An Eye for Injustice

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Robert C. Sims and Minidoka

Susan M. Stacy, Editor

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To the memory of Robert C. Sims

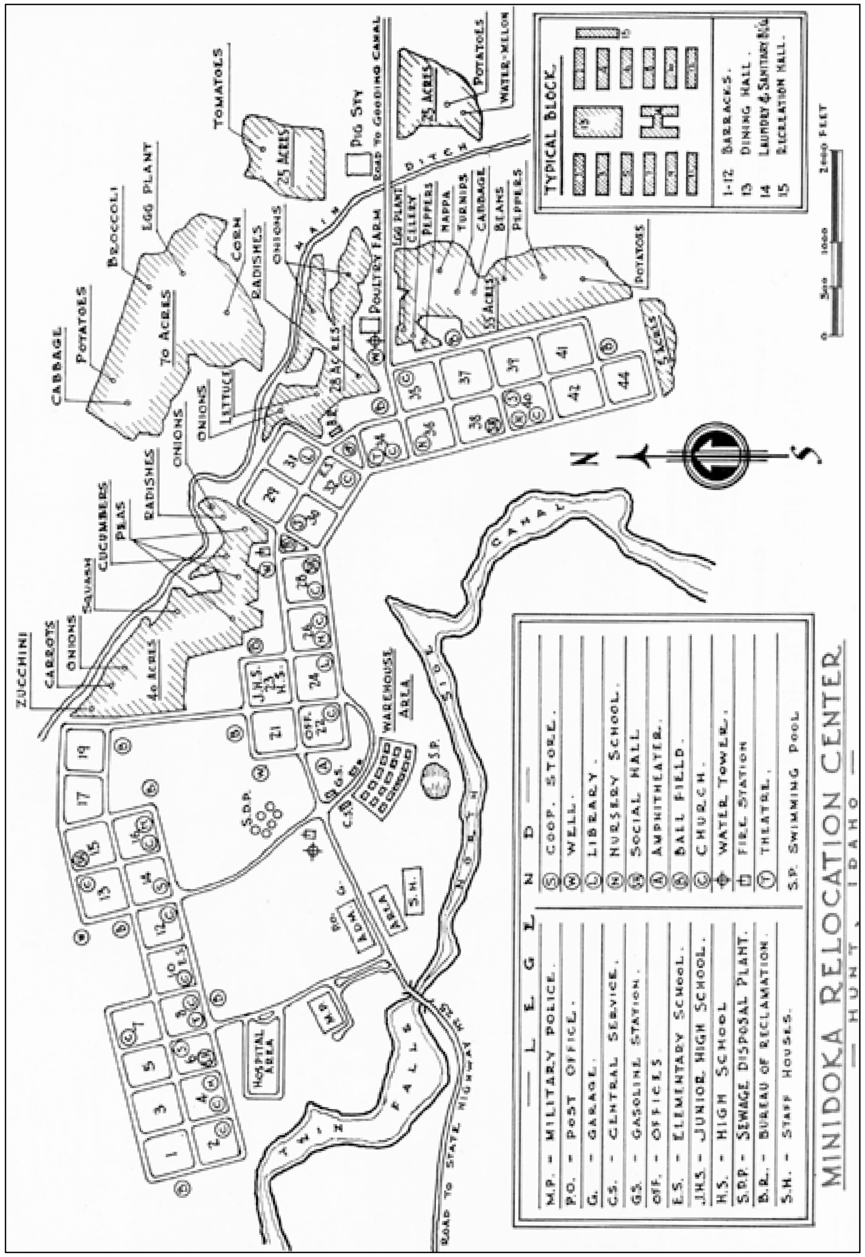
More than 40 years ago, shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry living in the United States were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in makeshift internment camps. This action was taken without trial, without jury. It was based solely on race, for these 120,000 were Americans of Japanese descent.

[It's] not for us today to pass judgment upon those who may have made mistakes... Yet we must recognize that the internment of Japanese Americans was...a mistake....we admit a wrong; here, we reaffirm our commitment as a nation to equal justice under the law.

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
August 1988

We marry activism with the knowledge of history because justice is not self-executing. It is not a gift, it's a challenge. And we cannot rely just on our institutions to protect us.... We should understand that dissent is not the enemy of patriotism.

Dale Minami
Densho 20th Anniversary Gala
Seattle, Washington
September 2016


MINIDOKA RELOCATION CENTER
HUNT, IDAHO
LEGEND
M.P. - MILITARY POLICE
P.O. - POST OFFICE
G. - GARAGE
C.S. - CENTRAL SERVICE
G.S. - GASOLINE STATION
OFF. - OFFICES
E.S. - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
J.H.S. - JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
H.S. - HIGH SCHOOL
S.D.P. - SEWAGE DISPOSAL PLANT
B.R. - BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
S.H. - STAFF HOUSES
COOP. STORE
WELL
LIBRARY
NURSERY SCHOOL
SOCIAL HALL
AMPHITHEATER
BALL FIELD
CHURCH
WATER TOWER
FIRE STATION
THEATRE
S.P. SWIMMING POOL
TYPICAL BLOCK
1-12 BARRACKS
13 DINING HALL
14 LAUNDRY & SANITARY BLG
15 RECREATION HALL
WAREHOUSE AREA
HOSPITAL AREA
POULTRY FARM
PIG STY
ROAD TO GOODING CANAL
ROAD TO STATE HIGHWAY
TWIN FALLS
NORTH SIDE CANAL
MAIN DITCH
N
S
ZUCCHINI
CARROTS
ONIONS
SQUASH
CUCUMBERS
PEAS
RADISHES
LETTUCE
CABBAGE
POTATOES
BROCCOLI
EGG PLANT
CORN
TOMATOES
CELERY
PEPPERS
NAPPA
TURNIPS
BEANS
WATER-MELON
40 ACRES
70 ACRES
28 ACRES
25 ACRES
55 ACRES
6 ACRES

Minidoka plat map by Iwao Matsushita for the *Minidoka Interlude*. Courtesy of Friends of Minidoka.

Preface

Susan M. Stacy

The two main characters in this book are Minidoka—the World War II Relocation Center in Idaho—and Robert C. Sims, historian of Minidoka. Bob Sims taught at Boise State University from 1970 to 1999, serving for a time as dean of the College of Social Sciences and Public Affairs. Throughout his career he wrote and spoke passionately and prolifically about the experience of Japanese Americans during World War II, with articles published in *Pacific Northwest Quarterly, Idaho Yesterdays*, and others. Co-founder of the annual Minidoka Civil Liberties Symposium, his work and reputation played an important role in the establishment of the Minidoka National Historic Site, a place now preserved and protected by the National Park Service. All of these activities were informed by a deep commitment to social justice.

After Bob Sims died in 2015, his family gave Boise State University his archive of research and writings on Minidoka and the people who were forced to endure life in this camp. Gathered over forty years, his accumulated notes, files, thumb drives, books, images, and other records reflect his continuous inquiry about Japanese Americans incarcerated at this place. Bob Sims felt strongly, and said so frequently, that the scope of history should not be limited to the political activities and conflicts among the groups and institutions who made decisions, but also supply evidence from the people who experienced the impacts of the decisions. His written works certainly reflect this.

Most of his articles appeared in scholarly journals, places intended to be noticed by other historians in his field, not necessarily by general readers. In 2015 Betty Sims, Bob's wife, asked me to look into the archive and consider whether his writings might be made more easily available to such readers. We decided they could be, and that we should proceed to gather them together along with a few of his speeches. We saw it as an introduction for students of all ages—from Idaho and elsewhere—to the history, politics, and people of Minidoka. We included the voices of people who knew Bob Sims and could speak to his character and contributions. And we included archival and other resources to encourage further study and exploration.

