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# Public History Service Learning in National Parks Campus-Community Partnerships for the Preservation of Minidoka National Historic Site

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PUBLIC HISTORY SERVICE LEARNING IN NATIONAL PARKS:  
CAMPUS-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE PRESERVATION  
OF MINIDOKA NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

by

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## ABSTRACT

This Master of Applied Historical Research project entailed the development and launch of an iOS-platform mobile application that provides an interpretive walking tour of Minidoka National Historic Site (Minidoka NHS). Established in 2001, Minidoka is a remotely located National Park Service unit which preserves one of the ten mainland United States WWII Japanese American concentration camps. With the Visitor Contact Station slated to open in 2019, the site has lacked in-depth interpretation of the history and landscape in a meaningful way, detracting from the typical visitor experience. The accompanying analytical essay situates the process of creating the *Minidoka NHS* mobile app within the landscape of preservation at Minidoka, as well as examines the existing interpretive framework of Minidoka NHS and the decisions made to position the app within the existing infrastructure in a complementary rather than redundant manner. It also interrogates the role of service-learning at Boise State University within the context of preservation and interpretation at Minidoka with particular attention to the Minidoka guard tower reconstruction project carried out by the Boise State University Construction Management program from 2013-2015. The paper describes the walking tour app and evaluates it and the guard tower project to advocate for the continued role of service-learning in enhancing civic engagement at Minidoka. Through this research I ultimately promote a greater emphasis on service-learning as it relates to Public History students engaged in national parks, and specifically in regards to the relationship between the

Master of Applied Historical Research and Service-Learning Programs at Boise State  
University and Minidoka NHS.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	viii
 PART ONE: HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN INCARCERATION .....	 1
 PART TWO: COLLABORATIVE PRESERVATION OF MINIDOKA NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE .....	 18
Establishment of Minidoka National Historic Site .....	19
Minidoka Guard Tower Reconstruction .....	24
 PART THREE: DIGITAL GOALS AND MOBILE INTERPRETATION IN NATIONAL PARKS .....	 29
Minidoka Walking Tour App.....	36
 PART FOUR: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE COLLABORATION AT MINIDOKA NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE .....	 51
 REFERENCES .....	61
 APPENDIX 1: <i>MINIDOKA NHS</i> COMPLETE APP TEXT .....	65

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Wireframed app mockups I sent to Shearer. Most of this outlined format remained the same in the final product. ....	39
Figure 2.	This is how the embedded interviews appear in the app. Screen capture image from <i>NPS Minidoka</i> app.....	42
Figure 3.	Screen capture image of an <i>NPS Minidoka</i> tour location, including a historic image.....	44
Figures 4 and 5.	GPS data of the tour sites occurs both in the overview map and in the individual tour stops to allow ease of access and wayfinding assistance for visitors to Minidoka. ....	45
Figure 6.	A screen capture of OpenSignal.com, which tests cellular networks by location and service provider. ....	46
Figure 7.	Screen capture image of the more recently released <i>Minidoka NHS</i> app, with FOM branding and minor layout changes. ....	50



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CMA	Construction Management Association
EO9066	Executive Order 9066
FOM	Friends of Minidoka
GMP	General Management Plan
GPS	Global Positioning System
JACS	Japanese American Confinement Sites
JANM	Japanese American National Museum
LRIP	Long Range Interpretive Plan
MAHR	Master of Applied Historical Research
NHS	National Historic Site
NPS	National Park Service
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
WRA	War Relocation Authority

## PART ONE: HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN INCARCERATION

Upon immigrating to the United States in the late 1800s following the opening of Meiji Japan in 1868, the issei, or first generation Japanese, were ushered in to their new lives with decades of anti-Asian sentiment, experienced through exclusionary policies surrounding land sales and immigration bans, in addition to lived prejudices in daily life. Like other immigrant groups, the Japanese communities in America thrived by maintaining ethnic enclaves, rooted in urban Japantowns or in tight-knit farming communities up and down the West Coast. As they rose through the ranks from laborers on railroads and in sawmills to gaining economic strongholds in timber, farming, commercial fishing, and hotels, to name a few, the issei and their American-born children, the nisei, created cultural infrastructure in the form of Japanese language schools, Buddhist and Christian churches, social clubs, and Japanese community newspapers. After 1868, Imperial Japan rapidly industrialized, adopted western militarization and colonialism, and widened its reach across Asia throughout the 1920s and 30s. As conflict seemed increasingly inevitable, US intelligence agencies surveilled Japanese American communities and yellow-peril propaganda blurred lines between Imperial Japanese agents and Japanese American civilians, a conflation that would be unleashed in the hysteria of the December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. Suppressing military and civilian intelligence reports that acknowledged that the Japanese American population posed virtually no threat to national security, President Franklin Roosevelt

signed Executive Order 9066 (EO9066) on February 19, 1942. While EO9066 did not explicitly single out any group based on race, it authorized General John L. DeWitt of the Western Defense Command to establish military exclusion zones along the West Coast of the United States. DeWitt then ordered the mandatory, forced evacuation and incarceration of all Japanese Americans within these zones, two-thirds being American citizens. In total, some 120,000 Nikkei (people of Japanese descent) from Arizona, California, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska were incarcerated without due process of law from 1942 until 1945 in one of ten American concentration camps, euphemistically referred to as War Relocation Centers. These ten confinement sites were administered by the newly created War Relocation Authority (WRA). In the Congressional findings leading up to the 1988 Civil Liberties Act, which gave an official government apology and redress payments to the survivors of the wartime incarceration, it was determined that the causes of the incarceration were a history of racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.<sup>1</sup> The wholesale incarceration of the Japanese American population during WWII is considered the touchstone of the Japanese American experience, some 76 years after the fact. In the broadly American experience, it remains in the public conscience, perhaps increasingly so, as a poignant reminder of its constitutional and ethical ramifications to American legal history.

Feeling a sense of shame and betrayal at being branded as disloyal by the nation that they had worked so hard to prosper in, the generations that experienced the trauma of

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<sup>1</sup> Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Seattle: University of Washington Press and Washington D.C.: Civil Liberties Public Education Fund, 1997), p 459.

incarceration felt stigmatized and mostly refused to speak of it in the decades following the war. This was in large part influenced by the Japanese cultural values bestowed by the immigrant issei on the nisei of *shikata ga nai*, meaning “it can’t be helped,” and *gaman*, “to endure the unendurable.”<sup>2</sup> The incarceration had also accomplished one of the goals, which was to disperse the Nikkei population, 90% of which was found in 1942 in concentrated Japantowns of the West Coast, to the rest of the country. A 1944 press release from Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes stated that in the forced removal and subsequent resettlement the government was implementing a policy to permanently relocate Japanese-Americans outside the West Coast area for “a more satisfactory nationwide distribution of a minority group which was doubtless too heavily concentrated before the war in one particular section of the country.”<sup>3</sup> Because of this, after incarceration many Japanese Americans settled in the Midwest in cities without Japanese American communities, and many intermarried with non-Japanese, though many others did eventually return to their pre-war communities and rebuild the Japantowns to some extent. Regardless, most pushed their sansei (third generation) children to be completely “Americanized,” and no longer prioritized maintaining cultural ties such as with Japanese language schools, but instead worked hard for their families to achieve “model minority” status through education and assimilation into the mainstream. However, influenced by the civil rights and ethnic studies movements of the 1960s and 70s, many sansei began to broach the silence of the issei and nisei generations surrounding the camp experience by

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<sup>2</sup> Brian Niiya, *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present*. (Los Angeles: The Japanese American Museum, 1993), p. 143, 311.

<sup>3</sup> Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, “Press Release, December 18, 1944,” War Relocation Authority, Department of the Interior Information Service.

asking questions of their families about the incarceration. This new interest in the World War II era incarceration of Japanese Americans resulted in the first initial publications about the camp experience, which helped educate the curious sansei, as well as the general public, about the camps, and helped normalize the discussion of the topic within classrooms as well as around dining room tables.<sup>4</sup>

The historiography of the WWII Japanese American incarceration has evolved over the last five decades to achieve more than just a general accounting of the camp experience. What began as simple descriptions and recollections of the overall lifestyle experienced in camp, then developed into an in-depth scrutiny of the history of the Japanese American experience and exclusion leading up to the war in order to understand the causation of this broad, sweeping act of injustice. Causation that was at first typified as a broad failure of political leadership during wartime hysteria was further distilled into intentional, individual racism behind the policies enacted, with a closer analysis of specific influential political figures, most recently including President Roosevelt himself. This evolved to include undercurrents of resistance, as seen in the responses given to the infamous loyalty questionnaire distributed throughout the camps by the government in attempts at further sorting the incarcerated population into those viewed as traitors and

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<sup>4</sup> Brian Niiya, *Japanese American History*, 107. See “Asian American Movement.” The early historiography on the incarceration history, pre-war history of Japanese American exclusion, and specific policy of incarceration was largely established by the works of two authors: Roger Daniels *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II*. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971) and *Prisoners without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II*. Ed. Eric Foner. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), and Michi Nishiura Weglyn’s *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America’s Concentration Camps* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Roger Daniels. *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II*. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 2.

those who were more or less harmless, and through the actions of the nisei men who were found to be loyal but then resisted the draft. Discussions of the Japanese American wartime experience, which generally ended with the closing of the centers in late 1945 to early 1946, began then to consider resettlement with an increasingly nuanced focus on students, in addition to the generally discussed descriptions of those released on work leave and military tours of duty. Recent scholarship also strives to reach a better understanding of alternate planes of power within the camps including gender, race, and labor dynamics, specifically as situated in the two Arkansas camps in the Jim Crow South. Further, scholars of the incarceration have recently favored a postwar analysis of the redress movement's grassroots community and congressional action, in hopes of learning important lessons about how to ensure the future protections of what have proven to be very fragile civil liberties.

Paramount in these early contributions were those by Roger Daniels, considered the dean of the Japanese American incarceration scholarship. His 1971 *Concentration Camps, USA: Japanese Americans and WWII* situates the incarceration in a historical context, illustrating pre-war anti-Japanese movements leading up to the forced removal, the key government players' often racist mentalities in determining Japanese American loyalty, and a brief discussion of resettlement after camps and court cases that arose to challenge the legality of the incarceration.<sup>5</sup> His 1993 book *Prisoners without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II* also defines the field in its broad temporal scope by analyzing policies of prejudice against Asians in America even before the arrival of

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<sup>5</sup> Roger Daniels. *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II*. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 2.

Japanese, also looking beyond the closing of the camps to discussions of the resettlement era.<sup>6</sup> Daniels concentrates on the administrative decision-making between government officials and focuses on the constitutional rights that were abridged. Other scholars began to address a history of the policies leading to incarceration, sometimes leading naturally into the policy of redress as well. One such work is Michi Weglyn's *Years of Infamy*.<sup>7</sup> First released in 1976, *Years of Infamy* was a ground-breaking work of the Japanese American incarceration and, significantly, was written by a former incarcerated. Armed with the mission to ensure that the full enormity of injustice was perceived, Weglyn expanded upon Daniels' argument that the lion's share of responsibility for what happened lay with the failed political leadership of government officials who illegally acted on their personal prejudices. Weglyn highlighted the position of several federal agencies and individuals who advised against the forced exclusion, yet went unheeded. Chief among these is the secret Munson Report, the findings of State Department Curtis B. Munson that assert an "extraordinary degree of loyalty" among American residents of Japanese descent. Like Daniels, Weglyn paid great attention to the use of loyalty oaths in the camps, used to sort loyals from disloyals and further analyze the level of threat that the Munson Report had already established did not exist. Weglyn illustrated the ways these oaths divided the Japanese American community, driving wedges between the

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<sup>6</sup> Roger Daniels. *Prisoners without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II*. Ed. Eric Foner. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 25.

<sup>7</sup> Michi Nishiura Weglyn. *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps*. (Seattle: University of Washington, 1996). Having been incarcerated at age 16 in the Gila River, Arizona, camp, Weglyn became an activist in the Japanese American community and spent eight years researching in national libraries and archives. She included private correspondence, diaries, government reports, full appendices of telegrams and memorandums, and other archival materials in print.

generations, between men and women, citizens and non-citizens, and those educated in Japan versus those educated in America. More recently, Eric Muller's works *Free to Die for Their Country* (2003) and *American Inquisition* (2007) focus entirely on the extent that the idea of loyalty played out during the incarceration. In *American Inquisition*, Muller goes into painstaking detail of the loyalty questionnaire and the accompanying programs established to separate the loyal from the disloyal and thereby determine their eligibility for resettlement from confinement sites to mainstream society, specifically tracing the processes of the questionnaires beyond the conflicted individual filling it out into what Muller deems the "bowels of the wartime bureaucracy."<sup>8</sup> In focusing on the extent of the bureaucracy in the example of the loyalty questionnaire, Muller demonstrates the systemic nature of the incarceration as state-sponsored racial oppression with individual prejudice displayed at every level. In a similar vein, *Free to Die for Their Country* offers a detailed look at the nisei draft resisters, relying more on personal accounts to flesh out the under-told story of what happened when Japanese Americans refused to follow government orders to fight for the country that had imprisoned them.<sup>9</sup> Greg Robinson's *By Order of the President* is a uniquely in-depth look at President Franklin D. Roosevelt's leadership and decisions related to the wartime incarceration.<sup>10</sup> While others have certainly not neglected to consider the failed political leadership of the time, they primarily focus on WRA administrators and ignore the role that FDR had in

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<sup>8</sup> Eric Muller. *American Inquisition: The Hunt for Japanese American Disloyalty in World War II*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Muller. *Free to Die for Their Country: The Story of the Japanese American Draft Resisters in World War II*. (University of Chicago Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Greg Robinson. *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001).



signing Executive Order 9066. Robinson consults letters, diaries, and memos written by Roosevelt and his advisors to highlight Roosevelt's motivations in the incarceration. Robinson argues that Roosevelt had a direct role in constructing the policies of the incarceration and grapples with the contradiction that a leader beloved for his dedication to the preservation of democracy abroad could enact one of America's most undemocratic policies towards its own citizens.<sup>11</sup> Where Daniels, Weglyn, and Robinson look at the broad patterns of pre-war anti-Asian sentiments and how they bleed into the nefarious motivations of individuals in power, in *Judgment without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment During World War II*, Tetsuden Kashima takes a carefully data-driven approach at the specific U.S. governmental processes that were developed leading up to the war, and establishes the federal government as the bureaucrat of carefully built mechanisms of surveillance and incarceration in the decades prior to WWII, rather than relying on simple explanations of wartime hysteria.<sup>12</sup> Kashima also takes a broader gaze at the incarceration, offering original research into the differences between the WRA narrative and the confinement of non-citizens, specifically by the Justice Department and the U.S. Army, as well as the imprisonment of Japanese Americans in Hawaii and Latin America.

Though most accounts of the incarceration establish a basic understanding of resettlement policy following the closure of the camps in 1945-1946, it usually comes as an afterthought, leading to the persistent false narrative that life returned to normal for Japanese Americans after 1945. In *From Concentration Camp to Campus: Japanese*

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<sup>11</sup> Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Tetsuden Kashima. *Judgment Without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment During World War II*. (Seattle: University of Washington, 2007).

*American Students and World War II*, Allan W. Austin focuses on the college-aged nisei that resettled to universities, specifically looking at the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, the private agency responsible for moving college students from camps to colleges outside of the West Coast.<sup>13</sup> Austin acknowledges that students occupied a third space between assimilation and being portrayed as the enemy, and asserts with a critical gaze that the resettlement is grounded in the policies of incarceration, warning us not to view the council as a moral triumph but in a nuanced light which factors in the roles of the government, the WRA, college administrators, and new foster communities. David K. Yoo's *Growing up Nisei* allows readers to understand the generational differences in the Nikkei community and the culture of recovery surrounding trauma.<sup>14</sup> Like Austin, Yoo hones in on the nisei, illustrating how they worked to create spaces for themselves in issei-dominated communities, and analyzes these relationships and tensions within the Nikkei community, which is often oversimplified in the literature into a cohesive unit. In his foreword to Yoo's book, Roger Daniels acknowledges that Yoo analyzes the nisei as a generation that have created history, rather than having history enacted upon them.<sup>15</sup> The continued struggles faced by Japanese Americans after leaving camp, given only \$25 cash and a one way bus ticket by the WRA, largely remains untold, perpetuating the "model minority" myth that they not only successfully assimilated back into society but quickly rose through the ranks.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Allan W. Austin. *From Concentration Camp to Campus: Japanese American Students and World War II*. (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2004).

<sup>14</sup>David K. Yoo *Growing up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-49*. (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> Yoo, *Growing up Nisei*, vii.

<sup>16</sup> Naomi Hirahara and Heather C. Lindquist, *Life After Manzanar*. (Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2018). *Life After Manzanar* includes family photographs and personal accounts

Instead, the post-war scholarship on the Japanese American community focuses more on the triumphs of the redress movement, skipping the experiences of the late 1940s through the 1960s, and emerging again in the Civil Rights era with a reclamation of history and the twenty-year struggle for an official apology and redress. *Achieving the Impossible Dream* should be considered the defining text on the history of redress and the lessons that the authors argue can be applied to civil rights litigation in the future.<sup>17</sup> It scrutinizes the many groups and individuals involved in the redress movement, discusses the Congressional Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians as it worked to determine the causes of the incarceration and appropriate reparations, details the legislative battles against the constitutionality of the incarceration, the introduction of redress legislation recommended by the CWRIC findings, and descriptions of how congressional changes in 1987-1988 aligned for the culmination of the redress movement in 1989 with the president's official apology and paid reparations. For a more focused view of the redress movement when it became a matter of lobbying for the passage of H.R. 442 and signing it into law as the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, see Leslie T. Hatamiya's *Righting a Wrong*.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the recently published *NCRR: The Grassroots Struggle for Japanese American Redress and Reparations* details the specific role of the

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to begin to illustrate the resettlement experiences of a number of individuals incarcerated at Manzanar, also including redress and other more recent community activism. While there have been article-length studies on resettlement in specific communities, there is no comprehensive book-length publication on the nuances of the post-war years and the ways in which Japanese Americans responded to them.

