

## **WW2 JAPANESE INTERNMENT CAMPS (INCLUDING THE TWO IN ARKANSAS)**

**THE INJUSTICE OF JAPANESE-AMERICAN INTERNMENT CAMPS RESONATES STRONGLY TO THIS DAY**

**376**

**THIS ARTICLE IS IN THREE PARTS**

**PART ONE: THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF THE JAPANESE INTERNMENT CAMPS**

**PART TWO: STORY OF THE ROHWER INTERNMENT CAMP IN ROHWER, ARKANSAS**

**PART THREE: STORY OF THE JEROME INTERNMENT CAMP IN JEROME, ARKANSAS**



Japanese internment camps were established during World War II by President Franklin Roosevelt through his Executive Order 9066. From 1942 to 1945, it was the policy of the U.S. government that people of Japanese descent would be interred in isolated camps. *Enacted in reaction to Pearl Harbor and the ensuing war, the Japanese internment camps are now considered one of the most atrocious violations of American civil rights in the 20th century.*

### **NOTE- PLEASE READ**

This subject can and has developed different opinions/sides among many Americans. Opinions stated here are as it is recorded on the Internet and from reliable sources, such as the History Channel, the National Archives, etc.

When everything settled down after the War and the internees had been released, many with no place to go, our own American Judicial System determined, *under our laws*, that *all aspects of the Internment were Illegal*, and the Supreme Court also stated that the President lacked the authority to initiate such an action, but the damage had been done.

48 years later, in 1990, after many had passed away, the United States sent out some 82,000 checks for \$ 20,000 each with a letter of apology from the President ..for their inconvenience

President Roosevelt never lived to see any of this. He passed away in April of 1945, several months before the War ended. The article is long but is very factful and attempts to let you know what happened some 79 years ago. [JEC](#)



UPDATED FEB 21, 2020

### **PART ONE**

On Feb. 19, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed *Executive Order 9066*, which initiated one of the most degrading, humiliating, and harmful experiences for people living lawfully in the United States: the removal and internment of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans into detention camps spread throughout the country.

**US GOVERNMENT VIDEO ABOUT THE JAPANESE INTERNMENT  
TO VIEW – COPY AND PASTE THE BELOW LINK INTO YOUR BROWSER**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation\\_id=annotation\\_3907064341&feature=iv&list=PL3XhkxcunJrEQ6o v7Sab9z1V2QyM0Fezq&src\\_vid=G4YsyT6xSkE&v=7KJNZUdWR5E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation_id=annotation_3907064341&feature=iv&list=PL3XhkxcunJrEQ6o v7Sab9z1V2QyM0Fezq&src_vid=G4YsyT6xSkE&v=7KJNZUdWR5E)



*A typical Japanese-American family with their "Destination Tags"*

The ostensible reason was the fear that they constituted a “fifth column,” a group within a country at war that is a potential source of sabotage and a threat to U.S. national security.

Two months earlier, Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor and destroyed the U.S. military fleet stationed there. This attack pushed America into the war against Germany, Italy, and Japan.

**US GOVERNMENT STORY ABOUT THE JAPANESE INTERNMENT**  
**(TO VIEW - COPY AND PASTE THE BELOW LINK INTO YOUR BROWSER)**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation\\_id=annotation\\_3907064341&feature=iv&list=PL3XhkxcunJrEQ6ov7Sab9z1V2QyM0FEzq&src\\_vid=G4YsyT6xSkE&v=7KJNZUdWR5E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation_id=annotation_3907064341&feature=iv&list=PL3XhkxcunJrEQ6ov7Sab9z1V2QyM0FEzq&src_vid=G4YsyT6xSkE&v=7KJNZUdWR5E)

A 1943 government-produced film about the wartime removal and confinement of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Japanese Relocation was shown in movie theaters before feature films. Although it was intended to shape public understanding of Japanese American incarceration, it failed to present a balanced view of the subject.

**EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066**

On February 19, 1942, shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japanese forces, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 intending to prevent espionage on American shores.



Military zones were created in California, Washington, and Oregon—states with a large population of Japanese Americans—and Roosevelt’s executive order commanded the relocation of Americans of Japanese ancestry.

Executive Order 9066 affected the lives of about 117,000 people—the majority of whom were American citizens.

Mexico enacted its version, and eventually, 2,264 more people of Japanese descent were removed from Peru, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina to the United States.

#### ANTI-JAPANESE ACTIVITY

Weeks before the order, the Navy removed citizens of Japanese descent from Terminal Island near the Port of Los Angeles.

On December 7, 1941, just hours after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the FBI rounded up 1,291 Japanese community and religious leaders, arresting them without evidence and freezing their assets.

In January, the arrestees were transferred to facilities in Montana, New Mexico, and North Dakota, many unable to inform their families and most remaining for the duration of the war.

Concurrently, the FBI searched the private homes of thousands of Japanese residents on the West Coast, seizing items considered contraband.