The archive contains much of the man. He was driven by the insult to the U.S. Constitution that Minidoka represented—injustice arising largely out of racism. An educator to his core, Sims found many ways to educate people. He directed much of his energy to preserving the site of Minidoka as a place where Americans and Idahoans could learn about this injustice and never forget it. His effort was well rewarded when President Bill Clinton designated Minidoka as a National Internment Monument and again when Congress declared it a National Historic Site. Bob Sims would want it to be known that he did not do it alone, but allied himself with many others working for the same goals. I felt that our book should contain at least some indication of this history he himself contributed to making—and some insight as to the nature of his leadership.

Before I knew Robert C. Sims as a historian, I knew him as the chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission of Boise City (for whom I then worked). He was a staff favorite because he always did his homework: reading inches-thick staff reports ahead of public hearings, making site visits on his own, and readying his positions. Unlike most other commissioners, he explained his votes, never more eloquently than when his was the lone "yes" or "no" vote. Yet his remarks were so even—in their rationale, in their diplomacy, in their absence of ire or judgment—that he aroused considerable admiration from his peers. In fact, his fellow commissioners chose him to be their leader, the chairman. In reading his papers, I encountered similar moderation in his historical writing, particularly his treatment of Idaho governor Chase Clark.

Betty Sims will say more about what motivated Bob's life of scholarship-with-action. Part one gathers the Minidoka works of Robert C. Sims. After publishing his first overview article, Sims focused on topics such as the role of Governor Chase Clark in the forced-relocation decision, farm labor, the loyalty oath crisis, and others.

Part two looks at how thirty-five years of efforts to memorialize the Minidoka site transformed it from "neglected" to "forever remembered," a property of our National Park System and a splendid educational instrument for highlighting not only a national tragedy but also the resilience of a people dealt with so unjustly. In part three, contributors, each in a position to understand his legacy personally, share their memories. The appendixes include a glossary of terms used throughout the book.

Bob had faith in the power of education to change people. He recognized that he himself had changed because of it. "I became enlightened," he once remarked, and reasoned that so could others. He connected the Minidoka experience to the much broader issue of what it means to be an American citizen. "The experience is more than an injustice to Japanese Americans, for, in a real sense, it threatens everyone. The denial of the civil rights of Americans is something no one should take lightly. Furthermore, there is good reason for Idahoans to recall it, because Idaho played an important role in relocation."

Most books published in recent years about Minidoka or the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II discuss the topic of terminology. Before historians uncovered the fact that the word "internment" was a deliberately chosen government-designed euphemism for "incarceration of American citizens without charge or trial," the general public became accustomed to using the World War II language. Bob Sims addressed this and other euphemistic terms in "The Other Concentration Camps," one of his public lectures. That discussion survives the test of time—and his own test of balance, historical context, and absence of judgement. It is published here, a fine tutorial on the topic.

Betty Sims and the team she gathered to help with this project began with a mission statement: to illustrate the power of one person's research, writing, and community engagement to move the cause of social justice forward, effect enduring changes in public policy, and influence individuals to care about and preserve our civil liberties. Bob would, I think, want his readers to realize that we ourselves have that same power.

Bob Sims in June 2007. *Photo by John Kelly courtesy of Boise State University.*

An Introduction to Bob Sims

Betty Sims

Robert C. Sims devoted nearly half his life researching, writing, and educating himself about the unjust incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. He brought deep empathy as well as intellectual rigor to his scholarship on the experiences of those incarcerated. What might account for his interest in and sensitivity to that somewhat then-neglected topic in United States history? Once discovered, why did he take on the topic with such passion and tenacity, and work to mitigate that neglect and preserve the Minidoka site?

Bob was raised by three generations of women in Fort Gibson, a small eastern Oklahoma town. Soon after his birth, Bob's father left the family and divorced his young mother, leaving her with their two small sons and no financial support. She moved the family into her own parents' small two-bedroom house, which housed Bob's great-grandmother as well. Bob once wrote about the economic instability the family experienced during this time as his mother, with a high school education and no work experience, struggled to find paying work. She did in time find steady work, was finally able to support the entire household, and later even served as mayor of the town.

Bob credited his grandmother with having the most influence on him. He once wrote, "I was very fortunate that I had a grandmother who cared for me and essentially raised me...[she] was a saint...and to the extent that I have any semblance of ethics and morality, it is attributed primarily to her." She raised Bob and his brother, cared for her own ailing husband (who died when Bob was seven) and, later, her own aging mother. She was the one to provide emotional stability and structure to the extended family.

All three of the women so important in his early life—mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother (who lived to be 103)—were members of the Cherokee Nation, as was Bob. He learned about the cruelty and injustice of the 1838 forced removal of the Cherokees from their homelands in the southeastern United States to Indian Territory.

Bob grew up during a time of racism and racial segregation. While he played on an integrated baseball team, his African American teammates went to a segregated school. He often observed that his own neighborhood was racially, culturally, and economically mixed, which he later realized was unusual; he was grateful for that aspect of his childhood experience.

Bob often spoke of particular teachers and parents of friends who encouraged him as he grew up. By high school, most of his friends were developing ambitious educational and professional goals for themselves. These relationships undoubtedly contributed to his own growing interest in further education, and he became the first in his family to enter college.

A shortage of funds, however, forced him to leave college after a year, and he joined the army. The army posted him to Germany and assigned him to legal work in Courts and Boards. The work interested him and he decided to finish his undergraduate work at Northeastern Oklahoma State College as a foundation for law school. He thought he would finance evening law school classes by teaching, so he got a teaching certificate. To his surprise, he discovered that teaching was actually his calling. He started working for an M.A. at the University of Oklahoma, and in 1964 began teaching at a high school in Denver, Colorado, launching a lifetime of teaching history.

By 1968 he had completed his master's degree, taught high school history for four years, and was midway through a doctorate in history at the University of Colorado. He considered himself a reasonably well informed teacher of American history. However, that year he was to learn that there was a part of America's history that he knew nothing about. Dr. Roger Daniels, a guest speaker at the university, was soon to publish *Concentration Camps USA*, a history of the government's 1942 decision to forcibly remove all persons of Japanese descent then living on the West Coast, most of whom were American citizens, and incarcerate them at ten camps in inland western states for the duration of the war. Bob, in Daniels's audience, was dismayed to realize that not once during his entire educational experience to date had he read or heard about this shocking part of American history. Hearing about it at this late date had a profound impact on him.

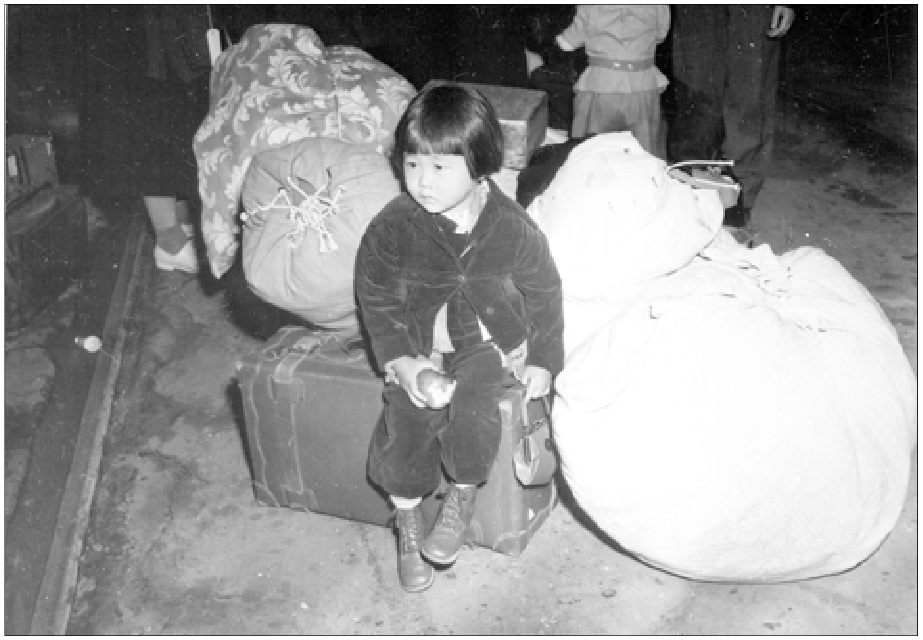
Bob's knowledge of injustices at the hand of the federal government, his experiences with racism in his community, and his family's poverty all seem to have played an important role in setting the stage for his sensitivity to those facing oppression of any kind. In college and graduate school, he acquired the tools, the understanding, and the insight that prepared him for the role he would play in confronting the incarceration of American citizens during World War II.

