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THE APERTURE

RETURN TO MANZANAR

"When we are dealing with the Caucasian race we have methods that will test the loyalty of them. But when we deal with the Japanese, we are on an entirely different field." — California Attorney General Earl Warren and latter Governor and Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

The most abhorrent act since the end of slavery in the United States was the relocation of thousands of Japanese-Americans to War Relocation Centers during the Second World War. These relocation centers were located in California, Arizona, Arkansas, Utah, Colorado, Idaho and Wyoming with one of the largest and most well-known was the center at Manzanar in the Owens Valley of California.

Approximately 110,000 Japanese Americans and Japanese who lived along the Pacific coast of the United States were relocated to 10 camps called "War Relocation Camps," in the wake of Imperial Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 The internment of Japanese Americans was applied unequally throughout the United States. Japanese Americans who lived on the West Coast of the United States were all interned, while in Hawaii, where more than 150,000 Japanese Americans composed over one-third of the territory's population, 1,200 to 1,800 Japanese Americans were interned. Of those interned, 62% were American citizens.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt authorized the internment with Executive Order 9066, issued February 19, 1942, which allowed local military commanders to designate "military areas" as "exclusion zones," from which "any or all persons may be excluded." This power was used to declare that all people of Japanese ancestry were excluded from the entire Pacific coast, including all of California and most of Oregon and Washington, except for those in internment camps. In 1944, the Supreme Court (*Korematsu v. United States*) upheld the constitutionality of the exclusion orders, while noting that the provisions that singled out people of Japanese ancestry were a separate issue outside the scope of the proceedings. The United States Census Bureau assisted the internment efforts by providing confidential neighborhood information on Japanese Americans. The Bureau's role was denied for decades but was finally proven in 2007

The Owens Valley is located approximately 180 miles due north of Los Angeles and was once a thriving agricultural area until William Mulholland and the City of Los Angeles' Department of Water and Power constructed an aqueduct to take the water from Owens Lake to feed the growing needs of Los Angeles in 1913 during the infamous California Water Wars.

The water wars began when Frederick Eaton was elected mayor of Los Angeles in 1898, and appointed his friend, William Mulholland, the superintendent of the newly-created Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP).

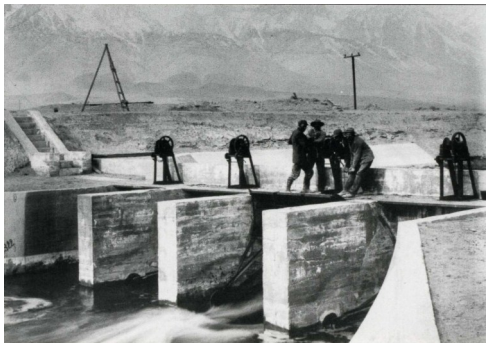
Eaton and Mulholland had a vision of a Los Angeles that would become far bigger than the Los Angeles of the turn of the century. The limiting factor of Los Angeles' growth was water supply. Eaton and Mulholland realized that the Owens Valley had a large amount of runoff from the Sierra Nevada, and a gravity-fed aqueduct could deliver the Owens water to Los Angeles.

Most of the 200 miles of canals and ditches that constituted the irrigation system in the Owens Valley in 1901 were in the north, while the southern region of the valley was mostly inhabited by people raising livestock. The irrigation systems created by the ditch companies did not have adequate drainage and as a result oversaturated the soil to the point where crops could not be raised. The irrigation systems also significantly lowered the water level in the Owens Lake (a process that was intensified later by the diversion of water through the Los Angeles Aqueduct). Around the turn of the century the northern part of the Owens Valley turned to raising fruit, poultry and dairy. The discovery of new mining fields in the northern region of the valley also aided in an economic turn-around of the area.

The southern region of the Owens Valley greatly differed from the northern region of the valley. In the south the climate was drier, irrigation was less developed and small farms were unable to compete with livestock owners with large land holdings. Most irrigable land in the south of the Owens Valley could not have water diverted to it by small, individual ditch systems. The land in the southern part of the Owens Valley required a system of canals and ditches capable of diverting part of the large Owens River. John Wesley Powell criticized laws that promoted settlement and development on the individual level and suggested that the magnitude of water diversion necessary for successful agriculture could only be achieved though many homesteaders joining together and creating irrigation districts with large-scale aqueduct systems. Each district would create its own rules and regulations for the use and division of the water for the parcels within the district.

Los Angels Aqueduct

The failure to create a system of this scale resulted in the limited and inefficient settlement in the southern part of the Owens Valley and made this region increasingly vulnerable and attractive to Los Angeles authorities as a source of water.

