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Japanese American Internment Centers on United States Indian Reservations: A Geographic Approach to the Relocation Centers in Arizona, 1942-1945

Kristen L. Michaud
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JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT CENTERS ON UNITED STATES INDIAN RESERVATIONS: A GEOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO THE RELOCATION CENTERS IN ARIZONA, 1942-1945

A Thesis Presented

by

KRISTEN L. MICHAUD

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

September 2008

Department of Geosciences
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Laurie Brown, Acting Department Head
Department of Geosciences
DEDICATION

To my Mom and Dad, who always believed in me and who were always there for me through thick and thin. I love you.
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INTRODUCTION

For many centuries, geographers have been examining the relationships between humans and their environments in order to draw spatial conclusions about these landscapes and their interactions. Felix Driver, professor of human geography at the University of London, is quoted in the Dictionary of Human Geography as saying, “‘thinking historically’ about geography is not a ‘luxury’ that should be afforded solely to historical geographers but is ‘an essential part of doing human geography’” (Johnston 2000, 338). On a more profound level, studying the relationships between people and their environments of the past can yield discoveries of future interactions with the environment. This thesis will use the lens of historical geography to examine the placement of Japanese internment camps on Indian reservation lands during World War II.

In September of 1987, H.R. 442, or the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, was passed by the House of Representatives. It called for a formal apology by Congress regarding the unnecessary internment of roughly 120,000 Japanese Americans (Daniels 2004, 98). This act of redress, although a major achievement for much of the Japanese population in the United States, was passed almost 50 years too late.

World War II was a terrible time for many individuals all across the world. Many remember the plight of numerous Jewish people in Europe who had to try and escape the grasp of the powerful Nazi regime. During the war, prior to the entrance of the United States in 1942, the enemy seemed to be thousands of miles away, with no eminent threat in sight on American soil. That of course all changed on December 7,
1941 when Japanese fighter pilots attacked the military base of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii in the early morning hours. The Japanese were successful in sinking or damaging nineteen United States Navy battle ships and killing around 2,300 Americans (Daniels 2004, 22). The Japanese were also successful in raising the ire of the then President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, as he declared war against Japan and also on Germany and Italy only three days later (National Archives and Records Administration, 2007).

Hysteria over the bombing of Pearl Harbor spread from coast to coast, but was most prevalent in the western states. Washington D.C. was no exception to this panic; the Department of Justice closed the American borders to all persons of Japanese ancestry, whether they were American citizens or not. Shortly thereafter the nearly 3,000 enemy aliens of Japanese heritage were arrested due to suspicions of fifth column activity and sabotage (Daniels 2004, 26-27). Americans of all walks of life were beginning to have doubts regarding their Asian neighbors and were treating them all as spies, whether they had connections to Japan or not. These were just some of the beginning factors which lead to the internment of over 120,000 Japanese peoples.

The word internment is most preferably used, because unlike concentration camps, which were used by the Nazis during this same time period, they were not torture or death camps, but rather an area of confinement during wartime. Throughout this thesis, the terms internment camp and relocation center will be used as reference to the ten centers where people of Japanese ancestry were held during World War II.

This thesis will examine the two internment camps which were located in the state of Arizona: Poston or Colorado River Relocation Center\(^1\) and the Gila River

\(^1\) Although the name given to this camp was officially Poston, named after Charles Poston of Arizona, many government documents referred to this camp as the Colorado River Relocation Center, and
Relocation Center. These were the only two relocation centers located in Arizona, and their specific location makes them unique, as both were also placed on Native American reservation land. Although this land is essentially owned by the United States government, it is leased to the tribes which inhabit the specified boundaries, and therefore their rights and opinions should be the main priority.

This thesis will seek to answer some basic questions in order to gain a better understanding of this tragedy in American history and to demonstrate its geographic relevance. How did this unprecedented use of federal lands affect the relationship between the Japanese internees and the Native American tribal groups and also the effects on the landscape? What were the lasting implications for land use in this area? Finally, what types of interactions occurred between these two groups and what effect did this have on the shaping of the landscape?

This thesis incorporates research from primary and secondary sources on the subject of the Japanese internment period, as well as the two Indian reservations where Colorado River and Gila River Relocation Centers were located. Government documents and resources used in this research are one of the best indicators of the politics surrounding the relocation centers’ placement, as well as the interaction between the centers and their Native American neighbors. Archival research was also conducted in Arizona, the nucleus of this topic.

To gain insight into this topic, I traveled to Arizona in order to actively research primary resources at Arizona State University in Tempe. At the Arizona Historical Foundation, located on the ASU campus, I focused on an analysis of media publications therefore for the purpose of dispelling any confusion, Colorado River will be used in this thesis, when necessary.
such as *Desert Magazine*, published between 1936 and the early 1980s, as well as the
*Gila News Courier*, published between September 1942 and December 1945. Data
gathered from these publications was used to carry out an examination on the rhetorical
discourses of relocation and how it was presented to the public. Before traveling to
Arizona, my first major research area was conducted at the National Archives and
Records Administration in Washington, DC. Documents from the War Relocation
Authority and the previously named, Office of Indian Affairs, dated 1942 through 1945,
were of great source to help provide insight into the reasoning behind the placement of
these camps and the federal decisions surrounding them. By analyzing materials from
both the war-related government agencies, as well as the Native American perspective, I
was able to find relevant information as to land use and the beliefs of the tribes located
on these lands.

The use of existing academic studies also became an important tool that assisted
me to frame questions for my archival research. Much research has been done on the
Japanese internment, especially on the psychological effects of the internment process
and the breaking down of an ethnic group. Allyson K. Young (1996) wrote a thesis on
“Gila River, Arizona: Personal Accounts of Japanese Americans in A World War II
Concentration Camp,” which was able to aid me to narrow in on some of the events that
were carried out at this reservation and internment camp by specifically looking at the
personal narratives of the Japanese located here. Numerous books on the history of the
Japanese internment have been published in recent years.

In regard to the placement of Japanese internment camps on Indian reservation
land, my thesis will be centered around the relationships between the United States
government, the Native Americans, and the Japanese evacuees. It is my intent to
demonstrate how these two centers were able to function on this borrowed land and
what lasting impressions were made, both physically and culturally. The major
objective of this thesis is to provide the fields of geography and history a geographical
perspective into the evacuation and relocation of the Japanese from the west coast,
especially in regards to the Indian lands of Arizona that were essentially borrowed for
this time period.

Chapter One will give a brief history of Japanese America and the events that
occurred that lead to the eventual internment of the Japanese. The necessity of
relocation and internment will be explained, as well as the governmental forces behind
the internment period. Chapter Two will then discuss the relationship between the state
of Arizona and the Japanese residents in its early period, prior to internment. The
establishment of relocation centers on reservation land in Arizona was a major defeat
for the tribal councils located on these lands, as their opinions were clearly not honored.
Conditions inside these two centers will then be described.

Following this discussion will be Chapter Three, an important insight into the
changing of the physical and cultural landscape that the Japanese were confined on.
The relationships between the three major groups, the government, the Native
Americans, and of course the Japanese will be highlighted, in order to best conclude
how these groups of people interacted during this difficult time. It is in this chapter that
the answers to the questions relating to the transforming of the landscape will be made
clear.
Chapter Four will begin with the closing of the relocation centers, and what that meant for the abandoned Japanese. Where did they go and were they accepted? Also, what has since occurred on these barren landscapes once the individual camps were closed and how the various tribes have dealt with the modifications made by the Japanese. Finally, in conclusion, Chapter Five will seek to answer the questions initially presented in the Introduction. From there, the end result is an explanation of why the Japanese internment should be studied from a geographic perspective.
CHAPTER 1
EVENTS LEADING UP TO INTERNMENT

This chapter will seek to set the stage for the Japanese American internment period and will give a brief history into the struggles of the Japanese prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Japanese enclaves located inside numerous towns and cities up and down the west coast are an important indication of how communities inside the relocation centers will function, and the following sections will further display these cultural attributes.

**Japanese Immigration to America & the Formation of Japanese Communities**

By the early 1880s, Japanese citizens began immigrating to the United States in search of more prosperous job opportunities. During this time, Japan was going through major changes, both economically and socially. The Meiji Restoration\(^2\) was taking place in Japan during the years 1866 through 1869. Throughout this political upheaval, many Japanese suffered economic loses as jobs were dwindling almost as fast as their current paychecks (Segal 2002, 139). Some of the first Japanese to leave their homelands in search of opportunity included around 150 refugees that sailed to Hawaii to work on the sugar plantations. It was not until Hawaii was annexed to the United States in 1898 that the Japanese workers began emigrating to the west coast states in large numbers (Daniels 2002, 250).

\(^2\) During the Meiji Restoration the Meiji Emperor was restored to power after centuries of imperial seclusion and began turning Japan around both socially and economically. Previous to 1868, the Tokugawa shogun had maintained Japan as an agrarian feudal economy.
Immigration to the United States was based on a push and a pull factor. The push factor was the declining economy in Japan due to the Meiji Restoration, while the pull factor was the Chinese Exclusion Act in the US, which was approved by President Arthur on May 6, 1882. The passing of this important anti-Chinese legislation, gave the Japanese a chance to take the jobs and opportunities that the Chinese no longer occupied (Daniels 1988, 7). This act merely stated that it would be unlawful for Chinese laborers to enter the United States, and also that this law would be reevaluated in ten years (NARA, 2007). Unlike China, Japan was industrializing and on its way to becoming a world power, whereas China was still an agrarian society. The United States government was more tolerant of Japanese migrants than Chinese for this very reason.

Most of the Japanese immigrants who entered the United States passed through the port of San Francisco. It did not take long before a large concentration of Japanese were settled around the San Francisco area and throughout Alameda County (National Park Service, 2006). By 1890 there were already 590 Japanese in San Francisco county alone, and a total of 184 in nearby Alameda County (U.S. Census Bureau, 1900). Settlement in southern California was not as well documented, however, the 1900 census reported only 204 Japanese living in Los Angeles county (U.S. Census Bureau, 1900).

Many of the early Japanese who came to America had all intentions of returning to Japan within a few years time. They were excited about the increase of income that they could acquire and, as such, wanted only to provide for their families back home and then return to the nation they loved (Daniels 1988, 8). By 1896, there were an
estimated 100 Japanese people in the city of Los Angeles with about sixteen Japan-oriented restaurants (Daniels 1988, 107). San Francisco saw a sudden influx of Japanese between the years 1891 and 1893 as word spread throughout Japan that money could be made in America. The port of San Francisco was where many Japanese entered the United States and soon the first Nihonmachi, or “Japantown” emerged as the Japanese immigrants could not migrate any further inland due to the lack of monetary funds (Daniels 1988, 109).

As more and more Japanese arrived in California, just like with the Chinese, the Californians were uneasy about this recent immigration activity. Widely read newspapers began running headlines and stories based on the Japanese “taking over California.” Other such headlines included, “Japanese a Menace to American Women,” “Brown Men An Evil in the Public Schools,” and “The Yellow Peril – How Japanese Crowd the White Race.” (Daniels 2004, 10).

California in particular saw a rapid increase of Japanese immigrants. However, although the population of Japanese in the west coast was growing, the sex ratio of these migrants was completely unbalanced. Those who immigrated to the United States were mostly younger males sent by their families to work and send money back home. In 1900 there were 9,598 Japanese males in California and only 553 females (Daniels 1988, 127). This sex ratio problem contributed to influxes of prostitution and the establishment of brothels. Gambling and prostitution businesses were perceived by local Americans as being characteristic of the Japanese community, similar to the typical laundry businesses of the Chinese (Daniels 1988, 106). In this respect, the
Japanese were perceived as amoral, especially when California political leaders tried to push for legislation that would include the Japanese in the Chinese Exclusion Act.