At an oral history workshop in Boise sponsored by the Japanese American Citizens League in 1973, Bob elaborated on his reaction to Dr. Daniels' lecture. "My interests [in the wartime incarceration program] can be marked to a time about five years ago when I became aware for the very first time of that entire experience. It seemed to me a sad commentary on the education system of America that would permit an event like that to go unnoticed in the education career of someone who is presumably going to go out and teach American history." After five years, he was still outraged. Anger proved to be a strong motivator; for Bob it transformed to a vigorous commitment to teaching all aspects of our country's history—our worst mistakes as well as our glorious accomplishments. He would be equally passionate about the importance of teacher training. He grabbed every opportunity to speak in classrooms, participated in teacher training workshops, and spoke frequently to public audiences large and small.

His conviction about the balanced teaching of *all* of our history led to his serving on the Idaho State Planning Team for "The Project for American Studies in the Secondary Schools," funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1980–81, an effort of history teachers to define and agree upon standards for elementary and high school history students. It was, he felt, a way of insuring that students and teachers would have a thorough understanding of all facets of our country's history—and teach them.

Soon after he arrived in Idaho to teach at Boise State University in 1970, Bob discovered at the Idaho State Historical Society several neglected boxes of Minidoka-related documents. As a newcomer to the state he wished to get acquainted with Idaho history. He chose the history of Japanese settlement in Idaho and the Minidoka camp as one of his first research projects. Perhaps his early years in Oklahoma predisposed him to focus on those who had experienced the upheaval directly, not just those responsible for defining policy and making the decisions. He therefore reached out to Japanese Americans and the Japanese American Citizens League, encouraging them to speak their memories, record them, and preserve them.

In addition to developing friendships with Japanese Americans in Idaho, he spent time in Portland, Seattle, Bainbridge Island, and California. He listened and learned and then began to speak at conferences, workshops, meetings. He was deeply touched by the stories he was collecting, but of equal importance, he was finding a community eager to have their stories told. While there had been a culture of silence for many of the incarcerees after their experience, they were grateful to have him as a spokesperson. He often heard the comments, "You can say things we have been unable to say" and "You are teaching us our own history."



In the early 1970s, Bob Sims framed this photo of Yuki Okinaga (Llewellyn) awaiting the train that would carry her away from home to Manzanar. He kept it at his desk until his death in 2015. *National Archives and Records Administration, WRA photo by Clem Albers, Los Angeles, April 1942, 210-G-2.*

After decades of documentary research, asking questions, preparing and publishing scholarly papers, and giving talks and slide shows, he developed an overwhelming belief that the injustice of incarcerating Americans based largely on their race should never happen again. He saw education as a means of avoiding a repetition of such tragic wrongs. He visited the Minidoka site and found most—but not all—of its buildings gone. How would anyone remember that this had been an incarceration center? How could what remained be preserved in the interest of our collective memory of it?

He found and joined a coterie of like-minded individuals who were connected in a variety of ways with Minidoka. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan informed the country that the confinement of Japanese Americans had been "based solely on race, for these 120,000 were Americans of Japanese descent."[1] When an opportunity arose in 2000, Bob and others joined forces to lobby and support the designation of Minidoka as a National Internment Monument, a unit of the National Park Service. After that, he participated in the creation of Friends of Minidoka, Inc., joining its board about a year after its creation. The establishment of the annual Minidoka Civil Liberties Symposiums soon followed. About all this, there is more in this book.

All these activities occupied Bob for over forty years. His reputation for fairness, balance, and a candor that rarely, if ever, led to rancor led him to become well known and highly regarded as the historian of Minidoka. Those same qualities contributed to his approach and involvement in community affairs. He served on the Boise City Planning and Zoning Commission from 1978 to 1984 and on the Idaho Humanities Council from 1978 to 1986. He co-founded the Fettuccine Forum, a feature of Boise's "First Thursday" celebrations downtown.

Bob brought to his teaching at Boise State the same empathy and caring for his students as he did to his work with Minidoka. He seemed to have a particular knack for noticing the individual who needed a shoulder, a nudge, or a little encouragement. One of his sons remarked that when watching sports events, he would "assess the situation, figure out who was playing and inevitably begin cheering for the underdog." He was a man of compassion, of empathy born of early awareness of injustices, and who loved learning and teaching history. A colleague described him as being "all about education in the service of social justice and the public good." He took a ten-year break from teaching and research to assume the position of dean of the BSU School of Social Sciences and Public Affairs, but returned eagerly to the classroom and Minidoka. He retired from teaching in 1999 but stayed actively involved in all things related to Minidoka, including community and school lectures supported by the Idaho Humanities Council, until 2014.

Bob realized that his accumulating scholarly research might be the foundation for a full-length book about Minidoka. He spoke publicly and often of that goal, but it proved to be elusive, which was a disappointment to him as well as the public who was eager for the book. The reasons are many, but underlying all other factors were serious health issues for the last twenty years of his life.

He was devoted to his family. His wife, three children, and nine grandchildren remember a gentle man with a great sense of humor and a love of jazz, as well as being a huge sports fan, and captain of the winning United States European Basketball Team of 1960. In 2003, after twin granddaughters were born in Boise, he went to their house and read to them each morning to their mutual delight, until a couple of months before his death in 2015.

Bob's family is extremely proud that part of his legacy is the rich archive of his research, ideas, and work and that it now resides at Boise State University. It is our hope that students, writers, and teachers will dig into his records and be inspired to continue his work: researching, writing, and teaching about Minidoka.

Note

1. Ronald Reagan, "Remarks on Signing the Bill Providing Restitution for the Wartime Internment of Japanese American Civilians," August 10, 1988. See Appendix A. Online transcript at www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36240.

PART ONE

ROBERT C. SIMS ON JAPANESE AMERICANS AND MINIDOKA

Japanese Association from Eastern Idaho, circa 1915. Image from Robert C. Sims slide presentation. *Sims Collection.*

1

The Japanese American Experience in Idaho

EDITOR'S NOTE

After arriving in Idaho in 1970 to teach history at Boise State University, Robert C. Sims soon met Merle Wells, the director of the Idaho State Historical Society. As Betty Sims recalled, Wells pointed Sims to several boxes of material on the Minidoka War Relocation Center (also known as Hunt camp) "just sitting there waiting for someone to get into them." So Bob Sims began his long and particular relationship with Minidoka and the Japanese American community.

He also researched the history of Japanese settlement in Idaho and its contribution to the state's economic growth. The persistence and successes of this group occurred despite the racism, legal and otherwise, they encountered. Sims became acquainted with members of the Pocatello-Blackfoot chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League and members of other chapters, establishing relationships that also persisted over time.