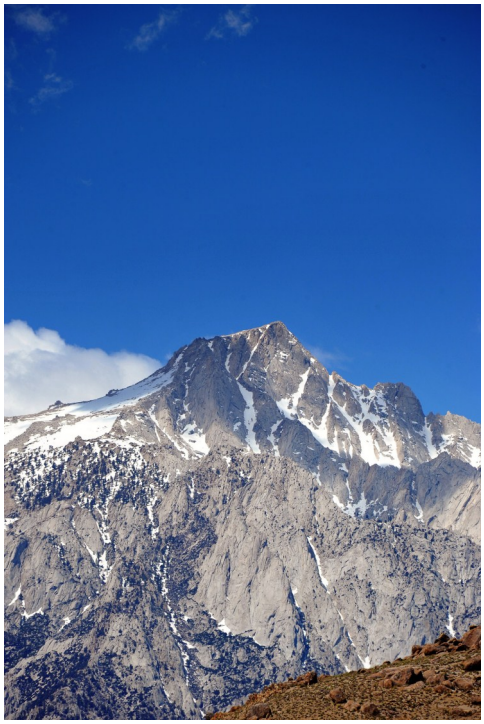


Workers test the gates on the Los Angeles Aqueduct, circa 1913

At the turn of the century, the United States Bureau of Reclamation was planning on building an irrigation system to help the farmers of the Owens Valley. However, the agent of the Bureau was a close friend of Eaton, so Eaton had access to inside information about water rights. Eaton bought land as a private citizen, hoping to sell it back to Los Angeles at a vast profit. Eaton claimed in an interview with the Los Angeles Express in 1905 that he turned over all his water rights to the city of Los Angeles without being paid for them, "except that I retained the cattle which I had been compelled to take in making the deals ... and mountain pasture land of no value except for grazing purposes."

14,505 foot Mount Whitney from US 395 in Lone Pine

Eaton lobbied Theodore Roosevelt and got the local irrigation system cancelled. Mulholland misled residents of the Owens Valley, by claiming that Los Angeles would take water only for domestic purposes, not for irrigation. By 1905, through purchases, intimidation and bribery, Los Angeles purchased enough water rights to enable the aqueduct. Many argue that Los Angeles paid an unfair price to the farmers of Owens Valley for their land. Gary Libecap of the University of California, Santa Barbara estimated that Los Angeles was willing to pay $8.70 per acre foot of water. The average sale price was about $4.00 per acre foot of water. Only a few of the transactions between Los Angeles and the farmers were above the price of $8.70, which was Los Angeles' maximum willingness to pay. Farmers that resisted the pressure from Los Angeles until 1930 received the highest price for their land; most farmers sold their land from 1905 to 1925, and received less than Los Angeles was actually willing to pay. However, the sale of their land brought the farmers substantially more income than if they had kept the land for farming and ranching. None of the sales were made under threat of eminent domain.



The aqueduct was sold to the citizens of Los Angeles as vital to the growth of the city. However, unknown to the public, the initial water would be used to irrigate the San Fernando Valley to the north, which was not at the time a part of the city. A syndicate of investors (again, close friends of Eaton, including Harrison Gray Otis) bought up large tracts of land in the San Fernando Valley with this inside information. This syndicate made substantial efforts to the passage of the bond issue that funded the aqueduct, including creating a false drought (by manipulating rainfall totals) and publishing scare articles in the Los Angeles Times,

which Otis published.

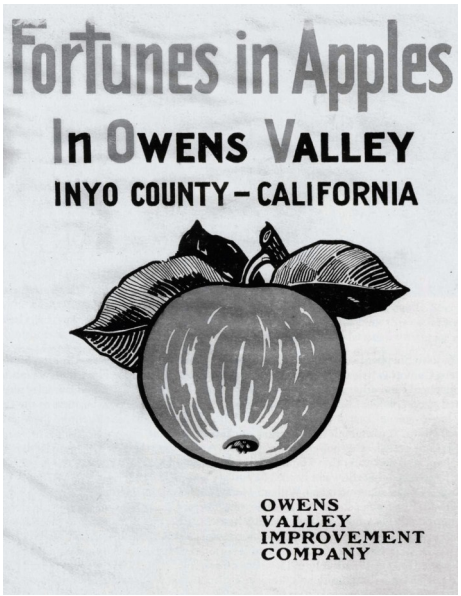
From 1905 through 1913, Mulholland directed the building of the aqueduct. The 223 miles Los Angeles Aqueduct, completed in November 1913, required more than 2,000 workers and the digging of 164 tunnels. The project has been compared in complexity by Mulholland's granddaughter to building the Panama Canal. Water from the Owens River reached a reservoir in the San Fernando Valley on November 5. At a ceremony that day, Mulholland spoke his famous words about this engineering feat: "There it is. Take it." Mulholland was also quoted as saying he "half-regretted the demise of so many of the valley's orchard trees, because now there were no longer enough trees to hang all the troublemakers who live there".