With this increased pressure from concerned individuals, something had to be done before it became a racial discrimination problem similar to the black crisis in the south. At this same time, President Theodore Roosevelt wanted to maintain good ties with Japan, as the country was quickly becoming a world power. Therefore, in 1907-1908, the Gentleman’s Agreement was signed between the United States and Japan. This agreement stated that Japan would stop issuing passports for laborers, similar to the Chinese Exclusion Act. The only Japanese that were allowed into the US were family members of those already in the country (Daniels 1988, 125).

Once this legislation was in place, there was still the issue of marriage and the numerous Japanese male laborers without families. The solution to this problem came with the arrangement of marriage between girls still living in Japan and those Japanese male laborers in the United States. These girls soon came to be known as “picture brides.” This process was initiated when a man’s family back in Japan would find suitable girls for him to marry and they would exchange pictures. When the families were satisfied, a document in Japan would be drawn up stating that the two individuals were “married.” At that point, the woman could legally enter the United States (Daniels 1988, 126).

Although the Gentleman’s agreement held off an increase of discrimination towards incoming Japanese, that notion only lasted for so long. In 1924 another act passed that changed the course of Japanese immigration for many decades. James D. Phelan, a US Senator from California, had previously voiced his opinion on anti-Asian
policies and ideas openly since the 1880’s, but by 1919 his campaign for re-election included his insistence that the Japanese were a menace to society (Daniels 1977, 81). Hiram Johnson, also a US Senator, and Valentine Stuart McClatchy, leader of the Japanese Exclusion League of California, felt strongly about Japanese exclusion, and along with Phelan decided to put into motion immigration legislation that would permanently exclude the Japanese (Daniels 1977, 93).

The 1920s saw a major push toward exclusion of the Japanese. In 1924, the vociferous politicians from California got what they had worked so hard for, the Immigration Act of 1924. Part of the act set a quota for all immigrants entering the United States to 2% of their immigrant population as had been previously counted in the 1890 census. However, for Asians, immigration had been cut off completely. From this standpoint, it seemed as though those Japanese who had not already entered the United States would never get that opportunity again (Daniels 1988, 151-152).

**Japanese American Life**

What the Japanese brought to the American countryside was a booming agricultural industry. Many Japanese men soon realized that farmers were considered higher class than laborers and they began to attain that higher status of wealth. By 1904, Japanese farmers were responsible for farming over 50 thousand acres in California. Their farms turned out to be extremely profitable, as evident from the sales of produce that in that one year had grossed around $67 million (Daniels 2002, 253).

Not only was the farming successful, but also the entire industry behind it. Farmer’s markets and truck farms were also an important asset to the Japanese farming
business. Agriculture businesses in Los Angeles county dominated as Japanese farmers contributed to a large amount of California’s produce markets. Iwata Masakazu (1962) concluded that, “[Japanese farmers] played a vital part in establishing the present system of marketing fruits and vegetables, especially in Los Angeles County…” He continues to note that “They were undeniably a significant factor in making California one of the greatest farming states in the Union.” By 1941, Japanese farmers were responsible for nearly 205,989 acres of cultivated land, and the crops grown on that land was valued at between $30-35 million (Masakazu, 1962). However, these achievements in California’s agricultural business were tainted with the presence of discrimination from their white neighbors. Many believed that Japanese farmers were trying to take over white American farms and trying to put them out of business.

Due to the discrimination from white farmers and California politicians, the state of California felt it necessary to enact a land law. In 1913, the Alien Land Law was passed. It stated that aliens that were ineligible for citizenship, mainly the Japanese, were prohibited from purchasing agricultural land. It also put restrictions on the leasing of land and the inheritance of land (Ichioka 1988, 153). This was just one of the examples of how Californians were trying to limit the prominence of the Japanese immigrants and their children. Ironically, as Japanese children were born in the United States, they instantly became American citizens and could therefore own land. To get around the law, many Japanese parents put their children’s names on such land leases (Daniels 1988, 143).

What many did not realize was that the Japanese sojourners at this time were not remotely close to being a major proportion of California’s population. According to the
US Census of 1900, there were a recorded 18,269 Japanese on the west coast, of which they only made up .7% of the total population. Similarly, in California, there were 10,151 Japanese which made up .6% of the state’s population (Daniels 1988, 115). The threat of the Japanese taking over California was not a realistic threat, but since most could not differentiate between the nationalities of Asiatic peoples, the problem was mostly Asian, rather than primarily Japanese. However, once this Asian problem, otherwise known as the “Yellow Peril” was recognized, the fire only continued to spread.

An updated version of the 1913 land law was passed in 1920. This law prohibited the Japanese from leasing or purchasing of land for any length of time. Proponents of the law tried without success to bar Nisei\(^3\) children from being land owners through their parents, but this was quickly dispelled as unconstitutional (Daniels 1977, 88).

Living in America for the immigrant Japanese was certainly not easy, especially when it seemed like no one wanted them there. Many Japanese lived in clusters, mainly because no one wanted them living in white neighborhoods, but also because it felt more safe and familiar. Similar to Chinatowns, Japantowns or Little Tokyos became defined sections of large west coast cities. By the 1930s and 1940s, “Little Tokyo” in Los Angeles had become a distinct ethnic enclave. The social organizations gave the residents of “Little Tokyo” and other surrounding Japanese a chance to keep their heritage alive, while also trying to teach their children about the Japanese way of life integrated among the American way.

\(^3\) *Nisei* is a term that refers to second generation Japanese.
For good reasons and bad, San Francisco remained an integral part of the Japanese American society. In 1893, for example, the San Francisco school board decided to segregate the Asian children from the whites, and made all the Japanese students attend the Chinese schools (Daniels 1988, 111). Once the higher governments heard of this resolution, they took immediate action to dissolve it, because the wording of the resolution stated that all “Chinese and Mongolians” must attend different schools, and the Japanese were neither Chinese nor Mongolian. The resolution was thus reversed (Daniels 1988, 111-112).

In 1940, Leonard Austin published a book on San Francisco that gave a description of merchants of Japantown in this era:

“As for the American trade they cater to it with over a hundred cleaning and dyeing establishments, as well as laundries, curio shops and photograph galleries. The merchant quarter adjoins Chinatown where one-third of the shops are Japanese…the center of the Japanese colony or ‘Little Osaka’ as it is called…is the corner of Post and Buchanan streets. The shops, restaurants, hotels are here, and all the needs of a self-contained immigrant community are located within a few blocks.” (Laguerre 2000, 67)

Japantown in these days was very lively and active with numerous businesses catering to the Japanese community.

The Immigration Act of 1924 affected the cultural community in Los Angeles, as family ties and community organizations strengthened with its current residents. Since the Japanese community in Los Angeles was so large, many neighborhoods had organizations based upon kenjinkai⁴, based on their homeland prefecture back in Japan. These kenjin⁵ would get together for social functions and also provide aid and support in various ways (NPS, 2006).

⁴ A term that refers to social organizations based on prefectures in Japan.
⁵ A term referring to the people from the same prefecture of Japan.
Day of Infamy

Although many people were certainly trying to push the Japanese out of America completely, they could not do anything about those who were already in the country and those that were born here. Of course that all seemed to change in late 1941.

By 1941, World War II was well underway, the Germans were invading European nations and causing havoc wherever they bombed, and the Japanese were waging war against China. Due to the unfortunate outcome of the Great Depression, the United States was staying out of the war, except for the fact that they were backing the Allies and China.

Although the United States was not officially engaged in the war effort, they were engaged in deterring Japan’s power in the war by establishing trade sanctions with Japan. For the first few years of the war, Japan had been engaged in purchasing huge amounts of United States aviation fuel. To effectively deter Japan, members of Roosevelt’s cabinet wanted to place a total embargo against Japan, but others feared it would spark a Pacific War. Roosevelt, however, did decide to freeze all Japanese assets in the US, which would force Japan to not only obtain an export license, but also another license to unblock their financial assets. These actions continued throughout 1941 and further harassed the leaders of Japan (Reynolds 2001, 141-142).

In the early morning hours of Sunday, December 7, 1941, the Japanese executed a surprise aerial attack on the military base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. This attack led to the destruction of one major aircraft carrier and damaged another eighteen ships of the United States Navy. Lives were also lost, including more than 2,300 American servicemen, and roughly 68 civilians (Daniels 2004, 22). The very next day, President
Roosevelt declared war against Japan, and the crisis at the frontlines and at home had begun (NARA, 2007).

This “day of infamy,” the very words President Franklin D. Roosevelt used, will live forever in the minds of not only the white Americans, but also to the Japanese living in the United States. It was at this point that they became aware that their lives would be forever changed. Before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans had been adapting well to American society, and were proud of their new country, or in the case of the Nisei, of their home country (Daniels 1988, 184). The Japanese on the west coast were seen as “unwanted” before the war, and following Pearl Harbor they were seen as enemies of the United States.

Within the next week all Japanese bank accounts had been closed and assets frozen, which included $27.5 million worth of businesses and personal property that was soon taken over by the Alien Property Custodian. In addition, all Japanese mail was to be censored and President Roosevelt ordered that all cameras, weapons, and radios be confiscated (United States CWRIC 1997, 61-62). The United States suspected that there were Japanese spies living among the innocent American public, and something had to be done to prevent another attack from happening.

The Necessity of Relocation

On December 11, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt became the supervisor of the newly created Western Defense Command (WDC), its main responsibility was to defend the west coast from enemy attacks. Within the next nine days, DeWitt submitted a formal proposal for a mass incarceration of all persons accused of fifth column
activity, which included not only the Japanese, but also German and Italian nationals (Daniels 2004, 30-31).

Hysteria was mounting in the weeks following Pearl Harbor. Japanese persons were discouraged from being near specific areas, such as railroad tunnels, highway bridges, and even radio stations. Even the Attorney General of Washington state believed that all enemy aliens, especially the Japanese, posed a serious threat to the state’s lumber industry (Takami 1998, 42-45).

By the end of January 1942, political pressure for the mass evacuation of the Japanese was at the forefront of the debate. Major Karl R. Bendetsen, chief of the Aliens Division of the Army’s Provost Marshal General’s office, was cautious of turning the proposed evacuation of Japanese natives and American citizens over to the War Department. He ended up proposing that the evacuation start off as voluntary, a point that DeWitt considered appalling (Daniels 1986, 32). As a result, on Sunday, February 5, real plans regarding relocation came into action.

Japanese feared for what would happen next. People that used to be friendly neighbors and customers were no longer. Even other Asian minority groups, such as the Chinese, began taking the side of the whites, mainly because they did not want to be mistaken for Japanese (Takezawa 1995, 77). The west coast took the tragedy to heart and took it out on all Japanese, whether they were Japanese natives or United States citizens. Propaganda did not help the situation at all. One such example was printed in the Saturday Evening Post by Frank Taylor in 1942:
“We’re charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons. We might as well be honest. We do. It’s a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown man. They came into this valley to work, and they stayed to take over…If all the Japs were removed tomorrow, we’d never miss them in two weeks, because the white farmers can take over and produce everything the Jap grows. And we don’t want them back when the war ends, either.” (United States CWRIC 1997, 69)

Between January 29 and February 7, Francis Biddle, Attorney General of the United States, went ahead and established 135 “prohibited” areas in the states of California, Oregon, Washington, and Arizona that restricted German, Italian, and Japanese enemy aliens from entering. These areas included the coastline stretching from Los Angeles to the Oregon border as well as various areas surrounding hydroelectric plants in the four states. This proclamation also established a curfew for those living inside the restricted areas, in which enemy aliens could not be found anywhere outside of their homes or places of business between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. (Daniels 1986, 105-106).