<sup>17</sup> Mitchell T. Maki, Harry H. L. Kitano, and S. Megan Berthold, *Achieving the Impossible Dream: How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress*. (University of Illinois Press, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Leslie T. Hatamiya, *Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and the Passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

National Council for Redress/Reparations in community organizing and political lobbying towards the Civil Liberties Act.<sup>19</sup> The Congressional findings themselves are also an important part of the narrative, detailing the personal testimonies of Japanese Americans across the country, many speaking of their incarceration for the first time, and the admission of Congress that the incarceration was not due to military necessity but a result of suppressed intelligence, and the oft-cited prejudice, war hysteria, and failure of political leadership.<sup>20</sup>

With the basic history of the incarceration and to a lesser extent the pre-war Japanese American experience and postwar resettlement and redress narrative well-defined, recent works are able to cross disciplines to shape the scholarship in original lines of analysis and reconsider the camps through new lenses. *Concentration Camps on the Home Front: Japanese Americans in the House of Jim Crow* provides an in-depth analysis of the Rohwer and Jerome camps in Arkansas, which it maintains are significant for their unique status as being the only two camps located in the segregated South.<sup>21</sup> Howard highlights the lesser known camp experiences of women, issei, and those that resisted dangerous working conditions through labor strikes, and also exposes the government campaign to Americanize incarcerated. It considers the roles of power circuits within the ten WRA camps, dealing with the role of race between the incarcerated and the

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<sup>19</sup> Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, *NCCR: The Grassroots Struggle for Japanese American Redress and Reparations*. (University of California, Los Angeles, Asian American Studies Center, 2018).

<sup>20</sup> Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Seattle: University of Washington Press and Washington D.C.: Civil Liberties Public Education Fund, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> John Howard. *Concentration Camps on the Home Front: Japanese Americans in the House of Jim Crow*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2008).

communities outside of the camps, gender roles and the construction of gendered spaces within the camps, the role of Buddhism and Christianity and how they determined power relations, as well as labor issues over pay, working conditions, and reoccurring worker deaths. Donna K. Nagata's *Legacy of Injustice* strives to fill the gaps in long-term effects of incarceration from a social science perspective, acknowledging that while other social science accounts focus on the psychological suffering of incarcerated, many sansei feel that the legacy of incarceration has impacted their own lives greatly even if they weren't incarcerated.<sup>22</sup> This book questions the second-hand experience of trauma, the long-term impacts, and highlights developments of resilience within the community's response to the trauma. It relies largely on data from the Sansei Research Project of 1987, the first study to explore the impact of incarceration on the sansei, which surveyed 700 sansei nationwide to examine the transmission of trauma and how perceptions of the incarceration differ across generations.<sup>23</sup> Another multi-disciplinary contribution is *Artifacts of Loss* by Jane E. Dusselier.<sup>24</sup> Dusselier presents ceramics, flower arrangements, paintings, drawings, furniture and other items crafted in the camps and argues that rather than representing the care-free lifestyle of the camps, their creation was a method for incarcerated to reposition themselves in hostile environments and voice their resistance to the exploitation of civil liberties they experienced.<sup>25</sup> The pieces serve as a visual account of loss and a mental landscape of survival, and were fundamental for

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<sup>22</sup> Donna K. Nagata, *Legacy of Injustice: Exploring the Cross-generational Impact of the Japanese American Internment*. (New York: Plenum, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Nagata, *Legacy of Injustice*, ix.

<sup>24</sup> Jane E. Dusselier. *Artifacts of Loss: Crafting Survival in Japanese American Concentration Camps*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Dusselier, *Artifacts of Loss*, 2.

incarcerees to change locations of imprisonment to places of survival. These interdisciplinary approaches present stunning examples of what a new framework can bring to an old subject, and how the shameful blight of our nation's recent past can continue to teach us relevant lessons in what it means to experience trauma and how to reclaim that history and recover, even if it takes multiple generations to achieve it.

In *Lost and Found*, former Japanese American National Museum (JANM) curator Karen L. Ishizuka tells the story of the exhibit entitled *America's Concentration Camps: Remembering the Japanese American Experience*, which was installed at JANM from 1994 to 1995, and traveled until 2004.<sup>26</sup> As a sansei daughter of incarcerated, Ishizuka writes as both a public historian and a Nikkei community member interested in reclaiming history for those impacted through the generations, and asserts the exhibit's pioneering role in allowing Japanese Americans to reclaim incarceration history by countering euphemisms, sharing and overcoming generations of humiliation and refusal to speak about the experience, and constructing the telling of their history. *America's Concentration Camps* was not built as an inanimate exhibit to be presented to guests, but as an evolving, experiential public space in which visitors could learn and recover from a traumatic past while reclaiming it as their own. *Lost and Found* relays the ways in which the exhibit created a personal pilgrimage for each individual to recover their personal and collective histories, and had an evolving, interactive nature that allowed former incarcerated to include their experiences as authentic representations in the shaping of the public memory and transform community perspectives. An instructive piece for public

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<sup>26</sup> Karen L. Ishizuka, *Lost and Found: Reclaiming the Japanese American Incarceration*. (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2006).

historians, *Lost and Found* serves as a prime example of the power of collaboration and community curation in the historicization of underrepresented communities, and captures a methodology to facilitate the recovering of and from difficult history. Both the exhibit and book combine scholarship and community curation of memory, correcting the record on the “camp” experience and raising the bar for public engagement of knowledge production and representation.

A particularly well-trod field in the scholarship on the Japanese American incarceration is that of oral history. Oral history is valued for its use in education and interpretation by making history come to life through primary sources, for facilitating the cathartic healing of generations of the incarceration that are still only beginning to acknowledge the deep shame they felt following it, and for community building and a general accessibility to producing history work when it is undertaken in collaborative projects. Arthur Hansen is viewed as an expert on oral history as related to the wartime incarceration, and is the long-time director of the Oral History Program at California State University, Fullerton. His *Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project* comprises a definitive five-volume collection of the oral histories of individuals involved in the incarceration in a wide variety of facets, including incarcerated, administrators, analysts, resisters, and guards and townspeople, in order to create the broadest sketch of the ways incarceration impacted the communities involved, whether Nikkei or part of the broader American society.<sup>27</sup> While studying the oral histories contextualizes a sense of the overall camp experience, the underdeveloped

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<sup>27</sup>Arthur A. Hansen. *Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project* (Westport: Meckler, 1991).

scholarship which discusses the oral history critically elucidates their role in the formation of collective memory and the ways in which different generations of the Japanese American community process trauma.<sup>28</sup> John Tateishi's *And Justice for All* also provides easily accessible primary accounts of the incarceration experience, comprising thirty oral histories of Japanese Americans who were incarcerated as well as veterans of the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, the famed segregated nisei unit of the U.S. Army.<sup>29</sup> In *The Unquiet Nisei*, Diana Meyers Bahr includes extensive oral history of Sue Kunitomi Embrey, who is known as the figurehead of the Japanese American preservation of Manzanar. Embrey's experiences document the social dynamics of the preservation movement, both factions between the Japanese American community and the struggles with the National Park Service and the U.S. government in general.<sup>30</sup> More of a practical field guide of using oral history in studying the incarceration, the *REgenerations Oral History Project* describes a project undertaken by JANM in Los Angeles in the years 1997 to 1999 in four different cities, published in an equal number of volumes.<sup>31</sup> This oral history initiative goes beyond the war years to broaden the scope of Japanese American incarceration and examines resettlement. A truly collaborative project, it partnered with Japanese American historical societies or museums in each city to collect oral histories of the resettlement experience, develop a model for community-

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<sup>28</sup> Arthur A. Hansen, "Oral History and the Japanese American Evacuation" in *The Journal of American History* 82.2 (1995), 638.

<sup>29</sup> John Tateishi. *And Justice for All: An Oral History of the Japanese American Detention Camps* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1999).

<sup>30</sup> Diana Meyers Bahr. *The Unquiet Nisei: An Oral History of the Life of Sue Kunitomi Embrey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Japanese American National Museum. *REgenerations Oral History Project: Rebuilding Japanese American Families, Communities, and Civil Rights in the Resettlement Era*. (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 2000.)



based oral history projects that involve the community in the documentation and interpretation of the local history. Similarly, Sierra College's "Standing Guard" Japanese American Internment Oral History Project was established in 2000 to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the incarceration, fuse art and oral history in the classroom setting, and raise important questions about constitutional rights.<sup>32</sup> The interviews collected were featured in an exhibition alongside student art and photographs loaned from interviewees, and compiled in a book that included a disc of all the interviews.<sup>33</sup> Debra Stuphen describes the methodologies and results of the project, which is of practical use in curriculum development and for using oral history research as a supplementary tool to improve standard history lessons by illustrating the impact of a historical event. This was especially important at Sierra College, which is in central California, home to many Japanese Americans who were forcibly relocated to the camps. The project also strengthened community bonds by connecting students to Placer County Japanese Americans, with aid from the Placer Japanese American Citizens League which helped make contacts with those willing to share their experience. This was an important exercise in education, community growth, and healing, as Stuphen stated that "most significantly, the students learned firsthand of the impact of World War II internment on their neighbors, while narrators learned of the healing power of sharing their experiences through teaching."<sup>34</sup> Students learned to research a topic and collect and transcribe

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<sup>32</sup> Debra Stuphen. "Sierra College's "Standing Guard" Japanese American Internment Oral History Project: Oral History as an Engine to the Power of Education" in *Preparing the Next Generation of Oral Historians: An Anthology of Oral History Education*. By Barry Allen. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006). p. 371-79.

<sup>33</sup> Stuphen, "Sierra College's 'Standing Guard,'" 377.

<sup>34</sup> Stuphen, "Sierra College's 'Standing Guard,'" 376.

interviews related to it, and narrators felt a responsibility to educate the students on a topic that isn't extensively taught at schools. It also aided the community by promoting Sierra College's Learning Resource Center as a repository for the tapes and transcripts as well as other resources relevant to the local Japanese American community. Stephen's piece is a trailblazer for bridging community and educational gaps through service-learning in classrooms. As the primary witnesses to the incarceration become fewer, the need for the scholarship to capture their grief, resilience, and creative routes of resistance grows ever more salient, and the important lessons of constitutional liberties remain fundamental to understanding the space that Americans occupy in relation to their history and to their future. Moreover, synthesis between disciplines as relating to the history of the incarceration can only inspire continued research from new perspectives; broader avenues for the facilitation of studying the Japanese American incarceration will only enhance our understanding of this event, which will no doubt remain pertinent to understanding human trauma, the contradictions of democracy, and the harmful legacies of racial prejudice.

## PART TWO: COLLABORATIVE PRESERVATION OF MINIDOKA NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

The Minidoka concentration camp was in operation from August 10, 1942, until October 28, 1945.<sup>35</sup> Because a town called Minidoka is located fifty miles east of the WRA camp, it was often colloquially referred to during the war years as Eden or Hunt, derived from the US Postal Service designation for the camp. It is located in Jerome County, Idaho, fifteen miles east of Jerome and fifteen miles north of Twin Falls.<sup>36</sup> While the peak population was 9,500, overall 13,078 Nikkei were confined in Minidoka at some point throughout the war. It was the seventh largest city in Idaho at peak population: a 33,000-acre community quickly popping up and then disappearing amidst the desert sagebrush of the arid Snake River Plain.<sup>37</sup> Those incarcerated at Minidoka primarily originated from the thriving Japantowns of downtown Seattle and Portland, as well as the surrounding rural areas in these regions. There were several hundred Japanese Alaskans incarcerated at Minidoka, as well as a sizable population of Californians who transferred to Minidoka from Tule Lake. While the other nine WRA camps were laid out on a single grid layout, Minidoka was bound on the southern side by the North Side Canal, and the layout of the blocks follow the arc of the canal.<sup>38</sup>

The Minidoka War Relocation Center consisted of a 950 acre residential and administrative center, including 600 buildings, eight guard towers, a military building and

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<sup>35</sup> U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *Minidoka Internment National Monument General Management Plan* (November 2006), 15

<sup>36</sup> U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *Minidoka Internment National Monument: Archeology at the Gate*. By Jeffery F. Burton, Laura S. Bergstresser, and Anna H. Tamura. (Tucson: Western Archaeological and Conservation Center, 2001), 5.

<sup>37</sup> NPS, *Archeology at the Gate*, 17.

<sup>38</sup> NPS, *Archeology at the Gate*, 6.

reception building at the entrance, with barbed wire fencing surrounding it all.<sup>39</sup> Over time, the incarcerated Nikkei transformed their surroundings to ameliorate their environment, express agency, and maintain their cultural heritage. Incarceree-constructed features included an Honor Roll, a patriotic eagle-adorned board inscribed with the names of all military recruits from Minidoka, a Japanese-style entrance garden, a remarkable underground root cellar, along with countless basalt-lined pathways and other gardens and landscaping features.<sup>40</sup> Following the closure of the camps, Minidoka was divided into 89 farm plots of land. Each plot was distributed along with two camp structures, mainly barracks, to homesteading war veterans from 1947-1949 on a lottery basis.<sup>41</sup>

### **Establishment of Minidoka National Historic Site**

The first strides towards memorializing Minidoka occurred on August 18, 1979, when a six-acre parcel was added to the National Register of Historic Places under the name of Minidoka Relocation Center.<sup>42</sup> Since this time, the site has been subject to a variety of commemorative actions aimed at its further preservation, and has also undergone several changes in its name. The National Register listing primarily protected the entrance area, which contained the most noticeable structures on site at that time, including the basalt and mortar remnants of the Visitor Reception and Military Police

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<sup>39</sup> NPS, *Archeology at the Gate*, 5. An experience unique to Minidoka, incarcerated were able to petition the administration to remove portions of the barbed wire fencing, though a 3-mile portion along the canal remained for the duration of operations.

<sup>40</sup> NPS, *Archeology at the Gate*, 9.

<sup>41</sup> This post-war history is represented at the Minidoka site with the Herrmann farm, also known as the Farm-in-a-Day site.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *General Management Plan* (2003), 45.

buildings, as well as the entrance garden area and original visitor parking lot.<sup>43</sup> On October 13, 1979, former incarcerated attendees attended a Day of Remembrance pilgrimage at the site, which coincided with a National Register designation ceremony. At this time a large interpretive sign and a National Register plaque were added near the Military Police building.<sup>44</sup> On May 26, 1990, a ceremony was held to designate Minidoka as an Idaho Centennial Landmark. The Bureau of Reclamation, which maintained ownership of part of the Minidoka site, constructed new sidewalks, an asphalt parking lot, and additional commemorative plaques.<sup>45</sup> Funding was provided by the Pocatello-Blackfoot Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League and the Idaho Power Company, with labor volunteered by local Boy Scouts.<sup>46</sup> The final and most powerful designation of Minidoka occurred on January 17, 2001, when President William Jefferson Clinton declared 72.75 acres of the site as the Minidoka Internment National Monument under Presidential Proclamation 7395.<sup>47</sup> Under this proclamation, areas of Minidoka that were owned by both the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bureau of Land Management were transferred to National Park Service.<sup>48</sup> In the proclamation text, Clinton noted the Minidoka Internment National Monument to be “a unique and irreplaceable historical resource which protects historic structures and objects that provide opportunities for public education and interpretation of an important chapter in American history – the internment of Japanese

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<sup>43</sup> U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *Cultural Landscapes Inventory* (2007), 34.

<sup>44</sup> NPS, *Cultural Landscapes Inventory*, 53.

<sup>45</sup> NPS, *General Management Plan*, 46.

<sup>46</sup> NPS, *Cultural Landscapes Inventory*, 53.

<sup>47</sup> NPS, *General Management Plan*, 46.

<sup>48</sup> NPS, *Cultural Landscapes Inventory*, 53.

Americans during World War II.”<sup>49</sup> Minidoka Internment National Monument was the 385th National Park Service unit to be designated.<sup>50</sup>

After the designation of Minidoka as a national monument, the National Park Service conducted an archeological investigation of the site in May 2001.<sup>51</sup> This investigation was the initial survey of the site, and the extent of cultural resources was not yet fully understood. The survey consisted of the recording, mapping, and photographing of the land and its features over eighty-three acres in a four-day period. In this time, over 200 features were recorded, including the entrance buildings, various concrete slabs and footings of buildings, part of a warehouse, and the remains of gardens, pathways, fences, roads, and incarcerated-built root cellar and swimming pools.<sup>52</sup> The entrance area of the park was further investigated in August 2002, which included the uncovering of an entrance garden, flagpole location, historic honor roll footings, two basalt-lined pathways in a V-formation, and preliminary testing to locate the former entrance guard tower foundations.<sup>53</sup> The report of this archaeological survey noted the interpretive value of the entrance area beyond its notable features, arguing that these features in their original form symbolically represent the juxtaposition of confinement, visible through the military presence of the guard buildings and fence, U.S. patriotism, visible in the military honor roll which included the names of incarcerated serving in the military during World War II, and Japanese heritage, visible in the traditional rock garden and landscaping features.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> NPS, Presidential Proclamation 7395, 3 C.F.R. (2001).

<sup>50</sup> NPS, *General Management Plan*, 46.

<sup>51</sup> NPS, *Cultural Landscapes Inventory*, 34.

<sup>52</sup> NPS, *This is Minidoka*, v.

<sup>53</sup> NPS, *Archeology at the Gate*, 5.

<sup>54</sup> NPS, *Archeology at the Gate*, 35.

Following initial surveys and subsequent planning processes, Minidoka's preservation has followed a steady trajectory, beginning with the stabilization of the incarceration-era root cellar, which took place in the summer of 2003.<sup>55</sup> Also in 2003, the Friends of Minidoka was established as a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to preservation and education surrounding the Minidoka site and its legacy. In 2006 came the completion of the site's General Management Plan, the timely completion of which was a stipulation of Proclamation 7395 in order to carry out the purposes of the proclamation and interpret the World War II "relocation and internment of Japanese Americans."<sup>56</sup> The stated purpose of the plan is to "articulate a vision and overall management philosophy for the national monument" to guide management for fifteen to twenty years, and formalize "management strategies for resource protection, visitor use and facilities, education and interpretation, operations and management, and development of the national monument."<sup>57</sup> The General Management Plan (GMP) and the Long-Range Interpretive Plan (finalized in January 2013) act as the formal guidelines for the current and future developments of the monument. The Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) details some of the most significant and recent changes the monument has undergone. Minidoka Internment National Monument was officially renamed Minidoka National Historic Site through congressional action with the May 8, 2008, passage of Public Law 110-229. This law also expanded the site to include the historic camp landfill, the Herrmann farm property, as well as a nine-acre Bainbridge Island unit in Washington State.<sup>58</sup> 2011

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<sup>55</sup> NPS, *Cultural Landscapes Inventory*, 35.

