

# Camp Tulelake



World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument,  
Tule Lake Unit

PO Box 1240

Tulelake, California 96134



# Introduction

Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1935, Camp Tulelake operated until 1942, housing at least four different companies of men. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program was one part of the “New Deal” legislation designed to ease the effects of the Great Depression by putting young men between the ages of 18-25 back to work. The program sought to teach these men new skills that would help them find employment at the end of their period of enlistment, as well as instill in them a sense of army discipline. Following the United State’s entry in World War II, the program ended, and most men enlisted in the army. During the war, the camp found other uses; persons of Japanese ancestry from the Tule Lake Segregation Center (commonly known as a Japanese American Internment camp) and German prisoners of war alike would briefly make Camp Tulelake their home. At the conclusion of World War II, the Fish and Wildlife Service used the buildings as a sign shop for the Pacific region until the mid 1970s. The camp lay vacant and deteriorating until 2006 when the Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge Association successfully applied for a grant to preserve the camp before it was too late. Volunteer efforts by the Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge Association and the Lava Beds Natural History Association stabilized part of the remaining barracks building. Camp Tulelake became a part of the Tule Lake Unit of World War II Valor in Pacific National Monument in 2008, and the National Park Service continues to work in partnership with Fish and Wildlife Service to continue preservation and interpretation efforts.





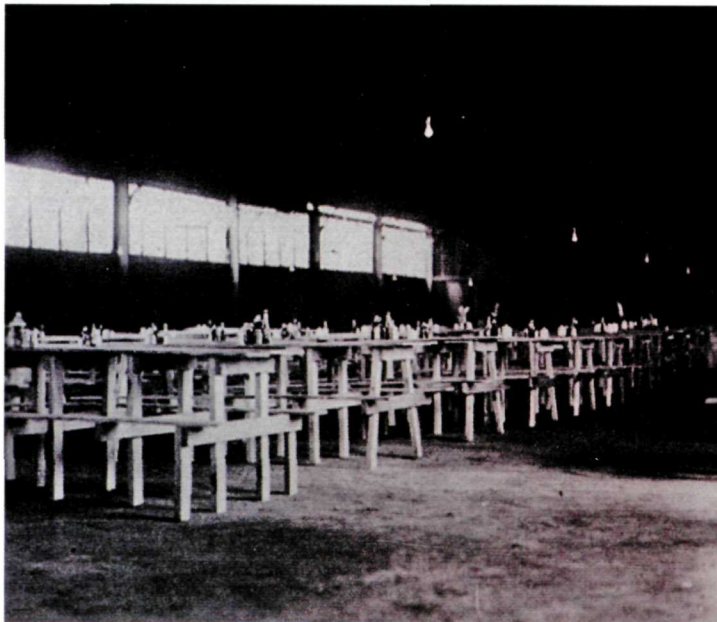
The buildings photographed below are identified by shading on the historic camp map shown on the previous page.