This overview of the Japanese American experience in Idaho set the foundations for themes that Sims explored in greater detail in subsequent articles.—Susan M. Stacy

The justification for a review of the Japanese American experience in Idaho is not necessarily that it offers unique features of the Japanese American experience in the United States, but rather that it incorporates most of the significant experience of Japanese in America. Idaho was one of the earliest states to receive Japanese immigrants; it applied discriminatory laws to Japanese; it was involved in the relocation experience because one of the camps was in Idaho; and it received a significant number of relocatees who became permanent residents.

This article by Robert Sims originally appeared under the same title in *Idaho Yesterdays* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1978).

Japanese first came to Idaho in the decade following statehood, the last decade of the nineteenth century. For much of the time since then, Idaho's Japanese have constituted one of the largest minorities within the state. Their contributions have been significant, all the more so because of the discrimination they have overcome.

Significant Japanese immigration into the United States began just about the time Idaho became a state. In 1890, there were only about 2,000 Japanese in the entire country; a decade later, there were almost 25,000. Most of those early immigrants found jobs in agriculture and railroad construction and maintenance. They also found discrimination, for they reaped the harvest of a half-century of anti-Chinese feeling, an attitude white Americans easily transferred to them. When Japanese first came to Idaho—and for decades thereafter—they found legal discrimination in the state's constitution, which had a provision prohibiting "Asiatics" from enjoying full rights.[1] There were other forms as well. In 1892, when Japanese laborers were first present in sizable numbers along the Oregon Short Line Railroad in southern Idaho, local citizens subjected them to harassment and intimidation. Starting in Mountain Home, where a dozen Japanese were chased out of town by the "best citizens" of that community, this attitude spread.[2] By the end of the summer more than 150 Japanese laborers had been driven out of southwestern Idaho.[3] But the railroad company persisted, as did the Japanese. By the end of the 1890s Japanese settlements were common features along the length of the Oregon Short Line, especially in cities like Nampa and Pocatello.

Some of those who came to work on the railroad gradually moved into agriculture, especially in the first decade of the twentieth century with the establishment of the sugar beet industry in the state. As sugar factories were established at Idaho Falls, Sugar City, Blackfoot, and Nampa between 1903 and 1906, a pattern of Japanese settlement in Idaho was set that persists to the present. These enterprises were possible because of Japanese immigration. In announcing plans for the Idaho Falls plant, the president of the Idaho Sugar Company commented that the only drawback was insufficient labor. That would be remedied, he said, by importing 600 to 800 Japanese.[4]

Starting with the population attracted through railroad construction and the sugar beet industry, Japanese built a base in the Gem State from which they gradually moved out into independent farming and occasionally into some trade or commercial enterprise. Particularly in the period just before World War I, with the agricultural development of the Snake River Valley, more Japanese came, settled on farms, and started families. By 1920, the number of Japanese in Idaho had reached 1,569.[5]

A Japanese farm family poses with fruit buckets. *Courtesy of Mrs. Itano Hosoda, Emmett, ID, Sims Collection, Box 22, Folder 6.*

In many ways the personal histories of these early settlers were the same as those of others. And, like pioneers on any frontier, there were sufficient challenges just to survive. But the generation of immigrants, the Issei, had other obstacles as well. Recognition of Japan as a world power following that country's defeat of Russia resulted in a strong anti-Japanese movement in the western United States. Beginning in California, and building on anti-Oriental attitudes from an earlier time when Chinese were the victims, anti-Japanese movements flourished—as evidenced by a California law in 1913 that limited the rights of Japanese to own and lease land.[6] An important element in this situation was the success the Issei had achieved. If Japanese were threats through competition in agriculture, some people sought to limit their opportunity. This movement was reflected in Idaho, and, beginning soon after the California law was passed, sessions of the Idaho legislature regularly considered bills designed to restrict Japanese property rights. There were groups opposed to such legislation, but they were unable to prevent passage of a 1923 law.[7] Although Japanese were not named specifically in the act, it was definitely an anti-Japanese measure. It declared that "Aliens ineligible for citizenship" were not entitled to own or lease land in the state. The federal naturalization statute did not specifically exclude Japanese either, but it did declare that only Caucasians and persons of African ancestry were eligible for naturalization. Although there are cases of local jurisdictions applying this rather loosely and admitting Japanese, most states, including Idaho, did not consider Japanese eligible. In1905 a judge in Boise denied the application of a Nampa man for naturalization on the grounds that the statute did not permit Japanese to become citizens.[8] Such grounds were confirmed by a United States Supreme Court decision in 1922. Another important step in the anti-Japanese movement was taken in 1924 with the passage of an immigration act that prohibited Japanese from coming into the United States by providing no quota for Japan.

Relegated to such a position, it is natural that Japanese in America would maintain close ethnic and political ties with Japan. In this, the Japanese Association was the most important Issei group. Its particular function was protective, to look out for the rights of those who did not enjoy full rights in American society. Part of the protective power of the Japanese Association lay in its relationship with the Japanese Consulate. The Issei were technically citizens of Japan, so their problems were usually brought to the attention of the Japanese government rather than local officials. The files of the Japanese Association for Idaho contain a heavy correspondence with the Consul General at Portland.[9] Not surprisingly, the Japanese Association played a conservative role with regard to acculturation.

LIBERTY
Japanese Float July 4th 1919 Boise, Ida.

The Japanese float in Boise's July 4, 1919, celebration connected the old country and the new. *Sims Collection, Box 22, Folder 12.*

By the 1920s, a new generation was coming of age. While their parents were prohibited from enjoying full citizenship rights, they were born in the United States and were entitled to full rights under the Constitution. By the late 1920s this group, intensely aware of their Japanese heritage but strongly seeking identification as Americans, had formed a variety of loose-knit "Citizens Clubs" composed of Nisei, or second generation. By 1930 these had come together in a national organization, the Japanese American Citizens League. Nisei in Idaho soon affiliated with the national group.[10]

In the period between the two world wars, the Japanese population of Idaho remained stable in numbers, but its character was changing.

In 1910 Japanese numbered over 1,300, but only 31 were born in the United States. In 1940, more than 60 percent of Idaho's 1,200 Japanese were native-born Americans. One thing that did not change was the large proportion continuing in agriculture.[11]

Unfortunately, this period saw a continuation of discrimination. The land law remained on the statute books, and isolated instances of racism occurred as well. There was often a correlation between these incidents and international events. Following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and a revival of strong feelings about the "Yellow Peril," the state witnessed a flurry of such activity. In the 1932 gubernatorial election campaign, for example, opponents of Governor C. Ben Ross placed an ad in the *Idaho Daily Statesman* informing voters that Ross had leased his farm near Parma to a Japanese, sufficient proof that the governor was inadequately informed on the peril and did not deserve public office. To the credit of Idaho voters, this did not prevent many from voting for Ross, who won the election. But those who placed the ad presumably had some hope that the people would respond to such an appeal.[12]

As Japan continued its activities in the Pacific and Asia, particularly after its invasion of China in 1937, apprehension grew in this country among Japanese Americans concerning a possible United States–Japan war. As war approached, nativist groups and individuals, in Idaho as on the West Coast, increased their verbal and physical assaults on Japanese. But the Japanese American response was positive. As the nation prepared for war in 1940 and passed a new Selective Service Act, the first Idaho man to register was a Japanese American. When the war began, twelve young Nisei from the Boise Valley area alone were in the armed services.[13]