<sup>56</sup> Presidential Proclamation 7395.

<sup>57</sup> NPS, *General Management Plan*, 2.

<sup>58</sup> U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *Minidoka National Historic Site Long-Range Interpretive Plan* (January 2013), 2. The Herrmann property was

brought many significant developments on site, including the installation and dedication of the historic honor roll reconstruction on July 3, the reclamation of an original barrack and mess hall in Block 22, the construction of a 1.6-mile interpretive trail complete with wayside exhibits and excerpts of oral histories narrated by former incarcerated, the installation of a NPS entrance sign, reconstruction of barbed-wire fence at the entrance area, the stabilization and rehabilitation of the historic barracks, mess hall, and fire station, and the submission of funding proposals for conceptual designs for other park features.<sup>59</sup> This was followed by the March 2015 historical reconstruction of the entrance area guard tower, the May 2016 historical reconstruction of a representative baseball field, and the May 2017 opening of a temporary visitor center in the Herrmann House. The operation of the temporary visitor center was a milestone in the development of Minidoka National Historic Site as it marked a shift of park administration from the Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument, located 40 miles west, to the Minidoka site. In doing so, it also provides the first facilities and on-site ranger presence for the visiting public outside of special events and pre-arranged tours since the site was established in 2001. At the time of this writing, the permanent Visitor Contact Station is under construction in half of a remaining camp-era warehouse structure, and the park is expected to be operational out of the new facility in the summer season of 2019.

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acquired by John Herrmann, a veteran who received a lottery allotment of 128 acres near the fire station, former water tower, and blocks 21-22. The farm was part of a demonstration project in April 1952 called “A-Farm-in-a-Day,” in which 1500 workers built the house, dug a well, moved two barracks off the land, put up fences and planted the crops. The Bainbridge Island unit is named *Nidoto Nai Yoni*, or Let It Not Happen Again, and is significant because the island was the first area to be evacuated under EO9066. All of the island’s Nikkei residents were initially sent to Manzanar, but requested and received transfer to Minidoka.

<sup>59</sup> NPS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, 6.



## Minidoka Guard Tower Reconstruction

The possibility of the historic reconstruction of one of the eight original guard towers that surrounded the boundaries of the residential and administrative areas of Minidoka was a preservation effort that NPS recognized since its initial surveys of the site. The LRIP listed the guard tower reconstruction as a recommended treatment to the historic landscape in the entrance area.<sup>60</sup> The GMP prioritized it as one of only four entrance area features considered for reconstruction as one of “the most evocative, symbolic, and identifiable features associated with the Minidoka story.”<sup>61</sup> A 1943 report by the WRA regarding the barbed wire fence and the eight guard towers at Minidoka noted that “Probably no other single factor has had as serious effect on the resident’s morale as the erection of the guard towers...” Though the towers were never fully utilized as planned by being manned by military police 24 hours a day, the WRA acknowledged their impact on incarcerated’ psyches regardless, admitting that “The sentry towers are always silhouetted in the distance. It is not enough that they are not being used — to the residents they stand waiting for the day when they will be used. The eight sentry towers are ever present as a symbol of their confinement.”<sup>62</sup>

In 2013 FOM, NPS, and the Boise State University Department of Construction Management entered a collaborative effort to design and reconstruct the guard tower, also including an educational component for the construction management class to learn the historical context of the incarceration and the political and social factors that contributed to it. Through her former employment with the Boise-based Morrison Knudsen

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<sup>60</sup> NPS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, 56.

<sup>61</sup> NPS, *General Management Plan*, 64.

<sup>62</sup> War Relocation Authority “The Fence at Minidoka” (Washington, 1943), 4.

Company, the construction company that originally built Minidoka, Dr. Rebecca Mirsky learned about the history of the Minidoka site and became interested in being involved with on-site preservation, possibly through the NPS Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program.<sup>63</sup> The Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) grant program was established by Congress in 2006 to preserve the sites related to the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans.<sup>64</sup> It authorized \$38 million to be used to “identify, research, evaluate, interpret, protect, restore, repair, and acquire historic confinement sites in order that present and future generations may learn and gain inspiration from these sites and that these sites will demonstrate the nation’s commitment to equal justice under the law.”<sup>65</sup>

Mirsky, who was at the time a Construction Management professor in the Boise State University College of Engineering, then learned of FOM’s preservation efforts and the previous JACS grants they had utilized, including the 2010 award in support of an annual Minidoka Civil Liberties Symposium and the 2012 historic reconstruction of the Minidoka honor roll. Mirsky approached FOM and the two parties collaborated in soliciting a grant for the historic reconstruction of the guard tower, positing that the guard tower reconstruction would directly fulfill the site’s GMP, be a strong addition to the visual landscape of the site, and contribute to the further preservation and interpretation

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<sup>63</sup> NPS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, 18. Morrison Knudson Company was awarded \$3,500,000 to build the Minidoka camp in 1942, and had many other large scale contracts with the U.S. military during WWII.

<sup>64</sup> Public Law 109-441, 120 Stat. 3288 (2006).

<sup>65</sup> “Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant,” National Park Service, September 21, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/jacs/index.html>.

of the incarceration history.<sup>66</sup> FOM was awarded \$280,378 as part of a two-for-one matching grant for the project, with the additional match met through individual donations and in-kind contributions from Boise State University, Cole Architects, Axiom Engineering, and others.<sup>67</sup>

In the fall of 2013, Professors Rebecca Mirsky and Casey Cline taught a special construction management course that researched construction techniques and federal preservation standards as well as the historic context of Minidoka and the Japanese American incarceration. They also opened the course to interested history students; two undergraduates and I (a graduate student) enrolled. The first part of the curriculum included an overview of the incarceration history, wherein students read *Farewell to Manzanar* and watched WWII-era government film reels about the incarceration to understand the role of propaganda in the government's actions. A representative from FOM was also present for this portion of class and gave a presentation about the specificities of the Minidoka site and experience. Because this project would be the first experience many of the students would have in historic preservation, representatives from the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) also presented on the Secretary's Standards of Historic Preservation and Section 106 compliance, and continued to be engaged throughout the project in the compliance process.

Cole Architects and Axiom Engineering, both Boise-based firms, volunteered their time and efforts to create construction drawings for the guard tower by using

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<sup>66</sup> Dr. Rebecca Mirsky (Professor of Construction Management, Boise State University) interview with the author, December 12, 2013.

<sup>67</sup> "Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant," National Park Service, September 21, 2018. [https://www.nps.gov/jacs/downloads/2012\\_Grant\\_Recipients.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/jacs/downloads/2012_Grant_Recipients.pdf)

historic photographs, as no original drawings or blueprints for the structure were found. Students tested the drawings by first building a one-third scale model tower. SHPO recommended modifying some details, including a cedar shingled roof, single pane windows and historic doors in the correct dimensions, and updated configuration of the hand railing based on comparison with historic photographs. Further extending the service-learning opportunity to the rest of the Construction Management department, faculty advisor Casey Cline opened the project up to the Construction Management Association (CMA), Boise State's Association of General Contractors of America student chapter. The students both in class and through the CMA completed pre-construction of the 26.5-foot tall guard tower on campus, obtaining materials then measuring and cutting all of the pieces and troubleshooting any issues that arose in assembly.

In March of 2014, Cline offered a one-credit Spring Break workshop for the on-site assembly of the guard tower. Students who enrolled in the workshop, as well as volunteers from the Boise State CMA, stayed near the Minidoka National Historic Site from March 21 through 27 of that year. The tower was disassembled and transported in pieces to Minidoka National Historic Site, and rebuilt on the new concrete footings, with remaining construction and the erection of the structure completed in that time. Teams of students worked on the concrete footings, then simultaneously constructed the lower structure, fabricated the roof of the guard house, stained the structure, placed the lower structure on the foundations, placed the roof on the guard house, then placed the entire guard house on the lower structure, squared the structure, and laid topsoil over the foundations.

In the dedicated crowdfunding website that FOM created to fundraise part of the required matching funds for the guard tower, they acknowledged the impact that the presence of the guard towers had on incarceratedees, and the impact that a reconstructed tower would have on the visitor experience and cultural landscape of the site, in that it would “closely resemble what former incarceratedees witnessed, and offer visitors a window into the physical and emotional experience of those who passed beneath it to enter the camp when confined at Minidoka.”<sup>68</sup> Dr. Mirsky also expressed her hopes for the guard tower reconstruction to draw further attention to the Minidoka story, raise interest in the history of what happened, and further preservation efforts of Minidoka and other sites as well as raising visibility for FOM in their efforts in the preservation and education of the Japanese incarceration.<sup>69</sup> The guard tower project, in its success as a true collaborative project between the Boise State campus, the NPS, FOM, and the Boise business community along with its innovative service-learning and cross-curricular educational opportunities for history and construction management students, was honored with a 2016 Orchid Award for Cultural Heritage Preservation from Preservation Idaho. The Society for History in the Federal Government also presented NPS, the Boise State Construction Management Department, and FOM the John Wesley Powell Prize in 2016 for excellence in historic preservation.

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<sup>68</sup> “Guard Tower Reconstruction Project” Friends of Minidoka, archived November 2, 2015. <https://web.archive.org/web/20151102233334/http://minidoka.org/guardtower.php>

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Dr. Rebecca Mirsky, interview with the author, December 12, 2013.

### PART THREE: DIGITAL GOALS AND MOBILE INTERPRETATION IN NATIONAL PARKS

I knew when I entered the MAHR program at Boise State University in the fall of 2013 that my master's project would set out to interpret the history of Minidoka National Historic Site in some type of publicly accessible format. I became specifically interested in public history surrounding Japanese American Confinement Sites following my undergraduate thesis: I studied the pilgrimage to Manzanar as an act of public memory, how the Japanese American community's commemoration of the incarceration history differed from the NPS interpretation of it, and the extent to which the NPS encouraged collaboration with the former incarcerated to develop the site. Fresh from the completion of the guard tower reconstruction in the spring of 2014, I sat down with then Chief of Interpretation and Education at Minidoka, Carol Ash, and asked her of the park needs. I hoped to fulfill a specific need of the park in filling an interpretive gap that they may not otherwise have the resources to do, understanding that the lack of on-site ranger presence for daily visitors to the site was a chief concern of the park in facilitating a worthwhile visitor experience. After consulting Ash as well as the GMP and LRIP, I decided to enhance the interpretation of Minidoka with an interactive walking tour in a mobile app format. I intended to follow any interpretive guidelines laid out by the NPS, participate in a conversation with existing scholarship and interpretive media in the field, and make a lasting contribution to future iterations of interpretation at Minidoka NHS.

When researching the resources available from the NPS, it quickly became evident that the agency was highly focused on the upcoming centennial campaign. 2016 marked the centennial year of the NPS, and was supported by the National Park

Centennial Initiative, a ten-year effort to prepare the parks for their next century. The Centennial Initiative was launched by President George W. Bush and then Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne on NPS's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, August 25, 2006.<sup>70</sup> The initiative included a service wide centennial vision, released in a 2007 publication called *The Future of America's National Parks*, and a boost in federal funding of the NPS budget by \$1 billion over ten years, committing \$100 million to parks each year specifically to Centennial Initiative programming if matched by private donors.<sup>71</sup> Funding of the Centennial Initiative was chiefly directed towards the maintenance backlog in parks that had amassed since the last infrastructural overhaul, the Mission 66 campaign for the park's 50th birthday in 1966. For Mission 66, Congress also appropriated \$1 billion over a ten-year period for development of park infrastructure including roads, trails, administration buildings and visitor centers, staff hiring and training, and land acquisition for additional parks.<sup>72</sup> The Centennial Initiative funds would similarly be directed towards construction, maintenance, and restoration of park assets, as well as for continued federal matching of Centennial Challenge projects.

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<sup>70</sup> "Centennial Initiative 2016." National Park Service, September 21, 2018  
<http://www.nps.gov/nava/learn/management/centennial-initiative-2016.htm>

<sup>71</sup> Dirk Kempthorne, "The Future of America's National Parks: A Report to the President of the United States by the Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne." National Park Service, September 21, 2018  
<http://www.nps.gov/foda/learn/management/upload/FutureofAmericaNationalParksFINAL.pdf>.

<sup>72</sup> Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*, (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 10. Mission 66 also marked a deep-rooted shift of the NPS from celebrating an untouched scenic splendor to taking on the civic responsibility of public education, historical interpretation, and building the national morale, leading to the concept of the visitor center as an educational facility.

Coupled with the increase in funding, the Centennial Initiative also inspired service-wide planning documents that work towards “a second century of stewardship and engagement.”<sup>73</sup> *A Call to Action* outlined an action plan for the 2016 Centennial Initiative to create a shared vision for the parks and their partners in the next century. It outlined four broad themes: Connecting People to Parks, Advancing the NPS Education Mission, Preserving America’s Special Places, and Enhancing Professional and Organizational Excellence. These themes were further broken into specific goals and specific actions to reach those goals, which are briefly explained in the document in one or two sentences. While there were a total of 36 actions between the themes, the most pertinent action to this study is the action “Go Digital.” This action serves the theme of Advancing the NPS Education Mission, and the goals to “strengthen the service as an education institution and parks as places of learning that develop American values, civic engagement, and citizen stewardship; Use leading-edge technologies and social media to effectively communicate with and capture the interest of the public; Collaborate with partners and education institutions to expand NPS education programs and the use of parks as places of learning.” The “Go Digital” action to contribute to achieving these goals then reads, “Reach new audiences and maintain a conversation with all Americans by transforming the NPS digital experience to offer rich, interactive, up-to-date content from every park and program. To accomplish this, we will create a user-friendly web platform that supports online and mobile technology including social media.” Also related to innovative interpretive methods is the action “Out with the Old,” which also

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<sup>73</sup> “A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement.” National Park Service, September 21, 2018  
[http://www.nps.gov/calltoaction/PDF/C2A\\_2014.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/calltoaction/PDF/C2A_2014.pdf).



serves the Advancing the NPS Education Mission and aims to “engage national park visitors with interpretive media that offer interactive experiences, convey information based on current scholarship, and are accessible to the broadest range of the public.” This specifically involves replacing “2,500 outdated, inaccurate, and substandard interpretive exhibits, signs, films, and other media with innovative, immersive, fully accessible, and learner-centered experiences.” Further, the “Live and Learn” action plans to “provide multiple ways for children to learn about the national parks and what they reveal about nature, the nation’s history, and issues central to our civic life,” namely by “reaching 25 percent of the nation’s K-12 school population annually through real and virtual field trips, residential programs, teacher training, classroom teaching materials, online resources, and educational partnerships.”<sup>74</sup>

It is significant that three out of the six actions towards accomplishing the theme of advancing education specifically call on digital methods such as distance learning, online curricula, interactive interpretive media, mobile technology, and social media. Many in both the parks and private sector have historically viewed technology as a threat to the original mission of the parks. As stated by the agency’s mission statement, “The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations”<sup>75</sup> While technology is sometimes viewed as a threat to the ability to “preserve unimpaired” the parks’ natural resources, education is an integral component of the agency’s mission. Digital technologies are invaluable in furthering this part of that

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<sup>74</sup> “A Call to Action” p. 13

<sup>75</sup> “About Us” National Park Service, September 21, 2018  
<https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm>

mission, and though the agency has had a conflicted relationship with technology in the past, it seems ready to embrace it as evidenced in the role of technology in *A Call to Action*. Though the planning documents establish national guidelines, the discretionary nature of park-to-park decision making and funding priorities can lead to mixed results at an individual park level. It falls on individual parks and park managers to be committed to the bigger visions.

In 2014 when I set out to create the walking tour app for Minidoka, the NPS had not yet embraced the trend of mobile interpretation, with only two parks having an interpretive app at the time: NPS Independence (Philadelphia, PA) and NPS National Mall (Washington, DC). At the time, the majority of apps related to parks were created by third party developers for some of the more popular parks. While there were park-related apps, which were products of varying levels of collaboration with NPS, third party developers generally had different priorities than the NPS in what mobile apps provide to park visitors. National Parks Conservation Association, for instance, created a conservation-minded app with eNature.com to provide photos and descriptions of flora and fauna, including threatened and endangered species. The app, National Parks Field Guides, featured fifty different parks and aimed to “reach a new generation” and “create new national park advocates” by promoting conservation, but did little to aid park interpretation, wayfinding, or interactivity.<sup>76</sup> What’s Invasive, an app that focused on enabling visitors to report and document the location of invasive plant species along Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, did much to accomplish its specific goal in fostering a conscientious and conservation-minded citizenry, but failed to serve

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<sup>76</sup> Amy Marquis, “The New-Age Naturalist” *National Parks* 85 no. 1 (2011): 8.

any of the park's interpretive or wayfinding needs.<sup>77</sup> More in tune with park needs, Brett Oppegaard, an assistant communications and journalism professor at University of Hawaii at Manoa, led development for the NPS Yellowstone Geysers app. Oppegaard worked with Yellowstone and Harper's Ferry NPS staff in the summer of 2014 to manage a team of developers and designers to create the app. While there were already apps for the purpose of navigating Yellowstone, they have been released by third party developers whereas Oppegaard's was the only official NPS app for the park. Beyond basic navigation, the app included a park map, safety tips, a live web cam stream of some of Yellowstone's geysers, estimated times for the next eruptions, and a platform for the park's Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube feeds. It streamlined the bulk of the information requested by park visitors, and provides recent park news and social media.<sup>78</sup>

More sophisticated efforts at digital interpretation use mobile devices to serve as platforms for rich, multimedia interpretation through supplemental interpretive text, audio, video, photographs, and more. They allow the previously established audio guide and mobile wayfinding capabilities, and additional engagement with an institution's archival collections, oral histories, animations, social media platforms, and links to other online resources. One such mobile application that drew upon the full interpretive capabilities of mobile devices in the NPS is the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site app, released in 2012. Undertaken as a collaborative effort between Brett Oppegaard, who was an assistant professor of communications at Washington State University,

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<sup>77</sup> "What's Invasive!" September 21, 2018 <https://www.whatsinvasive.org>

<sup>78</sup> Brett Oppegaard "Research team releases app for tracking Yellowstone geysers," Phys Org, January 21, 2015 <http://phys.org/news/2015-01-team-app-tracking-yellowstone-geysers.html>

Vancouver at the time, and Gregory P. Shine, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site's chief ranger and historian and adjunct history professor at Portland State University, the development of the app was funded by a National Endowment for the Humanities Digital Humanities Startup Grant.<sup>79</sup> The app masterfully combines text, audio, dedicated video, and animation to create an engaging narrative tour of Fort Vancouver. Oppegaard and Shine attributed the possibility of a successful digital interpretive project at Fort Vancouver to the integration of such possibilities in park planning documents, specifically recommendations that "in acknowledgement of the area's logistical challenges, special consideration shall be given to web-based, e-learning, digital-based, augmented reality, and distance learning opportunities that can utilize Village resources to help students connect to the park and understand its significance."<sup>80</sup> Fort Vancouver's Village area is described as presenting "significant challenges to interpretation," due to its location "away from any staffed facilities and without restroom access." On-site interpretive facilities consisted of two reconstructed cabins, "but staffing limitations precluded opening them to the public except for scheduled education programs and occasional cultural demonstrations."<sup>81</sup>

This desire to embrace digital trends as a way to mitigate limitations in the park operations likewise existed at Minidoka National Historic Site. In 2014-2015, and to a lesser extent still today, Minidoka faced similar realities with its rural location, lack of interpretive visitor center, and no consistent on-site services. Fortunately, strong cellular

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<sup>79</sup> Brett Oppegaard and Gregory P. Shine, "Going Mobile: Changing the Face of Interpretation in the National Park Service," *The Federal Historian*, 6 (2014) 123.

