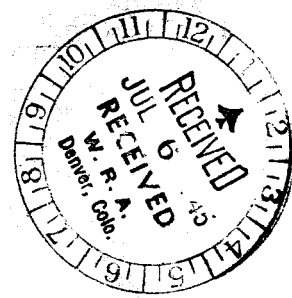


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Relocating Japanese Americans



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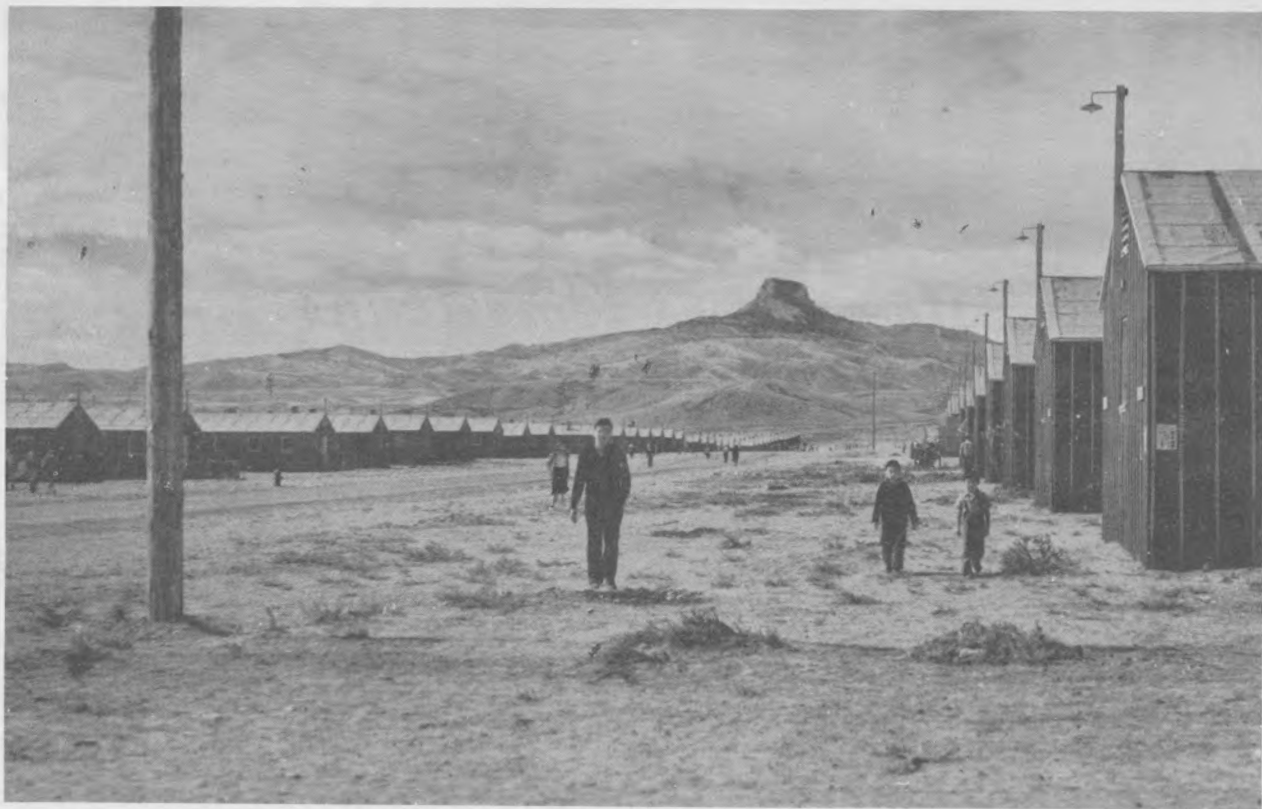
WAF RELOCATION AUTHORITY

May, 1945

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

26879347

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LOOKING DOWN F STREET TOWARD HEART MOUNTAIN. THIS IS THE MAIN THOROUGHFARE OF THE HEART MOUNTAIN RELOCATION CENTER.

BACKGROUND

During the spring and summer of 1942, the United States Government carried out one of the largest controlled migrations in history. This was the movement of 110,000 people of Japanese descent from their homes on the Pacific Coast to ten wartime communities newly constructed in seven states west of the Mississippi river.

At that time invasion of the West Coast appeared possible, and the Western Defense Command established a zone composed of the western half of Washington and Oregon, all of California and the southern third of Arizona, from which all people of Japanese ancestry were excluded. There was no charge of mass disloyalty against them. They were evacuated solely on the basis of military necessity. Roughly two-thirds of the 110,000 individuals involved in the exclusion were Nisei, or American citizens by birth. The remaining third were Issei, or Japanese immigrants who, in common with all other Orientals, had been denied the right of naturalization.