After the aqueduct was completed in 1913, the San Fernando investors demanded so much water from the Owens Valley that it started to transform from "The Switzerland of California" into a desert. Inflows to Owens Lake were almost completely diverted, which caused the lake to dry up by 1924. Farmers and ranchers tried to band together to sell water rights to Los Angeles as a group, but again through what historians called "underhanded moves", Los Angeles managed to buy the water rights at a substantially reduced price.

Manzanar, Spanish for "apple orchard," began soon after 1900 in the dream of a fruit-growing empire and today is a national symbol of America's decision at the onset of World War II to confine thousands of its citizens of Japanese ancestry behind barbed wire. But Manzanar's saga reaches back to other earlier dreams and tragedies. It is a story of not simply a single community, but many, whose pasts rest, often uneasily, one atop the other.

Each took root in a landscape of rugged beauty set in the isolated Owens Valley of eastern California. There, streams tumble down from the jagged crest of the Sierra Nevada, and barely 20,000 people live in a land of more than 900 square miles. Native people, called by white explorers the Owens Valley Paiute, subsisted undisturbed for 600 years on the valley's plants and wildlife before the wave of white settlement that swept across the West in the 19th century finally reached them. In the early 1860s, miners, with the gleam of silver in their eyes, crossed the Sierra into the valley, and ranchers followed close behind. When the Paiute fought to keep their land and way of life, the U.S. Army removed hundreds to a distant reservation in Southern California.

Especially attractive to homesteaders was the well-watered area known as George's Creek set against the Sierra Nevada midway between outposts at Independence and Lone Pine. For nearly four decades, ranching and farming occupied the cattlemen and their families who settled there. John Shepherd's 1,300-acre ranch, with its fertile soil and two streams, was among the most prosperous.



Southern California developer George Chaffey bought Shepherd's property in 1905, and in 1910, his company subdivided it for a fruit-growing colony called the Manzanar Irrigated Farms. With an innovative, mutually owned irrigation system and 20,000 apples trees brought from Washington,

Manzanar grew into a community of 200 over the next 15 years and produced apples, pears, and peaches of exceptional quality. But the presence of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, completed in 1913, cast a long shadow over all agriculture in the Owens Valley, and by 1926,

Los Angeles owned all of Manzanar's orchard lands and their prized water rights. Though fruit growing continued under Los Angeles management, the area gradually declined, and by 1935, the last family was gone.

In the aftermath of Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Manzanar was transformed from a sleepy abandoned orchard to a mile-square, prison-like camp, one of 10 across the country. Over 10,000 people of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of them American citizens, were brought there to live, most for the duration of World War II. In that time, they overcame primitive conditions and their own internal divisions, and, together with the War Relocation Authority (WRA) staff charged with overseeing them, they created a livable wartime city.

In 1905, John Shepherd sold his 1,300-acre George's Creek ranch to Charles Chaffey, brother of Southern California irrigation developer George Chaffey, for $25,000. The Chaffeys planned to turn Shepherd's and other properties nearby into an apple-growing subdivision modeled after the irrigated citrus colonies George had launched east of Los Angeles. Doing business as the Owens Valley Improvement Company, the Chaffeys and their investors called their venture the Manzanar Irrigated Farms. A town built in the center would be Manzanar, Spanish for "apple orchard."

In the same period, other powerful men from Los Angeles had their own, far grander designs on the region's land and water that would reshape the future of Manzanar and of the entire Owens Valley. Convinced that the water needed for his city to grow could come from the Owens Valley, Los Angeles water superintendent William Mulholland began plans for a 233-mile aqueduct to carry Owens River water south. At the same time, former Los Angeles mayor Fred Eaton quietly bought up 60 miles of land along the river to gain water rights for Los Angeles. Announcement of the huge project in 1905 sent shock waves through the Owens Valley. Aqueduct construction got under way in 1908, but work on Chaffey's project, mired in disputes with Los Angeles over water rights, started only in 1910. But by 1913, when the aqueduct opened, Manzanar had 20,000 apple trees; a town with a community hall, store, and schoolhouse; and the first buyers for its orchard parcels.

Mulholland's engineering feat had little effect on Owens Valley agriculture until the early 1920s, when drought and population growth in Los Angeles sent agents back to the valley for more water. By then, Manzanar's apples were renowned for their quality, but the promised fortunes to be made from them had not materialized. The Owens Valley Improvement Company and other owners were ripe for buyout, and by 1926, Los Angeles owned all of Manzanar. Although it kept orchard operations going, the end of the Manzanar orchard community was not far off.

Manzanar's orchards fell into neglect after 1934, but many kept producing, and each fall, local residents harvested their fruit for pies and preserves. Cattle grazed contentedly in the former hay fields, and teenagers raced their jalopies after dark in the deserted orchard rows .

Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, shattered that calm in the Owens Valley and across America. War hysteria soon enveloped Pacific coastal cities, but in the Owens Valley, isolated from the coast by the Sierra Nevada, few residents felt in danger. As calls for the removal of all ethnic Japanese from coastal areas grew louder, President. Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942. Eight days later, military officials appeared in the Owens Valley and selected the orchards and former town site at Manzanar as the location of the first "processing center" for "evacuated" Japanese. Manzanar's isolation, agricultural potential, and access to water and power sources met the military's requirements. But its landowner, Los Angeles, vehemently protested locating the camp within 1 mile of its aqueduct, which was considered a defense installation. Assured of military protection, Los Angeles agreed to a lease of 6,000 acres for the camp.

The Manzanar Relocation Center, established as the Owens Valley Reception Center, was first run by the U.S. Army's Wartime Civilian Control Administration (WCCA). It later became the first relocation center to be operated by the War Relocation Authority (WRA). The center was located at the former farm and orchard community of Manzanar. Founded in 1910, the town was abandoned when the city of Los Angeles purchased the land in the late 1920s for its water rights. The Los Angeles aqueduct, which carries Owens Valley water to Los Angeles, is a mile east of Manzanar. Begun in March of 1942, the relocation center was built by Los Angeles contractor Griffith and Company. Construction proceeded 10 hours a day 7 days a week; major construction was completed within six weeks. On March 21 the first 82 Japanese Americans made the 220-mile trip by bus from Los Angeles. More volunteers soon followed to help build the relocation center: over the next few days 146 more Japanese Americans arrived in 140 cars and trucks under military escort. Another 500 Japanese Americans, mostly older men, arrived from Los Angeles by train. By mid-April, up to 1,000 Japanese Americans were arriving at Manzanar a day and by mid-May Manzanar had a population of over 7,000. By July Manzanar's population was nearly 10,000. Over 90 percent of the evacuees were from the Los Angeles area; others were from Stockton, California, and Bainbridge Island, Washington.

Buses taking Japanese-Americans to the War Relocation Center at Manzanar

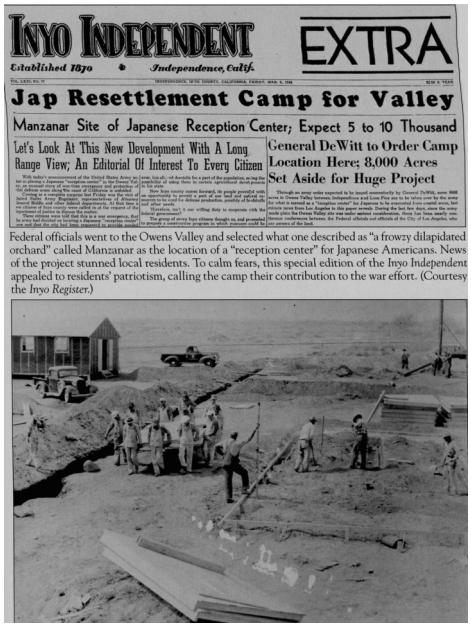
Japanese-Americans waiting for their transportation to the Manzanar Relocation Center

U.S. Department of Justice officials, meanwhile, had rounded up hundreds of Japanese aliens with ties to Japanese cultural or political activities. Families left behind faced growing isolation and uncertainty about their own futures. Despite the reluctance of many in the military and government to undertake a project clearly in violation of citizen rights, plans for the "gradual and orderly removal" of more than 100,000 ethnic Japanese from Military Area No. 1, along the coast, went forward.

Most were taken first to one of 16 assembly centers, usually in converted racetracks and fairgrounds. There they remained, some for up to six months, until the relocation centers were built. The Owens Valley Reception Center at Manzanar, however, was the first and only destination for most of the 10,000 people sent there.

Family quarters at Manzanar, Photo by Dorthea Lange

Japanese Americans were by far the most widely affected group, as all persons with Japanese ancestry were removed from the West Coast and southern Arizona. As then California Attorney General Earl Warren put it, "When we are dealing with the Caucasian race we have methods that will test the loyalty of them. But when we deal with the Japanese, we are on an entirely different field." In Hawaii, where there were 140,000 Americans of Japanese Ancestry (constituting 37% of the population), only selected individuals of heightened perceived risk were interned.



INYO INDEPENDENT EXTRA

Established 1870 • Independence, Calif.

Jap Resettlement Camp for Valley

Manzanar Site of Japanese Reception Center; Expect 5 to 10 Thousand

Let's Look At This New Development With A Long Range View; An Editorial Of Interest To Every Citizen

General DeWitt to Order Camp Location Here; 3,000 Acres Set Aside for Huge Project

Federal officials went to the Owens Valley and selected what one described as "a frowzy dilapidated orchard" called Manzanar as the location of a "reception center" for Japanese Americans. News of the project stunned local residents. To calm fears, this special edition of the Inyo Independent appealed to residents' patriotism, calling the camp their contribution to the war effort. (Courtesy the Inyo Register.)