<sup>80</sup> Brett Oppegaard, "Going Mobile" 133.

<sup>81</sup> Brett Oppegaard, "Going Mobile" 133.

networks at Minidoka also make a mobile app a valuable tool to overcome these logistical challenges to improve the visitor experience. Like Fort Vancouver, Minidoka's structures (camp-era barracks, mess hall, and fire station) are closed to the public except for scheduled programming. Though the level of on-site staff presence improved with the opening of the temporary visitor center in May 2017, the buildings remain closed and tours must be arranged in advance. Early park planning efforts recognized the ways the isolated location and small staff size would impact future programming, and recommended the emphasis to be on "self-guided and low-key interpretation with some interpretive activities and programs," with historic features "clearly identified and interpreted for their historical significance."<sup>82</sup> The development of the 1.6-mile interpretive trail with 23 wayside exhibit panels in 2011, with the addition of a few printed bulletins covering topics such as EO9066, a glossary of relevant terms, and a map of the various incarceration sites, comprised the entirety of the interpretation available for visitors on a self-guided visit to the site, with approximately twenty arranged interpretive tours and outreach presentations occurring annually.<sup>83</sup>

### **Minidoka Walking Tour App**

When I consulted staff at Minidoka National Historic Site about an interpretive need of the park that I could support, an initial suggestion was a printed trail guide that would follow the 1.6-mile interpretive trail, incorporating each of the wayside exhibits along the way, and offering added commentary to visitors. By integrating this interpretive walking tour instead into a mobile application, I could provide the first extensive and first

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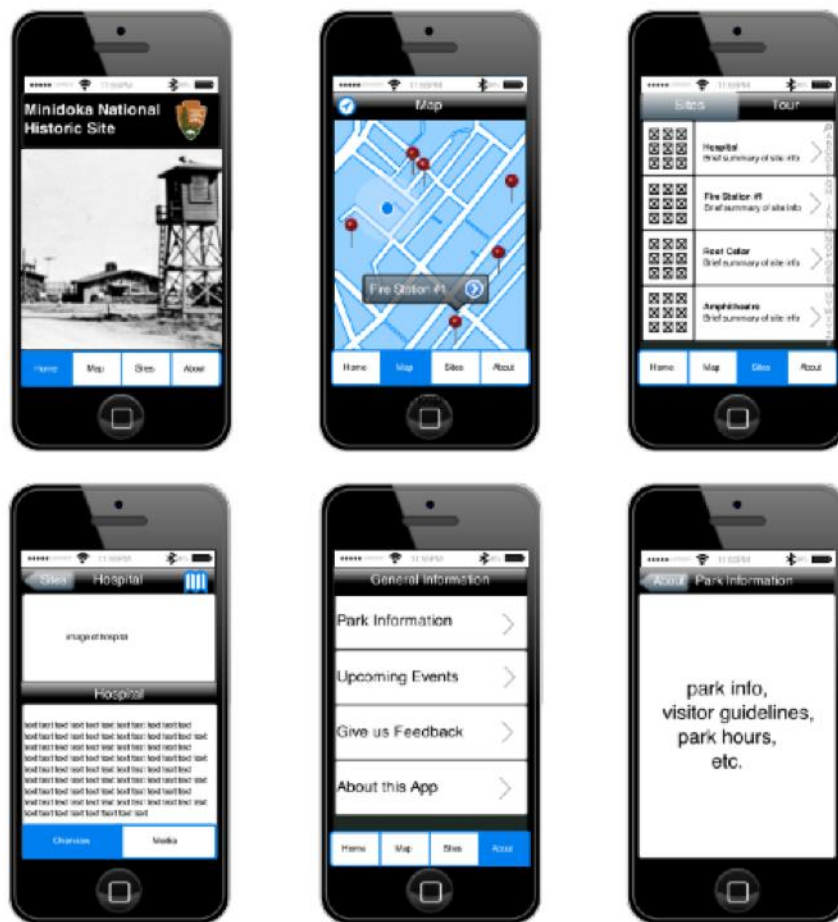
<sup>82</sup> NPS, *General Management Plan*, 61.

<sup>83</sup> Carol Ash, interview with Author, September 15, 2018.

digital source of historical interpretation to an increasing number of visitors to the site. It could provide not only a historical narrative, but also photographs, oral history, and other multimedia devices in a medium that offered more extensive information than the wayside exhibits and a printed trail guide, and that would be available to anyone through their mobile device or tablet. Interpretation of this nature would be especially crucial to the visitor experience because of the absence of both a visitor center and a continuous presence of rangers or interpreters to provide guided tours. It could also serve as a jumping-off point for the interpretation of the park at a critical point in time, as the NPS originally anticipated the opening of an on-site visitor center in 2016 or 2017. The research completed in the process of composing the walking tour had the potential to further benefit the NPS in their on-site interpretation in the visitor center with the exhibits and orientation film. With limitations in accessible information regarding the history of Minidoka both in academic and on-site interpretation, this project primarily set out to provide more extensive information to the visiting public, but had the added benefit to be able to engage a new type of “virtual visitor,” who would be able to access the information off-site through use of the mobile application from home or the classroom. The project would thereby reduce a critical gap in the overall interpretation of Minidoka National Historic Site, and begin to introduce the public to archival and other information that had not been presented before.

While the MAHR project requirements did not require the app to actually be built, but that I do the research, design and select information and technologies to be included, and write the content of the app as a potential project, there was such a need for visitor engagement in interpretation at Minidoka that I hoped for the ultimate outcome to be the

creation of the functional app, pending time and resources as the project progressed. I considered reaching out to the Computer Science department at Boise State University to find a student in need of a software engineering project to collaborate with in creating the app, but in the end approached Mike Shearer, at the time a client-side web developer, who was about to start a new job as an iOS app developer. He enthusiastically offered to develop the Minidoka app pro-bono as practice while transitioning into his new job. We had initial conversations about the general features of the app, with possible features as varied as wayfinding, highlighted museum collections, audio descriptions for universal design, filmed interviews with NPS staff about their work to preserve the site, music and photos to provide dimensional context to the narrative, opportunities for visitor contribution through a guest book or reflections, integration with social media platforms, augmented reality, badges and other gamification, and Japanese language functionality. Shearer suggested that while I continued to research content and narrow down features that I wanted to include, I wireframe or create mockups of the user interface that they could then use as reference when it was time to code the app. I did this with the google extension draw.io.



**Figure 1. Wireframed app mockups I sent to Shearer. Most of this outlined format remained the same in the final product.**

In order to become better acquainted with the interpretive guidelines of the park, work closely with the NPS staff, and have access to the resources I would need to inform my interpretative writing, I spent the summer of 2014 as an intern for the NPS at Minidoka National Historic Site and concurrently earned internship credit towards my MAHR program. As a first step in research, I consulted the GMP and LRIP, both of which list the park's interpretive themes and visitor goals, to ensure the app was a close fit to the NPS goals for the on-site interpretation in a complementary rather than redundant manner. By following these NPS guidelines I could also gain practical



experience following the professional standards in public history, and better understand both the limitations and strengths of working in interpretation for the NPS rather than a private institution. One of the long-term recommendations in the GMP was in fact a “free audio tour of the camp along the interpretive trail and through structures in Block 22 using first-person accounts of what daily life was like at Minidoka.”<sup>84</sup> This informed the basic goals of the app to follow the 1.6-mile interpretive trail, explain the structures along the trail, and interpret daily life through first-person accounts. The emphasis on primary source interpretation was present throughout these planning guides, which maintained that “stories of Minidoka will be told through the voices of former internees, their families, and others who shared the experience,” and that “oral histories will be a vital component to both on-site and off-site interpretive and educational programs.”<sup>85</sup> To follow these park goals as well as take full advantage of an established body of available primary resources, I prioritized the inclusion of oral history interviews of former incarcerated and others who experienced Minidoka first hand. This was accomplished by including video clips of interviewees reflecting upon a specific aspect of life at Minidoka associated with different areas of Minidoka. The videos were all drawn from Densho, a non-profit based in Seattle that is a partner dedicated to preserving the stories of the WWII Japanese American incarceration, originally through the collection of oral histories of those that lived it, though their mission has now evolved into educational curriculum and a vast digital archive of photographs, documents, and other ephemera of incarceration. I watched the 223 available interview clips of people who were

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<sup>84</sup> NPS, *General Management Plan*, 55.

<sup>85</sup> NPS, *General Management Plan*, 55; NPS, *Long Range Interpretive Plan*, 70.

incarcerated or employed at Minidoka, and in the end selected eighteen videos to complement the twenty four stops I would include.

I included interviews of both women and men who had ranged from small children to teenagers to young parents, and also included the white son of the Seattle Japanese Baptist Church reverend who moved to Twin Falls to follow his entire congregation when they were incarcerated at Minidoka. The interviewees represented different points of view, whether speaking of the ingenuity displayed or the difficult experiences of their parents and the other issei; to different rationalizations made by draft-age boys who volunteered for the service; and experiences of young children in the barracks-turned-school and teenagers who got temporary leave to work on local farms. This variety of viewpoints would also be augmented through written reflections or quotations from primary materials included in the narrative body of the text associated with each tour site. For instance, a white staff member reflects on his relative ease at entering the Military Police checkpoint, often duping them with his hunting license or receipts instead of his WRA pass to check in, while the incarcerated reflect on the trauma associated with seeing the Military Police at the camp entrance.



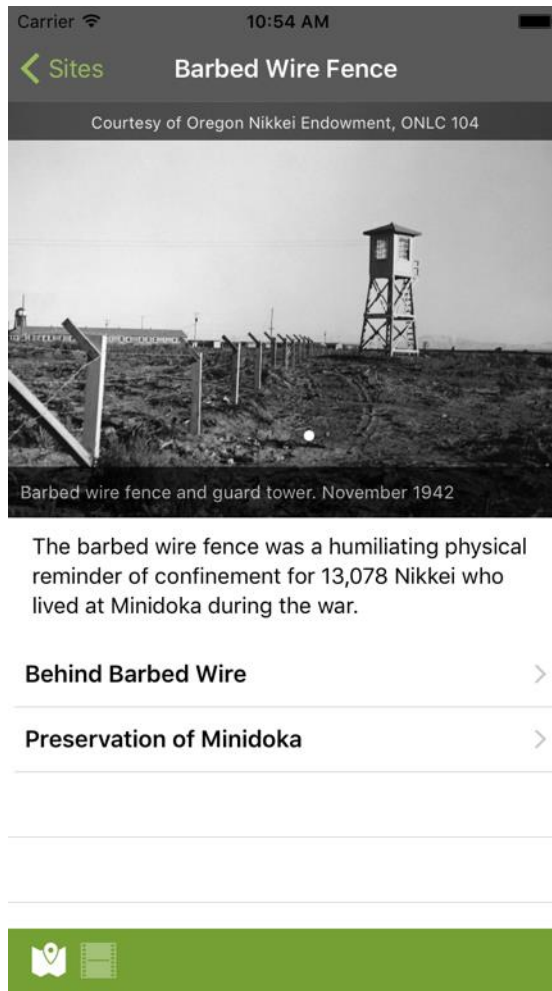
**Figure 2. This is how the embedded interviews appear in the app.  
Screen capture image from *Minidoka NHS* app.**

In addition to NPS planning documents and the oral history video collection from Densho, I spent my summer as an intern familiarizing myself with every known Minidoka resource that could be a source of information for the app. The NPS had a large collection of digitized wartime photographs, several hundred of which were the official government record of the incarceration taken by the WRA, which were then stored in the National Archives and belong in the open domain. Also on file at Minidoka were photograph collections from partner institutions such as Wing Luke Museum of the Asian

Pacific American Experience, the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, Manzanar National Historic Site, Densho, the University of Washington, and others. Through this collection I was able to identify photographs from outside institutions to use, and then request the needed permissions. The NPS paid for any usage fees. The digital copy of the full volume of the *Minidoka Irrigator*, the incarcerated-published camp newspaper, was also an important resource about daily life at Minidoka. The park's *Cultural Landscape Inventory* was an important contemporary compilation of timelines, important events, and a historical overview of Minidoka drawn from the *Irrigator* and other primary resources.<sup>86</sup> I also thought it important to include images of the different features of the site, to help visitors identify their surroundings as well as provide side-by-side comparison images of features during the camp's operation and how they appear today.

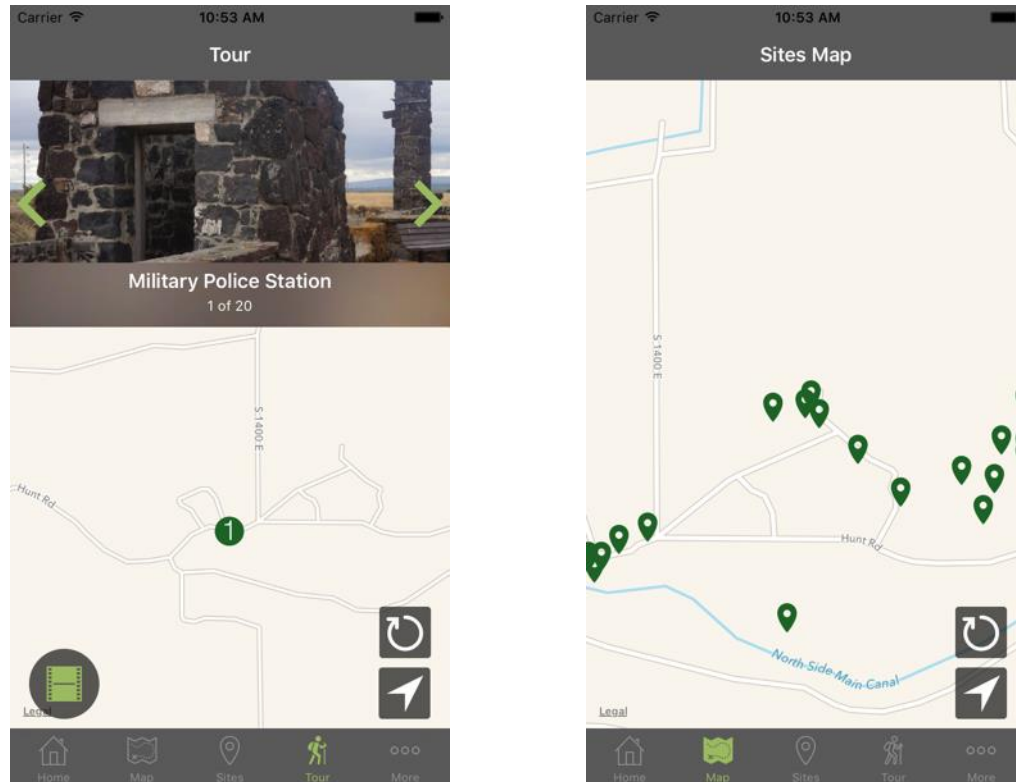
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<sup>86</sup> U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *Cultural Landscapes Inventory* (2007).



**Figure 3. Screen capture image of an *NPS Minidoka* tour location, including a historic image.**

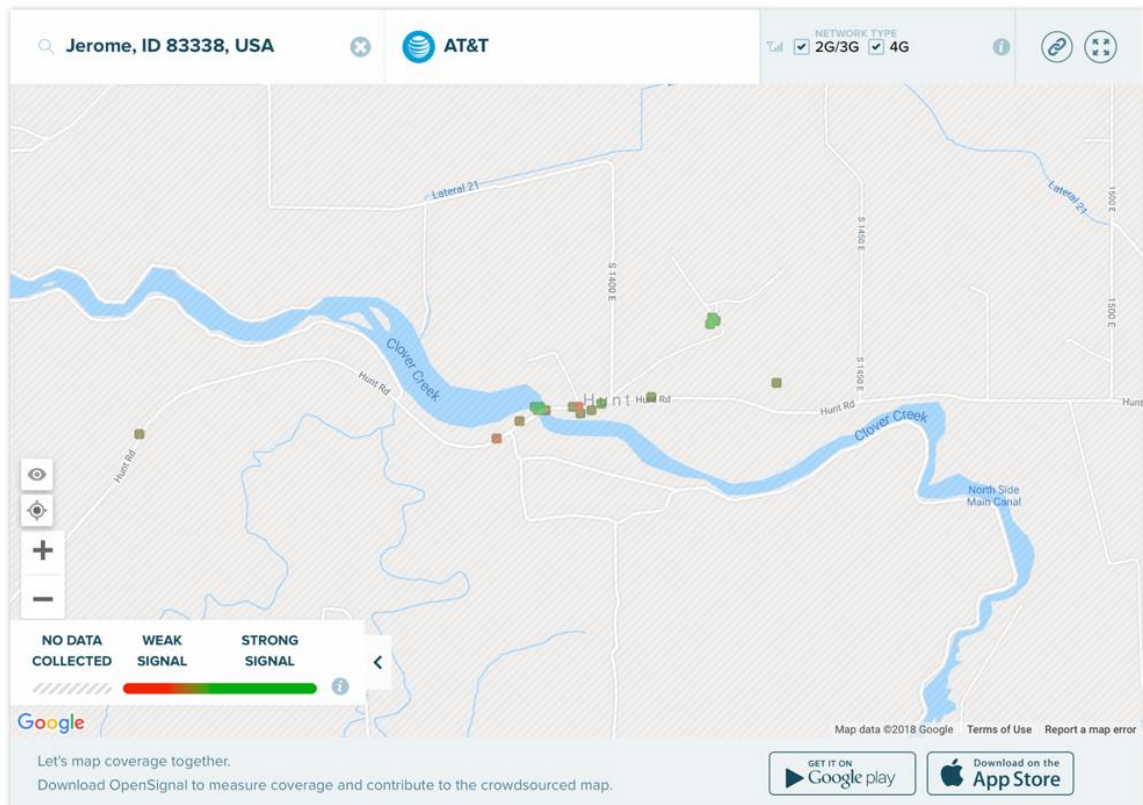
Another important feature that the app needed to include was GPS locations for each of the twenty-two stops along the interpretive tour route. To obtain this data, Shearer and I visited Minidoka on two separate occasions, once to capture the geo-locations and once to test them. Though we initially built only the iOS app, we used two separate GPS coordinate apps on an iPhone and an Android device to both cross-check the data and to support a future Android version of the app.