The evacuation was conducted by the Army. The evacuees were gathered at several assembly centers from which they were sent to the ten relocation

centers. At these points they became the responsibility of the War Relocation Authority, an agency formed on March 18, 1942, under Executive Order 9102. This new agency was delegated the authority to formulate and carry out a program for the relocation of these people whose pattern of life had been so summarily shattered by the exigencies of war.

EARLY PERIOD

The relocation centers should not be confused with internment camps for aliens of enemy nationality suspected of acts or intentions against the national security. They were established for the major purpose of serving as temporary wartime homes where the evacuees might live pending their re-absorption into private employment and normal American life.

Within the centers WRA sought to maintain insofar as possible all basic American institutions. Citizens were privileged to vote by mail in the communities where they formerly resided. Center newspapers were published in which the evacuees were allowed to express themselves freely. Mail was uncensored; self government was encouraged; freedom of worship was permitted.

Education was set up and maintained at three levels: nursery, intermediate, and high school. Early in the history of the centers, leave was given to students who could arrange to continue education in colleges. Hospitals were established, and because of the crowded conditions, special sanitary precautions were adopted to prevent the outbreak of epidemics. The evacuees assisted with the work necessary to the maintenance of the centers, for which they received a nominal wage. Recreational activities were encouraged.

However, in spite of all efforts, the centers were not normal American communities. Inevitably, the residents tended to become institutionalized. Living standards were never much above the bare subsistence level. Barracks were divided so that a family of four or five, typically, occupied a single room twenty by twenty-five feet. The Government furnished Army cots and blankets and small heating stoves. All other furniture was provided by the evacuees -- much of it built from excess scraps of lumber. Meals were served cafeteria style in central mess halls at a cost of less than forty-five cents per person per day. A bath, laundry, and toilet building was shared by all the residents of a block or upwards of 250 people. Most centers were enclosed by barbed wire. Ingress and



A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM AT THE ROHWER RELOCATION CENTER, MCGHEE, ARKANSAS.

egress were controlled by military guards.

The effect of this environment was to disrupt family life and to weaken parental influence. The dignity of the home was lost. The net result was to encourage inhibitions and frustration.