The idea of relocation was discussed daily in the White House, and Roosevelt had to make a decision on whether the United States could legally intern American citizens along with their enemy alien family members. Biddle already had his opinion in the matter, that this was a “military necessity” and that the Army could legally detain and “evacuate all persons in a specified territory if such an action is deemed essential from a military point of view for the defense and protection of the area.” (Daniels 1986, 43) Finally, President Roosevelt spoke out on this dilemma by transferring the authority of this matter form the Department of Justice to the War Department and by also informing the military that they had permission to do whatever they needed to do, and to “be as reasonable as you can.” (Daniels 1986, 44) Roosevelt was probably aware
that his actions would have repercussions later, but at the time, this was in the best interest of the country, in order to quell the fears of those on Capitol Hill and also with every other white American citizen.

Another day that will also live forever in the minds of the Japanese Americans is Thursday, February 19, 1942. This was the day that President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 declaring that the Army had the authority to relocate and intern whomever the military deems a national threat and to keep them out of said “military areas” and to provide them with transportation, food, and shelter (Daniels 1989, 70). This act did not specifically mention the relocation of the Japanese, nor did it mention any specific nationality, but it did give discretion to the military for deciding who should be retained for the purpose of national security.

The weeks following Executive Order 9066 saw chaos and confusion for America’s Japanese population. Those suspected of fifth column activity were taken to jail and their possessions seized, such as radios, which were believed to be used as spy paraphernalia. All members of the Japanese community were accused of being spies and loyal only to Japan, it would take years for the accused Japanese to set the record straight.

A couple weeks later, on March 2, General DeWitt issued Proclamation Number 1, which designated Military Area #1, an area that prohibited the Japanese from residing, this area included the western half of the states of Washington, Oregon, and California, as well as the southern portion of Arizona. This proclamation further
extended the areas that were already deemed “prohibited” by the areas previously sectioned off by Francis Biddle. Within a few days, Proclamation Number 2 was established, which designated the rest of those four states as prohibited (US Dept. of the Interior 1946, 1-2).

A voluntary evacuation was given as an option to Japanese living in these states, and that moving out of these areas would prove their “patriotic duty” to the United States. Many families did move voluntarily, however, those that did not participate would later be moved forcefully. The idea of forced relocation had been running through the minds of many politicians for weeks, and now it seemed to be a reality. An extensive resettlement program was in the works, but the federal government realized from the start that the military should not be the one responsible for this relocation, but rather a civilian agency, who could objectively oversee the entire relocation program.

On March 18, Executive Order 9102 was signed by the President, which created the War Relocation Authority (WRA), and put Milton S. Eisenhower in charge of this incredible task. From the wording of the order, the Director was

“authorized and directed to formulate and effectuate a program for the removal, from the areas designated from time to time by the Secretary of War or appropriate Military Commander under the authority of Executive Order No. 9066 of Feb. 19, 1942, of all the persons or classes of persons designated under such Executive order, and for their relocation, maintenance and supervision” (US Dept. of the Interior 1946, 4).

The WRA had three basic functions: 1) to provide for the Japanese, financially, during their move from the prohibited zones; 2) to establish work camps, similar to the Civilian Conservation Corp. camps, to be located west of the Mississippi River; and finally, 3) to also establish temporary holding stations where the evacuees would be held until they were transported to their designated internment camps. These temporary holding
quarters were later named Assembly Centers and were established by the Wartime Civil Control Administration. A total of sixteen were set aside mainly in former race tracks and fairgrounds (US Dept. of the Interior 1946, 4-6).

Figure 1  War Relocation Authority Centers Map. Map showing the location of Assembly Centers, Relocation Centers, Justice Dept. Detention Centers, as well as the boundaries of Military Area #1 and Military Area #2. Enemy aliens were prohibited from Military Area #1 and restricted from Military Area #2 until after the internment period. Michaud, 2006.

In keeping with the notion of calling these camps “work corps,” the WRA quickly drew up plans allowing evacuees to leave the centers for short periods of time, especially for the purpose of seasonal agricultural work in the nearby mountain states. Also, college-aged students were encouraged to apply to schools on the east coast, and would be granted leave to attend those universities during the evacuation period.
Fortunately for those students, by September of 1942 a total of 143 colleges and universities were approved for student relocation (US Dept. of the Interior 1946, 8-9, 14).

A large majority of those being relocated believed that they were doing this for their country and that they would be able to return to their homes within a year. Unfortunately, everything that they had owned prior to relocation would have to be sold or kept in storage while they were in the internment camps. Those being relocated were told only to bring what they could carry. In a mad rush, many had to sell personal effects, homes, and businesses. Many of their things went for next to nothing or were given to friends. Their loss was incredible, and it would be many decades before they were to see any type of compensation (Daniels 2004, 55).

Due to this embarrassment a family would often destroy personal property instead of selling it for dirt cheap prices, and other times, white opportunists would end up stealing the items that were on sale, often reminding the Japanese that they had to get rid of them regardless and that they would not need money where they were going. This humiliation and loss of property was especially disheartening to many who had worked very hard their entire lives to attain what they now had to give up (United States CWRIC 1997, 131-133). As early as April, Japanese families were being relocated into the assembly centers, and soon thereafter into their respective relocation centers.
CHAPTER 2
ARIZONA’S INVOLVEMENT

The following sections will outline life in Arizona for the early Japanese settlers. Insight into the prejudices from white American farmers is one of the indicators of how the American public allowed the internment of a single group of people to occur. Furthermore, explanation of the two relocation centers placed in this state will be summarized. Neither white citizens or the Native Americans wanted the centers placed in these areas, but the government duly overruled them and instead hoped that through the exploitation of the Japanese farmer’s expertise would give Arizona a further push in the agricultural market.

Arizona’s Native American Tribes

Many of the artifacts and evidence relating to Indian ancestors of the Southwest region have disappeared or have been lost. Tribes have moved to different locations, or have almost completely become extinct by dissolving into other local tribes. The history of Arizona is rich in native traditions. The internment camps which are the focus of this thesis were located in the territories of four of these Native American tribes.

The area which comprises the state of Arizona was populated for around 12,000 years by nomadic, game-hunting Paleo-Indians (Cheek 1993, 79). Thousands of years later the big game they were so reliant on began disappearing and cultivation of the arid
landscape was the only other alternative for a food source. The Hohokam that migrated from Mexico brought their knowledge of land cultivation and irrigation to this area. Archaeologists are uncertain what the fate of the Hohokam were, as their culture disappeared and seemed partially present in the Pima Indians further north. What is apparent is the Hohokam’s relationship with the land, which they had adapted to by irrigating their crops of corn, beans, and squash with a canal system (Cheek 1993, 82-89).

A major turning point in Arizona’s native history came around the year 300 B.C. During this time, the idea of cultivating food was passed on to the Paleo-Indians of southern Arizona from their neighbors in New Mexico. This profound change required that bands of Indians stay together, rather than scattering seasonally. Complex systems of government and tribal units soon developed (Cheek 1993, 81). Throughout the next few hundred years the Hohokams located along the banks of the Salt and Gila Rivers continued to develop their culture and cultivating techniques, their land became very successful due to intense irrigation systems (Baldwin 1970, 41).

The first documented event of European contact came around 1541 when Francisco Vasquez de Coronado wandered into Arizona and stumbled upon the Pimas. Other than bringing with them “white man’s” diseases, Coronado and his men did not have a huge effect on the Indians they encountered. They were unsuccessful in finding great civilizations full of gold and silver deposits, so they continued to move on, and it was not until the mid-sixteenth century before more European explorers would venture into Arizona (Sheridan 1995, 22-27).
Although explorers and missionaries came and went for the next few centuries, no major events occurred until a Yaqui Indian discovered large slabs of silver in 1736. A mining camp named Arizonac was established and numerous prospectors horded the area, thus creating Arizona’s first mining boom. However, the boom didn’t last long when it was decided that the silver deposits were not a natural phenomena, but rather a spot of buried treasure. Regardless, the Spaniards were reluctant to settle the area, and tried valiantly to do so, fighting many angry tribes along the way (Sheridan 1995, 31-32).

Spanish Arizona was invaded by Anglo trappers such as Ceran St. Vrain and William Sherley Williams in the early nineteenth century. They were successful in selling their furs to ships on the California coast and trading with the Mexicans. Even after the decline of the fur trade, the United States was at this time hungry for acquiring as much land in North America as possible (Sheridan 1995, 42-43). The stronghold of the Mexicans could hold the Americans off for only so long. In 1853 President Buchanan sent railroad speculator, James Gadsden to offer Mexican president Santa Anna with offers to purchase a vast area of northern Mexico. Finally on June 29, 1854, the United States became the owner of a large piece of land known as the Gadsden Purchase, and the lands of Arizona now became an American territory (Sheridan 1995, 56). From this point on, the United States would control the land and its people residing in Arizona, and when the taming of the Native Americans didn’t work, the reservation system was put into place.

The Gila River reservation was established in 1859, the first lands set aside for the native peoples of Arizona. Two main tribes inhabit this area, the Pimas and the
Maricopas (Cheek 1993, 114). The Pimas are known, through archaeological evidence, to be descendents of the Hohokam people, as proof by their irrigation techniques and other cultural traits. They were considered expert farmers, creating intense canal systems in order to irrigate their crops (Miller 1986, 180).

After leaving the lower Colorado River valley, the Maricopa were involved in fighting many wars against the Yuma and Apache tribes, so they traveled north and settled with the Pimas in this region of Arizona. They are noted to be a peaceful people, by their nonviolent actions toward white settlers and the armies of the US government (Baldwin 1970, 93). The Pimas and the Maricopas live harmoniously on the Gila River.
reservation, in which they maintain a single council governing body that follows the traditions of both groups (Gila River Indian Community, 2007).

Along the border with California, adjacent to the Colorado River, a large reservation was set aside in 1865, that included the Chemehuevis and the Mohaves of that area (Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc., 2007). The Mohaves and Chemehuevis differ in their farming techniques, as the Mohaves were forced to rely on the unpredictable flooding of the Colorado in order to farm such crops as pumpkins, beans, and maize. The Chemehuevis, on the other hand, practiced very little farming, as their settlements were mostly scattered and they preferred hunting and gathering rather than trying to cultivate the land. No known system of irrigation has been found for this area, at least nothing long-lasting (Blossom 1979, 22-25).

All four of these tribes were forced to conform to “white culture” as it was perceived by the US government in the nineteenth century. The reservation system was imposed to keep these “backwards people” on separate lands. Tribes were told to keep to a certain boundary and were given very little federal funding or food. The similarities between the reservations and the internment camps are apparent, as the government imposed restrictions of where a certain culture of people are to live. Prior to the placement of the Japanese on tribal lands in Arizona, the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) and the War Relocation Authority needed the tribal council’s approval. Both councils, Gila River and Colorado River, rejected the building of internment camps on their land, due to the unfortunate circumstances, and the similar treatment of the Japanese to the American Indians. Unfortunately, the Office of Indian Affairs used their power to override their vote, and the lands were leased to the War Relocation
Authority for the internment of the Japanese, despite the opposition of the local tribes. The economic gains that the OIA believed they could attain from the highly skilled Japanese farmers were enough to allow them onto parcels of land that did not entirely belong to the government.