Americans of Italian and German ancestry were also targeted by these restrictions, including internment. 11,000 people of German ancestry were interned, as were 3,000 people of Italian ancestry, along with some Jewish refugees. The Jewish refugees who were interned came from Germany, and the U.S. government didn't differentiate between ethnic Jews and ethnic Germans (Jewish was defined as religious practice). Some of the internees of European descent were interned only briefly, and others were held for several years beyond the end of the war. Like the Japanese internees, these smaller groups had American-born citizens in their numbers, especially among the children. A few members of ethnicities of other Axis countries were interned, but exact numbers are unknown. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson was responsible for assisting relocated people with transport, food, shelter, and other accommodations.

Many notable liberal progressives such as Roosevelt, Justice William O. Douglas, Justice Hugo Black and Earl Warren supported the internment of these Japanese Americans as vital to the war effort. One dissenting voice was that of J. Edgar Hoover the director of the FBI. Hoover's opposition stemmed not so much from a constitutional or civil rights position, but from a belief that the FBI could handle any security threat to the United States from citizens of foreign ancestry. He believed that the most likely spies had already been arrested by the FBI shortly after the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

It should be noted that not one case of espionage or treason was attributed to people of Japanese ancestry and the only real cases of treason or espionage were against Germans and Communists like Klaus Fuchs, Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs.

Executive Order No. 9066 came about as a result of great prejudice and wartime hysteria after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Even before the Japanese-Americans were relocated, their livelihood was seriously threatened when all accounts in American branches of Japanese banks were frozen.

Then, religious and political leaders were arrested and often put into holding facilities or relocation camps without letting their families know what had happened to them.

Children being trucked into Manzanar, Ansel Adams

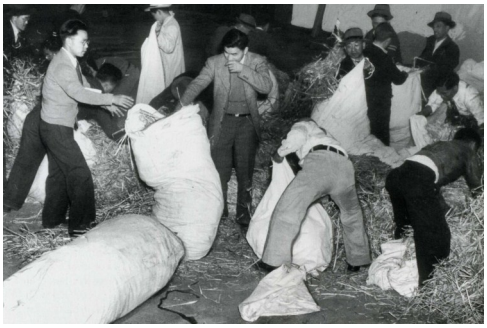
The order to have all Japanese-Americans relocated had serious consequences for the Japanese-American community. Even children adopted by Caucasian parents were removed from their homes to be relocated. Sadly, most of those relocated were American citizens by birth. Many families wound up spending three years in facilities. Most lost or had to sell their homes at a great loss and close down numerous businesses. This was a boon for the banks and real estate speculators.

Many Japanese businesses were closed and fell to the mercy of unscrupulous real estate agents and banks

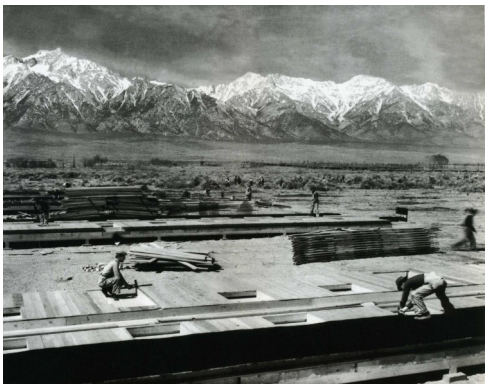
People from Japan began migrating to the U.S. in significant numbers following the political, cultural, and social changes stemming from the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Particularly after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Japanese immigrants were sought by industrialists to replace the Chinese immigrants. In 1907, the "Gentlemen's Agreement" between the governments of Japan and the U.S. ended immigration of Japanese workers (i.e., men), but permitted the immigration of spouses of Japanese immigrants already in the U.S. The Immigration Act of 1924 banned the immigration of all but a token few Japanese

The ban on immigration produced unusually well-defined generational groups within the Japanese American community. Initially, there was an immigrant generation, the *Issei*, and their U.S.-born children, the *Nisei Japanese American*. The Issei were exclusively those who had immigrated before 1924. Because no new immigrants were permitted, all Japanese Americans born after 1924 were—by definition—born in the U.S. This generation, the Nisei, became a distinct cohort from the Issei generation in terms of age, citizenship, and English language ability, in addition to the usual generational differences. Institutional and interpersonal racism led many of the Nisei to marry other Nisei, resulting in a third distinct generation of Japanese Americans, the *Sansei*. Significant Japanese immigration did not occur until the Immigration Act of 1965 ended 40 years of bans against immigration from Japan and other countries .

These Japanese immigrants, like the Irish, Italian, German and Eastern European immigrants before them, presented an economic threat to the established businesses on the west coast. They worked hard and had closely knit families that supported their businesses. For the ones who were allowed to own land they had rich strawberry fields, vegetable farms and fruit and citrus orchards in California, Oregon and Washington. They owned restaurants, tailoring and dress-making shops. They ran landscaping and gardening services and had their own banks. They had prosperous fishing fleets all along the west coast.