**Figures 4 and 5. GPS data of the tour sites occurs both in the overview map and in the individual tour stops to allow ease of access and wayfinding assistance for visitors to Minidoka.**

While we considered early on the possibility of “pushing” data to devices when triggered by physically visiting a tour stop location, that would preclude the option for virtual field trips by app users not physically visiting the site. This would also create a stronger dependence on a strong cellular signal in a remote location, which was not in the end a problem: we checked the cellular data signals with OpenSignal online and with our devices when visiting Minidoka, and the connection is more than adequate on almost all the major carriers. Instead, the app came pre-loaded with all GPS data, content, and photographs, the only exception being the Densho oral history videos. By including the videos in the app’s downloaded data, it would become a large download and require significantly more storage space on the device to which it is downloaded. However,

downloading the videos in real-time over cellular data networks could also require significant usage of data. The videos, therefore, require a wireless internet connection to access.



**Figure 6. a screen capture of OpenSignal.com, which tests cellular networks by location and service provider.**

Aside from the videos, GPS data, and historic and current photographs, the app also includes interpretation of each location according to the park's interpretive themes. Park guidelines included four pre-established interpretive themes. These include Civil and Constitutional Rights, People, Place, and World War II. The discussion of Civil Rights includes the causes of the incarceration; the loyalty questionnaires; the range of patriotic acts in both resisting the draft and serving in the Army's segregated nisei units; and the current forum for discussions of constitutional rights that the incarceration

provides.<sup>87</sup> The theme of People includes the turmoil that incarcerated people faced; the ways they persevered and resisted; experiences lived by different genders, religious practitioners, and generations of Nikkei; social and economic interactions of incarcerated people; and how Nikkei rebuilt their communities during the resettlement period.<sup>88</sup> The theme of Place includes discussions of the Bainbridge Island Nikkei community; the setting of Minidoka; the transformation of the landscape of Jerome county; and post war settlement of homesteaders to the area.<sup>89</sup> The theme of World War II includes discussions of broader national wartime sacrifices and experiences of those of Japanese ancestry in Canada and Latin America.<sup>90</sup> The interpretation of the tour sites touches upon all of these themes, but the bulk of the content focuses more narrowly on the lived wartime experience of life at Minidoka. This was an intentional interpretive decision to focus on daily camp experience, as the park orientation film and exhibits would be able to provide a broader context of pre-and-post-war narratives. Also integrated into the text descriptions is a glossary function, which will bring up definitions of Japanese terms, acronyms, and brief biographies of mentioned individuals. Lastly, the app has an information section to include important visitor information such as contact information, directions, site information, safety warnings, and NPS announcements.

While the early vision of the basic app features matches closely to the final version that was produced, by 2015 mobile apps NPS Klondike Gold Rush (Seattle, WA and Skagway, AK) and NPS Herbert Hoover (West Branch, IA) were also rolled out. At

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<sup>87</sup> NPS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, 16.

<sup>88</sup> NPS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, 20.

<sup>89</sup> NPS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, 26.

<sup>90</sup> NPS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, 27.



this point, it became evident that the NPS had at least started to formulate a basic template across the apps, with some small formatting changes being made to give them all a cohesive feel, as well as a new map being created to integrate into all of the apps. Shearer and I decided to match our app design to be more compatible to the NPS apps that were available at this point, in case the template became standard across all NPS sites. We felt this would offer a more seamless transition should NPS staff at Minidoka decide to then convert it to the template of these apps that were likely being produced by a single individual through Harpers Ferry, the centralized interpretive media office of the NPS. To this end, we followed NPS style guides and included their logo, font, and color scheme, though we weren't able to make contact with anyone in NPS regional or national offices for guidance on the detailed map or anything to do with an "official" NPS app for that matter. In this regard, apps in the NPS were still too new to have official guidance or a bureaucratic system for production in place. We also consulted the *Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media* in hopes of meeting universal design standards. While following all of the standards relevant to mobile apps is on our list of desired improvements for future iterations of the app, we did follow the audiovisual guidelines for hearing by transcribing all of the oral history videos to provide captions as printed words on the screen alongside each video.<sup>91</sup> We launched the app as *NPS Minidoka* for iOS devices on February 19, 2016, under the management of the NPS. This date was significant as it marks the Day of Remembrance, a nationwide commemoration of the signing of EO9066, in the centennial celebration year of the NPS.

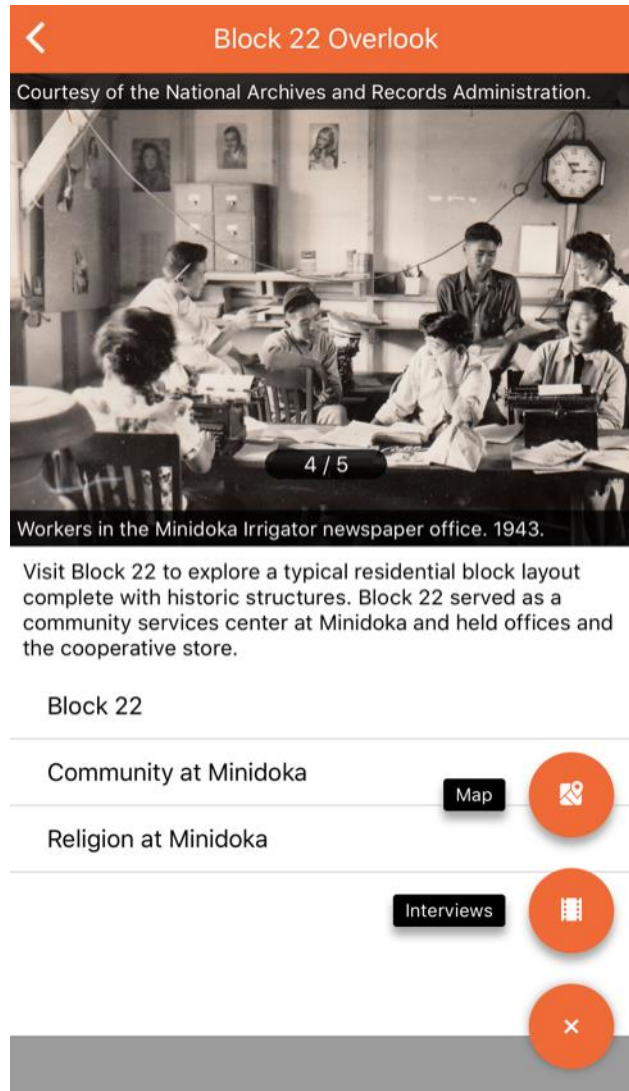
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<sup>91</sup> National Park Service, *Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media*, (2017). <https://www.nps.gov/features/hfc/guidelines/>

Its release was announced in NPS service-wide communications. At this time, Minidoka staff did hear from NPS national offices regarding the release of an “official” mobile app for the park without engaging the central media office. In 2016, I was hired as Executive Director of FOM and sought guidance on the NPS management of an interpretive app created independently from Harper’s Ferry Center. Specifically, I consulted the NPS regional partnership director and Yosemite staff, as Yosemite has a partner-launched app hosted by the Yosemite Conservancy. I received no response to this inquiry and it was evident that the rapid increase in park apps in the centennial year was overwhelming the service and that digital interpretation in this regard was still a “wild west” of interpretive media. Without further NPS guidance on the seemingly frowned upon partner-created “official” app, I decided to find a creative solution to hosting the app. It has since undergone minor content revisions and relaunched under the management and branding of FOM. It is now available as *Minidoka NHS* on iOS and Android devices, and in both Japanese and Spanish. Overall, I believe that the app successfully contributes to the one of the park’s most urgent short-term visitor experience goals, that “each person can connect and experience the story on their own terms, by walking past or through Minidoka Relocation Center’s restored and partially furnished historic structures.”<sup>92</sup> It also fulfills my personal goal: to assist the typical visitor, whether a descendant of an incarcerated Japanese American, or someone who noticed the park on their route elsewhere, to gain an immersive understanding of life at Minidoka by engaging in a walking tour without the assistance of a park ranger.

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<sup>92</sup> NPS, *Long Range Interpretive Plan*, 58.



**Figure 7.** Screen capture image of the more recently released *Minidoka NHS* app, with FOM branding and minor layout changes.

## PART FOUR: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE COLLABORATION AT MINIDOKA NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

From the earliest efforts to lay out management strategies and future guidelines for the site, NPS has outlined cooperative partnerships with specifically Japanese American and other community organizations to be a foundational aspect of the protection of Minidoka's cultural resources and historic legacy. One of the critical long-term recommendations of the LRIP outlines a main goal to be the continued nurturing of current and new partnerships to "fulfill the park's broad purpose and mission," stressing the importance of partnerships in obtaining oral histories from eye witnesses, and to help restore and interpret Minidoka National Historic Site in both its Idaho and Bainbridge Island units.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, the short-term recommendations outlined the need to work with partners to submit grants that could appropriate resources for improvements in infrastructure, interpretive and educational programs, and the hosting of special events to attract public attention and further resources to the site. It urged for continued collaboration between NPS and FOM, the College of Southern Idaho, Boise State University, and the Minidoka Pilgrimage Planning Committee in order to continually present and expand the annual Minidoka Civil Liberties Symposium and Minidoka Pilgrimage. It also suggested bringing in new partners, basing collaborative efforts on the organizational strengths of each partner, assessing future shared projects, and applying for grants and funding together when "mutually beneficial projects are identified."<sup>94</sup> It suggests that the exploration of new research opportunities within University of

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<sup>93</sup> NPS, *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*, 51.

<sup>94</sup> NPS, *Long Rang Interpretive Plan*, 51.

Washington, Boise State University, and the College of Southern Idaho as well as partnership with local farmers which could include special use permits and other land use agreements could continue to foster development of the historic preservation of the camp experience, and further proposes partnership with “high school or college students during the developmental phase of the social media strategy.”<sup>95</sup> Overall, the official Minidoka management documents strongly exhibit that the development and continued fostering of community partnerships is a foundational aspect of the park’s broad purpose and interpretive guidelines.<sup>96</sup>

This is not an isolated effort, as is clearly evident in the language of the NPS to rely on increased partnership engagement to fulfill the basic purpose of each park unit in an era of decreased funding but increased visitation of public lands. For instance, Lowell National Historical Park has created a programmatic pyramid for elementary through college students to develop relationships with the park, spanning from field trips to internships, seasonal employment, to full-time careers. By creating a career track for local area youth who have been stewards of the park at different stages of their lives and education levels, Lowell is building a sustainable integration into the local community and ensuring a diversity of local representation in their workforce.<sup>97</sup> While NPS has a history of developing a variety of partnerships in managing Minidoka, it could benefit from a systematic approach to creating a funnel of engaged community members at different life stages to ensure a stream of visitors, volunteers, seasonal staff and interns,

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<sup>95</sup> NPS, *Long Rang Interpretive Plan*, 49.

<sup>96</sup> NPS, *Long Rang Interpretive Plan*, 3.

<sup>97</sup> National Park Service, *Leading in a Collaborative Environment*, (2010).

<https://www.nps.gov/Civic/resources/Leading%20in%20a%20Collaborative%20Environment%20FINAL%2010-27-10.pdf>52

leading to future staff and leadership. On a service-wide scale, NPS espouses that “Students and their communities both benefit from the combination of classroom instruction, experiential learning, civic engagement, and reflection that service-learning provides,” and offers lesson plans and case studies on service-learning in the parks, though the lesson plans available seem to focus on place-based experiential learning with a reflection piece rather than creating a product or fulfilling a need of a park.<sup>98</sup> Rather than creating a robust national model for service-learning, the NPS leaves individual parks to foster partnerships that will create sustainable engagement with the community to the mutual benefit of the visitors and the parks. Minidoka, then, cannot rely on a top-down program for community engagement to be established by the NPS at a regional or national level, but should seize the rich array of partnerships that have been established at the park since the beginning, and continue to seek or create opportunities to collaborate with them. As most of these partners are similarly under-resourced community non-profit organizations, NPS should especially seek partnerships with students from Boise State University, College of Southern Idaho, and University of Washington, all institutions with previous partnerships. Service learning in its various forms should indeed be a priority, as students are often required to take on culminating projects, wherein a majority of the resources are provided by the university and the heightened interest and satisfaction in their work are derived from the students’ desire to produce useful work that interests them.

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<sup>98</sup> “Service Learning with Places.” National Park Service, October 4, 2017. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/teachingwithhistoricplaces/service-learning.htm>

Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher define service-learning as a “course-based, credit-bearing educational experience that allows students to (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.”<sup>99</sup> It allows students to gain real-world experience and be civically engaged, and allows universities to connect with their off-campus communities. In a way, the field of public history itself is the historical discipline’s answer to civic engagement, as “its practitioners embrace a mission to make their special insights accessible and useful to the public,” and the public history course and traditional history course alike are ripe with opportunities for service-learning projects.<sup>100</sup> Whereas students in traditional history courses can *benefit* from service-learning projects as a new approach to their craft of historical research and study, public history students *should* engage in service-learning as they are required to move past the study of history and cultivate “specific skills appropriate to public history practices in their individual fields and an opportunity to practice them in the real world.”<sup>101</sup>

The Minidoka guard tower reconstruction and the walking tour mobile app are both recent examples of what a successful service-learning partnership between Boise State University and Minidoka National Historic Site can accomplish. Both directly engaged Boise State students in contributing to the preservation and interpretation of

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<sup>99</sup> Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher, “A Service-Learning Curriculum for Faculty,” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 112-122

<sup>100</sup> Constance B. Schulz “An Academic Balancing Act: Public History Education Today,” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 21, No. 3, (Summer, 1999): 143-154.

Minidoka in physical manifestations that will have long term impacts on the park and its visitors. The guard tower and walking tour app were constructed chiefly within the 2014-2016 period, engaging very diverse sectors of the student body and their respective skills, interests, and talents, in an important period of growth and attention towards Minidoka both as a national park in the agency's centennial year, and as a site of conscience in a changing political climate. The guard tower reconstruction was faculty-driven, in that it was conceptualized by a faculty member who independently approached the NPS and collaborated with them to fund the project, and engaged a large group of mostly undergraduate students and club members in the College of Engineering's Department of Construction Management. The walking tour app was student-driven, identified as a project also through dialogue with the park, required very few funds, and accomplished by an individual student in fulfillment of a culminating project requirement with the additional in-kind donation of the engineer's time and energy. Both are examples of students engaging in meaningful, practical, real-life experience in the field that they are preparing for careers in, while simultaneously benefitting a local public lands agency in completing a project which had previously been identified as a priority in improving the cultural landscape and visitor experience.

The Boise State University Service-Learning Program was established in 1999. The mission is to connect "classes with the community through capacity-building partnerships to enhance student learning, address critical community issues, and encourage students to be active citizens in their local, national and global communities." The program is directly responsible for campus-community partnerships in which students are able to engage with community organizations to contribute meaningful



projects, towards a vision of “all Boise State students graduating with the skills, knowledge, and disposition to be locally responsive and globally aware citizens,” as part of a campus culture that “supports teaching and learning environments in which civic engagement is highly valued, practiced, assessed, and recognized.”<sup>102</sup> The Service-Learning Program takes a faculty-driven approach towards building these partnerships, first building community relationships with off-campus local businesses, non-profits, and civic organizations, and then supporting the faculty seeking service-learning coursework by matching them to a community organization whose need matches the skillset of that faculty’s courses. This approach has certainly worked for the program thus far, with 36 new faculty joining the program in the 2017-2018 year bringing the involvement to over 2,800 students, 93 faculty, and 159 courses for the year, and earning it the distinctions of Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement and National Service Learning Honor Roll. While the program aims to cultivate student civic leaders and advocate for the institutionalization of service-learning across campus, however, this top-down approach of engaged departments via individual faculty does little to foster student-driven service-learning via opportunities such as independent study, for-credit internships, or culminating projects.

The Master of Applied Historical Research program is a natural fit for engaging department-wide with the Boise State Service-Learning Program, as well as opportunities for student-driven community engagement in their coursework, especially in regards to culminating projects. Like all public history degrees, The MAHR degree is broadly meant

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<sup>102</sup> “Welcome to Service-Learning.” Boise State University. September 21, 2018. <http://servicelearning.boisestate.edu/>

to prepare students to work in the public history field, whether in varying levels of government or private historical site management, historical consulting, archiving, preservation, cultural resource management, and more. The program website sums up the goal as such: “This professional degree is geared largely toward those seeking careers outside of traditional academic settings... Its main goal is to prepare students for further study or for a successful career in history.”<sup>103</sup> The culminating requirement for the program is an applied research project which demonstrates scholarly competence in the field. A recent review of the MAHR program undertaken by community partners in the public history field found that the MAHR program at Boise State could better use existing resources to benefit students’ preparation for success in the field, especially in regards to the relationship between the program and its community partnerships:

The Boise State Department of History already has many community connections, and should explore fostering greater partnerships with local and state agencies, such as the City of Boise and Idaho State Historical Society. Community professionals are able to teach courses or workshops that would lessen the load of history faculty and provide applicable content from a practitioner’s viewpoint. These partners could also identify information gaps, community needs, or commemorative events as potential projects. It is also recommended that faculty and students take advantage of the community’s historic sites and teach courses that utilize site visits.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> “Master of Applied Historical Research.” Boise State University. September 21, 2018. <https://history.boisestate.edu/graduate/master-of-applied-historical-research/>

<sup>104</sup> Amber Beierle et al. “Boise State University Master of Applied Historical Research Community Review” (Winter 2018), 6.