The attack on Pearl Harbor was a national tragedy, and for some Americans it led to an intensely personal tragedy as well. Japanese Americans were shocked by the event and uncertain as to what the future held. The immediate reaction, locally, was expression of strong support for America in a number of ways. A tragic element of this situation was that more seemed to be required of Japanese Americans; at least, more was expected. The day following Pearl Harbor, Japanese from Middleton to Weiser met at Ontario, Oregon, and pledged their allegiance to the United States. The Japanese Farmers' Association stated in a resolution to the governor that "the action of the Imperial Government" was deplorable and "we do hereby declare our unswerving loyalty to the government of the United States, and we declare our determination to uphold its policies. We appreciate the advantages we have enjoyed here and the friendship manifest toward us by the people of Malheur County, Oregon, and of southwestern Idaho, where many of us were born and others of us born across the Pacific, have made our homes for upwards of 40 years."[14] On December 9, officers of the Japanese American Citizens Club of Southern Idaho and Eastern Oregon purchased a $100 U.S. Defense Bond.[15]

In spite of these and other sincere gestures, Japanese in the area were subjected in numerous ways to acts of discrimination and proscription. By the end of February 1942, approximately 100 Japanese homes had been raided, mostly in the Nampa, Caldwell, and Boise areas. According to a newspaper account, what the "sleuths found was the usual semi-sensational bill of fare, guns, ammunition, cameras, and a few documents whose significance officers said they would be unable to ascertain until they could contact an interpreter of Japanese 'hieroglyphics.'" For those whose homes were entered it was a time of great upheaval. Only one thing was certain—they were in a very vulnerable position.[16]

As agitation mounted on the West Coast to "do something about the Japanese" there gradually developed a plan for removing them. Wartime hysteria, building on the long tradition of the anti-Japanese movement, finally resulted in a presidential executive order issued in February of 1942 making the removal of the Japanese from the West Coast possible. Essentially, the three westernmost states were designated as a defense area from which "any or all persons might be excluded," at the discretion of the military commander. In March President Roosevelt established the War Relocation Board, which had the authority to "remove, relocate, maintain, and supervise" anyone detained by the military commander in the West Coast states. Through a series of military proclamations, the complete evacuation of Japanese and Japanese Americans from the West Coast was ordered as a security measure.[17]

With the relocation program, the history of the Japanese in Idaho entered a new period. That program greatly affected the state through the placement of one of the ten camps within its borders. The effect was felt not only during the war but after, since many chose to remain rather than return to their former homes. In addition, the nature of relocation—the forced removal of 110,000 people in ten concentration camps—was at least in part determined by the people of Idaho, particularly through their governor, Chase Clark.

The early plans for relocation called for voluntary action. That is, Japanese were encouraged to seek out their own opportunities inland. When a congressional committee held hearings in Seattle in late February 1942, to consider the kind of welcome relocating Japanese would find in interior states, they got a clear answer from Governor Clark, who told them that it would be a serious mistake to send "enemy aliens" to Idaho. Clark recommended to the committee that if Japanese were to be placed in Idaho, it could be done only by putting them in "concentration camps under military guard."[18] The governor had a lot of support. Many individuals and organizations revealed hatred for and fear of Japanese, whether American citizens or aliens. For example, representatives of most of Nampa's women's clubs met with Governor Clark in late February to protest movement of Japanese aliens into Idaho; they were assured by him that if "Japs were sent into the Gem State, armed guards would be requested."[19]

If West Coast Japanese were to voluntarily relocate in Idaho, they would have to lease or purchase homes and land. But they met strong resistance when they tried to do so. A group of fifty Japanese Americans from Monterey, California, sent a representative to negotiate for the purchase of the 3,000-acre Mesa Orchards in Adams County. He was thrown out of the governor's office when he went there to inform Clark of his mission. This representative, a deputy sheriff of Monterey County, was incensed at his treatment and in a meeting with the press declared: "If a democracy is worth fighting for, it ought to be worth practicing. Class hatred and racial discrimination…are the fundamentals of the dictatorships with whom we are at war." Clark responded by saying that he was not ready to sell Idaho to Japanese while Americans were dying to prevent Japan from taking the state of

Idaho by force of arms.[20] In taking that position Clark refused—as he had before—to distinguish between loyal Americans of Japanese ancestry and Japanese in Japan. Many in the state agreed with the governor. Armed with a feeling of support from his constituents, Clark protested to military authorities about voluntary relocation, and he continued to argue against the Japanese coming. In early April 1942, he declared: "When this war is over, I don't want this great Snake River of ours—it is an ideal spot for Japs because it is the greatest garden spot in the country—I don't want ten thousand Japs to be located in Idaho."[21]

Clark took yet another approach to discourage migration to Idaho. Feeling that many who were coming were doing so because they were encouraged by those already in the state, he issued a warning to Japanese in Idaho to "refrain from any activity in encouraging other Japanese to come into Idaho because it might result in the exclusion of all."[22] Members of Idaho's Japanese American Citizens League were in fact searching in March of 1942 for homes for relocatees but admitted that sites were scarce. Under pressure from the governor, they publicly backed away from this effort.[23] In early April, when the governor became aware of attempts by Japanese to purchase land in Kootenai County, he contacted the sheriff there to investigate and attempt to stop the sale. At the same time, he announced that the force of public opinion had brought about the cancellation of sales of three farms to Japanese at Rexburg.[24] At one point he appealed to Idaho citizens "not to sell land to the Japanese. If we let them come now, and by the purchase of land, settle themselves here, we will soon be sick of them."[25] Public opinion was, indeed, the only weapon Clark had at his disposal. Although Idaho had a law prohibiting alien land ownership, most of those trying to relocate were not aliens, but American citizens. Early in his campaign to keep Idaho free of Japanese, Clark was reminded by the editorial writer of the *Idaho Daily Statesman* that Japanese Americans,

> regardless of our personal feelings in the matter, have the same right to live here and hold property here, under the democratic covenant, that citizens do whose fathers and grandfathers were German or Italian. If the American melting pot has failed to melt Jap complexions or habits to the strict American mold, that is too bad, but it still doesn't erase inalienable rights under the Constitution.[26]

Clark disagreed. In a radio address, he spoke to the problem of the "constitutional rights" of the evacuees. He argued that these were nonexistent, for, if they had any such rights at all, they had a right to stay on the Pacific coast. "My only thought now," he said, "is to keep Idaho for Idahoans, and not to sell it to the Japanese. There is nothing un-American about my taking that position. If we permit them to come in here and buy land, there would be one hundred thousand here before summer starts."[27] At another time the governor stated that "recognizing their constitutional rights and being good to them is flowery language, but I am looking to the future of Idaho."[28] With official resistance such as this to the program of voluntary relocation, it is little wonder that it did not work. In fact, by early April only 3,200 had voluntarily relocated.[29]

A conference was called at Salt Lake City on April 7, 1942, at which Army and federal officials met with governors and other top officials from the ten western states. At the conference, Milton Eisenhower, War Relocation Authority Director, made a plea for a relocation program emphasizing voluntary relocation and private employment and resettlement in independent and self-supporting communities. What Eisenhower called for was just such an operation as had been planned for Mesa Orchards. Obviously, Clark was opposed to such an idea. In fact, most of the governors expressed strong opposition to Eisenhower's proposals. Some suggested that the coastal states were using the war as an excuse for getting rid of a long-standing problem by transferring it inland, a point made several times by Clark. Some governors also denied that those who were native-born had any citizenship rights.[30]

With Governor Clark leading the way, federal officials became convinced that the state officials would settle only for concentration camps with armed guards. Clark considered this the only reasonable approach to the problem. In the closed executive session at the conference he spoke candidly on his position and expressed a desire not to be known in history as the person responsible for letting Idaho become full of Japanese. He then went on to admit, "right on the start that I am so prejudiced that my reasoning might be a little off, because I don't trust any of them. I don't know which ones to trust and so therefore I don't trust any of them."[31]