**Early Japanese in Arizona**

According to the US Census Bureau, there were fewer than 300 Japanese residing in Arizona prior to 1900 (US Census Bureau 1920). One of the major reasons for California Japanese to migrate to Arizona was for job opportunities as railroad laborers. Many Chinese laborers had done the same, but only a small number of Japanese workers took on this migration. Once the railroad was completed, many of those same Japanese stayed in the area as farmers and began cultivating this arid landscape (Young 1996, 9).

Just prior to 1920 Arizona’s Japanese population began rising in large numbers. By the 1920 census report, there were 550 Japanese living in the Grand Canyon state, 167 of which was female, which had risen sharply in comparison with 1900’s report of only 20 females (US Census Bureau 1920). With the rise in population also came the increase of animosity and negative sentiment against the race. White farmers were not as pleased to have Japanese farmers as their competitors.

In 1921 an act similar to the one passed in California in 1913 was enacted in Arizona. The Arizona Alien Land Act stated that “non-citizen” Japanese could not own land in Arizona. However, just like in California, many Japanese found ways around
the law by purchasing land through a third-party or in the name of their American-born children (Young 1996, 9).

Hostility toward the Japanese only seemed to escalate further during the 1930’s when Japanese farmers seemed not to be struggling as badly as their white farmer neighbors. The best example of anti-Japanese movements occurred when eight white farmers organized the Anti-Alien Committee, which particularly targeted the Japanese that spurred a four-day conference meant to tackle the “Jap problem” in Arizona. This conference not only got the attention of many Arizona citizens, but also the entire nation. These outcries had a major impact on the Japanese population as a whole. By 1940 the population had declined by nearly 25% in ten years, and the same happened to the agricultural land, which declined by 12,589 acres (Young 1996, 10-12).

The lives of the Arizona Japanese prior to the internment period have not been widely written about. What is apparent is that Arizona had a similar reaction to the Japanese following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and fully supported the relocation of those “Japs.” Ironically two of the relocation centers were located in Arizona, and the Japanese population in this anti-alien state rose to over 35,000 (Bailey 1971, 89).

Establishment of Relocation Centers

As per the creation of Executive Order 9102, the act creating the War Relocation Authority, work camps were to be established in the western part of the United States to house the alleged enemy aliens. Assembly centers were organized to accommodate the evacuees before they transitioned to their future homes inside one of ten relocation centers. With only a few suitcases filled with clothes, bedding, a small number of
kitchen items, personal care items, there was hardly enough room for a few personal affects. With these suitcases they were escorted to various race tracks or fairgrounds where they would await their relocation center assignments.

A total of seventeen assembly centers were designated up and down the west coast, as well as one in Arizona (Daniels 2004, 55). Life inside these assembly centers was very disheartening, as those interned were unsure of where their next destination would be and what kind of conditions lay ahead. Armed guards kept the evacuees inside these centers weeks and in some cases for months. Due to the horrible conditions inside the Assembly Centers, the evacuees were convinced that the relocation centers would be much better and resemble resorts.

Although being shuffled into relocation centers would not normally be considered a godsend, it was, however, a major improvement from the horrible conditions at the various assembly centers. Although they were not luxury resorts, the change of scenery and the actual community atmosphere of the relocation centers was welcomed by the weary Japanese. With the establishment of the War Relocation Authority, ten relocation centers had to be built in a short amount of time, which was later apparent by the cheap condition of the buildings.

Milton S. Eisenhower former President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s younger brother, became the first director of the WRA and quickly realized that he was ill prepared for his duties. Relocating hundreds of thousands of mainly innocent minorities was not something Eisenhower was accustomed to dealing with. He is quoted with saying, “I feel most deeply that when the war is over and we consider calmly this unprecedented migration of 120,000 people, we as Americans are going to
regret that avoidable injustices that may have been done” (Daniels 1989, 91). He, unlike many of his counterparts, understood fully the repercussions that would undoubtedly befall the United States justice system.

Table 1  Summary of WRA Relocation Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRA Relocation Center</th>
<th>Peak Population</th>
<th>Date of First Arrival</th>
<th>Sending Assembly Center(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gila River (AZ)</td>
<td>13,348</td>
<td>July 20, 1942</td>
<td>Fresno, Stockton, Tulare, Turlock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granada (CO)</td>
<td>7,318</td>
<td>August 27, 1942</td>
<td>Merced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Mountain (WY)</td>
<td>10,767</td>
<td>August 12, 1942</td>
<td>Pomona, Portland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerome (AR)</td>
<td>8,497</td>
<td>October 6, 1942</td>
<td>Fresno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manzanar (CA)</td>
<td>10,046</td>
<td>March 21, 1942</td>
<td>Owens Valley, Santa Anita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minidoka (ID)</td>
<td>9,397</td>
<td>August 10, 1942</td>
<td>Puyallup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado River (AZ)</td>
<td>17,814</td>
<td>May 8, 1942</td>
<td>Parker Dam, Mayer, Pinedale, Portland, Salinas, Santa Anita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rohwer (AR)</td>
<td>8,475</td>
<td>September 18, 1942</td>
<td>Stockton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topaz (UT)</td>
<td>8,130</td>
<td>September 11, 1942</td>
<td>Tanforan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tule Lake (CA)</td>
<td>18,789</td>
<td>May 27, 1942</td>
<td>Marysville, Pinedale, Puyallup, Sacramento, Santa Anita</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Similar to the Arizona centers, the lands used for the other centers varied in their acquirement, for example, Tule Lake, Minidoka, and Heart Mountain were all placed on undeveloped federal reclamation projects (Daniels 1989, 96). Many of these lands had been vacant for many years due to the fact they were virtually uninhabitable. Located in desert areas, these conditions made it extremely hot and dry during the summers and bone-chilling cold and windy during the winter months.
Most of the relocation centers were built on land that could be cultivated or could transfer internees to nearby agricultural lands so that they could do one of five kinds of work: public work, harvesting, manufacturing, private employment, or the possibility of the creation of self-supporting communities outside the centers. As payment for their work, the WRA set up a pay scale, no internees could earn more than $19 a month, a far cry from what many successful professionals had been receiving back home (Daniels 1989, 93).

In their original design, the relocation centers were to be constructed as self-containing communities which included necessities such as a hospital, a post office, schools, residences, and multiple mess halls. Community infrastructure was also added, such as churches, ball fields, and even auditoriums. Surrounding the entire relocation center would be a barbed wire fence complete with guard towers and armed men carrying loaded weapons (Burton 2002, 40). Army style barracks were used to house the internees, and were planned on a basic grid system of blocks. The barracks inside each block unit were 20 feet by 120 feet and were divided into six separate “apartments” for families. Each unit was provided with some type of heater, one single light bulb hanging from the ceiling, and army cots with blankets and mattresses (Burton 2002, 40-43). The amenities at these centers were few and far between.

Once the transfer was complete, the Japanese surrounded by barbed wire fence were faced with an even larger dilemma, how to occupy their time inside the center. Most did have jobs, but normal life was certainly not pleasant here. Luckily for them, the government did not plan on keeping them trapped forever, although some politicians did favor the idea. Estimates were made that the Japanese would be interned for not
more than four years. However, it was just enough time for the US government to make a lasting impression on a group of undoubtedly innocent people.

What made the Colorado River and Gila River Relocation Centers unique, as mentioned earlier, was their location on Indian Reservations. The government felt it necessary to use land they technically already owned, or land they could easily acquire. In an effort to reject the building of an internment camp on the site of already forced reservations, both Tribal Councils had refused the leasing of their lands for the purpose of relocating an innocent group of people, similar to the way they had been relocated. Unfortunately, the Army and the Office of Indian Affairs disagreed with their notion and leased the lands to the WRA without the full consent of the inhabitants of the tribal lands. In the beginning, the Office of Indian Affairs had even been granted control over the Colorado River center (Burton 2002, 38-39).

**Colorado River Relocation Center.** Located in a desolate area in western Arizona lay an Indian Reservation bordering the Colorado River. Parker, Arizona, a tiny blip on the map was the town in which the evacuees first arrived. Just south of the town, three camps were established that would eventually become completely self-sufficient.

Prior to the internment period, these lands were envisioned by the Superintendent of the Indian Affairs to be irrigated for agriculture. Irrigation was not going to be easy, but the OIA was certain that once the Indians had successful farms they could make room for the white pioneers. The success of these farms did not happen easily, however, because irrigation systems were not the Mohave or the Chemehuevi’s specialty. In 1875 an irrigation canal was built by the Mohaves, but it
soon failed because of the heavily silted water. Thriving agricultural fields were finally producing food when the OIA leased some of the land to outside farmers (Lillquist 2007, 410-411). When the Japanese did arrive in the early 1940s, improvements were certainly welcomed by the Office of Indian Affairs, even if the Mohaves and the Chemehuevis were not quite as accommodating.

Officially the relocation center has two names, Colorado River is the name listed on many government documents and the name of the Indian reservation, but the center was also named after Charles Poston, the so-called “father of Arizona.” Earlier, in the late 1800’s, Poston had a vision of turning Parker Valley into a booming, green paradise. He had been prepared to tackle the lack of water with an intricate irrigation system. However, with all of his efforts, this area never became the paradise he had set out to build. The Office of Indian Affairs along with WRA hoped that the Japanese could make Poston’s dream into a reality with their expertise in farming (Bailey 1971, 80).

As the trains and buses pulled into Parker, Arizona, the evacuees got to see firsthand where they would be spending the next few years. On first impression, many quickly noticed the vast and seemingly endless landscape and desolate conditions which they would call home. It was late spring, and temperatures were just beginning to climb into their highest averages of the season. Days would be hot and nights were to be much colder, and the dust that the winds picked up was visually unbearable.

Although the tribes located on the Colorado River Indian Reservation had voiced their refusal over the locating of internment camps on their land, the government went ahead with the plans for such camps. The lands that were to be leased for the
specified time period were within two areas, Parcel A contained approximately 11,200 acres of land and Parcel B, contained a total of approximately 14,200 acres of land. Parcel A would primarily be used as lands for the three separate camps for the evacuees (War Relocation Authority Memorandum, 1942). What the Office of Indian Affairs hoped to gain from this project was the cultivation of at least 3,000 acres of agricultural
Because a large population would be residing at Colorado River, a total of three camps were built on the site at three mile intervals. These were appropriately named Poston I, Poston II, and Poston III. Poston I was the largest of the three, it included such buildings as administration offices, staff quarters, warehouses, a hospital and military police compound, and a total of 36 residential blocks. Inside of each block would contain fourteen barracks, a mess hall, a men’s and women’s latrine, laundry and ironing facilities, a recreation building, and a fuel oil shed. Schools were also built for each of the three camps, as well as other recreation buildings, and libraries (Burton 2002, 219, 221). Poston II and III were very similar in layout, but in much smaller proportions.

**Gila River Relocation Center.** On July 18, 1942, the Gila River Relocation Center was open to its first Japanese inhabitants (Wade Head Collection 1942-1944). This center is located on the reservation lands 50 miles south of Phoenix and just west of the small town of Sacaton. Prior to locating the relocation center on these lands, a site had been picked out in Nebraska, but at the last minute those plans fell through, and Gila River became camp number ten. A five-year permit was finally agreed upon, despite rejection from the Indian tribes, and a total of 16,500 acres was leased to the WRA (Burton 2002, 59-61).