New internees were issued mattress sacks to fill with straw



Building Manzanar, Clem Albers

After the attack on Pearl Harbor many Caucasian Americans, who viewed the Japanese as competition, saw the Exclusionary Act as an opportunity get rid of their competition. "Japs not wanted" signs and posters were in abundance all along the west coast.

The "wartime purpose" that Project Director Ralph Merritt described for Manzanar was never entirely clear to most of its residents. But it was a city, nonetheless, that began as an instant boomtown of 10,000 people who required food, water, electricity, medical care, and employment. When the first internees arrived, only the barest outline of an infrastructure was in place. Open ditches carried wastewater and sewage, internee cooks heated water in garbage cans on outside stoves, and medical care consisted of one doctor working in a barracks room without running water. Within a few weeks, Manzanar was more habitable, thanks to the efforts of both internees and Caucasian staff. By early 1943, Project Director Ralph Merritt had brought stability to the War Relocation Authority staff and more efficiency to its organization. WRA personnel and internees worked together in nearly every department, with internees often in supervisory positions.

The government's goal of making Manzanar and the other camps as self-sufficient as possible opened hundreds of jobs to internees in farming, medical care, public works, and manufacturing. The 34 mess halls employed 1,500 internees, and others worked in stores, barbershops, and other services. Employment was not mandatory, but 80 percent of eligible internees did have jobs, in part to ease the tedium of daily life in camp. Less of an incentive was the wage scale. There was even a weaving factory where the internees made blankets and camouflage netting for the military.

Mealtime at Manzanar, Ansel Adams

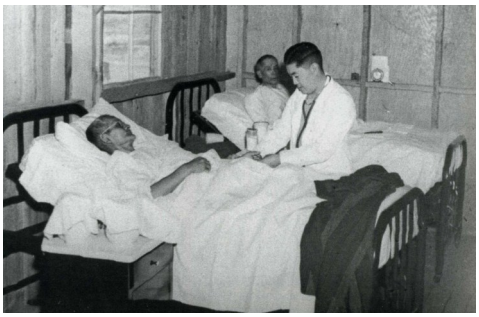
A constant source of friction between internees and administration, it was set well below prevailing wage scales on the outside. Unskilled and semiskilled laborers earned $12 a month, skilled workers got $16, and professionals or supervisors received $19. Many jobs included on-the-job training. Internee police and firemen, together with utility workers, social workers, hairdressers, teachers, and cooks, received training that would help fulfill the government's goal of preparing Manzanar's residents to disperse across America.

Workers at the weaving factory

Thirty-six drab and depressingly identical barracks blocks, each with 300 or more occupants, functioned as both living and administrative units at Manzanar. Gradually their sameness gave way to unique identities, many formed by internees' prewar ties. Manzanar's 10,000 people came from dozens of communities in Southern California and elsewhere. As the exclusion orders emptied neighborhoods and towns, authorities generally moved their residents to the same camp and often assigned them housing together. At Manzanar, West Los Angeles residents lived in Block 22, while those from the San Fernando Valley occupied Block 28. Bainbridge Island, Washington, strawberry farmers in Block 3 were next to Terminal Island, California, fishermen in Blocks 9 and 10.

The Miyatake Family, Ansel Adams

Special groups had their own living areas. Children of even partial Japanese heritage without parents or families-those in orphanages and foster care included-came under the mandatory evacuation order. All were brought to Manzanar, and a total of 101 children, together with staff, lived in the landscaped three-building Children's Village set in a firebreak near the pear orchard. Nearby, doctors and nurses had quarters at the hospital; other internee medical workers lived in Blocks 29 and 34 across the street. Often shunned by older Issei fearful of disease, medical personnel formed their own close-knit community. War Relocation Authority staff, including teachers, lived first in Block 7, enduring primitive barracks conditions with internees. By early 1943, the "Beverly Hills of Manzanar," as the WRA area was known to internees, was ready. The 22 well-built, gleaming white barracks were configured as dormitories or family apartments with kitchens and baths and housed nearly 300 staff and their families. Employees had their own mess hall, recreation club, and Victory Garden. Some, including children, socialized with their Nisei (or American-born, second-generation Japanese) counterparts at internee parties, baseball games, and weddings. But others clearly felt the invisible barrier that lay between them. At Project Director Ralph Merritt's insistence, the staff housing was inside the fenced internee living area, a symbolic gesture that, as he later wrote, "we are all in this together."