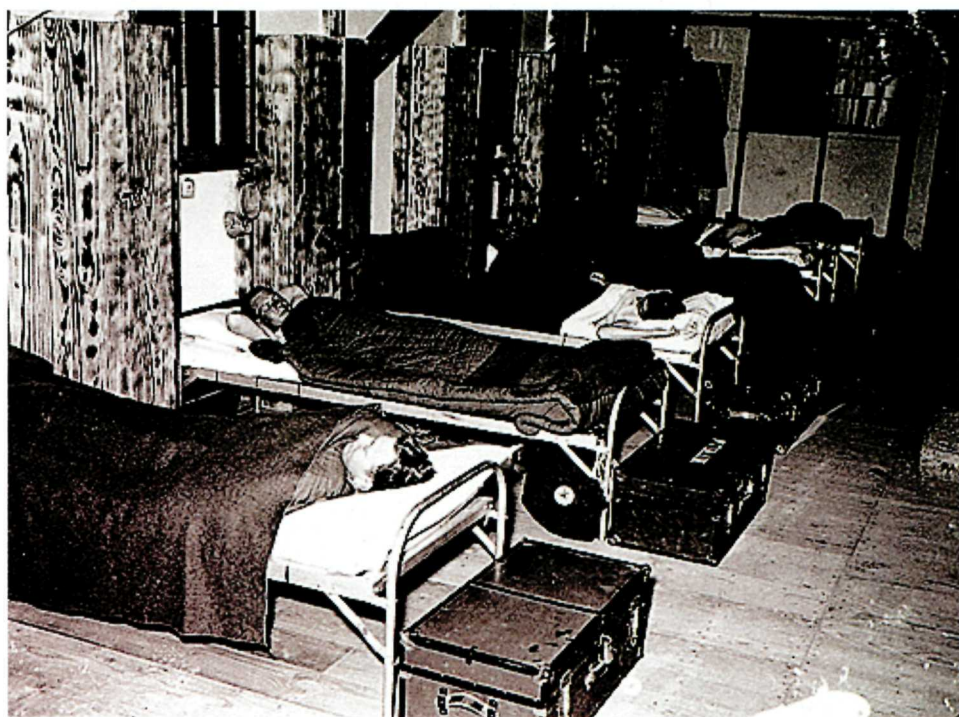
The Civilian Conservation Corps stands as one of the best examples of inter-governmental cooperation. The US Army maintained day-to-day discipline in the camps, while the men did a variety of work for agencies including the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife and the Bureau of Reclamation. Throughout the camp's use, this area would have been an open courtyard. Here, men would have reported for inspections and also drilled on Saturday afternoons. Army discipline was a central tenant of the camps, and enlisted men could move up in the CCC ranks. The building (below, left) served as the officer's quarters for the army officers assigned to run the camp; today, a large mound marks the location of these quarters, as seen above.





Men enlisted in the CCC received all meals and medical care at no extra cost. Food was not fancy, but plentiful and often better than what they had to eat in their home communities. During the Great Depression, many families could not afford to feed themselves. Men often sacrificed their own portions to help feed their wives, children or parents. Having three large meals a day, then, was a welcome change for many men coming to the CCC camps. Some goods were shipped in monthly, but most of the food, particularly fresh meat and vegetables were purchased locally. Not only did this provide better quality meals, but it also assisted the local economy. Meals for holidays like Thanksgiving were extra special, leaving many men to wish that “Thanksgiving would come more often.” Beyond the mess hall would have been a hospital unit, which no longer stands today. A camp doctor provided basic care, including routine vaccinations. A dentist would have also regularly visited the camp.

Men enlisted in the CCC slept in army barracks in a seemingly endless line of cots. A CCC company typically consisted of about 200 men who would have been divided between the three u-shaped barracks. The fourth u-shaped barracks on the map served as the education and recreation building. The army provided beds, linens and uniforms for all enlisted men, and they were expected to adhere to army standards. Men had little opportunity for privacy, and the barracks were inspected for cleanliness each day. One Saturday per month, the men spent up to four hours thoroughly cleaning their home, even airing the mattresses.



CCC men began their days with a wakeup call as early as 5am. Following breakfast and inspection, the men would have departed for their work projects. Work projects included road building, stone wall and building construction, soil and game monitoring and other tasks. For their work, men earned \$1 per day or about \$30 per month. Men received \$5 as personal spending money, while the remaining \$25 went to support the man's family. Those who had no family were required to place the money in a savings account to help support them after they left the CCC. This practice helped spread around the economic benefits; \$25 went to communities all over the country to help improve conditions for families, while the CCC men took their spending money to local communities, supporting their economies.



### **Daily Schedule**

5am: Wakeup call

6am: Breakfast

7am: Inspection & Load trucks for work

7:30am-4pm: Work Project

4pm: Return to camp and prepare for evening activities

5pm: Evening Flag ceremony

6pm: Dinner

7-lights out: Recreation and Education activities



After a long day of work, men enlisted in the CCC had time to relax. Inside the recreation building, men enjoyed card games or entertained each other with skits and music. The CCC also offered weekend truck service to Klamath Falls, where men could see a movie, shop or even date local girls. A few even met their wives this way! Attached to the recreation building was the education building. A main goal of the CCC was to teach men the skills they needed to successfully apply for jobs elsewhere after their six month enlistment periods. As many men did not have beyond a grade school education, many courses focused on academic subjects, like math and reading. Courses also included practical skills such as welding, diesel engine repair, typing and first aid. If the curriculum