Preceding the arrival of the Japanese the tribes located on the Gila River Indian Reservation were already skilled farmers. Their crops included corn, wheat, beans, and
melons, which were irrigated by a system of irrigation canals. Their existence was further hindered when white settlers cut off much of their water supply and droughts were a common occurrence beginning in the 1880s. Interesting to note, by 1897 Japanese immigrants began congregating in Arizona and working various agricultural jobs in this area.

**Figure 4** Aerial Image of the Gila River Relocation Center. Image showing the location of Poston camps in the Gila River Relocation Center. Source: Burton, Jeffery F., et al. 2002.
Just prior to internment, the reservation was doing quite well and was even involved in becoming a major transportation corridor filled with travelers of gold seekers, emigrants, and traders.

Two separate camps were built to hold up to 14,000 inhabitants in total, the first camp, Canal Camp, located to the east, and Butte Camp, just three and a half miles to the west. What set this relocation center apart from the rest was the fact that it was considered a “model community” for the reason that it was built a bit nicer. Although the outer appearance was more attractive, the bare minimal conveniences were the same throughout. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt even made a special appearance at Gila River, in an attempt to show America that the internment camps were not horrible places (Burton 2002, 62). But for the Japanese, who valued the new roots they had established in America, being separated from their homes was a truly horrible condition.

Irrigation canals had already been created by their neighbors, the Pimas and Maricopas, but as agreed upon in the lease, the Japanese were supposed to build more canals and some main roads (Burton 2002, 61). As long as the Japanese would be habitating the reservation lands, the OIA wanted to make sure that they would get something out of this period.

Although the Gila River Relocation Center never reached its built capacity of 14,000, it had one of the largest populations in the whole War Relocation Authority camp system, with just over 13,300 people at its height in 1943, also becoming Arizona’s fourth largest city (Burton 2002, 59). A total of 1,225 buildings were constructed on both camp sites. Butte Camp, located on 790 acres of land, was considerably larger than Canal Camp. A recent decline in the reservation economy was
a huge factor in locating the Japanese on this land (Young 1996, 23). Buildings &
agricultural land could be turned over to the local Indians following internment, as well
as employment opportunities for tribal members during the opening and closing of the
relocation center.

**Life Behind Barbed Wire**

The Japanese living inside the confines of these desolate camps had to do the
best they could in order to make their lives bearable. They had left behind a stable
lifestyle in places like California and Washington, with homes and businesses
liquidated, and personal effects put into storage. Life for the Japanese during World
War II became increasingly simple, yet complicated.

One of the fortunate aspects about the centers in Arizona is that there was much
work to be done out in the fields. At Gila River, the internees were responsible for
providing a large amount of food products to the other relocation centers. This type of
work kept the internees busy, despite a drastic change in their lifestyle. The internment
camps became small towns overnight, and buildings were constructed to hold such
things as recreation areas, religious centers, and schools. Life was to continue as
normal, for as long as the internment lasted.

Upon arriving in the camps, the Japanese entered their new homes inside army-
styled barracks, sectioned off by low partitions. A typical family of six found
themselves inside an area about twenty feet square complete with cots, a pot-bellied
stove, and a single light bulb. These were the simple necessities that the WRA felt the
internees needed. Bathrooms were shared, water was scarce, and furniture and other materials had to be made from scratch (WRA, 1946).

Life inside the camps was very dull and boring for many. They used their skills to build furniture and make do with what they could construct. They tried growing gardens in the arid landscape, and many were surprisingly successful. Jobs inside the centers would not pay over $19 a month (Daniels 1993, 66). Many psychological issues did arise, however. Privacy was not a luxury anymore, and many families were started in the midst of many close neighbors.

Figure 5 Barracks. The arrangement of barracks located at the Gila River Relocation Center. Source: Burton, Jeffery F., et al. 2002.

The family structure also began breaking down, as their eating habits were contained within a mess hall, and many of the children ate with their friends rather than with their families. Also, men were not the breadwinners of the family anymore, as they relied solely on the WRA for food, clothing, and basic amenities. Men were emotionally affected with the fact that no matter how hard they worked inside the center, there was
nothing they could do to improve conditions for their families (Matsumoto 2000, 133-134).

However, after a few months of isolation, the government took a brazen step to pass out and make all persons seventeen and older answer a questionnaire. There were only two questions that were the most important to answer, for many, these two questions would decide their fate. The questions were:

“27. Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?

28. Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forego any form of allegiance to the Japanese emperor, to any other foreign government, power or organization?” (Daniels 1993, 69)

A total of 6,700 internees answered “No” to both questions and were recorded as being disloyal to the United States. The WRA then decided it would be best to separate the loyal from the disloyal and transferred those that had answered “No, No” to the Tule Lake Relocation Center in California. Numerous males eighteen and older who answered yes to both questions were drafted for service in the war overseas (Daniels 1993, 69-70). It was a hard decision for many male Japanese internees as the United States government did not recognize them as citizens, but they were willing to place them on the front lines of battle for the nation. Feelings of betrayal and exploitation were rampant, but many believed that if they agreed to serve in the US military they and their families would be released from captivity. Unfortunately this was not the case.

Life was not unbearably tough, but rather boring and a waste of time. Fortunately these camps were not the typical concentration camps that many scholars attest to. These were not death camps, similar to those found in Germany, but were
merely holding cells for a few years. For the Japanese internees, there were 1,990 deaths, nearly all of them from natural causes, and an astounding 6,485 births inside the confines of internment (Daniels 1988, 241). This fact does not excuse the notion that 120,000 Japanese were rounded up and held in captivity. Although the camps were not used for mass executions, they were used as a method of denying rights to a group of people of the same ancestry and neglecting their civil freedoms and liberties.
CHAPTER 3
TAMING OF THE LANDSCAPE

This chapter seeks to answer the questions first presented at the beginning of this thesis, especially in regard to the physical and cultural adaptation of the landscape. Mainly, what were the lasting implications for land use in this area? The Japanese were very successful in adapting the land to the needs of the relocation centers, and these improvements were later left behind for Native American tribes.

Interactions Between the WRA, the OIA, the Army, Native Peoples, & the Japanese

The Arizona centers were unique within the internment camp system because of the location of the Arizona internment camps and the subsequent relationship between the War Relocation Authority, the Office of Indian Affairs, the native peoples, and lastly, the interned Japanese. It didn’t take long for each of these parties to realize what the other interests were. The government war agencies wanted war production, the OIA wanted better land cultivation for the reservations, and the Japanese just wanted to live freely in America. Trying to find a common ground was difficult, especially when communication lines were more often than not crossed or broken.

The United States government was destined to keep the internment camps a classified matter. Only a few newspapers and magazine reporters were allowed to enter the relocation centers in order to tell their story, however, the media was largely unaware of exactly what went on inside the confines of camp life. The war was raging
in Europe and in the Pacific, therefore many Americans were preoccupied and had no interest in the treatment of thousands of alleged enemies.

The sometimes conflicted interests of the two government agencies responsible for the interned Japanese led to confusion and disarray throughout the camps. The War Relocation Authority, and much of the high ranking officials in Washington basically wanted the Japanese held in confinement until this whole matter could sort itself out. While interned, government leaders realized how the Japanese could not only help themselves, but also contribute their skills to the war effort. The notion of New Deal work corps was implemented in the centers in various ways. Camouflage net factories were located on both the Colorado River and Gila River sites. A model ship building facility was also built at Gila River, and this aided the Navy in preparing for warfare on the open sea. Also, with the shortage of food in the west, the Japanese were also responsible for providing food, such as vegetables, to the mountain states. That reason alone kept those states interested in hosting internment camps.

For Arizona’s benefit, the Office of Indian Affairs had their own agenda. John Collier, the commissioner at the time, decided to let the WRA and the Japanese lease their lands in order to produce a fruitful agricultural area. Gila River had already been cultivated and irrigated for many years by the tribes that inhabited the area, but the site chosen for the Colorado River center had not been farmed, and this became a great opportunity to exploit the talented Japanese farmers. Collier also believed that the Japanese situation was very similar to that of the American Indians, and that internment camps and reservations were practically the same thing, leading most to believe that the OIA was capable of handling this type of circumstance (Lillquist 2007, 411).
Through Executive Order 9102, the establishment of work corps were decided to be the best way for the Japanese to work for the benefit of the surrounding states. Internees would therefore be released from the strict confines of the centers, and be able to work out in the fields on a seasonal basis (WRA, 1946). Acting as farmers to provide food for the general public was not the only place in which the Japanese supplied agricultural products to. They were also a key element in feeding their counterparts in the other centers. A total of 20% of the food produced at Gila River was shipped to the other nine relocation centers (Burton 2002, 68). Just like with the natives who farmed this land for many centuries, the Japanese were also very successful in getting the land to produce plentiful crops. By the end of 1944, 1,289 acres of land had been cultivated which produced nearly 15 million pounds of vegetables for consumption (War Relocation Authority, 1944).

As for industrial enterprises in the Arizona centers, camouflage net factories were established on both relocation centers. At Gila River, an estimated 80 million feet of camouflage netting was produced in the five months that the factory was in operation. In addition to these net factories, a model ship building shop was also located at Gila River. This shop greatly aided the United States Navy in creating more than 600 scale models of ships that could be used in simulation for the military servicemen (Lillquist 2007, 496).

A self-sustaining community environment was highly encouraged within all the relocation centers. Although the government appointed supervisors that were assigned to the centers, their jobs were mainly to oversee the centers and to pass correspondence back and forth to the main headquarters in Washington. Each camp was divided into
blocks, these blocks had subsequent managers who would oversee the actions of those assigned to that area. Council governments were set up to facilitate the cooperation with the internees, mainly so they would not feel the pressures of the federal government looming over their everyday activities.

Although the camps were designed as peaceful living communities, the military maintained a presence in all the camps. Watch towers were built along the perimeter of the centers, and soldiers carried loaded weapons on them at all times. In a memorandum dated May 28, 1942, the Western Defense Command located in San Francisco stated that the duties of the military were for the prevention of “ingress or egress of unauthorized persons and preventing evacuees from leaving the center without proper authority” (Office of the Commanding General, 1942). For the most part the military police stationed at the centers did not need to show force, but on a few occasions, frustration clearly broke out among the internees.

One such example occurred at Colorado River in November of 1942. At this time the military was in the process of recruiting young Japanese men to fight in the war effort for the United States. Between frustration over conditions of camp life, the insistence of military enlistment, and the breakdown of the center’s elected council, a group of Japanese men attacked Kay Nishimura, a suspected government informant, and beat him severely with a lead pipe. Two men were arrested, and this action precipitated a riot outside of the jail where hundreds of internees lead a strike against the internment. In order to quell the strike, camp officials released the men to later discipline them under the camp’s judiciary system. However, this strike proved the presence of tension boiling up from the interned Japanese against the mistreatment from
their government leaders. Tension continued to rage when the draft was set to be reinstated for Japanese Americans (Muller 2005, 124-125). The Colorado River Relocation Center became a hotbed of internal activity seemingly overnight, and soon spread to other centers as the war continued.

