

From the Director: Tom Ikeda

As we travel to different communities to conduct interviews, we observe the influence of geographic location on the stories of Japanese Americans. Last month, for example, we were in Honolulu and heard stories of families separated between Japan and Hawaii during World War II. Because Hawaii was closer to Japan than the West Coast, visits to Japan were more common, especially during an era of boat travel. During the war, families were put in the difficult situation of having siblings fight or work on opposing sides.

In the Midwest and East Coast, Japanese American communities emerged through resettlement. A few weeks ago we were in Minneapolis. There we heard stories of Nisei relocating during the war from concentration camps to attend college or to work. We also heard about families settling in Minneapolis during and after the war because of their favorable experiences while attending the Military Intelligence Service Language school at Camp Savage and Fort Snelling.

At each location I feel privileged to hear these stories, similar in the overall experience and yet different in detail. I am also incredibly grateful for the assistance, hospitality, and friendship of partner community organizations. In Honolulu we were assisted by the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii and funded by the Tateuchi Foundation. In Minneapolis we partnered with the Twin Cities chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League.

>> Go to the Densho blog for more information about recent interview trips



IN THIS ISSUE

From the Archive
Densho News
New to the Archive
National News and Events

From the Archive

Jazz Bands, Baseball, and Beauty Queens: Recreation in the Camps

*"Just to pass time. Kill the monotony of it."
-- Tom Mine*

Life in the remote confinement sites that held 120,000 people of Japanese descent during World War II in some respects resembled life in normal communities of the time. Responsible for this large captive population, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) created a facsimile of social life in the outside world. Recreation committees saw to it that bored and often idle detainees were diverted by amusements like sports events, movies, dances, and crafts classes. Critics who considered Japanese Americans tantamount to the enemy accused the WRA of "coddling" their wards by providing entertainment. An alternate view suggests that authorities supplied social and recreational activities as a means of managing, or placating, what could become a restive, even rebellious, population trapped behind barbed wire. The Japanese Americans themselves formed sports teams, music groups, social clubs, and art classes to fill empty time and make their harsh and uncertain situation more bearable.

>> Read more of this article



to top

Densho News

Japanese American Resettlement through the Lens: Author Talk

Asian American studies scholar Lane Ryo Hirabayashi will explore the government's use of photography in the Japanese American "resettlement" process of 1943 to 1945. On Saturday, July 25, at 2:00pm he will discuss his latest book, *Japanese American Resettlement through the Lens: Hikaru Iwasaki and the WRA's Photographic Section, 1943-1945*. Professor Hirabayashi will investigate questions related to official War Relocation Authority photographs: Under what conditions were they taken? How were they used during the 1940s? What impact did they have during and following the war? Lane Hirabayashi is chairman of the Asian American Studies Department, UCLA, and holds the George and Sakaye Aratani Professorship in Japanese American Redress, Internment and Community. There will be a question and answer session, and light refreshments will be served. Books will be sold by Elliott Bay Book Company. The event takes place at Densho. It is free and open to the public; tickets are not required.

Contact us for more information at info@densho.org or 206-320-0095



Civil Liberties Curriculum Evaluated

In June, Densho completed a successful yearlong curriculum evaluation project. Twelve Washington State teachers tested Densho's standards-based social studies lessons in the classroom. Teachers found the lessons to be very effective. As one reported, "Students responded quite well, and by the end of the unit, they were proud to share what they knew about the Japanese-American experience during World War II." After years of random anecdotal feedback, we are now equipped with solid data -- reviews from several districts and grade levels, direct classroom observation, a range of student work, and teachers' recommendations for revisions and future outreach. This information will be of tremendous help as we refine and improve our curriculum and promote its use. Many thanks to education consultant Sarah Loudon for her expert management of the evaluation project.

>> See Densho's education resources



to top

New to the Archive

Look Inside the Archive: Words of Wisdom

Bob Sakata spent his childhood in Alameda, California, where his family operated a 10-acre farm. They were removed to Tanforan Assembly Center, California, and Topaz incarceration camp, Utah. He resettled in the welcoming community of Brighton, Colorado, and resumed farming. Along with wife and son, Bob owns and operates Sakata Farms, currently one of the top produce growers in the country. In the featured excerpt from his interview, Bob relates how his father expressed concern for his future.

>> See the featured sample from the Densho Digital Archive
>> Register for the free Densho Digital Archive



to top

National News and Events

Manzanar Calls for Archeology Volunteers

Archeological projects are vital to preserving Manzanar National Historic Site and telling its stories. From July 3 to July 7, July 31 to August 4, and August 28 to September 2, National Park Service archeologist Jeff Burton will supervise a crew of archeologists and volunteers in uncovering and stabilizing features at Manzanar's Chicken Farm, Camouflage Net Factory, and Merritt Park. The projects will preserve important cultural resources and offer opportunities for volunteers and visitors to learn more about the experiences of Japanese Americans at Manzanar during World War II. Volunteers must sign up ahead of time.

- >> [Read more information about volunteering](#)
- >> [Learn more about Manzanar National Historic Site](#)



[to top](#)

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