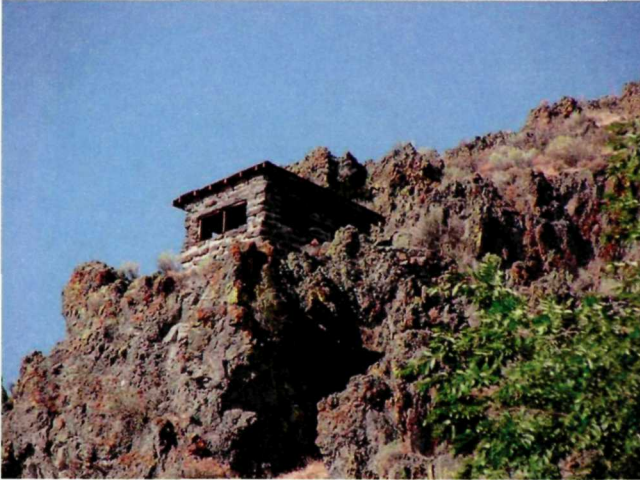
did not offer a particular skill or course needed for advancement, men could request that it be added.





This building served as a garage, workshop and storage space. The camp newspaper proudly notes the installation of “truck pullers” on the camp trucks, which would allow vehicles to be pulled from the burning building without requiring men to enter. The garage and workshop area are some of our most fragile buildings today; recent harsh winters have sped up the deterioration process considerably. Inside the building, you can still see the concrete slabs for the garage, as well as assorted signage.

The day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States entered World War II. The attack on Pearl Harbor shocked and frightened Americans, but also caused a surge of patriotic feeling. The war effort mobilized all Americans to assist in the war effort by working in defense plants, joining the military or simply making sacrifices in their daily lives. Men in the CCC were swept up in the war as well, and many left to join the armed forces. By early 1942,



the number of CCC enrollees dwindled, and in mid 1942 the program ended as there were not enough men to work on the projects. Those still in the CCC when the program ended quickly found work in defense plants or

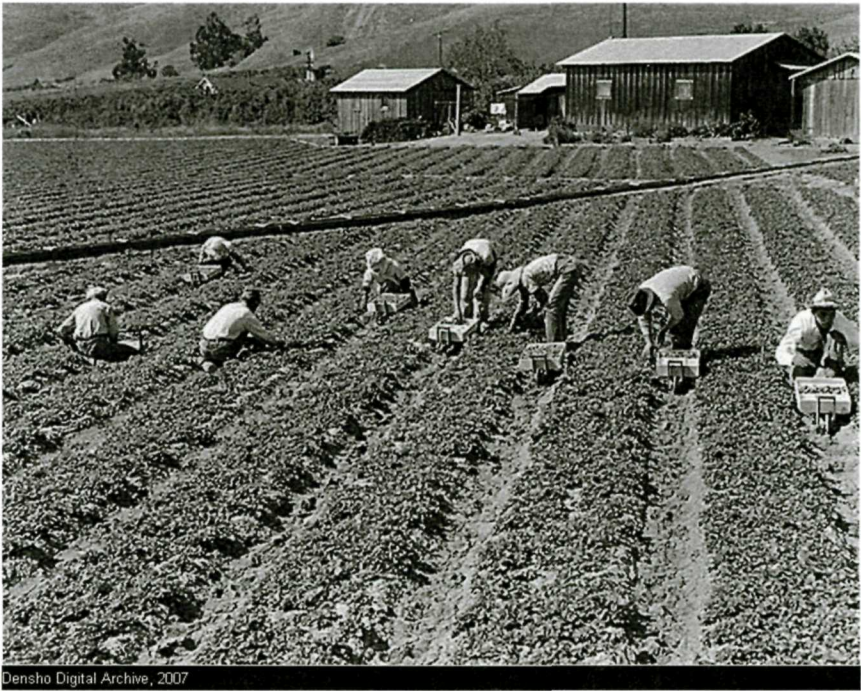
enlisted in the armed forces. The legacy of the CCC lives on in some of the many work projects they accomplished, as pictured.