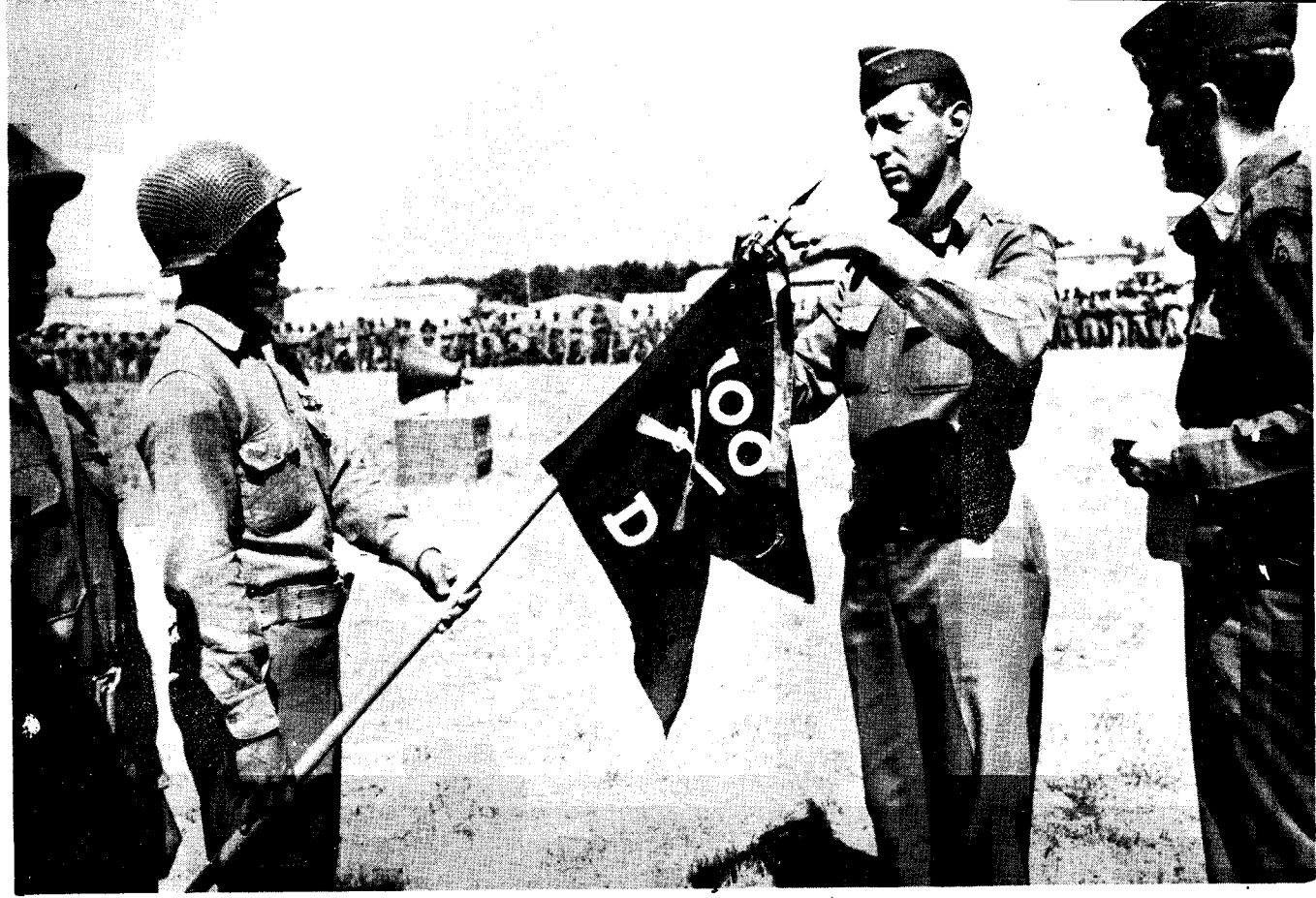
SEGREGATION

It was soon apparent that there must be a separation of those residents who preferred to identify themselves and their future with Japan, from the great mass of center residents who neither knew nor preferred other than the American way of life.

Accordingly, plans were made in May 1943, and announced in July 1943, to segregate the former category at the Tule Lake center in northern California, which was designated as the segregation center. The major part of the segregation movement took place in September and October, 1943, and was carried out in cooperation with the War Department.

MR. JOSEPH SAKAMOTO OF ELKHORN, WISCONSIN, WORKING WITH HIS NEIGHBORS. THE SAKAMOTO FAMILY IS ONE OF THREE FAMILIES FORMER RELOCATION CENTER RESIDENTS, NOW OPERATING A VEGETABLE FARM.





Included among the segregants were: (1) persons who had requested repatriation or expatriation to Japan, (2) those who refused to pledge loyalty to the United States, and (3) persons who, because of unfavorable intelligence reports or other records, indication of potential danger to the national security, were found to be ineligible to leave relocation centers under WRA leave clearance procedures. A fourth group, of considerable size, was composed of the families and dependent relatives of the segregants. Included in these four groups were undoubtedly a number of individuals, particularly older persons, who chose to be segregated because they felt that by so doing they would have the refuge of a center for the war period. Tule residents not falling in any of these groups were transferred to relocation centers. The total population at Tule Lake, as of May 12, 1945 was 17,887 of this number more than one-fourth are minor children.

MIDDLE PERIOD

The period following segregation was marked by a growing emphasis on the need to speed reloca-

tion of family groups out of the centers into productive, normal American life. Having disrupted their home lives and forced their removal, the government assumed the responsibility of finding new locations, new job opportunities for the loyal Japanese Americans. This program, begun in 1942, was expanded, developed and implemented until it became the most important phase of WRA operations.

During 1943 procedural techniques were developed which speeded leave clearance for evacuees departing both for indefinite leave and for temporary work. Considerable time and thought were spent in developing machinery for relocating older ~~tsae~~ and family groups. The young, energetic, skilled Nisei were placed easily.

Many evacuees feared the conditions they might meet outside the centers. Their confidence in themselves and in the government had been shaken. They had been uprooted once and were reluctant to face another adjustment.

Because of this understandable reluctance, committees were established within centers to fos-

← *LT. GEN. MARK W. CLARK, C.G. (NOW GENERAL) OF THE FIFTH ARMY, TYING PRESIDENTIAL CITATION BANNER ON THE COMPANY D STANDARD, 100TH INFANTRY BATTALION. THIS UNIT CONSISTS OF AMERICANS OF JAPANESE DESCENT.*

ter relocation sentiment. Welfare counselors analyzed the needs of families requiring public assistance and attempted to work out solutions through referral to local welfare agencies in the communities of resettlement. Small grants of assistance were made available to those families in need of finances to relocate. Railroad fares were paid to points of relocation and small sums advanced to meet expenses for the first few days.