Manzanar's hospital opened in two rooms and later moved to a three barracks facility

Hospital at Manzanar

Photo at right: 188 couples were married during the four years at Manzanar in the Manzanar Christian Church

More essential than the luggage Japanese Americans carried into Manzanar was their response to sudden confinement: "*shikata ga ni*," or "it cannot be helped." Most chose to go on with life: they fell in love, succeeded in school, worked productively, had fun, and learned new skills. "The threads of normal life that were broken with the evacuation were slowly mending," wrote the Manzanar Free Press. To people accustomed to work and activity, the enforced idleness and boredom of early camp life were, for many, more difficult to bear than the primitive barracks and inedible food. It was no surprise, then, that from the beginning, internees took the camp's urgent needs into their own hands when they could, and those with skills and talents stepped forward to help make the best of a very bad situation. Volunteer teachers started nursery schools, gardeners planted lawns, restaurant chefs helped set up mess halls, and doctors and nurses organized a hospital.

Manzanar Free Press Office, Ansel Adams

Leisure-time activities gave morale a lift as well, and a WRA Community Activities section employed 150 internees who supervised arts and crafts, athletics, gardening, music, the Boy Scouts, and social events. Weekly Sunday night Concerts Under the Stars brought out 1,000 or more classical music lovers who gathered in the south firebreak and listened to selections from records played by internee Harry Ushyjima. Nearly 3,000 adults took Americanization classes and courses in English, history, science, and sewing during 1942, and while many internees turned to church-going, others "made the best of it" by distilling prohibited rice gin in their barracks. Devoted fishermen found the Sierra Nevada's nearby streams irresistible and regularly crawled under the barbed-wire fence with rods and reels in hand. More than any other activity, though, baseball brought the excitement, competition, and identity with America that many internees yearned for. When the Aces, Scorpions, Broncos, or Gophers played, anticipation built and thousands came to watch at the field near Block 19. "Softball governs," wrote the Manzanar Free Press, "150 teams rule supreme."

Sign marking the ground where the baseball fields were

The once productive apple, peach and pear orchards at Manzanar

Military regulations allowed only WRA photographers, and others granted permission, to work in the camps. Their largely unspoken task was to cast the relocation in positive terms and help eliminate. any qualms fearful white Americans had about depriving thousands of fellow citizens of their guaranteed rights .

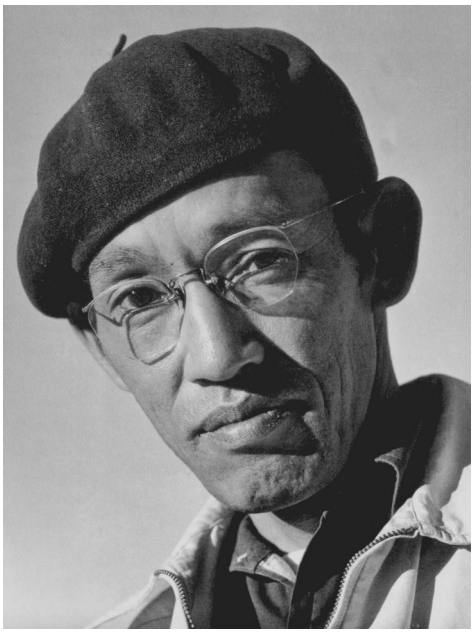
Dorothea Lange was already well-known for her social activism and harrowing images of Depression-era migrant workers, and she used her large body of removal photographs to explore the physical, psychological, and social effects of the government's policy on the incarcerated people. Most of the photographs were never published during the war.

Manzanar living quarters, Ansel Adams

Manzanar Project Director Ralph Merritt invited his friend Ansel Adams to photograph the camp as it evolved. During visits in 1943 and 1944, Adams produced more than 200 of his starkly elegant images. Set amid the grandeur of the Owens Valley environment, they portray Manzanar's residents as loyal Americans successfully adapting to life in camp.

Toyo Miyatake's darkroom at Manzanar, Ansel Adams

A successful photographer in the Little Tokyo section of Los Angeles before his removal to Manzanar, Toyo Miyatake hid a lens and film holder in his luggage, and once in camp asked a carpenter to build a crude camera box from wood scraps. Working early in the morning, he documented Manzanar life for nearly nine months before being noticed. Project director Ralph Merritt concurred with Miyatake's insistence that photographing the camp was his historic duty, and he allowed him to continue, but with a WRA employee called in to release the shutter. Miyatake eventually worked on his own with few restrictions and produced some 1,000 images that document aspects of camp life not otherwise recorded on film. After Miyatake died in 1979 his studio in Los Angeles has been run by his heirs.



Portrait of Toyo Miyatake by Ansel Adams

Few images remain of the camp's aftermath, when buildings were hauled off and sand gradually covered much of what remained of the mile-square city. Local veterans lived for a time in the former staff barracks, but, like the former internees of Manzanar who descended into a long silence about their time in camp, Owens Valley residents, too, wanted to put behind them those four years and the place many called "Jap Camp."

The decades-long effort to gain recognition for Manzanar led to designations as a California State Landmark, a National Historic Landmark, and, in 1992, a National Historic Site. Today a new, nonresident community includes National Park Service staff and nearly 90,000 visitors annually. Among them are many who once lived at Manzanar.