Following the “Poston Strike,” leaders on both sides of the system came to the center to sort the situation out. Collier, head of the OIA, took it upon himself to tell the Japanese internees exactly what they were facing in the years ahead. He envisioned a permanent homestead for the uprooted Japanese in the Parker Valley, and had plans for land development and irrigation stretching out the next forty years. However, the WRA superintendent Dillon S. Myer completely disagreed and had made a speech to the governing bodies of the Colorado River Relocation Center admitting failure within the system and that as soon as could be facilitated, the lives of the Japanese would be reinstated and dispersal was imminent. Everyone hearing both of these speeches became intensely confused and did not know which side of the story to believe. Either they would be “prisoners” on this barren landscape for the next two generations or they would have to start new lives somewhere in America very shortly.

Interactions with Their Native American Neighbors

Relations between the Japanese and the federal government may have been strained and confusing at times, but the relationship with their neighboring tribal members was relatively benign. At both Gila River and Colorado River the tribal councils had vetoed the establishment of internment camps on their land, but as with most minority groups, their voices were not heard over the government’s
encouragement. Members of the tribes felt sympathetic to the Japanese, as many of them and their ancestors had gone through a similar situation when the reservation system was established.

Before the internees were located at their new homes, many local Native Americans were hired to help with the construction of the center itself. At Gila River, members of the tribal community also worked alongside the Japanese in the camouflage net factory and in other aspects of the center. What made matters worse for the Japanese was the fact that outsiders who came to the relocation center for employment, including the Native Americans, received a much higher paycheck, and they were also not obligated to stay inside the camp at all times. For leisure activities, at both Gila River and Colorado River, Indian baseball teams would challenge Japanese teams, in fact a few of the local Pimas and Maricopas assisted in the construction of the Zenimura baseball field located at the Gila River center (Lillquist 2007, 436, 502).

The Pimas located on the Gila River reservation not only worked alongside the Japanese in the fields and in the factories, but also young Indian students and Japanese children would often play together if they happened to attend the elementary school located inside the center. One young Indian girl at the time remembers inviting her Japanese friends over to her Aunt’s house where they were fed large meals and then later swam and played in the nearby canal (Young 1996, 25).

As for land development, the Japanese were responsible for assisting the Colorado River Indians with agricultural techniques, such as teaching them how to use the arid landscape to their advantage, as well as the benefits of irrigation canals
The Japanese seemed to have a real knack for cultivating difficult landscapes, and the seemingly infertile lands of Arizona were no exception.

Interaction between these two groups was limited. The local Indian tribes had first attempted to prevent the construction of an internment camp on their lands, and when that plan was overruled, many wanted very little to do with the entire process. The centers did provide for job opportunities for locals, as well as some food products, but overall times of leisure were mainly the other ways in which the Japanese would have a positive interaction with their fellow Native American neighbors.

**Agricultural Advancements**

**Colorado River Relocation Center.** Those located in the Colorado River center were told that their main goal during internment was to make the barren landscape into a plush, irrigated wonderland. Not an easy task for many, but these Japanese were exceptional farmers, and the OIA was convinced that this group of people could successfully get the job done.

As per the agreement for the Colorado River center between the War Relocation Authority and the Secretary of the Interior, by early 1944, a total of 3,000 acres of land will have been cleared, leveled, and irrigated for the purpose of harvesting crops (WRA, 1942). Each center was to provide food for themselves, as well as a small percentage for public consumption. Although Gila River had been successfully farmed previous to internment, Colorado River, on the other hand, had not had the same successes (Lillquist 2007, 533).
For internees confined at the Colorado River Relocation Center, 25,000 acres were set aside for the purpose of farming. Internees would be responsible for jumpstarting a flourishing farming program for when the war ended and the Native Americans took full control of their land once again. Besides just crop farming, plans for a dairy, the breeding and slaughtering of livestock, an apiary, and nurseries were put into place at Colorado River. By November of that same year, plans for helping feed the other nine centers, as well as the public, were abandoned due to the fact that the farm production needed to concentrate on only feeding those located on site (War Relocation Authority, 1942-1946).

The agricultural program was divided between the three units of the center, and even located in areas in between barracks, on firebreaks, and on vacant blocks. By the middle of 1943 a total of roughly 240 Japanese internees were working in the three agricultural units. At this time, 167 acres had been farmed and another 80 acres was added to the their total rented from the Colorado Valley Indian School (WRA, 1942-1946). Although conditions were harsh in this area, one aspect that did make it easier for harvesting was the fact that the growing season was considerably longer than that of California, and therefore employment in farming lasted throughout the entire year.

Irrigation was also a major problem for this area. Up until the internment period, irrigation systems had not been proven very successful on this reservation. By November of 1942, more than 40 miles of irrigation canals, laterals, and sub-laterals had been constructed (Lillquist 2007, 424). Successful irrigation led to the successful continuation of the agricultural program, and by mid-1944, 1,510 acres were available for farming which would provide for nearly 650 acres of truck crops and another 400
acres set aside for grains and alfalfa fields for the feeding of livestock (WRA, 1942-1946).

The Japanese were satisfied with the opportunity to hold jobs as farmers on this land, and although they were not adequately paid for their miraculous farming techniques, the prospect of having a job was enough for the internees. The War Relocation Authority and the Office of Indian Affairs, on the other hand, were extremely pleased that they had a center full of talented farmers who could create a self-sustaining community for little cost to them.

After three years of intensive farming, the Japanese were responsible for providing the Colorado River Relocation Center with 28 different varieties of vegetables suitable for growing in this area. Such vegetables included: beans, carrots, cucumber, daikon, lettuce, squash, watermelon, and two kinds of cabbage. A total of 2,500 acres of land had been cleared, leveled, and irrigated for farming during these years (WRA, 1942-1946). In addition to the construction of irrigation canals, a direct highway to the railhead was also built. Including the construction of roads and bridges, a total of 21.27 miles was built by the WRA (WRA, 1942-1946).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2  Colorado River Relocation Center Production Estimates</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Colorado River Relocation Center</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Acres Harvested</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Production (lbs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumed at Center (tons)</td>
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<td>Shipped to Other Centers (tons)</td>
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Data adapted from Lilquist, Karl, 2007.
Besides just the growing of crops to feed the center, the Japanese were hard at work with landscaping and the creation of gardens in and around the blocks. The planting of trees, shrubs, and small gardens provided an aesthetic improvement for the area. Small ponds were created, and traditional stone gardens were a symbol of stability throughout much of the center (Lillquist 2007, 430). Internees made this barren landscape into a place they could call home, for however long they would be interned there.

**Gila River Relocation Center.** At Gila River, however, the Japanese farmers were preceded by the also very talented natives. This landscape had already once been successfully irrigated and farmed for many years, now it was up to the Japanese to provide food crops for themselves and also for the other nine centers. Prior to internment, 7,000 acres had been cultivated for alfalfa and the soil was in perfect condition for continued agricultural production (Lillquist 2007, 488).

Although alfalfa had been lucrative previously, the center also needed numerous truck crops in order to feed the internees. Gila River’s growing season was very similar to that of Colorado River, and not only did it mean that the season lasted year round, but also that the types of vegetables were in high productivity. Radishes were the first successful crop the internees provided for consumption, but later on, a total of 48 different varieties of produce were grown on site. These crops included three types of beans, cantaloupe, sweet corn, two varieties of potatoes, tomato, and onions, among many others. For the war effort, castor beans, cotton, and flax was grown (Lillquist 2007, 489-490).
The fiscal year of 1944 was a very profitable year for the Gila River center. A total of 1,289 acres of vegetables were grown, which produced over 15 million pounds of food crops to be used not only on the tables at Gila River, but also at the other relocation centers (WRA, 1944). The mass amount of food that was being shipped to the other centers also provided for the construction of a new loading and warehouse facility at Serape, nearly 11 miles from the center (Burton 2002, 62).

Gila River was mainly responsible for supplying fresh produce for the other relocation centers. The agricultural program employed nearly a thousand men and women during the 1943-1944 harvest season and 84 truckloads of food products were shipped from Gila River to the other nine centers (Burton 2002, 68). Over 10 million pounds of produce was shipped to the other relocation centers between 1942 and 1945, without this intense agricultural success, the other centers would have had very little to eat (Lillquist 2007, 492).

Table 3  Gila River Relocation Center Production Estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gila River Relocation Center Estimates</th>
<th>Total Produce Yields (1942-1945)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Acres Harvested</td>
<td>4,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Production (lbs)</td>
<td>32,736,537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumed at Center (tons)</td>
<td>21,854,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipped to Other Centers (tons)</td>
<td>10,791,238</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data adapted from Lillquist, Karl. 2007.

Livestock was also another important aspect of the Gila River agricultural program. To keep this program efficient, by the end of 1943 a butchering plant was
erected on the site of the camp. Nurseries and seed farms were also necessary when shortages of seed occurred throughout the growing seasons (Burton 2002, 68). The resourcefulness of this center was apparent by the success of its farms and livestock program.

Ornate gardens and concrete-lined ponds were also constructed throughout the center, mainly for the purpose of beautification. Lawns were even planted to provide a cooler environment in this arid landscape. Twenty-five acres of lawn and 6,884 shade trees helped to provide relief; and to help the internees forget that they were trapped in a desert landscape surrounded by the colors of only tans and browns (Lillquist 2007, 496).

Although the Japanese seemed to have an immense task to tackle when arriving to these desert landscapes in early to mid-1942, they were extremely successful in carrying out the duties that the Office of Indian Affairs had planned for them. These centers were truly self-sustaining, especially in regard to food items. In the case of Gila River, not only could they feed themselves, but they were able to help feed the other nine relocation centers as well. Whatever irrigated and cultivated fields that the Japanese had leftover after the closing of the camps, the Native Americans continued to harvest the crops in the same manner that the Japanese had during a major world war.
CHAPTER 4
THE END OF AN UNFORTUNATE ERA

It is the intent of this chapter to discuss the end of the internment period and what that meant for the Japanese evacuees, who now were forced to relocate to a new, unfamiliar place. Conveyed here is the condition of the camps once the Japanese moved out and what the various tribes gained in the process. Current conditions of the two relocation centers will also be presented, as well as how they are being remembered and honored to this day.

Closing of the Camps

Almost as soon as the ten relocation centers had opened their gates, the War Relocation Authority was already working out the details of closing them. Although no one could predict when the war would end, or if the United States could beat the Japanese in the Pacific, nonetheless, those that had sent the Japanese to the camps understood that they could not be held as prisoners forever.

One of the major milestones which expedited the release of the Japanese was the decision of the Supreme Court case *Endo v. United States* in December of 1944. The courts decided in favor of Mitsuye Endo and ruled that “whatever power the War Relocation Authority may have to detain other classes of citizens, it has no authority to subject citizens who are concededly loyal to its leave procedure.” (US Supreme Court, 1944) From this moment on American citizens of Japanese ancestry that did not have a
case of espionage or sabotage against them were free to leave. Oddly enough, many did not feel the need to leave immediately.

Throughout internment, leave clearance had been granted for select individuals such as college students, seasonal workers, those enlisting in the army, and finally those willing to give up their American dream and be exiled back to Japan. Finally on January 2, 1945 the War Department announced that Executive Order 9066 would be revoked and that within the next year all relocation centers would be closed and all internees would be relocated elsewhere (US Dept. of the Interior 1946, 72).

In order to facilitate the relocation process, the War Relocation Authority set up six regional offices and 35 sub-regional offices to aid in preparing not only the Japanese for resettlement, but also the communities receiving them (Daniels 1993, 78). The WRA was not going to take any chances with resettlement, as they wanted the public to accept the Japanese, since it had finally been proven that those living among American citizens were not a threat to national security and that maybe internment had not been the best course of action on behalf of the United States.