Since he was unable to persuade the governors to endorse his relocation plan, Eisenhower considered the conference a disaster, and he concluded that it was largely Clark's fault. The day following the conference, Eisenhower wrote to the Attorney General of the United States referring to the meeting as a "rather tragic conference," highlighting Clark's resistance.[32] The results of the conference confirmed what WRA officials had already perceived: voluntary relocation had not worked, and would not. Two weeks after the meeting, the War Relocation Authority announced plans to relocate the Japanese and Japanese Americans in ten camps in the western United States, under military guard. One of the camps would be built in Idaho. Until the camps were ready, the relocatees would be detained in a number of "assembly centers."[33]

The possibility of large-scale voluntary relocation had created considerable anxiety among Idaho citizens. As a side effect, even those Japanese who were long-term residents of the state met with increased suspicion and hostility. The decision reached at Salt Lake City relieved this somewhat. In May of 1942, a Japanese American wrote from Caldwell to a friend in Seattle, "The prejudice here has died down immensely since the voluntary evacuation has been stopped."[34]

Perhaps the greatest impact that the relocation program had on Idaho was its provision of agricultural labor. When proposals for removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast were first made, comments on that removal usually dealt with the labor they might provide to inland states. In Idaho, in early 1942, views were mixed on the advisability of using such labor. At its annual meeting in Boise in February of 1942, the Idaho Grange—which was consistent in its anti-Japanese American position throughout the war—voted to oppose importation of Japanese aliens from coast areas for farm labor.[35] Idaho beet men, looking at the possibilities for the 1942 crop, were told by sugar company officials that acreage would be doubled in 1942 and that they could rely on Japanese workers to provide the additional labor. But the general reaction among farmers continued to be mixed. While Governor Clark attended the Salt Lake City conference to protest against bringing Japanese to Idaho, the head of the Idaho Beet Growers Association also attended and reported that, contrary to Clark's views, Idaho needed the labor that might be provided by relocation.[36]

There was a serious need for additional manpower in agriculture in this region. By May of 1942 the shortage became so acute and pressure became so great that, contrary to the policy announced after the Salt Lake City conference, the WRA permitted evacuees to work in sugar beet areas. Once the sugar beet interests got to work, it was amazing to see how quickly some politicians changed their minds. By May 15, 1942, the WRA concluded an agreement with Governor Sprague of Oregon for the release of evacuees to work in the sugar beet area in Malheur County. At first, the WRA proceeded with great caution; but as the need for labor grew, regulations were gradually relaxed, and by late September of 1942 the release program was quite liberal.[37]

While Sprague and others were changing their minds, Governor Clark was still insisting on his previous points. In a speech in late May he made a statement that has been as much quoted as any other on the issue of relocation. He bitterly denounced Japanese as people who "act like rats," and he told the Grangeville Lions Club that a solution to the "Jap problem" in Idaho and the nation would be to send them all back to Japan, "then sink the island." "Japs live like rats, breed like rats and act like rats. We don't want them…permanently located in our state."[38]

Predictably, Clark's attitude interfered with efforts to attract Japanese labor. The Idaho Director of the U.S. Employment Service found Japanese reluctant to come to Idaho to work because of reports of anti-Japanese sentiment, especially as expressed by Clark.[39] When Idaho sugar beet companies sent recruiters to the Puyallup Assembly Center, they found a clipping of Clark's Grangeville speech posted on the bulletin board and discovered that evacuees were not at all anxious to work in Idaho. When he saw the potential disadvantages of his remarks, the governor modified his stand with a press release, which stated: "In this beet thinning emergency, Japanese living in this country have a fine opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty. Any that are doing this I am ready to give my praise and they should be excepted in any remarks I've made."[40] By the end of 1942 some 9,000 evacuees were working in agricultural areas throughout the west and were being enthusiastically praised. In Idaho, their contribution was essential, and there is no doubt that they were instrumental in saving the sugar beet crop.[41]

Evacuees assigned to the newly constructed camp at Hunt, Idaho—first opened on a limited basis in August of 1942—began almost immediately to obtain work releases. By the end of the harvest, about 2,100 were working in off-project employment, more than double the number of workers from any other relocation center.[42] Early the next year sugar companies began recruitment programs seeking laborers and sharecroppers, including extensive advertising efforts in the camp newspaper. By October of 1943, the number of Hunt residents working in seasonal agriculture was 2,400, a significant addition to the labor force available for Idaho's harvests.[43]

Not all Idahoans were pleased with this turn of events, however, and some viewed the activities with horror. Some continued their insistence that the Japanese be closely guarded. In addition, the work-release program was unpopular with some because it permitted the Japanese to compete in the labor market. Labor unions around the state were particularly concerned, and their attitude was reflected in a number of resolutions against employment of Japanese. Typical of such resolutions was that of the Pocatello Carpenters' Union, which in May of 1943 approved a resolution prohibiting any of its members from working on any job where Japanese were used in any capacity.[44]

General public concern was expressed that good jobs might encourage the evacuees to settle permanently in Idaho. This concern was closely related to activities in the West Coast states to prevent the return of the Japanese at the end of the war. There, many of the groups involved in the removal program initially began to push for a prohibition against the Japanese returning. For example, Grange Masters representing Granges in the West Coast states requested that the federal government prohibit persons of Japanese ancestry from returning following the war, complaining that such persons had "failed to assimilate themselves and can never be assimilated into American community life."[45]

The evacuees were aware of these pressures, and as a result, when permanent relocation became possible by late 1943, many of the younger generation took the opportunity to start a new life. By February of 1944

Hunt relocatees were scattered in thirty-three states, and the camp led all other centers in the number of evacuees out on this type of leave.[46]

One Hunt resident, who had been active in the JACL in Seattle, saw this as a blessing in disguise. In a letter to a friend he wrote:

> The interesting feature about this whole affair is, however, that the second generation constitutes some 85 percent to date of the entire number of persons leaving the relocation centers for resettlement outside. This is what we were leading up to before the war with little success. Now when America is at war with the land of their parents, what was proving not any too successful is now taking place under forced conditions. It is a healthy thing, nevertheless.47

The camp they had come to was the Minidoka camp, at Hunt, Idaho, in the area north of Twin Falls. Most of the residents of the camp were from the Portland and Seattle areas and were not prepared for the physical environment they were coming to. A Caldwell Nisei wrote to a friend in Seattle, referring to the relocatees:

> It sounds like they will be coming to Idaho...I'm afraid it will be dusty and hot because of the uncultivated land and no trees as such. They sure won't think so much of this state, while all along I've been trying to explain to them what a wonderful state it is. They surely won't believe me now after the experience they will no doubt go through.[48]

The movement to Hunt from the assembly centers, which began in August of 1942, was by train. The evacuees all passed through Nampa, where many saw friends who had come in the period of voluntary relocation. One internee wrote: "I thought how ironic it was that we should see…Japanese who were free to do as they pleased while we, by trainloads, were being herded to camps." The same writer also commented on her arrival at the camp: "We finally arrived at Minidoka, and at the sight of dust and rows and rows of barracks, I was ready to cry when I thought that this was to be our home for the duration."[49] Another expressed these feelings:

"When we first arrived here we almost cried, and thought that this was a land that God had forgotten. The vast expanse of nothing but sagebrush and dust, a landscape so alien to our eyes, and a desolate,

woebegone feeling of being so far removed from home and fireside bogged us down mentally, as well as physically."[50]

