks area, the historic jail remains and can be visited via a ranger guided tour.



Typical Block Built in 1942



Typical Block Built After 1943