The events at Pearl Harbor created another surge of strong feelings, this time against the Japanese Americans. Many Americans believed that the Japanese Americans whose features and culture seemed alien to them were in fact agents of the Japanese government. Others, envious of Japanese Americans material success, sought a way to undermine Japanese American farms and small businesses. Following pressure from residents, politicians and the military on the West Coast, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. This order stated that a military commander could declare military areas from which civilians could be excluded. California, along with parts of Arizona, Oregon and Washington became Military Area #1; all persons of Japanese ancestry were excluded. Japanese American families received evacuation orders, which ordered them to report to an assembly center where they were assigned to a Relocation Center.



The Tule Lake Relocation Center (later, the Tule Lake Segregation Center), built approximately 10 miles outside of Tulelake in present day Newell, and did not use any of the facilities from the CCC camp at Camp Tulelake. However, in 1943, Japanese Americans who refused to answer a loyalty questionnaire were held at Camp Tulelake for about 30 days. During this time, they improved camp infrastructure before being transferred back to the Tule Lake Segregation Center.



Densho Digital Archive, 2007

Later in 1943, Japanese American internees working on the camp farm went on strike to protest a truck accident. The accident, which killed the driver and injured five others, angered the incarcerated population, many of whom felt that poor maintenance caused the accident. They began a work stoppage until safety measures improved. Concerned that the crops might be lost if not immediately harvested and preferring not to negotiate with the strikers, camp directors brought in Japanese American internees from other camps to harvest the crops. These strikebreakers earned \$1 per hour, easily making in two days what a Tule Lake worker earned in a month. To protect the strikebreakers from the anger of the striking population at the Tule Lake Relocation Center, the strikebreakers were housed at Camp Tulelake.