One-third of Hawaii's population was of Japanese descent. In a panic, some politicians called for their mass incarceration. Japanese-owned fishing boats were impounded.

Some Japanese residents were arrested and 1,500 people—one percent of the Japanese population in Hawaii—were sent to camps on the U.S. mainland.

#### JOHN DEWITT

Lt. General John L. DeWitt, leader of the Western Defense Command, believed that the civilian population needed to be taken control of to prevent a repeat of Pearl Harbor.

To argue his case, DeWitt prepared a report filled with known falsehoods, such as examples of sabotage that were later revealed to be the result of cattle-damaging power lines.

DeWitt suggested the creation of the military zones and Japanese detainment to Secretary of War Henry Stimson and Attorney General Francis Biddle. His original plan included Italians and Germans, though the idea of rounding up Americans of European descent was not as popular.

At Congressional hearings in February 1942, a majority of the testimonies, including those from California Governor Culbert L. Olson and State Attorney General Earl Warren, declared that all Japanese should be removed.

Biddle pleaded with the president that mass evacuation of citizens was not required, preferring smaller, more targeted security measures. Regardless, Roosevelt signed the order.

#### WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

After much organizational chaos, about 15,000 Japanese Americans willingly moved out of prohibited areas. Inland state citizens were not keen on new Japanese residents, and they were met with racist resistance.



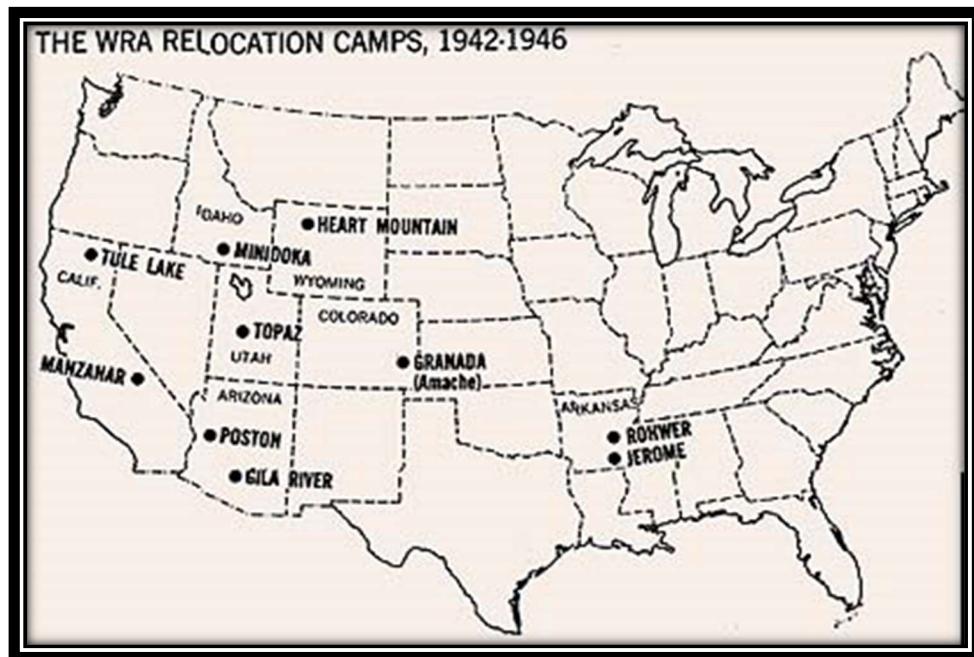
**Ten state governors voiced opposition**, fearing the Japanese might never leave, and demanded they be locked up if the states were forced to accept them.

A civilian organization called the **War Relocation Authority** was set up in March 1942 to administer the plan, with Milton S. Eisenhower from the Department of Agriculture to lead it. **Eisenhower only lasted until June 1942, resigning in protest over what he characterized as incarcerating innocent citizens.**

#### RELOCATION TO ASSEMBLY CENTERS

Army-directed evacuations began on March 24. **People had six days' notice to dispose of their belongings other than what they could carry.**

Anyone who was at least **1/16th Japanese** was evacuated, **including 17,000 children under 10, as well as several thousand elderly and handicapped.**



*Map of The Relocation Centers in the US*

Japanese Americans reported to centers near their homes. From there they were transported to a relocation center where they might live for months before transfer to a permanent wartime residence.

These centers were located in remote areas, often reconfigured fairgrounds and racetracks featuring buildings not meant for human habitation, like horse stalls or cow sheds, that had been converted for that purpose. In Portland, Oregon, 3,000 people stayed in the livestock pavilion of the Pacific International Livestock Exposition Facilities.

The Santa Anita Assembly Center, just several miles northeast of Los Angeles, was a de-facto city with 18,000 interred, 8,500 of whom lived in stables. Food shortages and substandard sanitation were prevalent in these facilities.

#### LIFE IN THE ASSEMBLY CENTERS

Assembly centers offered work to detainees with the policy that they should not be paid more than an Army private. Jobs ranged from doctors to teachers to laborers and mechanics. A couple of assembly centers were the sites of camouflage net factories, which provided work.