In the beginning, many Japanese located inside the camps were apprehensive of returning to the outside world. For many it had been more than three years since living among the public, and without the “comfort” of the camps, they were unsure if their peers would accept them again. This became a true testament in the fairly decent treatment of the Japanese over the course of internment, they all of a sudden didn’t want to leave. Of course there was another element to their hesitation, all of their possessions had been given away, their homes sold, and no jobs to fall back on. At this point, camp life is all they knew and all they had in life. With the menial paychecks they had
received over the past three years, starting a new life among practical strangers was not going to be an easy task that many were willing to take on.

The state of Arizona did not want the Japanese resettling within their borders. The Japanese population prior to the war was minimal, and following the war, Arizona did not want that to change. Prior to internment there were an estimated 632 Japanese living in the state, and by the 1950 US Census, a total of 780 Japanese were reported living in Arizona. Apparently the state of Arizona did not get its wish, as many Japanese still resided in Maricopa county, the home of Phoenix (US Census Bureau, 1950). The current Governor, Sidney Osborn, and other local politicians encouraged the Japanese to resettle elsewhere. Although the Japanese had been successful in taming and cultivating the arid Arizona landscape, it was time for them to move on. While Arizona’s most prominent citizens did not want the Japanese to stay, many ended up doing just that.

Gila River was to be closed by November 15, 1945 and actually ended up closing its doors on November 10. Colorado River also closed early instead of December 1, 1945. The entire camp was abandoned by November 25 (Department of the Interior 1946, 75). Those who had been labeled as “disloyal” were sent to the Tule Lake camp in California, and by December of 1945 all the other camps had been emptied except for Tule Lake which had a population of 12,545. Tule Lake did not finally close until mid-1946 (Daniels 1993, 72).
Another Relocation Period

By the end of 1945 it was time for another relocation. This time resettlement, instead of confinement. The Japanese had mainly come from places across California, Oregon, and Washington, but were highly encouraged not to return to their original homes, and instead resettle someplace in the eastern portion of the United States. Once again the government was guiding them to places they knew nothing about and had no connection to.

The regional offices spread all across the country were responsible for aiding the Japanese to mainstream back into public life. War hysteria was practically over, and most people were not holding grudges over the Japanese, especially after the United States beat the Japanese in the war following the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Japanese at least had hope that they could start anew somewhere.

President Roosevelt and WRA officials hoped that the resettlement of the Japanese could occur sporadically. Their goal was to release small groups of internees so that they would resettle in different areas across the country and therefore not cluster together, as Roosevelt felt that prewar Japanese clusters had led to the hysteria (Daniels 1993, 80). Unfortunately, the Japanese, after being confined to a Japanese-only community did not have high hopes of returning to white neighborhoods following the events of Pearl Harbor. The comforts of Japantowns were still needed for many Issei members, expectations were that new Japantowns could be formed, even if it were on the east coast.

The largest concentrations of Japanese American communities were in New York City, Chicago, Denver, Salt Lake City, and even in Cleveland, Ohio. The mid-

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6 Issei is a term that refers to a first generation Japanese person.
west attracted the first resettlers, as this area was less affected by the war hysteria and had been perceived as open to Japanese settlement. Some 18,000 former Japanese internees chose the north central states as their new permanent home, in places such as Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and even the northern peninsula of Michigan.

**Figure 6** Destination Cities & States for Colorado River Evacuees Map. A map depicting the destination places where residents of the Colorado River Relocation Center relocated to during resettlement. The red states indicate the best representation of the resettled states. The towns and cities highlighted are a few of the most desired places for the relocated Japanese.

Nearly 12,000 settled in the city of Chicago. The city of Cleveland attracted as many as 2,400 settlers alone, an area not usually associated with large Japanese populations drew a large crowd following internment (Wade Head Collection, 1946). Reasoning for this
could have been the aspect of fitting in with the rest of the public and not clustering in large cities, like had once happened in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Acceptance by their white neighbors was plentiful in these areas, and even in places like western Pennsylvania and New York, job opportunities were created especially for the returning Japanese to mainstream society. The WRA was credited with doing an amazing job at providing for the Japanese while they looked for places to live and jobs to occupy (Wade Head Collection, 1946). Religious organizations, such as the Quakers were an immense help to the Japanese, as hostels were created to house families with no place else to go (Daniels 1993, 78). Without the WRA regional offices, many Japanese would have had no idea where to turn next, and their presence among the rest of nation might have been construed as threatening.

The southern states, however, were not the most attractive places for the Japanese to congregate. In the beginning, the army and the WRA tried to resettle the Japanese in places other than along the coast, but the reluctance may have occurred because lingering feelings of black prejudice. Many places in the south did not openly accommodate the Japanese, especially in Arkansas, after their experience with hosting two internment camps that had sparked resentment among its local citizens (Wade Head Collection, 1946).

The last place that the Japanese were allowed to resettle to was the west coast states. The resilience of the Japanese permitted them to conquer their fears of their fellow western neighbors’ hostility. A total of over 43,000 returned to California, more than 10,000 to Washington state, and even 2,088 to Oregon (Daniels 1993, 81). Not the type of resettling that the government had in mind, but in the end, it all worked out.
At Colorado River, relocation out of the center was encouraged starting in early 1943. By the end of that year 2,675 had left the center and during 1944 another 2,789 had departed. Many felt they could not leave the confines of their camp because they had very little money, worried they could not find adequate work on the outside, and realized that inside the relocation center they had shelter, three meals a day, and a supportive Japanese community (Lillquist 2007, 439).

![Figure 7](Map of destination places where residents of the Gila River Relocation Center relocated to during resettlement. The red states indicate the best representation of the resettled states. The towns and cities highlighted are a few of the most desired places for the relocated Japanese.)

A similar pattern occurred at Gila River during the years 1943 and 1944, when many internees were allowed to resettle in select places across the country. It was a bit
slower to start at Gila River, as less than 2,000 relocated during 1943, but by the next year, the number of resettlers had risen to 2,739. The preferred destinations were mainly in the mid-west including the cities of Chicago, Minneapolis, Detroit, and Cleveland (Lillquist 2007, 503).

With the frenzy behind them, the American public was surprised to see that the Japanese people were really hard workers and had aspirations to join the ranks of the middle-class. What made the War Relocation Authority’s job real easy was the success the all Japanese 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion and the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team of the United States military had achieved during the war. They were all true heroes, and to prove their heroics, the President awarded twenty Congressional Medals of Honor, one Distinguished Service Medal, and 560 Silver Stars; these honors made this group of soldiers the most decorated unit in United States military history for its size and length of service (NJAHS, 2007). Americans needed to feel proud to call these Japanese men their fellow citizens.

Although the WRA knew they would not be around forever and organized the resettlement of the Japanese as quickly as possible, they were still the government body responsible for rounding up the west coast Japanese and placing them in concentration camp-style facilities and denying their rights as American citizens. Enormous numbers of possessions and carefree lifestyles were robbed at the expense of the war crisis in the 1940s. The WRA likened this event to a period of “human conservation.” When this period finally did come to an end in 1945-1946, Roger Daniels sums it up perfectly by saying,
“There can be no more poignant evidence of that human waste and of man’s inhumanity to man than the fact that thousands of exiles, persons who had been part of a free and self-supporting community, were so shattered by their wartime treatment at the hands of their own government that they literally had to be evicted from concentration camps.” (Daniels 1993, 87)

Reservations Forever Changed

As stated in the lease agreements signed by the War Relocation Authority and the Office of Indian Affairs, when the internment camps closed and the Japanese were released, the buildings, land improvements, and anything else constructed on the property would be handed over to the tribal councils (WRA, 1942). In the end, the existing reservations had a lot to gain from the internment period, including an extremely successful farming operation.

As the Japanese were moving out of their barracks, the WRA was busy signing over land and buildings back over to the Office of Indian Affairs. A tract of 2,000 acres was the first to be returned, and despite a current drought, plans for harvesting nearly 800 acres of that land turned out not to be quite as successful (WRA, 1945). A program called the Colonization Program was initiated to move members of southwestern Native American tribes into barracks of the camp located at Poston II. By September of that year, Hopis entered Poston II and other buildings in the remaining center were taken apart and their adobe bricks were used to build other structures in nearby Parker. Those buildings left standing, not taken over by Hopi or other tribal families were sold for $50-75 each in the latter part of 1946 (Lillquist 2007, 443).
Currently, the camp of Poston I is the most intact. The area surrounding where the camp once stood is still irrigated farm lands, mainly growing alfalfa. Many of the buildings had either been sold or demolished since the 1940s. What remains today are the site of the Poston I Elementary School, including a section of the auditorium, concrete slabs depicting the sites of barracks and the old high school, as well as the sewage treatment plant three quarters of a mile west of Mohave Road (Burton 2002, 228-231).

The only visible signs of the camp buildings at Poston II and III are mainly concrete slabs and their respective sewage treatment plants. The irrigation ditches and canals built by the Japanese are still in use today and remain a vital part of the reservation’s agricultural program. The enhancements made at the railroad station in Parker are also still standing. The Colorado River Indian Community took advantage of many of the buildings that were left behind, as of early 2000, a total of 50 relocated buildings had been identified in the surrounding area, being used mostly for housing, while one is in use at the Colorado River Indian Tribe’s Head Start School (Burton 2002, 236-241).

When the leases between the WRA and the OIA for the Gila River Relocation Center ended, a total of 17,125 acres was reverted back to the Gila River Indian Reservation (Lillquist 2007, 507). All land improvements, just like at Colorado River, were kept in tact for the tribal community to take advantage of. Other than visible remnants of building foundations, most physical attributes were either sold or torn down.
Nearby towns were also able to benefit from the abandoned WRA buildings. The City of Mesa, for example, bought what was once the Butte High School auditorium. Other buildings were auctioned off in mid-1946, and many educational institutions ended up with them all across the state (Burton 2002, 71). What does remain in tact, and in great demand, are the road networks laid out by the Japanese internees. The old highway that was once used as a main road by the WRA from Phoenix to Casa Grande has been superseded by Interstate 10 (Burton 2002, 72-73).

The area where Canal Camp once stood is in very good condition, however, no buildings remain on the site. Concrete slabs where buildings once stood is all that remains, other than a few artifacts, including engravings from the Japanese throughout the area. What also still remains is both sewage treatment plants located at Canal Camp and Butte Camp (Burton 2002, 72-83). However, it is interesting to note that more buildings were not utilized throughout the reservation following internment, as had
happened in Parker. Some of the buildings were sold to local Pimas and Maricopas for only $1, but the remnant of those buildings are certainly not present today (Lillquist 2007, 507).

A major difference between the two areas, Colorado River and Gila River, is at Gila River artifacts and physical remnants from the actual internees are still present. Such artifacts include stone walk-ways, leading up to barrack entrances, dug out cellars, for the Japanese to stay cool during the intense summer months, and also concrete lined ponds and other forms of landscaping (Lillquist 2007, 508).

![Current Condition of Gila River](image)

**Figure 9** Current Condition of Gila River. Remnants of concrete slabs, probably from WRA buildings at the Gila River Relocation Center. Source: Lillquist, Karl, 2007.

