

CAMP AMACHE EVACUEES with COLORADO DESTINATIONS 1942 - 1945

June 2022

By Gerald E. Sherard

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent declaration of war against Japan, many Americans believed that the Japanese-Americans were spies or traitors. In fact, very few Japanese-Americans were disloyal but the hysteria revolving around the war led President Franklin D. Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 9066, which authorized the Secretary of War to set up military areas where Japanese-Americans from the West Coast would be sent until their loyalty was proven and they could work and live outside the camps. Anyone with any Japanese ancestry could be sent to the camps. The Japanese-Americans had as little as 6 days notification to dispose of most of their property and possessions before they were transported. Many were forced to sell property at well under market value while assets of the Japanese immigrants (the Issei) were frozen leaving them with few possessions or savings. The Nisei, citizens by birth, endured less hardship. The federal government then transferred these internees further inland to such camps as one near Granada, Colorado. (2)

Camp Amache was a Japanese-American Internment Camp in southeast Colorado in Prowers County from May 6, 1942 to October 15, 1945. The camp was established by the War Relocation Agency (WRA). It was one of ten internment camps the WRA built in the U.S, all to house only those of Japanese ancestry and the only camp whose land was acquired by a mix of purchase from private land owners and condemnation.

The Camp Amache Museum and research center maintained by the Amache Preservation Society is located in downtown Granada. The museum has high school yearbooks and an alphabetical list of names of internees. The actual site of Camp Amache (officially the Granada Relocation Center) located about a mile and half west of the town of Granada became part of the National Park System in 2022. The camp was named Amache after John Power's Cheyenne Indian wife. John Powers was a leading pioneer and rancher in the county. The Camp Amache (Granada) school was located on the site. Over, 10,331 people passed through Camp Amache and at its peak, it housed 7,318 internees in February 1943, two-thirds of whom were U.S. Citizens. Nearly all of the camp's original internees came from California: southwest [Los Angeles](#), the Central Valley

and the northern coast. Many had been residents of the [Yamato Colony](#), a Japanese agricultural community in Livingston, California. Resident wise, the camp was the smallest of the ten U.S. relocation centers. The Arkansas River ran 2.5 miles north of the camp, but the 10,500 acres of land, 16 square miles, was arid when not irrigated.

The central section of Camp Amache was 640 acres (one square mile), made up primarily of 29 blocks of Army-style barracks. The barracks were divided into six apartments no bigger than 24 feet wide and 20 feet long with brick floors, empty except for a coal-burning stove, military canvas cots and a single lightbulb dangling from the ceiling. Bathrooms were communal and had no doors, so many women waited until nighttime to use them. Each block had a mess hall (cafeteria), laundry, toilets, and a shower room. There were several youth clubs, extracurricular activities, and social events that were available. There were also shared administrative facilities such as a hospital, school (both elementary, middle and high school), recreation buildings, a public library, dry goods store, barber shop, sewage plant, and post office. A barbed wire fence surrounded the central section of the center with seven watch towers along the perimeter. All watch towers were rarely manned at one time, and the guns were never used. As in most of the relocation centers, armed military police manned the towers.

Many of the center's internees were seasoned farm workers, and they turned Camp Amache into a productive agricultural center, raising beef and dairy cattle, poultry, and hogs and growing potatoes, onions, corn, alfalfa, and wheat. In 1943 and 1944, Amache had such good growing seasons that it produced a surplus of crops which were sold to the other relocation centers. It was the only War Relocation Center with a silk screen shop with forty-five staff members who created training materials and color posters for the U.S. Navy and Army, in addition to calendars, program events and other personal-use items for camp residents. The centers internee workers were paid a monthly wage. Also, over ten percent of the Amache residents volunteered for military service, more than any other War Relocation Center.

Today the camp is a lonely, desolate place on the high prairie, covered by scrubby vegetation and small cacti. All the buildings were removed, but their concrete foundations, a cemetery, and the main water tank with pump house remain. Several monuments and replicas of the barracks, water tower, and guard tower have been constructed on the site. 107 internees died while held in Amache.