A few years ago I had a conversation with a Japanese American land surveyor colleague regarding a contract with my firm for supplemental surveying services. Somehow the conversation drifted to the recent death of his father.

Recruit being examined for induction into the U.S. Army. Toyo Miyatake

Nisei men of the 442 Regimental Combat Team returning on leave to Manzanar

Entrance to Manzanar War Relocation Center

When I asked Calvin if his dad had been a member of the 442 Regimental Combat Team, the "Go For Broke" outfit his eyes lit up and he asked if I knew about the 442. When I told him I was interested in military history and I was well aware of the heroics and accomplishments of this all Nisei unit Calvin began relating the story of his grandparent's internment at Manzanar.

Calvin's grandparents had been rounded up with thousands of other Japanese Americans after President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. They were temporarily put in horse stalls at Santa Anita Race Track in Los Angeles until they were shipped off to Manzanar. Even though Calvin's grandparents were interned in Manzanar his dad, an American born Nisei, enlisted in the United States Army and was shipped off to Camp Shelby in Mississippi to become a part of the 442. His dad fought in North Africa, Italy, France and Germany with distinction earning a purple heart along with a silver and bronze star. This Nisei unit was the most decorated regiment in the history of the United States armed forces, including 21 Medal of Honor recipients.

Calvin had tears in his eyes when he spoke of his father and his service in WWII. When I asked him if he had any resentment against the United States for the treatment of his grandparents and other Japanese Americans he answered with a definite NO! Calvin said his dad had taught him that the United States, a country he loved, was in a war and he believed some things were necessary to win it, even if it required questionable constitutional acts. He said his grandparents also expressed no resentment as they adapted to Manzanar life as best they could and when the war was over and they returned to life in Los Angeles they simply put the Manzanar experience in their past. When I related this story to one of the National Park Service guides at Manzanar she told me this was a common story among the visitors who had been at Manzanar or had family members interned there.

While at Manzanar I made a point of paying my respects to Calvin's father by looking for his name on the wall of honor for those who served in the 442 and sure enough I found Calvin's dad's name on the list .

Some people have called Manzanar a concentration camp. While in theory their use of the term is correct I do not agree with them.

To call Manzanar a concentration camp is to do a disservice to the millions who died at the hands of the NAZIs in the holocaust at their numerous extermination camps where brutality, inhumane treatment, torture, medical experiments and extermination were commonplace.

We can debate the unconstitutionality of these relocation centers as much as we wish. In my opinion they were blatantly unconstitutional and unnecessary. The vast majorities of these Japanese Americans were loyal Americans and were interned out of fear and racial prejudice. They were interned by an administration comprised of progressive liberals who ignored the constitution of the United States.

It was not until 1988 when President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which apologized for the internment on behalf of the U.S. government. The legislation stated that government actions were based on "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership", and beginning in 1990, the government paid $20,000 in reparations to the surviving internees.

We must remember the words of Benjamin Franklin when he said; *"They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."*

Typical living quarters for one family

The Japanese Garden

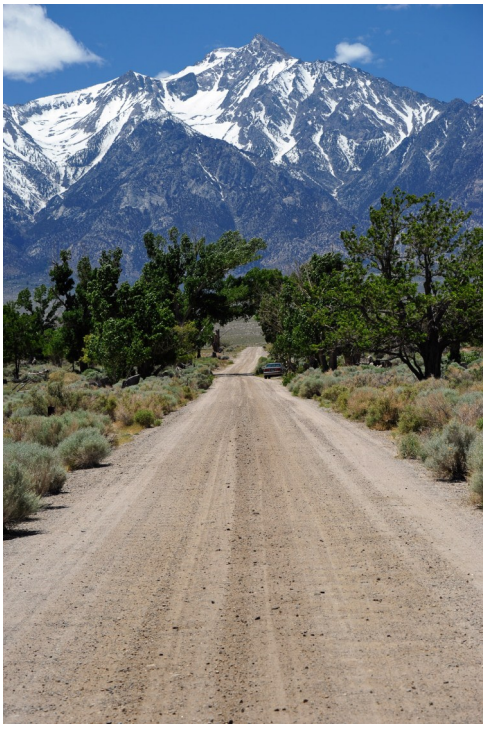
Site of the weaving factory

The Cemetery.

Additional Photos of Manzanar as it looks today.

Manzanar Interpretative Center and Museum

Guard Tower.



Looking westerly along the northern perimeter road.

You can view a complete gallery of all the photos I took while at Manzanar by clicking here. When you view one of the photos and it has a hyperlink (shown in red) under the caption you can click on it to open a Google Map showing the exact location where the photo was taken. When traveling, I always use a GPS attachment on my Nikon cameras so I can document the position of each photo.

I have added an archive of all past editions of the Aperture. You can access this archive by clicking here.

Control (Ctrl) Click on any Photo or Link to open a full-size image in a new window or tab.

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