

Japanese Internment during WWII

On December 7th 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. US citizens feared another attack and war hysteria seized the country.

State representatives put pressure on President Roosevelt to take action against those of Japanese descent living in the US.

On February 19th 1942 Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. Under the terms of the Order, some 120,000 people of Japanese descent living in the US were removed from their homes and placed in internment camps. The US justified their action by claiming that there was a danger of those of Japanese descent spying for the Japanese. However more than two thirds of those interned were American citizens and half of them were children. None had ever shown disloyalty to the nation. In some cases family members were separated and put in different camps. During the entire war only ten people were convicted of spying for Japan and these were all Caucasian.

"It was really cruel and harsh. To pack and evacuate in forty-eight hours was an impossibility. Seeing mothers completely bewildered with children crying from want and peddlers taking advantage and offering prices next to robbery made me feel like murdering those responsible without the slightest compunction in my heart."

***-Joseph Yoshisuke Kurihara
speaking of the Terminal Island
evacuation.***

Life in the camps was hard. Internees had only been allowed to bring with them a few possessions. In many cases they had been



given just 48 hours to evacuate their homes. Consequently they were easy prey for fortune hunters who offered them far less than the market prices for the goods they could not take with them.

They were housed in barracks and had to use communal areas for washing, laundry and eating. It was an emotional time for all.

Some internees died from inadequate medical care and the high level of emotional stress they suffered. Those taken to camps in desert areas had to cope with extremes of temperature.

"I remember the soldiers marching us to the Army tank and I looked at their rifles and I was just terrified because I could see this long knife at the end...I thought I was imagining it as an adult much later...I thought it couldn't have been bayonets because we were just little kids."
-from "Children of the Camps"

The camps were guarded by military personnel and those who disobeyed the rules, or who were deemed to be troublesome were sent to the Tule Lake facility located in the California Rocky Mountains. In 1943 those who refused to take the loyalty oath were also

sent to Tule Lake and the camp was renamed a segregation centre.

In 1943 all internees over the age of seventeen were given a loyalty test. They were asked two questions:

1. Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty wherever ordered? (Females were asked if they were willing to volunteer for the Army Nurse Corps or Women's Army Corps.)

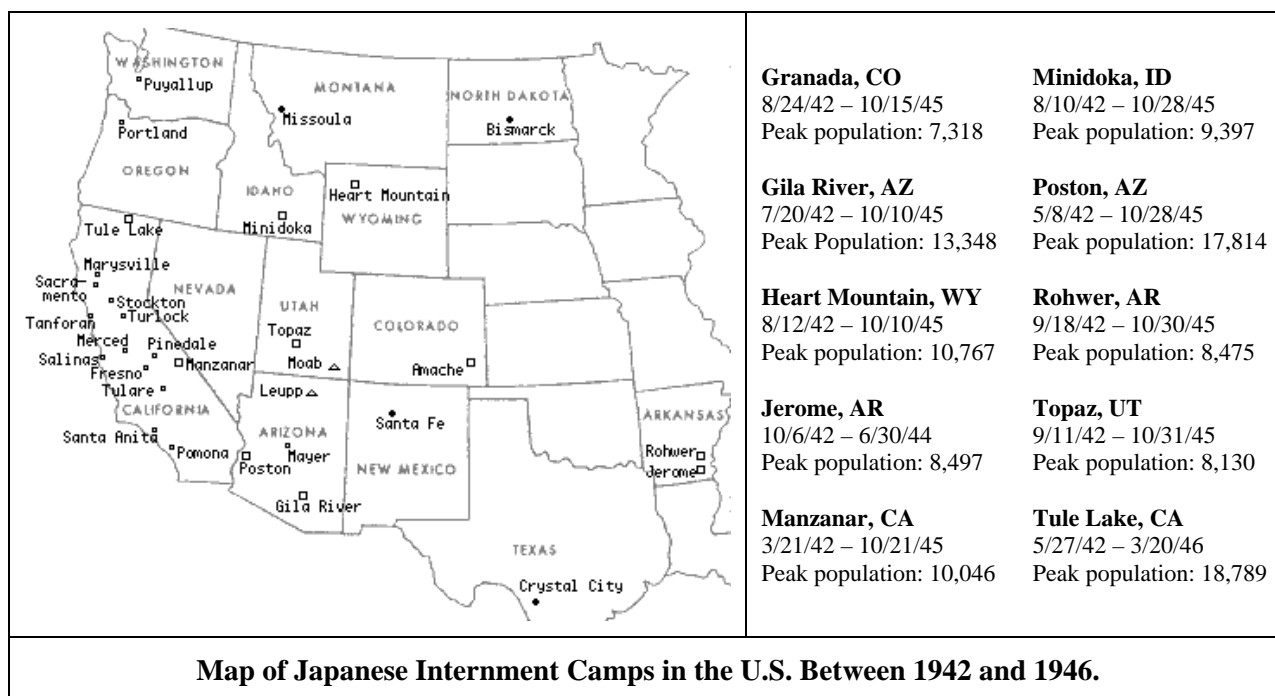
2. Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces and

forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, to any other foreign government, power or organization?



In December 1944 Public Proclamation number 21, which became effective in January 1945, allowed internees to return to

their homes. The effects of internment affected all those involved. Some saw the camps as concentration camps and a violation of the writ of Habeas Corpus, others though, saw internment as a necessary result of Pearl Harbor. At the end of the war some remained in the US and rebuilt their lives, others though were unforgiving and returned to Japan.



<http://www.historyonthenet.com/ww2/japan_internment_camps.htm>