Images of the complete Camp Amache roster book with the names listed alphabetically, are found at the Family Search website given in Reference 4 below. To view these images, under View the Images, click “Browse Page”, click 101044943 (233 pages of images comes up), and then go to the page with the evacuee’s assigned number or to the image page. Note that there are 49 additional evacuees listed on pages 220 and 221. Also the Amache Museum has the original alphabetical by name roster listing which may have additional nicknames, barrack information for the evacuee (for example 10E-5A is 10 Block Barrack E, first room in Barrack 5A), the age, a more complete final departure destination address, and records with Japanese lettering..

Information given in the NARA (National Archives) Granada Relocation Center rosters is: Internee’s assigned number, Name, Other names used, Family number, Sex, Birth date, Marital status, Citizenship, Alien registration number, Type of original entry, Entry date, Address (City & State), Relocation center address, Type of final departure, Departure date and Departure destination (City & State).

Some of the more common Acronyms used in these records are (8):

Entry Types: B Birth, MeAC, Merced County-CA Assembly Center, SAAC Santa Anita CA Assembly Center, T-Jerome Transfer from Jerome (Senson, AR), T-Santa Fe Transfer from Santa Fe NM, T-Tule Transfer from Tule Lake (Newell, CA), VE Voluntary Resident

Discharge Types: D Death, **Ind-AF** Armed Forces, Ind-Educ Education, Ind-Emp Employment, Ind-Invt Community Invitation, Ind-JnFam Join or Accompany Family, Term-Intern Dept of Justice Interment, Term-w g Term with grant, Term-w/o g Term without grant, T-Heart Mt Transfer to Heart Mountain, WY

Listed below are evacuees who had an address of Colorado upon departure, marriages, and names originally omitted from the rosters. For these evacuees is the following information: Evacuees assigned number, Name (those with nicknames in separate record), Family number, Sex, Birth date, Marital Status, Departure Destination (Colorado towns unless noted otherwise) and Image page. Those who departed to Fort Logan likely joined

the Army. md means “married” and ca means “about”. It was hard to distinguish between the following letters in the original records: M and N, M and H, e and o, and c and o. Also look for the name at the bottom of the roster page. **When looking for an evacuee, one should check the attached list, the names listed in Reference 4 below and the original roster list which the Amache Museum has.**

References:

1. <https://amache.org> “Amache Museum, Historical Significance”
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Granada_War_Relocation_Center “Granada War Relocation Center - Wikipedia”
3. <https://archives.colorado.gov> “Colorado State Archives, Collection, History, Amache, Booklet About Amache Camp”
4. https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States,_War_Relocation_Authority_Centers,_Final_Accountability_Rosters_-_FamilySearch_Historical_Records To view these images, under View the Images, click “Browse Page”, click 101044943
5. Harvey, Robert, *Amache: The story of Japanese interment in Colorado during World War II*, 2003, 245 pages
6. https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=DUT5gYCe&id=CB82EDB87EB0A292C05614A194821B94279663C7&thid=OIP.DUT5gYCe8_fm8dJf_OHz3AHaE8&mediaurl=https%3A%2F%2Fcanyonsandplains.com%2Ftemplates%2Fyootheme%2Fcache%2Fbents-old-fort-bb83f20a.jpeg&e “Camp Amache Photo Gallery”
7. <https://www.bing.com/images/search?q=camp+amache+display+monuments&qpv=camp+amache+display+monuments&tsc=ImageHoverTitle&form=IGRE&first=1> “Camp Amache Monuments”
8. <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2982/> and pages 11 & 12 in Reference 4 above “War Relocation Center Acronyms / Abbreviations”

9. <https://www.archives.gov/research/japanese-americans/wra> “Search Database of Japanese American Internees”

10. <https://www.historycolorado.org/amache-bibliography>