Community support for the evacuees was enlisted through the cooperation of local business, religious and welfare organizations. In many states hostels were set up to provide temporary housing for evacuees during the trying period between their departure from the center and their establishment in new communities.

Most encouraging to WRA was the steadily broadening field of employment in which evacuees were placed. In the early period, the demand was almost exclusively for domestics and farm laborers. Gradually, the more skilled and professional fields were opened to Japanese Americans. Dental assistants, machinists, laboratory technicians, photographers, office and factory work are among the positions filled by the evacuees.

Relocation from the centers has tended to spread the Japanese American population somewhat more evenly across the country than in the prewar period when about 90 percent were located along the West Coast. More than 8,000 have settled in Illinois, most of these in the vicinity of Chicago; Michigan has provided homes for almost 2,000; Cleveland and the Great Lakes area of Ohio have absorbed more than 2500; while a fairly large number have found homes in New England. Utah, Idaho and Minnesota, in the order named, have provided opportunities for an increasing number of evacuees. As of May 1, the number returning to the West Coast was less than 4,000.

Public attitude in general toward the evacuee group was greatly improved by the brilliant record of the Japanese American soldiers. On January 20, 1944, National Selective Service announced that induction of Nisei into the Army through the regular draft procedure, which had been suspended in the spring of 1942, would be resumed. Later, the 442nd Combat Team, composed wholly of Nisei (both volunteer and selectees) covered itself with glory. As of April 9, 1945, this Team had won two Presidential Citations, 31 Distinguished Service Crosses, 183 Silver Stars, 218 Bronze Stars, 64 Divisional



TWO FORMER RESIDENTS OF RELOCATION CENTERS AT WORK IN A CLEVELAND, OHIO, WAR PLANT. BOTH MEN ARE VETERANS OF WORLD WAR I. THEIR EMPLOYER REPORTS THAT THEY ARE EXCELLENT WORKERS.

DR. TOM ABE, RESIDENT PHYSICIAN AT BROADLAWNS, POLK COUNTY HOSPITAL, DES MOINES, IOWA. DR. ABE AND HIS WIFE WERE FORMER RESIDENTS OF THE JEROME RELOCATION CENTER.

Citations and 3007 Purple Hearts. Such individual heroism and high group morale brought praise from army officers and acclaim from the American press. Many Japanese Americans volunteered for service in the Pacific.

FINAL PERIOD

The WRA has always felt that relocation could not be completed as long as permission to return to the West Coast was denied to the Japanese Americans. Many of the evacuees held property, both real and personal, in that area and were understandably reluctant to resettle in other sections of the country. However, when the West Coast exclusion ban was lifted on January 2, 1945, the relocation program entered its final phase.

The WRA leave regulations were revoked, and the War Department assumed responsibility for determining who were to be permitted to leave the centers and who were to be permitted to locate on the West Coast. Concurrently, the Director of WRA publicly announced that all relocation centers would close and set January 2, 1946 as the closing date.

In order to facilitate liquidation, new area

offices were established on the West Coast and in the South increasing the number of such offices to ten, each with a resident supervisor. Sub-offices were located in cities throughout the country, as needed. By the end of April, 1945, there were 48 of these district offices. The hostels and community contacts utilized in the previous year were expanded in number and became increasingly important. As families successfully relocated, other families were drawn out.

The Jerome Relocation Center located in Arkansas was the first of the ten centers to close. Decision to close this center was announced in February, 1944. It was officially closed June 30, 1944, by which time the remaining population had been transferred to other centers. Since Tule Lake had become a segregation center, and was no longer a relocation center, there remained eight relocation centers: Central Utah, Colorado River, Gila River, Granada, Heart Mountain, Manzanar, Minidoka and Rohwer, with a total population as of April 28, 1945. of 54,262.

As the WRA program enters its final phase, one of the strangest chapters of American history draws to a close. Never before has the government of the United States administered a program re-

stricting the full movement of its citizens solely on the basis of ancestry. The full effect of this uprooting of an entire segment of the population cannot be measured until time has overcome the frustrations and erased the resentments.



THREE NISEI CADET NURSES AT THE KANSAS CITY GENERAL HOSPITAL. ALL THREE OF THESE GIRLS HAVE LIVED IN RELOCATION CENTERS.



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