Significantly, MAHR students can earn up to one third of the required credits through internships, during which they may develop specific technical skills and gain experience in different areas of public history to narrow down their specific career interests. As the required courses focus more strongly on theory and processes such as historiography in the field, the internship experience comprises the bulk of the practical skillset that students will gain from the program for the field, and quality of the internships can therefore have a large impact on the overall takeaway of the degree program. While there have been MAHR courses involved in service-learning projects, these too were formulated by faculty members to varying levels of success for the community partner involved. The continued pursuit of service-learning projects for MAHR classes should not only be a program priority, but additional student-driven service-learning should be fostered as independent study, the applied research project, or as projects delivered via for-credit internships. A formal relationship between the History Department, especially with regards to the MAHR program, and the Service-Learning Program would be a welcome influence to help students thoughtfully select field experience through service-learning, whether through faculty-driven coursework, or through their independent pursuit of a specific project as their culminating research project or as an independent project in fulfilling a course or internship requirement. Not only would this support the department's goals to prepare MAHR students to gain employment in their preferred field, but it would ensure that the program also enjoy increasingly diverse and fulfilling relationships with community partners with many fruitful collaborations to come. A relationship between the Master of Applied Historical Research program and Minidoka National Historic Site would fulfill the goals for a

robust community partnership program for both the History Department and the NPS, and ideally foster a rich program of student participation in shaping the research, interpretation, and preservation of this incredibly important site of national heritage, as well as serve as a much-needed model of public history service-learning in national parks. Minidoka National Historic Site, the NPS, the MAHR program, the Service-Learning Program, and individual students would only stand to gain through this type of forward-thinking partnership. With a demonstrated commitment to partnerships existing in the culture of the NPS at Minidoka National Historic Site, and a willingness on the part of Boise State University faculty and students to engage with Minidoka through service-learning courses, a mechanism to foster a sustainable campus-community relationship between the two would go a long way in ensuring that students not only learn about the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans in Southern Idaho, local history that a shocking number of students will never encounter, but engage in meaningful efforts to contribute to the preservation of the site. In the education of civic engagement, the incarceration history is an immensely appropriate locus of study, because as Cherstin M. Lyon reminds us, “Japanese American history has been useful and necessary in a U.S. context to serve as a warning against reactionary politics, racial profiling, prejudicial laws, and ignorant political speech that threaten to marginalize entire groups based on race, ethnicity, or religion.”<sup>105</sup> Service learning in the context of Minidoka could not only

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<sup>105</sup> Cherstin M. Lyon, “Portals and Praxis in Japanese American Public History,” *Southern California Quarterly* (Vol. 98, No. 3), p267. For excellent examples of public history service-learning related to the Japanese American incarceration experience, see Lyon’s piece as well as Chrissy Yee Lau, “Towards a Pedagogy of Asian American Public History: Creating a Student Digital Exhibition” *Southern California Quarterly* (Vol. 98, No. 3), p. 275-296.

be a welcome chance for many students to delve into practical experience in their field, but would allow them to give back to their communities and public lands, and feel a sense of ownership over the site and the legacy that it protects and of the work that they produce. Moreover, the components of this mechanism already exist within the Boise State University campus infrastructure, yet have not been fully aligned to be continuously utilized in a value-creative manner.

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## APPENDIX 1: *MINIDOKA NHS* COMPLETE APP TEXT

This appendix includes the full text content of the *Minidoka NHS* app, which is identical on both the iOS and Android platforms. The text appears nested as individual sections, each bolded title indicating one geographic site along the tour route, with content below indicating the sections of text and images included at that stop. While image captions and credits are included, the images themselves are not included. The 18 Densho oral history videos are not included in the appendix either, though the app includes full text transcripts of each video as well. Words in brackets followed by a definition in parenthesis indicates an embedded glossary feature, in which terms are defined when they are clicked on. Underneath the “info” section, basic visitor information is provided including wayfinding to Minidoka NHS and the Bainbridge Island Unit, organizational information about Friends of Minidoka, safety tips, credits, and a brief background of the Japanese American experience leading up to the Minidoka context.

### **Guard Tower**

Historic guard tower reconstruction.

Stop at the historic camp entrance to see a reconstructed guard tower and get a sense of confinement that incarcerated were faced with.

### **Sentries in the Sage**

Eight guard towers stood sentry around the perimeter of the camp like this historically reconstructed model. Construction of the guard towers and barbed wire fence began in November 1942, several months after the first incarcerated arrived. While some [WRA] (War Relocation Authority. The government agency responsible for the administration of the War Relocation Centers where Japanese Americans were held during World War II.) centers had very strict rules against incarcerated leaving, Minidoka had daily, temporary, and long-term leave clearances for incarcerated to attend school, work outside of camp, run errands in nearby towns, and visit friends. Confusion existed as to why the watch towers were necessary since Minidoka had already been operating without them and was in such a desolate location.

Before their construction, [Kleinkopf] (Arthur Kleinkopf. From September 25, 1942, until February 9, 1946, Arthur Kleinkopf was a staff member at Minidoka as supervisor of student teachers and later as superintendent of education.) recorded that “The reason for the towers is being discussed by many Japanese and some appointed personnel. Some say they are fire lookouts and others maintain that the sole purpose is to have them manned by soldiers with machine guns to prevent the escape of any evacuee. In the block managers meeting today it was said that... it is the responsibility of all those who leave the center to work outside to prove to the white Americans that the Japanese are willing to do their share and can be relied upon and that the towers are for Japanese protection and must be regarded as such.”

### Symbols of Confinement

According to a WRA report on the guard towers, “original plans called for equipping these sentry towers with searchlights and phones, and the towers were to be manned on a 24-hour basis,” but a lack of necessary equipment prevented the towers from being fully used. Though never utilized to their full extent, the guard towers play a large role in the memories of former incarcerated, and often appear in writing, artwork, and oral histories recalling camp years. This psychological impact was noted by the WRA, which reported that “probably no other single factor has had as serious effect on the resident’s morale as the erection of the guard towers.” The report summarized the overall impact of the guard towers when it noted that for incarcerated, “the sentry towers are always silhouetted in the distance. It is not enough that they are not being used - to the residents they stand waiting for the day when they will be used. The eight sentry towers are ever present as a symbol of their confinement.”

Reconstructed entrance guard tower. 2015.

Entrance to Minidoka. 1944.

Contributed by Densho, courtesy of the Mitsuoka Family Collection

### **Military Police Area**

Historic entrance area and guard station.

Immerse yourself in a visit to Minidoka War Relocation Center at the historic camp entrance under the shadow of a guard tower.

### Military Police Area

The Military Police troop housing area was just north of Hunt Road across from the entrance area, and separated from the rest of the camp project area by a barbed wire fence and a private access road. Minidoka was guarded by the 321st Military Police Escort Guard Company under Captain William E. Dorland. While not allowed in the project, the military police patrolled the perimeter fence and acted as guards at the camp entrance

station. Incarcerees were granted access to the entire relocation area during the day and were restricted to the residential center at night.

In the early months of Minidoka's operation, residents lived on site while some areas were being constructed. These construction areas were guarded by the military police. In September, 1942, an elderly [Issei] (first generation immigrant from Japan) man was shot at, but unharmed, by a military police guard for wandering through a restricted area. Contact between the military police and camp residents was generally limited to interactions at the gate, checking residents and visitors in and out.

#### At the Gate

[WRA] (War Relocation Authority. The government agency responsible for the administration of the War Relocation Centers where Japanese Americans were held during World War II.) employee and [Nikkei] (people of Japanese ancestry, Japanese emigrants and their descendants) incarceration sentiments towards the military police understandably varied. Many Nikkei still recall the presence of armed guards and the psychological impact it had on their Minidoka experience. In contrast, [Arthur Kleinkopf] (From September 25, 1942, until February 9, 1946, Arthur Kleinkopf was a staff member at Minidoka as supervisor of student teachers and later as superintendent of education.) recorded in his diary the military police's laidback approach to checking him in, as he successfully used a calling card, social security card, health insurance card, various receipts, and hunting and fishing license in place of his WRA-issued pass to gain entrance into camp.

One WRA-employed teacher recalled the irony of military police guarding the families of American service members, illustrated by the construction of the Honor Roll at the heavily guarded camp entrance, and noted that some of the military police were bothered by this irony and wondered why they were even needed there.

Ruins of Military Police entrance station. 2015.

Ruins of Military Police visitor reception area. 2015.

Camp entrance area. Entrance station at left, reception area at right.  
Courtesy of NPS, Koyama Collection

Unidentified member of Military Police poses by entrance station.  
Courtesy of NPS, Koyama Collection

Camp entrance area with buses.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

#### **Hospital**

Former hospital site.

Learn about historic hospital operations at Minidoka in an area that now serves as farmland.

## Hospital

The hospital area was part of the project's inner core that included the military police area, administrative area, sewage treatment plant, and warehouse area. Construction of the hospital complex was completed in October 1942. The hospital employed 200 people, both incarcerated and [WRA] (War Relocation Authority. The government agency responsible for the administration of the War Relocation Centers where Japanese Americans were held during World War II.) employees.

The hospital complex consisted of eighteen buildings which included surgery, pediatrics, maternity, and isolation wards, an optical clinic, dental clinic, pharmacy, morgue, and housing for WRA-hired doctors and nurses. These buildings were modified barracks with the addition of painted wood siding and interior walls. Boasting one of the project's best-equipped kitchens and most popular dining halls, the hospital area received its own dehydrating plant and cannery in September 1943.

Though the hospital had two army ambulances, many incarcerated remember walking, sometimes upwards of two miles in harsh conditions, to receive medical services or even give birth. Hospital records documented 489 births and 193 deaths during Minidoka's operation.

Minidoka War Relocation Center hospital nursery. December 1942.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Minidoka War Relocation Center dentist, Doctor T. Nakamura. December 1942.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Minidoka Irrigator article praises hospital operations, September 1943.  
Contributed by Densho, Courtesy of Cherry Kinoshita

Nikkei hospital staff. High school students often worked part time as nurses' aides. June 1943.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Patients at Minidoka War Relocation Center hospital. November 1942.  
Courtesy of Oregon Nikkei Endowment, ONLC 112

## North Side Canal

Bureau of Reclamation irrigation canal.

Learn about the role of water at Minidoka and its unlikely source.

## North Side Canal

Prior to the war, the land that would become the wartime confinement site was part of a Bureau of Reclamation irrigation project called the Minidoka Project. The North Side Canal was part of the Minidoka Project and later served as the southern boundary of the Minidoka War Relocation Center. Though North Side Canal directly bordered the camp, it was at a lower elevation and pumping the water would have been costly. Milner-Gooding Canal, five miles away, was used instead to irrigate project farmland and residential area victory gardens. Incarcerees constructed a lateral canal from Milner-Gooding to designated areas in May 1943. In addition to this 7-mile-long, up to 17-mile-wide lateral canal, incarcerated built a complex network of irrigation and drainage ditches which transformed over 700 acres of sagebrush land into an agricultural oasis. The present-day agricultural character of the area is a legacy of [Nikkei] (people of Japanese ancestry, Japanese emigrants and their descendants) labor during wartime incarceration.

Hunt Bridge and the North Side Canal. 2015.

Original WRA caption: A view of the Twin Falls North Side Canal which borders this War Relocation Authority center on the south. 1942.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Original WRA caption: Establishing irrigation controls, land reclamation. June 1944.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

## **Honor Roll**

Reconstruction military Honor Roll.

Gain an understanding of the various displays of patriotism and experience the irony of military service during incarceration when you visit this reconstructed Honor Roll.

## **Honor Roll**

An Honor Roll for incarcerated from Minidoka who joined the military was dedicated on October 14, 1943. Originally only consisting of the center panel, the two side panels were added as the number of Minidoka military recruits swelled. By the end of the war, almost 1,000 Minidoka [Nisei] (second generation Japanese American; U.S. citizens by birth, born to Japanese immigrants) were listed. Respected [Issei] (first generation immigrant from Japan) artists, Kamekichi Tokita and Kenjiro Nomura, were sign makers in camp and designed and painted the Honor Roll.

The Honor Roll stood in front of a Japanese style garden designed by Fujitaro Kubota, a famous Japanese landscape designer from Seattle. The arranged basalt boulders and earthen mounds are all that remains of the garden. It originally included stepping stones, a water feature, trees, shrubs, and flowers. The contrast of the traditional Japanese style entrance garden, nearby entrance gate and guard tower, and the Honor Roll, signifying patriotism and loyalty, represents the complex and sometimes conflicting cultural values of the incarcerated [Nikkei] (people of Japanese ancestry, Japanese emigrants and their descendants).

This replica of the historic Honor Roll was unveiled on July 3, 2011 and honors the legacy of the Minidoka incarcerated who entered military service. The basalt stepping stones and pathways leading to the Honor Roll were placed by incarcerated.

### Loyalty Questionnaire

In early 1943 the WRA issued a questionnaire to all adult incarcerated in order to determine loyalty on an individual basis. Those who answered "yes" were eligible to leave incarceration sites for employment, education, and the armed forces. The questionnaires did not account for nuances between Issei and Nisei, or men and women, and two questions in particular became problematic:

No. 27: Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?

No. 28: Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of American and faithfully defend the United States from any and all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?

For Issei, barred by law from becoming naturalized U.S. citizens, answering Question 28 "yes" and forswearing allegiance to Japan would leave them nationless. Many Nisei felt no loyalty to the Japanese Emperor and were confused by the question. Many women and elderly Issei were unsure of how to answer the question regarding combat duty.

Overall, 97% of Minidoka's population answered "yes-yes" to the questionnaire, which is the highest "loyalty" rate of the ten incarceration sites. 335 Minidoka incarcerated who answered "no-no" were branded "disloyals," and sent to Tule Lake, which was converted from an incarceration site to a segregation center. 2,000 "yes-yes" Tule Lake incarcerated were transferred to Minidoka. Of 315 total Nikkei to resist the draft, 40 were from Minidoka. While some "no-no" incarcerated and draft resisters were more loyal to Japan or wanted to avoid military service, others felt it was their American duty to answer "no" in protest of their incarceration. No matter their reasoning, they all experienced the same consequences.

### Military Service

Nikkei were originally considered unfit for military service due to their perceived disloyalty to the United States. In 1943 Roosevelt activated the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a segregated Nisei unit serving under white officers. Even following the controversy of the loyalty questionnaire, almost 1,000 "yes-yes" or "loyal" Nisei from Minidoka served in the military during WWII.

The 442nd motto "Go for Broke," a gambling term that implies risking everything to win, represents the Nisei attitude in fighting bravely to prove their patriotism. The 442nd and its attached 100th Infantry Battalion served in Italy, France, Germany, and Northern Africa, becoming the most decorated unit in American military history for its size and length of service. Minidoka supplied more 442nd servicemen than any other incarceration site.

Many Nisei served in the Pacific front in the Military Intelligence Service (MIS), using Japanese language skills to translate enemy documents, interrogate Japanese prisoners of war, persuade enemies to surrender, or work as radio announcers and propaganda writers. General MacArthur's Intelligence Chief said of the MIS, "The Nisei saved countless Allied lives and shortened the war by two years." Over 300 Nisei women served in the MIS, Army Nurse Corps, and Women's Army Corps, serving as linguists, doctors, nurses, and clerical workers.

Reconstructed honor roll. 2015.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Historic photograph of the original honor roll.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Kaun, Ko, and Satoru Onodera, brothers incarcerated at Minidoka, volunteer for the Army while the entire family looks on.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

These four brothers, Kenny, Chester, Ted, and Howard Sakura, all volunteered for service in the 442nd regimental combat team of the United States Army while incarcerated at Minidoka.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Buddhist funeral for a fallen soldier in a Minidoka recreation hall

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

### **Administrative Area**

Administrative area of Minidoka.

Visit the site of the administration area and learn about life as a WRA employee at Minidoka.

### **Administrative Area**

The administration area included a main administration building, two garages, a post office, personnel office, warehouse office, relocation office, statistics office, welfare office, relocation leave section office, legal division office, evacuee property office, appointed personnel store, a staff mess hall, and a recreation hall. There was also staff housing in this area, which initially consisted of only one men's and two women's dormitories. The [WRA] (War Relocation Authority. The government agency responsible for the administration of the War Relocation Centers where Japanese Americans were held during World War II.) later constructed two more women's dormitories, ten staff apartment buildings which held four apartments each, and a staff laundry building. The number of WRA staff employed at Minidoka varied from 100 to 200 people at a time.

### **Staff Experience**



Minidoka's WRA-hired staff was in some ways subject to the same living conditions as the incarcerated, resulting in a high turn-around and often a shortage of staff. Kleinkopf observed this difficulty in keeping staff, and remarked that "it takes a great deal of pioneering spirit and patience to endure." Upon arrival at Minidoka, teacher Robert Coombs recalled "They assigned me to room C which was all right with me as it was a place to sleep. I then asked about a place to eat and he told me there was a dining room. I responded with, 'Well, that is all I need.' So I moved into my room without much furniture, to say the least, but that didn't bother me. This was going to be a challenge and I was ready for it."

Contrary to incarcerated barracks, staff dormitories had indoor showers and toilets and were later furnished by the WRA, and an incarcerated cleaning staff was provided for daily housekeeping. The elderly women sometimes cleaned the dormitories twice a day to combat dust storms. This housing was offered to staff at a rental rate of approximately \$22.50 per month.