That some were able to have a positive thought in that kind of situation is a tribute to the human spirit. Some did: one young man wrote to a friend in one of the assembly centers, gave him a description of the physical layout, and then added "all in all, the great intensity and extent of work that needs to be done here cannot be overemphasized. There is no denying the fact that the place is a desert now but it can be made into a model community and will certainly be worth a try."[51]

An element among the evacuees, perhaps a majority, could see through the difficulties and sense opportunity. One of the more optimistic wrote a friend:

> The more I think of it, the stronger becomes my belief that the path of the second generation into American life becomes much more clearcut and broader. Placed into a camp such as this, we are prone to feel that our future in America is closed to us, but instead, I believe that this is now a new starting point, from which we can proceed... to become part and parcel of the national life. I am basing this belief upon the fact that by obeying the military order we are proving our loyalty. By our conduct today in these camps will we be judged later as either good or bad timber in the building of America.[52]

The physical hardships and the "testing" might have been better borne if the Japanese Americans had not had to endure other degradations as well. One situation that made relocatees feel unwelcome in Idaho involved the practice of many school districts charging tuition for children of relocatees. When the War Relocation Authority objected, the state superintendent of public instruction requested an attorney general's opinion and was advised that they had to pay nonresident tuition. The superintendent criticized the decision:

> It is unfortunate that such obvious discrimination exists in some districts in Idaho. Such acts are bound to reach the ears of sons and brothers of these people fighting in the American army with other American boys. It is equally astonishing that such charges should be made in the face of the contribution the evacuated people have made to Idaho's outstanding record of agricultural production in war time.[53]

One of the ironies of the situation in Idaho during the war was that Chase Clark, following his tenure as governor, was appointed a federal district court judge. In late 1944 he was the presiding judge in trials for draft evasion of thirty-four internees from Minidoka. At the beginning of the war, there had been no prohibition against Japanese in the armed forces. When enlistment lines formed in Pocatello on the Monday following Pearl Harbor, the first in line was an Idaho-born Japanese. But the opportunity for Japanese Americans to enlist was soon cut off. In May of 1942 the War Department began devising plans for all Japanese American units, and recruitment began at the camps in July. The result was the establishment of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and a group composed mostly of Hawaiian Nisei, the 100th Battalion. These groups fought with distinction in the Italian campaigns, and the 442nd was the most decorated unit in the war. Largely on the strength of the public support gained by these military groups, Selective Service procedures were by January of 1944 once again applied to Japanese Americans. It was probably predictable that some would balk, and at Minidoka thirty-four refused induction.[54] This must be measured against the approximately 800 residents of the camp who did enter military service. Many other Japanese Americans served in units in the Pacific and distinguished themselves. Slowly some of the bitterness toward Japanese and Japanese Americans was tempered by the realization that they, too, were fighting and dying for America.

When the order excluding Japanese from the West Coast was rescinded in January of 1945, many would not return to their former homes. In the short run, approximately 3,000 Hunt residents were resettled in Idaho by the end of the war. Five years later, fewer than 1,000 remained. With the exception of some who obtained relocation permits in the state, worked in communities where they were accepted, and found friends, the total experience was a tragic one; little wonder few stayed. The last family left Minidoka in October of 1945. They were reluctant to leave, probably because they really had no place to go. The camp director asked the Jerome County sheriff to arrest them, and they spent the night in jail while camp officials packed their personal effects. The following day, they were put on the train for their former coastal home.[55]

It would be too much to say that after the war there was a return to normal. People did not just go back and pick up where they left off. The war and relocation left a heavy mark on Japanese American communities and families. Many took the opportunity to break away from their old life and move to the East or Midwest. Others—like many who stayed in Idaho, either in the period of voluntary relocation or out of the camps—had established roots and were not inclined to attempt to start over again in their old homes.

But the end of the war and the immediate readjustment is not the end of the story. Many Japanese Americans had endured, even tolerated, relocation because of a feeling of loyalty, and saw that time of trial as a way of proving that loyalty. They came out of the experience with a resolve that, having passed the ultimate test, they were now entitled to a full share of the American Dream—they were entitled to equal treatment.

The JACL honors Idaho Issei upon their naturalization as American citizens in 1955. *Sims Collection, Box 22, Folder 16.*

One of the most significant barriers to the realization of that dream fell in 1952 when, with the passage of new immigration and naturalization legislation, alien Japanese became eligible for citizenship. In addition, for the first time since 1924, Japanese were allowed to immigrate. Just a few years later, in 1955, Idaho Japanese organized and successfully obtained the repeal of the 1923 Alien Land Law, which had stood so long as a symbol of racial discrimination.[56]

Through the efforts of many, the Idaho Legislature placed on the ballot in 1962 a proposed constitutional amendment that deleted the section disqualifying Japanese from full citizenship rights. The amendment symbolized a new status for Japanese in Idaho, one won through many struggles and against strong odds.[57]

In the past decade or so, Americans have come to an increased appreciation of their pluralistic cultural and ethnic heritage. Few minorities have as much to celebrate, in terms of both what they have overcome and what they have contributed. In seeing Japanese in our midst, in seeing how fully they have been incorporated into Idaho community, business, and professional life, it is perhaps too easy to forget that their achievements are all the more remarkable because of the difficulties they have overcome. Because of the uniqueness of their experiences and contributions, Japanese Americans make up an important chapter in Idaho's history.

Notes

1. Article VI, Section 3, Constitution of the State of Idaho (1889).
2. *Idaho Daily Statesman* (Boise), July 13, 1892, 5.
3. Ibid., July 26, 1892, 8.
4. Ibid., January 31, 1903, 2.
5. Harry H. L. Kitano, *Japanese Americans: The Evolution of a Sub-culture* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 162–63.
6. Japanese American Citizens League, *The Experience of Japanese Americans in the United States* (San Francisco: JACL, 1975), 53.
7. Kazuo Ito, *Issei* (Seattle: Japanese American Community Services, 1973), 162–63; Idaho Session Laws, 1923, 160–65.
8. *Caldwell Tribune*, November 4, 1905, 1.
9. The files are located in the Japanese American Research Project Collection, The Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.
10. *Japanese-American Courier* (Seattle), June 11, 1932, 4; March 10, 1934, 4.
11. 1940 Census of Population, Idaho, 396.
12. *Idaho Daily Statesman*, November 1, 1932, 2.
13. Ibid., December 9, 1941, 6.
14. Ibid., December 10, 1941, 2.
15. Ibid., 8.
16. *Idaho Daily Statesman*, March 1, 1942, 1.
17. These events are best described in Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps, U.S.A.* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1972).