In 1945, the tribal council located at the Colorado River Indian Reservation divided the reservation into a Northern Reserve and a Southern Reserve. Outside tribes were allowed to come settle the vacant areas left over from the Japanese, and within a couple of years the Mohave and Chemehuevis were neighbors to Hopi, Navaho, Walapai, Supai, Cocopah, and the Quechan. By 1964, the Mohave and Chemehuevi
tribes wanted their land back, and soon many of the others left and returned to their respective reservations (Lillquist 2007, 448). As of the 2000 census report, 9,197 people inhabit the lands known as the Colorado River Indian Reservation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Due to the successful farming and irrigation techniques of the Japanese, the Colorado River Indian Tribes continue to farm this area, and by 1963 a total of 34,000 acres were harvesting cotton. In 1963, a US Supreme Court declared that the Indian reservation was entitled to a significant portion of the Colorado River and could then irrigate up to 107,588 acres of farmland. Although farming is still a major part of the reservation, the area that was once a barren landscape to the Japanese, now is a landscape full of farming, tourism, and light industry (Lillquist 2007, 448).

The recent history of the Gila River Indian Community is a bit different than its Arizona counterpart. In 1968, Gila River Farms took over the majority of the farming lands located within the relocation center. On roughly 15,000 acres, the subsidiary of the reservation grows such crops as cotton, alfalfa, wheat, oranges, melons, and olives, among others. However, in 1971, the Gila River Indian Community brought a suit against the United States claiming that they deserved compensation for the lands that were never cultivated as per the agreement. A total of 8,850 acres were not developed on the lands that Canal and Butte camp once occupied and were never restored following internment. The United States found in favor of the Indian community and awarded them over $1.5 million in damages (Lillquist 2007, 513).

Today the area is still thriving economically and physically. A total population of 11,287 was recorded for the 2000 Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). It is unsure
whether the Japanese were mainly responsible for the success of this area, as the irrigation and farming had always been an integral part of the reservation, but it is fair to say that the Japanese did improve the lands and surrounding area. Economically, the Gila River community has also profited. Being located so close to the Phoenix metropolitan area has certainly been an advantage. Many recreational amenities are located in this area, including golf courses, gaming facilities, and tourist resorts.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Finally, the information gained throughout this thesis should be applied to draw conclusions for the purpose of studying the internment period. This horrible tragedy in American history also succeeded in establishing some positive aspects for the reservations these particular centers were located on. In a geographic perspective, the Japanese carried with them not only physical possessions, but also a cultural aspect that led to their specific marking of the landscape.

**Remembering the Internment Period**

Since the closing of the relocation centers, much has happened to positively demonstrate the hopes of the Japanese through this dark period, and also to educate Americans on an event in American history that the US government is not particularly proud of. Most of the ten centers have been selected as some sort of historical designation. Below I will be describing only the two relocation centers central to this thesis.

Before memorials and monuments could be constructed, the Japanese, after being released from confinement, wished to attain compensation for the property, personal effects, and lost wages throughout the years of internment. Millions of dollars were lost, although many believed they would never see a cent. The Japanese Claims Act of 1948 was established to settle loses for $38 million to cover some 23,000 claims. However, these claims actually totaled nearly $131 million. Payments were finally
given out by 1965, after which many of the original *Issei* had passed on, or the money received was so small that it was not even worth the litigation (Daniels 1993, 89).

Two important milestones in the redress movement happened during President Ford and Carter’s administrations. First, on the 34th anniversary of the signing of Executive Order 9066, President Ford repealed the order and declared that the Japanese “…were and are loyal Americans…” Next, during Carter’s years in office, he created the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC), which would determine the transgression the US government had inflicted on the Japanese during World War II (Daniels 1993, 90-91). The redress movement had kicked into full swing and the Committee was soon busy deciding who and what should be awarded as compensation. Something that was still absent from all this was a formal apology from Congress for the entire treatment of the west coast Japanese.

By 1983, the Committee had published the findings in its report, *Personal Justice Denied*, and it had proposed five recommendations:

“1. A formal apology by Congress.
2. Presidential pardons for persons who had run afoul of the law while resisting the wartime restraints placed upon Japanese Americans.
3. Congressional recommendations to government agencies to restore status and entitlements lost because of wartime injustices.
4. Congress to establish and fund a special foundation to ‘sponsor research and public education activities…so that the causes and circumstances of this and similar events may be illuminated.’
5. A one-time, tax-free payment of $20,000 to each Japanese American survivor who had been incarcerated because of ethnicity during World War II.” (Daniels 1993, 98)

Finally on November 21, 1989, President George Bush signed the appropriation bill which began payments of up to $500 million until all eligible persons had been compensated. Survivors as well as heirs of survivors were provided with checks nearly
one year later (Daniels 1993, 104). Only one year after the signing of the bill, but almost 45 years too late.

Presently there are two memorials on the Colorado River and the Gila River Relocation Center sites. At Gila River, access to the sites of Canal Camp and Butte Camp are restricted, as they are treated as sacred sites to the tribes. A permit must be obtained to enter these areas, but survivors and family members of Japanese internees are allowed to visit the sites. The tribes did allow a couple markers to be placed on the sites of the two camps. Each plaque states the history of the internment and the relocation center, as well as listing the names of those who were killed in action during World War II.

![Honor Roll Monument](image)

**Figure 10** Honor Roll Monument. Plaque listing the names of Japanese Americans who had served and died in the US military during WWII. Source: Burton, Jeffery F., et al. 2002.

The only type of monumental display is the Honor Roll Monument placed at Butte Camp. This monument is dedicated to the men who served in the war effort who had been residents of Gila River. Through the years this monument has been subject to
vandalism, but the reflecting pool and wooden benches still remain (Burton 2002, 91-99).

At the Colorado River site, a more permanent and intact memorial exists. Located on the site of Poston I in the town of current Poston is a kiosk and monument dedicated to the men, women, and children interned at the Colorado River Relocation Center. The Poston Memorial site was dedicated in late 1992, with the cooperation of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, former internees of the center, and veterans and friends of the 50th anniversary of the evacuation and internment. Included are an information kiosk formed in the shape of a Japanese lantern, and a large monument standing thirty feet tall with plaques on each side also telling the history of the site as well as listing the names of those who fought and lost their lives during the war. This site is not restricted and is still in excellent condition, due mostly because it was built next door to the Poston fire department.

Figure 11  Poston Memorial Monument. A monument and kiosk located at the site of the Colorado River Relocation Center constructed to remember the Japanese who were interned here. Source: Michaud, 2008.
As stated earlier, one of the main purposes of this thesis is to demonstrate that the period of the Japanese internment can and should be studied under the lens of geography. As a mainly historical topic, human geographers look at the changing of landscapes and how different groups of people interact with their environment. Geography is a multi-faceted field of study, and so is the Japanese internment.

In reaction to the placement of internment camps on Indian reservation lands, the answers are simple. The government owned the land and the rights of the Native Americans were superseded by powerful politicians. Much of the land used for the relocation centers was located on already owned government land, and although other sites had been proposed in Arizona, such as Beardsley, Cortaro Farms, and even the Fort Mohave Indian Reservation, both Colorado River and Gila River had been chosen. These previous three were rejected mainly because they were either too expensive to built on or they were located near key military sites (Lillquist 2007, 411). The reservations located at Poston and Gila River became the perfect solutions, and despite the fact that both tribal councils rejected the idea, the relocation centers were constructed.

As for the relationship between the Native Americans and the Japanese, not much has been documented to that effect. What is known is that both groups worked side by side in the construction and farming efforts of the camps. Although the Japanese received very little pay compared to their Indian neighbors, the relationship while hard at work did not appear to be strained or envious. When it came to recreation and the befriending of young Japanese and Indian members, interactions were rather
Baseball games and recreation were a usual occurrence at the two centers. It seems as though the Native American tribes, although they rejected the original plan for the relocation centers, did not hold any sort of grudge against the Japanese. In many ways they felt bad for them, as they could relate to the placement of a large group of people on lands that were unfamiliar and forced.

The main idea behind the self-contained relocation centers held true, as the Japanese developed a new life behind the barbed wire fences, and their Native American neighbors went about their usual business in the nearby town of Parker. Besides recreation, the only other contact between the two groups occurred when roughly seventeen Hopi families moved into Poston II at the close of the internment, while as many as one thousand Japanese remained inside the camp. As the Hopis were moving in, the Japanese were slowly moving out.

The Japanese were definitely not encouraged to stay on the lands they had developed, even though Indian Commissioner John Collier had first envisioned a permanent community of Japanese on the lands of the Colorado River reservation. The Indians were assured that the Japanese would only stay a few years and then later move not only off the reservation, but also mainly out of state. As such, Arizona Senator McFarland publicly announced that the Japanese were not welcome to relocate in the state of Arizona. As evident, no offices were established to facilitate a relocation to parts of Arizona or any assistance in finding job opportunities (Lillquist 2007, 438). Once internment was over, the state of Arizona was content in washing their hands of the entire matter.
The Japanese were skilled farmers, and their expertise is what helped shape the landscape. On the Colorado River Indian Reservation, their skills came in particularly handy when the US government expected the Japanese internees to develop the land. Farming on this land had only barely started before the Japanese had arrived. By the end of internment, 7,237,620 pounds of vegetables were grown at Colorado River, and the 1,004 acres that the produce was farmed on would continue to be cultivated when the Native Americans returned to their land (Lillquist 2007, 424-426).

By 1999 a total of 84,500 acres were being farmed on the reservation (Lillquist 2007, 448). The irrigation canals and ditches that the Japanese had helped establish on the property were still in use at this time. The plush landscape that was continuing to flourish many decades later was the result of hard work by the interned Japanese. It would not be fair to say that the reservation lands would not have been as prosperous without the Japanese, but the reality is that these lands did become a green wonderland and helped the Indian Reservation find a place in the world of agricultural business.

Despite the changes physically, there were cultural changes as well. The Japanese suffered through two relocations, both of which were forced. The first when they were required to leave their homes on the west coast and be confined in desolate places across the mountain and western states. The second relocation occurred at the conclusion of internment when the Japanese were literally evicted from the relocation centers. It was hard enough to get used to the confinement of the centers, but the Japanese quickly recognized that the realization of their outside neighbors may be more difficult to live among then they first had been. Even before internment, west coast Americans made it clear that the Japanese were not always welcome, following Pearl
Harbor and the War, who could imagine the resentment all American citizens were feeling.

The Japanese were first scattered between all ten relocation centers, and from 1945-1946, they were furthered scattered across the entire nation. The Japantowns that had once been thriving sections of west coast cities and towns were no more, and instead the Japanese hoped for some sort of familiarity in their new east coast homes. However, no major Japantown did form in any of these eastern cities, but in places like Chicago, Cleveland, and New York City, their presence was definitely felt.

The Native Americans left on the used reservations were content with the idea that the Japanese had improved their land, especially on the Colorado River reservation. They continued to flourish on their lands, and probably hoped that the United States government would not pull another situation as the internment on them again.

In a geographic setting, the Japanese internment involved both a physical and cultural phenomenon. Land was cultivated under the direction of the WRA, but the Japanese brought their knowledge for making the harvest seasons so successful. Culturally, all groups involved in this period, the Japanese, the government, and certainly the Native Americans, played a key role in shaping the landscape. The Japanese were successful in also establishing ethnic enclaves on the west coast, and then transferring them to the relocation centers. Although the government had isolated them from the outside world, the Japanese continued to thrive in a world by themselves, with religious centers, recreation, and various clubs and institutions. They carried their way of life with them, wherever they ended up. Their positive attitude also prevailed
during this period, as they never gave up and never let go of the faith that one day they could call themselves proud Americans.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