#### Attitudes Towards Nikkei

Sentiments varied widely among WRA workers towards the incarceration of Japanese Americans. Some considered work at Minidoka as contributing to the war effort, and genuinely cared for the incarcerated. Coombs recalled that at camp "I soon became a worrier because I wanted them all to succeed in everything they were doing in the school." Coombs experienced backlash against his involvement with Nikkei from his former employer, the superintendent of Sacramento schools, who told him 'Don't you ever come back and ask for a job here in Sacramento.' [Kleinkopf] (Arthur Kleinkopf. From September 25, 1942, until February 9, 1946, Arthur Kleinkopf was a staff member at Minidoka as supervisor of student teachers and later as superintendent of education.) observed negative attitudes towards [Nikkei] (people of Japanese ancestry, Japanese emigrants and their descendants) within the WRA staff at Minidoka, noting that "Some of the appointed personnel employed at the center are too anti-Japanese in their attitudes and actions for the good of the project and the policies of WRA." Other employees remained in contact with their incarcerated friends for years after camp closure, even attending reunions in postwar years.

Administrative area. 1943.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

WRA staff housing.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Tura Nakamura, block manager of block 42-44 presents ceremonial Tai fish to Project Director, H.L. Stafford and Philip Schafer, assistant project director. 1943.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

H.L. Stafford, project director of Minidoka War Relocation Center. 1943.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

## **Fire Station**

Historic fire station.

Visit this historic fire station and learn about life as an incarcerated firefighter.

### **Fire Station as Home**

One [Nisei] (second generation Japanese American, U.S. citizen by birth) firefighter, Norio Mitsuoka described the fire station as a prime facility compared to the rest of the camp, recalling that he and another fireman, Jimmy Okamoto, "were rather fortunate in the way of living quarters because we were bachelors and were working for the fire department. Although we were assigned a block living quarter, we gave that up and moved into the fire station."

The physical appearance of Fire Station #1 remains largely unchanged: "In the back of the station house there were two small rooms. Jimmy and I occupied one of the rooms and the other was used for storage. The station house had a shower and sink and toilet facilities built inside so we were saved the inconveniences that the majority of evacuees faced. We even had a refrigerator."

Fire Station #1 even had a black and white mixed-breed "fire station mutt" for its mascot, which appears in several historic photos of the fire crew.

### **In the Field**

Firefighting was a necessary occupation at Minidoka. For some, the job was appealing because it involved 24-hour shifts with 48 hours off in between. For others, it meant an exciting opportunity to explore beyond project boundaries, often on overnight camping trips, when assisting the [Grazing Service] (U.S. Grazing Service, now the Bureau of Land Management) in wildland firefighting.

Mitsuoka recalled fighting fires in Idaho towns like [Minidoka] (a town 35 miles Northeast of Minidoka National Historic Site), Hailey, Gooding, Burley, and American Falls, and visiting attractions like Craters of the Moon National Monument and underground lava tubes. He noted in his autobiography, "during the time we were at Minidoka Relocation Center we helped in the suppression of fires during 3 fire seasons." The Grazing Service provided the Minidoka volunteers with transportation, equipment, meals, bedding, and paid \$.60 per hour of active firefighting.

### **Fire Station #2**

Fire Station #2 apparently served as a multi-purpose space over the camp's operation. [Kleinkopf] (Arthur Kleinkopf. From September 25, 1942, until February 9, 1946, Arthur Kleinkopf was a staff member at Minidoka as supervisor of student teachers and later as superintendent of education.) recorded in his diary: "Attempts to secure Fire Station #2 for use by the auto mechanics class have so far resulted in failure. There is a Japanese fish market there. All attempts to get the proprietors to move the market to another

building have met with rebuff." The fish market eventually did move out of Fire Station #2, which was renovated in 1944 to accommodate the auto mechanics class.

#### Female Firefighters

Stepping up on the home front, like many women around the nation during WWII, an all-female fire crew helped staff Fire Station #2. Though Fire Chief W. L. Yeager initially released a call for "30 women fire wardens between 19 and 35," a crew of nine women was chosen. Like the men, they worked 24 hours on followed by 48 hours off duty. The crew included Assistant Chief Tsugi Kodama, Captain Margaret Fukutomi, driver Hanako Tokumasu, Takako Masumoto, Collete Kawaguchi, Chieko Mukawa, and Mary Mukasa.

The Twin Falls Times News ran a story on the female fire crew, attributing their necessity to the drain on manpower while countless men left the center on work release to help with the local sugar beet and potato harvest. The article reads: "They man one of the two fire stations, carrying out all duties from driving a truck to holding the nozzle of a high-pressure hose, which is a job that grown men don't master without training," and that "The girls showed both attention to business and a spirit of adventure as they went through their drill in the routine that might become necessary for an actual blaze at any time."

Fire Station No. 1. 2015.

Fire Station No. 1. 2015.

Fire crew in front of Fire Station No. 1. 1944.

Contributed by Densho, courtesy of the Mamiya Family Collection

Original WRA caption: The fire crew of station #1 swings into action. 1943.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

Unknown women in front of Fire Station No. 2. November 1942.

Courtesy of Oregon Nikkei Endowment, ONLC 93

#### **Herrmann House**

Post-war farm house.

Stop by this 1950s era home to learn about post-war land use and development of the former incarceration site.

#### Homesteading

Over time, many incarcerated relocated from Minidoka for education, work, or military service, but many, especially the elderly [Issei] (first generation immigrant from Japan), remained at Minidoka with nowhere to go and lacking the resources to start their lives anew. In the end, the WRA forcibly evicted the remaining incarcerated, providing them with a one-way train ticket and \$25 cash.

Following the official closure of Minidoka on October 28, 1945, the former incarceration center property was transferred back to the Bureau of Reclamation. The government then subdivided the property into farmsteads which were distributed to returning Caucasian veterans through land lotteries. Under the Homestead Act, each winner was required to move onto the land within six months, live there for three years, and cultivate one-sixteenth of the land in that time. Depending on the land parcels, some homesteaders benefitted from the reclamation work accomplished by incarcerated during the war. They each received between 52 and 90 acres, two former Minidoka barracks buildings, one smaller building, and surplus supplies. Converted barracks buildings, foundations, and other remnants still dot the landscape in the surrounding area.

#### **Farm-in-a-Day**

This house is part of the homestead of John P. Herrmann, a veteran who successfully applied for an unclaimed land lottery property. This 128-acre property encompassed a Minidoka-era fire station, water tower, sewage treatment plant, blocks 21 and 22, portions of several other blocks, and part of the root cellar. Prior to the construction of this home, the Herrmanns resided in the fire station. Herrmann was recalled for active duty in 1950 and wasn't able to develop his farm. In 1952, the North Side Conservation District, the local branch of the US Soil Conservation Service, wrote to Herrmann and asked to use his undeveloped homestead as the site of a Farm-in-a-Day event. During this event on April 17, 1952, over 1,500 volunteer workers demonstrated state-of-the-art machinery and farming techniques to build a house, dig a well, place fences, level fields, and plant crops. The event received much local publicity before and after it took place, and the Twin Falls Times News reported the next day that 11,321 spectators attended the event, describing it as "bigger than a county fair," "more exciting than a circus," and "organized confusion." The house is the temporary Visitor Center and will be used in the future as NPS offices.

Herrmann house. 2015.

portion of historic barracks; Herrmann family milking barn. 2015.

Program from Farm-in-a-Day event.  
Minidoka NHS Museum Collection

John and Elfrieda Herrmann. April 17, 1952.  
Jerome County Historical Society Collections.

Local organizations provided refreshments. April 17, 1952.  
Jerome County Historical Society Collections.

Fire Station no. 1 during Farm-in-a-Day. April 17, 1952.  
Jerome County Historical Society Collections.

#### **Water Tower #2**

Site of former water tower.

The large foundations of this water tower were recently uncovered for visitors to see. Learn about water usage at Minidoka.

#### Water Tower #2

Situated in the brush behind Fire Station #1 and the Herrmann house, the large cement foundations of Water Tower #2 still remain. The water towers were the tallest structures in camp, looming in the horizon above the barracks and guard towers.

Morrison-Knudsen Company completed the camp water infrastructure by October 1942. This included four deep ground wells, which pumped water to one of two large water towers, then to the mess hall and H-shaped lavatory-laundry building in each residential block. This provided well water for laundering, showering and bathing, and cooking and drinking.

concrete footings of Water Tower #2. 2015.

Historic photograph of one of the camp water towers. August 1942.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Original WRA caption: Brush fire midsection of camp. 1945.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

#### **Sewage Plant**

Former sewage treatment plant site.

Learn about some of the necessary infrastructure for a desert area to support a population boom.

#### Sewage Plant

The former sewage treatment center is located on the [Herrmann] (John Herrmann, a veteran who acquired 128 acres on the former location of Minidoka's fire station, water tower, sewage treatment facility, blocks 21, 22, and portions of other blocks through a land lottery.) farm site. It was a critical component of camp infrastructure to support a population around 10,000 people. Incarcerates were without proper sewage for the first several months the camp was in operation. They were forced to use outdoor latrines, located close to the main road, in the frigid Idaho winter. This early period was marked by widespread ptomaine poisoning as a result of flooding latrines.

The sewage treatment plant began operation on February 4, 1943. Sewage flowed from each block lavatory to the treatment center, which included digesters, filters, clarifiers, chlorine tanks, and a pump house, and went on to rest in a sewage lagoon three miles south.

The close proximity of the sewage treatment plant to administrative offices and housing was a subject of contention for [WRA] (War Relocation Authority. The government agency responsible for the administration of the War Relocation Centers where Japanese Americans were held during World War II.) staff, as recorded in the diary of [Arthur Kleinkopf] (From September 25, 1942, until February 9, 1946, Arthur Kleinkopf was a staff member at Minidoka as supervisor of student teachers and later as superintendent of education.). He noted that "appetites are now quite often adversely affected by the foulness of the air," and that residents in nearby Blocks 10 and 12 complained of mosquito swarms caused by sewage overflow.

Site of former sewage treatment center. 2015.

Original WRA caption: Hunt, Idaho. Minidoka sewage treatment plant.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Minidoka student essay excerpt: "As the silhouette of summer slowly desends (sp) upon Minidoka, the fragrant smell of garlic blooms and the sewage plant drifts about with the playful breezes." 1943.

Contributed by Densho, Courtesy of Helen Amerman Manning Collection

### **Tire / Motor Repair Shop and Warehouse Area**

Historic warehouse area and tire shop.

Visit the largest remaining historic structure at Minidoka and learn more about camp operations.

#### **Tire / Motor Repair Shop and Warehouse Area**

This area, known as the warehouse and motor pool area, contained 17 warehouse buildings, the gas station, and a lavatory. These included a refrigerated warehouse, storage warehouses, maintenance shops, a sign shop, and offices for engineers, carpenters, plumbers, and electricians. Other warehouses served as classrooms for the adult vocational classes to teach incarcerated skills like carpentry, welding, equipment repair, and mechanics.

The large structure that remains today is part of warehouse #5, which served as a motor repair and tire shop. It will be converted into the Minidoka National Historic Site Visitor Center in 2017. The small structure is the warehouse area lavatory.

Half of a historic warehouse that held a tire repair shop. 2015.

Motor pool area. Notice the warehouses in the background.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

Incarcerated repairing a car in a warehouse.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

Minidoka motor pool area.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

## **Root Cellar**

Historic root cellar.

Learn about the agricultural legacy of incarcerated Nikkei as you peer into this 1940s era root cellar.

### **A Sustainable Community**

Incarcerees built this root cellar in 1943 using tarpaper, straw bales, and sod. In just a few years' time, incarcerateds converted some 700 acres of sagebrush into fertile crops. By 1944, they were able to completely provide for Minidoka's produce needs, as well as run successful hog and poultry farms. A farmers' dining hall was eventually built to feed farm laborers closer to the fields.

Many Minidoka [Nikkei] (people of Japanese ancestry, Japanese emigrants and their descendants) also used agriculture as a means of improving their living situation. Victory gardens and community vegetable gardens appeared between barracks and near the schools, with everyone from elementary students to elderly [Issei] (first generation immigrant from Japan) tending to their plots. These gardens beautified the living space and supplemented a government rations-based diet with familiar Japanese vegetables such as [daikon] (large white radish), [nappa] (Asian cabbage), [gobo] (burdock root), [azuki] (sweet red beans), and [shingiku] (edible chrysanthemum).

### **A Collective Effort**

Incarcerees also contributed to the war effort on the home front by working in agriculture beyond the confinement site boundaries. By October of 1942, 1885 newly arrived incarcerateds already left to work in the harvest of local beet and potato crops, as local communities had lost much of their labor force to the war. As late as 1982, one local newspaper reported that "the Hunt residents were credited with possibly saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in crop losses in the local sugar beet and potato crops..."

Harvest was a critical time in Minidoka's farms as well as local farms, and involved the efforts of Minidoka incarcerateds of all ages. Robert Coombs, a [WRA] (War Relocation Authority. The government agency responsible for the administration of the War Relocation Centers where Japanese Americans were held during World War II.) teacher, recalled:

"I would take my core classes out in big trucks, along with other teachers and classes, and we would clear the sage from the soil, pile it up and burn it. We would go out and harvest beets, carrots, radishes, turnips, and potatoes."

For the month of October each year, Hunt High School students were released on harvest vacation. Both students and teachers worked harvesting the Minidoka crops, while others opted to earn money by working in fields across Southern Idaho.

Entrance of historic root cellar. 2015.

Incarcerees harvesting corn at Minidoka. 1943.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Stafford Elementary School students clearing sagebrush to plant vegetable crops. 1943.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Japanese Americans harvesting potatoes at Minidoka.  
Contributed by Densho, Courtesy of the Bigelow Family Collection

Minidoka's hog and poultry farm.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

### **Outdoor Amphitheater**

Outdoor amphitheater and baseball field.

Participation in sports and community gatherings was a memorable and positive aspect of the Minidoka experience for incarcerated.

#### **Outdoor Amphitheater**

Below the warehouse and motor pool area and adjacent to Block 22, a bowl-shaped outdoor amphitheater was constructed for large gatherings and outdoor events. The Hunt High School commencement was held here on July 23, 1943. Superintendent of Education Arthur Kleinkopf described the scene in his diary, recalling "A few fleecy clouds rested lazily on the horizon against which the genial sun spread rays of golden light. This huge earthen bowl or amphitheater was backed by rows of barracks beyond which stretched a vast panorama of desert sage with here and there a spot of brighter green where fields of vegetables were growing." The 1943 commencement included 188 students representing 52 different Oregon and Washington high schools, with the young men dressed in blue gowns and the ladies in cream. The Hunt Engineering Section erected a platform within the amphitheater in 1944 for future graduations and memorial ceremonies for Minidoka's fallen soldiers.

#### **Baseball**

This is the site of a former baseball field that was reconstructed in 2016. Baseball and softball were popular throughout the camp, with blocks forming teams and competing. There were "Old Stars" teams for those 26 years and older, women's teams, and a highly accomplished semi-professional team. The semi-pro team, the Hunt Center All-Stars, was undefeated in the region in 1943, and competed in the Idaho State Semi-Professional Tournament that July in Idaho Falls. They moved into the semi-finals by defeating the Hunt Military Police team 14-1.

The pride of Minidoka was the Hunt High School Wolverines baseball team. They traveled outside the camp to compete, and often greatly outscored local opponents. In 1945, it was recorded that they defeated the Eden High School team 21-0 in only three innings. When they hosted a game against Twin Falls High School at the center, nearly 4,000 incarcerated gathered to watch Hunt High defeat Twin Falls 16-4.



## Sports

As early as 1943, incarcerated created a variety of sports fields and recreational areas in the camp. There were thirteen baseball fields, several basketball, tennis, and volleyball courts, and an ice skating rink. Fields were dispersed throughout the camp between blocks, and judo halls were created in three different block recreational halls. Block 23 had an adjacent outdoor basketball court, baseball fields, and a volleyball court.

Many former incarcerated fondly recall ice skating in the winter months. A skating rink was built near Block 21 by Hunt High School physical education students and the Hunt Fire Department. The students dug a pond while the fire department used hydrants to fill the pond in layers, allowing it to freeze in sections over a course of several days. Other recreation included swimming in one of two swimming holes, also constructed by incarcerated, located adjacent to the root cellar and near Block 30.

site of former amphitheater and newly reconstructed baseball field. 2016.  
Courtesy of Ryan Kozu.

Richard Sakurai and Shingo Inouye in front of scoreboard at Minidoka.  
Courtesy of National Park Service, Sakurai Collection.

Group funeral for fallen soldiers, held in amphitheater.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

Area A basketball champs.1944.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

Winners of a cross country run pictured with WRA P.E. instructors.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

## **Block 22 Overlook**

Overlook of Block 22.

Visit Block 22 to explore a typical residential block layout complete with historic structures. Block 22 served as a community services center at Minidoka and held offices and the cooperative store.

## Block 22

The central location of Block 22 made it a convenient site for community services offices like a placement office, clothing allowance office, employment and housing division office, the Minidoka Irrigator newspaper office, church offices, and the Minidoka Consumers Cooperative store.

Community at Minidoka

Block 22's central location made it a convenient site for community offices like a placement office, clothing allowance office, employment and housing division office, the Minidoka Irrigator newspaper office, church offices, and the Minidoka Consumers' Cooperative. The Consumers' Cooperative operated necessary businesses such as a general store, dry goods store, fish market, clothing stores, mail order stores, flower shop, barber and beauty shops, watch and radio repair shops, a dry cleaning business, canteens, movie theaters, and a check cashing service. A strict pay scale for was adhered to for incarcerated labor. Wages ranged from \$12 per month for unskilled labor to \$19 per month for skilled professionals.

The Minidoka Irrigator was a WRA-approved but incarcerated-run newspaper in print from August 1942 to July 1945. The placement office assisted in finding incarcerated internal camp jobs and registering for the military, while the employment office helped with temporary and permanent relocation through outside employment and school enrollment. The legal division assisted with legal problems, many of which centered around taxes and insurance on properties owned prior to forced relocation. Community Activities coordinated activities for incarcerated including movie nights, art exhibits, choirs, scouts, record concerts, boxing class, flower making class, and dances.