18. *Idaho Daily Statesman*, February 28, 1942, 1.
19. Ibid., 3.
20. *Idaho Daily Statesman*, March 15, 1942, 1.
21. "Verbatim Record of Speeches," WRA-WCCA Salt Lake City Conference, April 7, 1942, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (hereafter cited as JERS).
22. *Pocatello Tribune*, March 17, 1942, 1.
23. *Idaho Daily Statesman*, March 27, 1942, 6.
24. "Survey of Public Opinion in Western States on Japanese Evacuation, Idaho" (A 16.03), JERS.
25. *Idaho Daily Statesman*, March 15, 1942, 1.
26. Ibid., March 14, 1942, 4.
27. "Radio Address of Gov. Clark" (C 1.03), JERS.
28. *Idaho Daily Statesman*, March 15, 1942, 8.
29. Remarks by Milton Eisenhower, Salt Lake City Conference (C 1.03), JERS.
30. Ibid.
31. "Verbatim Record of Speeches," JERS.
32. "WRA Correspondence on Meeting and Post-Meeting Policy" (C 1.03), JERS.
33. *Twin Falls Times-News*, April 23, 1942, 1.
34. Letter from Evacuee to Rev. Emery Andrews, May 1942, Andrews Papers, University of Washington Library, Seattle.
35. *Idaho Daily Statesman*, February 13, 1942, 16.
36. John W. Abbott to Robert K. Lamb, April 8, 1942, "WRA Correspondence on Meeting and Post-Meeting Policy" (C 1.03), JERS.
37. Carey McWilliams, *Prejudice* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1944), 164.
38. *Idaho Daily Statesman*, May 23, 1942, 1–2.
39. Ibid., 1.
40. *Idaho Daily Statesman*, May 26, 1942, 8.
41. Audrie Girdner and Ann Loftis, *The Great Betrayal: The Evacuation of the Japanese-Americans During World War II* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1969), 339.
42. *Minidoka* (Relocation Center) *Irrigator*, November 4, 1942, 2.
43. Ibid., October 23, 1943, 1.
44. Walter Chambers, Recording Secretary, Local 1258, to August Rosqvist, Secretary, Idaho State Federation of Labor, Pocatello, May 12, 1943, "Japs-NYA and Employment, 1943," Box 23, Rosqvist Papers, Idaho State Historical Society, Boise.
45. *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 22, 1944, n.p. Clipping in "Japs-NYA and Employment," Rosqvist Papers.
46. *Minidoka Irrigator*, February 26, 1944, 1.
47. James Sakamoto to Father Mulligan, December 23, 1943, Sakamoto Papers, University of Washington Library, Seattle.

48. Letter from Evacuee to Rev. Emery Andrews, May 1942 (1–107), Andrews Papers.
49. Ibid., August 24, 1942 (1–105).
50. Ibid., n.d. (1–117).
51. Dyke Miyagawa to the Japanese Advisory Council, Puyallup Assembly Center, August 10, 1942, Sakamoto Papers.
52. James Sakamoto to Robert Flanders, July 13, 1942, Sakamoto Papers.
53. *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 8, 1944, n.p. Clipping in "Japs-NYA and Employment, 1943," Box 23, Rosqvist Papers.
54. *Idaho Daily Statesman*, October 3, 1944, 1.
55. *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 29, 1945, 1.
56. Box 306, Japanese American Research Project Collection.
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2

Idaho's Governor Chase Clark and Japanese American Relocation in World War II

EDITOR'S NOTE

After Imperial Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States declared war against Japan, the subsequent punitive treatment of Japanese American citizens living on the West Coast—their detention, forced removal, and incarceration for the duration of the war—was due in part to war hysteria and the powerful force of racism. Much of this hysteria was fueled by a number of western state leaders, among them Idaho Governor Chase Clark.[*]

For many years after the war, the general belief among Americans was that the confinement of Japanese Americans was a military necessity during wartime. But a 1982 Congressional examination of the Japanese incarceration, published under the title Personal Justice Denied, *revealed that military assessments during the early months after Pearl Harbor had denied any such military necessity. The report said that those assessments had been suppressed, and that bureaucrats had deliberately contrived euphemisms to manage the public perception of the mass incarceration of American citizens and their immigrant parents.—SS*

During World War II, the United States government removed the entire Japanese and Japanese American population from the West Coast and interned the 110,000 men, women, and children in the interior. The incident was tragic not only for those directly affected but for all Americans, because it constituted a failure of the American

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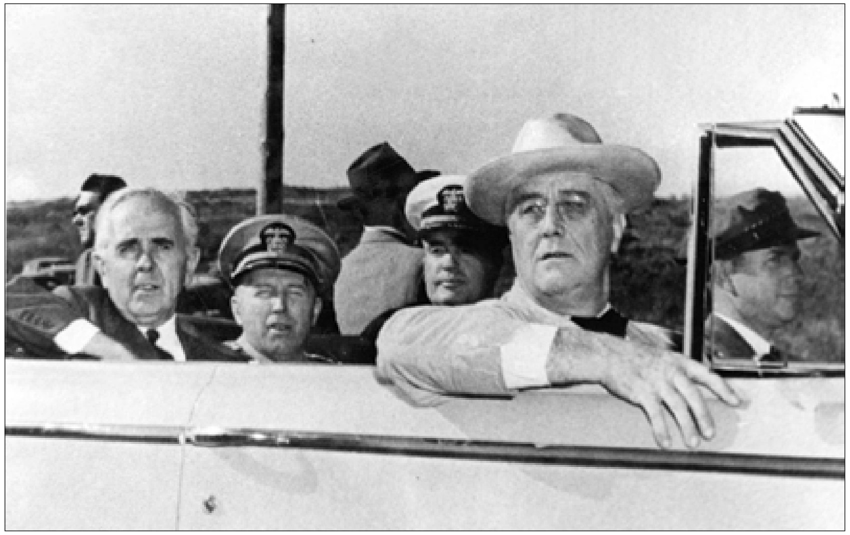
system of justice. This subversion of the civil rights of American citizens, justified at the time as a military necessity, has been characterized in recent scholarship as a triumph of racism. Studies have proven that anti-Japanese groups influenced the decision to remove all persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast. Overt racism also affected development of the wartime relocation program.

At least partly in response to anti-Japanese attitudes in the interior states, the federal government adopted the harshest and most restrictive solution to relocation that it had considered—concentration camps. Chase Clark, governor of Idaho in 1941 and 1942, was one official who insisted on a program that included detention and armed guards; his demands were strident, persistent, and influential. A look at his role in this regrettable episode in our history will help us to better understand the part played by other officials and individuals from interior states.



Governor Chase Clark, far left, accompanies President Franklin D. Roosevelt circa September 21, 1942, on a secret tour of Camp Farragut Naval Training Station near Sandpoint, Idaho. *Idaho State Historical Society, Idaho State Archives, 72-3-3.*

Before Pearl Harbor, Clark showed little indication that he was capable of his later stand against Japanese Americans. He came from a section of the state which claimed more than half of Idaho's 1,200 Japanese. Many of these families had long been residents of the region, some for forty years or more, and Clark knew and was known by many of them. In late November 1941, he was a featured participant in an intermountain district meeting of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) at Pocatello, Idaho. At that gathering, Clark stated: "We must realize that we are all, first and last, Americans." Unfortunately, his commitment to that view was one of the casualties of Pearl Harbor.[1]

By late December 1941, speculation about the relocation of West Coast Japanese was rampant. The issue touched Idaho primarily as a labor question. With acreage controls lifted because of expected demands, Idaho sugar beet growers were concerned about having sufficient labor to meet their needs. Attitudes of Idaho farmers on the possible use of evacuee labor varied, with some farm organizations adamantly opposed.

In an interview in mid-February, Clark referred to Japanese and Japanese American laborers imported from the Coast as "enemy labor," and he indicated that, in his view, Idahoans were opposed to bringing "alien enemy labor to Idaho." In a telegram sent that month to the chairman of a House committee investigating national defense migration, Clark warned that it would be a "serious mistake to send enemy aliens to Idaho," and he urged that any Japanese brought to the state "be placed in concentration camps under military guard."[2]

At that time, the government was still forming its policy concerning Japanese and Japanese Americans. Although there clearly was strong support for removal of the Japanese from the West Coast, officials were undecided about the manner of removal and about what to do with the people after they were moved. Little evidence exists to suggest that federal officials favored placing the Japanese in detention centers under armed guard, as Clark recommended. In fact, an army spokesman indicated that the military could not respect the wishes of Clark and various groups in the inland west on the relocation matter.[3]

Once the government made the decision to remove all Japanese from the coastal areas, initial plans called for voluntary relocation.