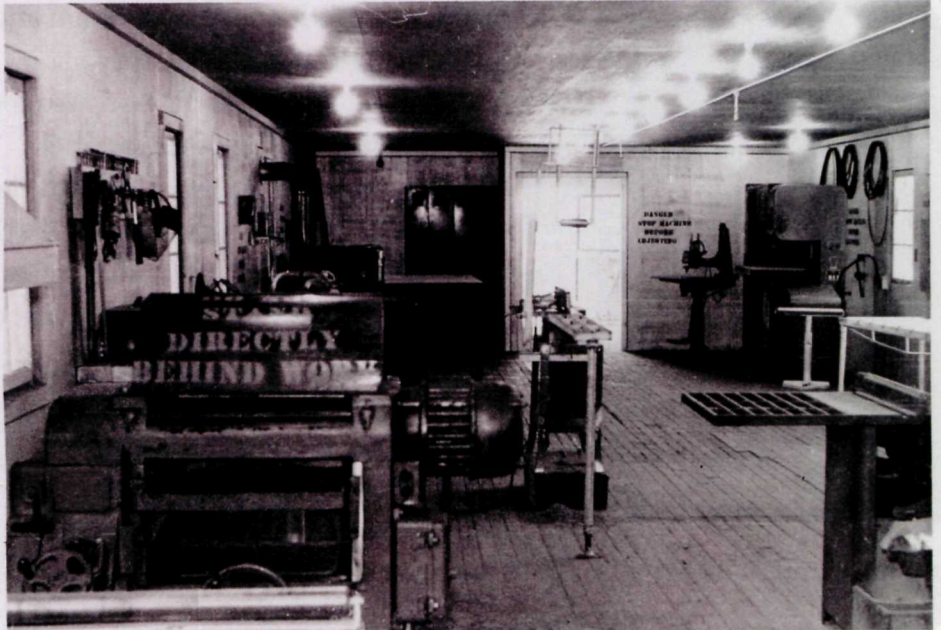
## Prisoners of War at Camp Tulelake

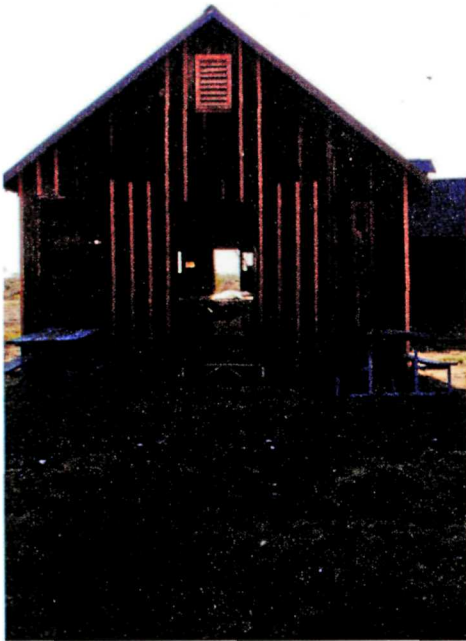
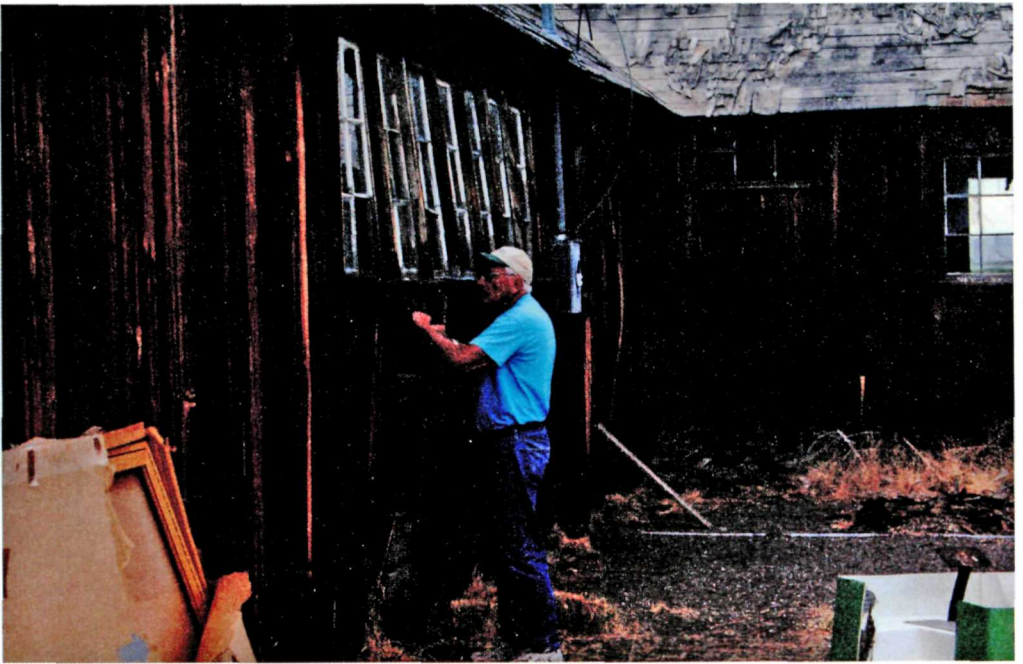


The Klamath Basin economy was almost entirely based on farming, and by 1944, the area farmers faced a labor crisis. Most men who could have been hired to harvest crops had been sent to war, and due to the labor shortage, most migrant workers did not need to travel as far north as Tulelake to find work. The farmers petitioned the government for help. In response, the government converted Camp Tulelake to a Prisoner of War (POW) camp. 150 Italian prisoners made some changes to the existing camp, including adding four guard towers. Beginning in June, German POWs would live in the camp for the next 18 months, helping farmers through two growing seasons. At its peak, the camp held 800 German POWs, who were essential to the harvest. Most of them proved to be hard and willing workers and formed close friendships with local farmers.

## After World War II

World War II ended in 1945 and by 1946, all German POWs returned to Germany. The camp would not be vacant long, though. In 1958, the US Fish and Wildlife Service established a sign shop for the Pacific region in the remaining buildings. Safety reminders painted on the wall are a clear reminder of this period of the camp's life today. The mess hall was converted to housing for seasonal employees during the 1960s. In 1975, the Fish and Wildlife Service closed the sign shop, tore down a few buildings, moved a few others and left behind the buildings seen today. Camp Tulelake lay vacant until 2006.





Working through a Preserve America's History grant in 2006, the Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge Association and the Lava Beds Natural History Association, volunteer groups, worked to stabilize the wing of the barrack open to the public today. Through the continued efforts of the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service and through the support and service of our volunteer groups, we hope to extend our stabilization and preservation efforts to the remaining buildings. In doing so, we will honor the legacy of the CCC to conserve our

resources and our own mission to preserve and protect.



Your comments are important to us! Please help us shape the future of the Tule Lake National Monument by writing comments below. Either return the card to a ranger or simply fold it in half, tape it shut and place it in the mail.

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