#### Religion at Minidoka

All of the Minidoka church offices were located in Block 22, Barracks 1 and 3. Six Protestant denominations in Minidoka joined under the umbrella organization of the Federated Christian Church. [Nikkei] (people of Japanese ancestry, Japanese emigrants and their descendants) Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian ministers Tsutomu Fukuyama, Naomichi Kodaira, Henry Sakuma, and Gennosuke Shoji were paid by their individual church mission boards. The Episcopal Church had its own services and a separate office for Reverend Joseph Kitagawa. There was also a Catholic Church office for Maryknoll pastor L.H. Tibesar. Many of these ministers, as well as Caucasian missionaries, followed their congregations from the Seattle area to support them during their incarceration at Minidoka. There was also a United Buddhist Church office, with worship services held for practitioners of the Shinshu, Shingon, and Nichiren Buddhist sects. Worship services were held at churches in recreation halls throughout the housing blocks. Many youth at Minidoka participated in church youth groups within camp and even went to Christian summer camps outside of Minidoka, including in Sun Valley.

#### Images

Overlooking Block 22. 2015.

First Communion class of Catholic Church at Minidoka. 1943.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Inside the Minidoka Consumers Cooperative store.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Workers in the Minidoka Irrigator newspaper office. 1943.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Block 22 office map. Six of the barracks remained residential.  
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

### **Laundry and Lavatory Building**

Site of historic laundry-lavatory building.

Learn about the laundry, shower, and restroom facilities in each residential block.

(Block 22) Laundry-Lavatory

#### **Laundry and Lavatory Building**

Each block's laundry-lavatory building consisted of a communal laundry room, a boiler room, and separate facilities for men and women with communal showers and toilets. The supplied laundry facilities consisted of large washtubs and wash boards. A few families were eventually able to send for their washing machines from home, but this was a rarity. In the high school block, the laundry room served as a makeshift lab for the chemistry classes. The boiler room allowed for hot water, all of which was heated by coal. While toilets and women's showers were eventually partitioned, men's showers were not partitioned. For many, especially the women, this lack of privacy was one of the most difficult aspects of life at Minidoka. Four bathtubs were provided in each women's lavatory, primarily for the elderly.

Laundry and lavatory building. August 1942.  
Courtesy of Oregon Nikkei Endowment, ONLC 35

Typical laundry room in laundry and lavatory building. August 1942.  
Courtesy of Oregon Nikkei Endowment, ONLC 61

Wash room in laundry and lavatory building. August 1942.  
Courtesy of Oregon Nikkei Endowment, ONLC 62

### **Residential Barracks**

Historic residential barracks building.

Explore this historic Minidoka barrack building and learn about typical living conditions for incarcerated Nikkei.

#### **Residential Barracks**

This historic barrack building was one of over 400 residential barracks at Minidoka. The buildings also served as classrooms and church or community offices. Each block held 12 barracks buildings, a recreation hall, a mess hall, and a laundry-lavatory building. The barracks were hastily and cheaply constructed. They consisted of simple wood frame buildings covered with tarpaper, providing no insulation.

Each 20' by 120' barracks building was divided into six smaller apartments to accommodate families. A single barracks included two 16' by 20' apartments, two 20' by 20' apartments, and two 24' by 20' apartments. The smallest apartments housed couples or families of three, the medium units housed families of four or five, and the largest housed

six to eight people. Upon arrival, apartments were bare except for a single hanging light bulb, a pot belly stove for heat, and army issued cots, mattresses, and wool blankets.

Though the barracks were divided, the partitions did not extend to the ceiling, leaving gaps for noise to travel between apartments. Beyond the cramped living quarters inside the barracks, each barracks building was spaced only 40 feet apart.

### Life at Minidoka

Incarcerees were subject to all of the extremes of Idaho's high desert climate. These conditions were made harsher when compared to the mild weather of Seattle or Portland, where the majority of incarcerated were from. The winter of 1942 brought almost record low temperatures, with one nearby town reaching -20 °F. There was no respite from the cold that winter, as coal deliveries were delayed and incarcerated took to burning sagebrush outside for warmth. Winter and spring were accompanied by extremely muddy conditions, while summers were hot, dry, and dusty, with temperatures over 104 degrees and even rattlesnakes seeking shade near barracks.

The green pine used for construction would eventually dry and shrink, creating cracks between boards. This allowed dust, snow, heat, and cold to drift into apartments. Many incarcerated women recall the endless frustration of trying to keep their homes clean. The dust was an inescapable part of camp life: "A windy, dusty day. Nothing can be kept clean. Dust, dirt, and sand get in our hair, eyes, noses, and throats. It comes in through the countless cracks around the windows, doors, floors, and roofs."

### Making a Home

Incarcerees quickly drew on their resourcefulness to enhance and personalize their surroundings, both in their apartments and outdoors. Early on, a supply of lumber intended for construction was guarded by the Internal Security Section, a police force consisting of 50 [Issei] (first generation immigrant from Japan) men. On this, one incarcerated remarked, "Since the police are Japanese Issei, they overlook most things." Another recalls, "We were able to walk off with quite a few pieces of 1 x 12 western pine lumber...As dusk approached we could look down to the lumber storage area and literally see lumber walking off in many directions." Much of this lumber was used in apartments, for necessary furnishings including tables, dressers, and chairs. [Kleinkopf] (Arthur Kleinkopf. From September 25, 1942, until February 9, 1946, Arthur Kleinkopf was a staff member at Minidoka as supervisor of student teachers and later as superintendent of education.) noticed that "shelves and bookcases mysteriously appear overnight and are found next day in classrooms which the day before were barren." Issei artist Kamekichi Tokita expressed the emotional benefits of making homes out of barracks when he recorded in his diary that "I created [a] cupboard by putting junk boards together, which made me happy and gave me a great sense of accomplishment." Additional furnishings and homeware such as wallpaper, drapes, bedspreads, were eventually ordered through Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck catalogs.

Historic residential barracks in Block 22. 2015.

Looking down a row of barracks. 1943.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

A typical unfurnished barracks at Minidoka.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

The barracks of Mrs. Eizo Nishi, showing furniture made from scrap lumber.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Renovated exterior of barracks at Minidoka. 1943.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

## **Mess Hall**

Historic mess hall building.

Visit this historic mess hall and experience how even meals demonstrate the structured nature of camp life.

### **Mess Hall**

This is a historic mess hall that has been returned to Block 22. Each block had a central mess hall, 40' x 100' in size, designed to accommodate 304 people during scheduled meals. In each of ten incarceration sites, the [WRA] (War Relocation Authority. The government agency responsible for the administration of the War Relocation Centers where Japanese Americans were held during World War II.) allotted \$.45 per day per person for food. It was noted that this amount "does not permit the buying of the better foods. The milk situation is still bad. One-half cup per meal is allowed the children less than 12 years of age, elderly people, invalids, and pregnant mothers."

WRA employees also dined at an employee mess hall, and several recalled the food as being basically good overall, but with a large emphasis on fish, which they disliked. [Kleinkopf] (Arthur Kleinkopf. From September 25, 1942, until February 9, 1946, Arthur Kleinkopf was a staff member at Minidoka as supervisor of student teachers and later as superintendent of education.) recorded his daily meals in his diary and gives insight into the varying quality of meals. One day he recorded, "Lunch poor. Wieners and sauerkraut. Kraut too rotten. Soup made from greasy mutton and was full of curry powder which I do not like." A few months later, "We had another one of those rare dinners today. It consisted of roast pork, dressing, peas, carrots, potatoes, cake, coffee, and cold tea. This happens about once a month."

### **Social Dining**

One result of communal dining was an overall breakdown in family structure during incarceration. Many [Nisei] (second generation Japanese American; U.S. citizens by birth, born to Japanese immigrants) youth dined together with friends in the mess hall of their choice, sometimes twice during one meal time. While incarcerated were intended to eat in their own block's mess hall, it wasn't always the case: "Chef in one dining hall complaining that people from other blocks are eating in his dining hall. Says some are eating twice - once in his mess and once in the adjoining block." The [Issei] (first

generation immigrant from Japan) experience with this was less positive, as they felt at a loss to regain control of a traditionally patriarchal family structure. Kleinkopf observed this, noting, "Many Japanese deplore the fact that they no longer have any home life, can no longer sit together at the dinner table and talk over the day's events."

Historic mess hall in Block 22. 2015.

Incarceree chef preparing lunch in a Minidoka mess hall. 1942.  
Courtesy of the National Records and Archives Administration

A meal receipt received by a visitor to Minidoka.  
Contributed by Densho, Courtesy of the Yamada Family Collection

Incarcerees in line for a meal in a Minidoka mess hall.  
Courtesy of the National Records and Archives Administration

Mess hall interior. August 1942.  
Courtesy of Oregon Nikkei Endowment, ONLC 64

### **Barracks as Classrooms**

Junior high and high school block.

Minidoka's youth traveled to Block 23 to attend junior high and high school. The layout was the same as residential blocks, and barracks buildings served as classrooms.

#### **Barracks as Classrooms**

The stretch of agricultural land northeast of Block 22 once held Block 23, and with it, two schools. The continued education of children was a top priority for many incarcerated. Huntville Elementary School operated in barracks in Block 10, Stafford Elementary School in Block 32, and Hunt Middle and Hunt High School in Block 23. Nursery schools, provided for Minidoka's youngest residents, existed in Blocks 4, 16, 26, 36, and 40. Construction of a high school gymnasium and auditorium began in September 1943, though it was never completed due to labor disputes. The large structure was used for some large gatherings even in its incomplete state.

At first, schools were unfurnished and undersupplied. [Kleinkopf] (Arthur Kleinkopf. From September 25, 1942, until February 9, 1946, Arthur Kleinkopf was a staff member at Minidoka as supervisor of student teachers and later as superintendent of education.) recorded, "One teacher has seventy-five fifth grade pupils in a room 20' x 30'... There are no chairs, no blackboards... and not even the minimum amount of needed supplies." Books supplied to the camp were outdated, with health class textbooks published in 1896. [WRA] (War Relocation Authority. The government agency responsible for the administration of the War Relocation Centers where Japanese Americans were held during World War II.) employed teachers often grew frustrated at the lack of supplies and harsh living conditions. While some felt encouraged to fulfill their assignment as

contributing to the war effort, others faced pressure for their involvement with the Japanese American "enemies."

### School Activities

Vocational learning was a success, as students could earn school credit and support camp operation by working part-time in many capacities, such as secretaries, journalists, teachers' aides, nurses' aides, and more. Continuing education programs trained adults in skilled labor such as welding, carpentry, and auto repair. As WRA teachers came in increasingly short supply, incarcerated with college degrees were often hired to fill in. Even high school students were encouraged to help with the younger grades.

School activities kept both students and parents busy, as the camp's Parent-Teacher Association was one of the largest in the state, with over 200 members for each of the elementary schools and nearly 500 for the high school. Students were active with after-school jobs, sports teams, class victory gardens, pep bands, boy and girl scouts, and more. One WRA teacher recalled having "activities Saturday afternoons, and Saturday evenings we had dances. Friday evenings we would have parties for one reason or another. We would make up reasons for parties," to keep the students busy and out of their cramped living quarters.

Hunt High School students outside of a barracks classroom.

Contributed by Densho, Courtesy of the Bigelow Family Collection

Dedication of the Stafford Elementary School flag pole. 1943.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Girls study in Hunt High School classroom. Mural painted by students. 1944.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Adult education class in carpentry. 1943.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Students in barracks classroom. November 1942.

Courtesy of Oregon Nikkei Endowment, ONLC 76

### **Behind Barbed Wire**

Barbed wire perimeter fence.

The barbed wire fence was a humiliating physical reminder of confinement for 13,078 Nikkei who lived at Minidoka during the war.

### Behind Barbed Wire

This portion of barbed wire fence represents the five-mile fence that once surrounded Minidoka's perimeter and residential areas. Construction of the fence occurred from October to December 1942, several months after the first incarcerated had arrived. This was a point of contention for incarcerated, leading them to submit formal protests against

the fence to [WRA] (War Relocation Authority. The government agency responsible for the administration of the War Relocation Centers where Japanese Americans were held during World War II.) administration. The fence was removed from residential areas by April 1943. Perimeter fence near the hospital, warehouse, military police, and administration areas remained until the closure of Minidoka.

#### Preservation of Minidoka

On January 17, 2001, President William Clinton designated 72.75 acres as Minidoka Internment National Monument. Clinton saw Minidoka to be "a unique and irreplaceable historical resource which protects historic structures and objects that provide opportunities for public education and interpretation of an important chapter in American history -- the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II."

Minidoka Internment National Monument was renamed Minidoka National Historic Site in 2008 under President Bush with a law that also expanded the site. In 2011 the historic reconstruction of the Honor Roll was installed and dedicated, an original barrack and mess hall were moved back to Block 22, the 1.6-mile interpretive trail was constructed, the NPS entrance sign was installed, the barbed-wire fence at the entrance area was installed, and historic barracks, mess hall, and fire station were stabilized and rehabilitated. The entrance Guard Tower was installed in 2014, the result of a partnership between NPS, the Friends of Minidoka, and Boise State University Construction Management Department. In May 2016 the baseball field was recreated in a single day by Friends of Minidoka, NPS, and 200 volunteers.

Historic reconstruction of barbed wire perimeter fence. 2015.

The fence along the North Side Canal remained until camp closure.

Barbed wire fence and guard tower. November 1942.  
Courtesy of Oregon Nikkei Endowment, ONLC 104

#### **Info**

Minidoka National Historic Site is a developing national park unit. The historic site, located near the towns of Twin Falls and Jerome, Idaho, is open year-round from dusk to dawn. The Visitor Center is open seven days a week from 10am to 5pm from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Winter hours are 12pm to 5pm from Thursday through Sunday. Check the park website for updated hours, programs, and activities.

Minidoka National Historic Site Temporary Visitor Center:

296 S 1400 E  
Jerome, ID 83338  
208-933-4125  
[www.nps.gov/miin](http://www.nps.gov/miin)



All content and images are property of the Friends of Minidoka, except where otherwise credited. Additional credit goes to Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project, the Oregon Nikkei Endowment, and the Jerome County Historical Society. Research and writing was provided by Mia Russell. Software design and development was provided by Shearerbeard, LLC.

## **Safety**

There are limited facilities and services at Minidoka NHS and the boundaries are not well marked. Many buildings and features that were part of the center are located on private property surrounding the Historic Site. Please do not enter any private property. Collection of artifacts, rocks, plants, animals, or any other object within the National Historic Site is strictly prohibited. Help preserve your park by taking only memories and photographs. Report violations to the Visitor Center.

- \* Wear sturdy footwear, a hat, and sunscreen.
- \* Bring water. There is no water available at the site.
- \* Stay on the trail.
- \* Pets are not allowed on the trail.
- \* There is little - no shade at the site.
- \* Portable Toilet facilities are available.

## **Background**

On February 19, 1942, in the panic following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066. This authorized the U.S. Army to forcibly remove approximately 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry from their West Coast homes. Of this group, two-thirds were American citizens, and the remaining population was prohibited by U.S. law from obtaining citizenship. They were first sent to temporary detention centers in race tracks and fairgrounds for several months. They were then sent to one of ten War Relocation Centers, or long-term incarceration sites, for the duration of the war. From October 1942 to August 1945, Minidoka housed over 13,000 incarcerated.

The largest population of Minidoka incarcerated came from Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; and surrounding areas. Around 200 Japanese Alaskans also made up the original Minidoka population. In 1943, 1,900 transferred to Minidoka from Tule Lake when Tule Lake was set aside as a segregation center for suspected “disloyals.” Another 227, originally from Bainbridge Island, Washington, voluntarily transferred from Manzanar to Minidoka to be closer to contacts from the Seattle area. Officially designated the Minidoka War Relocation Center, Minidoka was locally referred to as the Hunt Camp. It received its own postal designation of Hunt, Idaho, since Minidoka already referred to an Idaho town located 35 miles northeast. The names are often used interchangeably today.

The congressional Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, established by congress in 1980, found that Executive Order 9066 was not justified by

military necessity and that “the broad historical causes that shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership.” No evidence of wartime espionage or sabotage by a Japanese national or Japanese American was ever found.

### **Bainbridge Island**

The Japanese American Exclusion Memorial on Bainbridge Island, Washington, is part of Minidoka National Historic Site. It honors the first Nikkei forced from their homes under Executive Order 9066. For visiting information or tours, contact the Bainbridge Island Historical Society using the information below. The memorial is a joint effort of the historical society and Bainbridge Island Exclusion Memorial Association, Bainbridge Island Japanese American Committee, and City of Bainbridge Island. Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Site in Seattle, Washington, provides National Park Service administrative assistance.

Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial:

4192 Eagle Harbor Drive  
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110  
206-842-2773  
[www.bainbridgehistory.org](http://www.bainbridgehistory.org)

### **Directions**

East Bound I-84 from Boise:

Take exit 165 for Jerome. This will be the first of two exits for the city of Jerome. Turn left towards Jerome on Highway 25. Continue on Highway 25 for 14.3 miles, crossing Highway 93 to continue to Minidoka NHS. Just before Hunt Road, you will see a large wooden historic sign on the left about Hunt Idaho and the incarceration site. Turn left (northeast) onto Hunt Road and continue for 2.2 miles to the small parking area on your right. There is additional parking near the warehouse area on your left as you continue traveling east on Hunt Road.

North Bound US 93 from Twin Falls:

From the intersection of Interstate 84 and U.S. Highway 93, travel north on US 93 for 5 miles to the Eden exit. Travel east on Highway 25 for 9.5 miles to the Hunt Road exit. Travel east on Hunt Road for 2.2 miles to the small parking area on your right. There is additional parking near the warehouse area on your left as you continue traveling east on Hunt Road.

\* The Historic Site is located on a county road. Please check road conditions before visiting at <http://511.idaho.gov/>

### **Friends of Minidoka**

Friends of Minidoka (FOM) engages in and supports education, research and historic preservation of the WWII Japanese American incarceration experience. We strive to pass on the history, legacy, and lessons of civil liberties through transforming and inspiring experiences for the general public and those with personal and familial ties to Minidoka. We are committed to working with partners, including the National Park Service, to accomplish these goals.

By supporting the Friends of Minidoka, you are supporting site preservation, educational programming, and historic research. Past projects led by FOM include the historic reconstruction of the Honor Roll, Guard Tower, and Baseball Field. Programmatic events include the annual Minidoka Civil Liberties Symposium and support for site tours and off-site education.

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