There were opportunities for farm work during a labor shortage, and over 1,000 internees were sent to other states to do seasonal farm work. **Over 4,000 internees were allowed to leave to attend college.**

### CONDITIONS IN THE RELOCATION CENTERS

There was a total of 10 permanent housing camps called Relocation Centers. Typically, in some form of barracks, several families were housed together, with communal eating areas.

Residents who were designated as dissidents went to a special camp in Tule Lake, California.

Two relocation centers in Arizona were located on Indian reservations, despite the protests of tribal councils, who were overruled by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Each relocation center was its town, featuring schools, post offices, and work facilities, as well as farmland for growing food and keeping livestock, all surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers.

Camouflage net factories offered work at several relocation centers. One housed a naval ship model factory. There were also factories in different centers that manufactured items for use in other centers, including garments, mattresses, and cabinets. Several centers had agricultural processing plants.



### VIOLENCE IN THE RELOCATION CENTERS

Violence occasionally occurred in centers. In Lordsburg, New Mexico, internees were delivered by trains and marched two miles at night to the camp.

An elderly man attempted to flee and was shot and killed. After settling in, at least two men were shot and killed while trying to escape.

On August 4, 1942, a riot broke out in the Santa Anita facility, the result of anger about insufficient rations and overcrowding.

At Manzanar, California, tensions resulted in the beating of a Japanese American Citizens League member by several men. Fearing a riot, police tear-gassed crowds, and one man was killed by police.

At the Topaz Relocation Center, a man was shot and killed by military police for going too close to the perimeter. Two months later, a couple was shot for the same reason.

In 1943, a riot broke out at Tule Lake following an accidental death. Tear gas was dispersed, and martial law was declared until agreements were reached.

### FRED KOREMATSU

In 1942, 23-year-old Fred Korematsu was arrested for refusing to relocate to a Japanese internment camp. His case made it to the Supreme Court, where his attorneys argued in *Korematsu v. United States* that Executive Order 9066 violated the Fifth Amendment. He lost the case, but he went on to become a civil rights activist and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998. With the creation of California's Fred Korematsu Day, the U.S. saw its first U.S. holiday named for an Asian American. But it would take another Supreme Court decision to halt the internment of Japanese Americans.

The internment camps ended in 1945 following a Supreme Court decision.

## MITSUYE ENDO

In *Endo v. the United States*, it was ruled that the War Relocation Authority “has no authority to subject citizens who are concededly loyal to its leave procedure.”

The case was brought on behalf of Mitsuye Endo, the daughter of Japanese immigrants from Sacramento, CA.

After filing a habeas corpus petition, the government offered to free her, but Endo refused, wanting her case to address the entire issue of Japanese internment.



Two years later, the Supreme Court made the decision but gave Roosevelt the chance to begin camp closures before the announcement. One day after Roosevelt made his announcement, the Supreme Court revealed its decision.

During the time the “Relocation Centers” were in operation a total of 1,862 detainees died from various diseases.

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## **PART TWO**

### ARKANSAS ROHWER RELOCATION CENTER MEMORIAL CEMETARY OVERVIEW



*Rohwer War Relocation Center Cemetery in Rohwer, Desha County, AR.*

Rohwer Relocation Center Memorial Cemetery in Desha County, Arkansas, also known as the Nisei Camp Cemetery, is one of only three extant Japanese American relocation center cemeteries in the United States. Today, the cemetery is the only part of the Rohwer Relocation Center that remains.

Japanese Americans interned in the relocation center from 1942 to 1945 designed and built the cemetery which has several monuments, including one honoring a Japanese American soldier who died fighting in Europe during World War II.

Governor Homer Adkins, a former Ku Klux Klan member, initially opposed the WRA's proposal to build Rohwer and its neighbor, Jerome, in Arkansas, but relented after being assured that the Japanese American detainees would be controlled by armed white guards at these facilities and they would be removed from the state at the end of the war. During this era, Arkansas had Jim Crow laws and continued with its disenfranchisement of African-American citizens started at the turn of the century. Adkins supported unsuccessful legislation that would have barred Asian Americans—including American citizens—from owning land and successfully banned Japanese Americans from leaving camp for work in the state or from attending any of the colleges in the state.

In March 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9102, which established the War Relocation Authority, the federal agency responsible for the evacuation, relocation, and internment of Japanese Americans and the construction and administration of internment camps throughout the United States. The U.S. military supported Executive Order 9066 by assembling and transporting the evacuees. Through Executive Order 9066 came Proclamation No.1, which was initially a policy of voluntary participation to relocate; however, the relocation soon became mandatory forcing some 120,000 Japanese Americans and those of Japanese ancestry to move to 10 inland internment camps across the nation.

#### HISTORY

The 10,161-acre (4,112 ha) of land on which Rohwer was built had been purchased by the Farm Security Administration from tax-delinquent landowners in the 1930s.

It remained largely abandoned until the War Relocation Authority, which oversaw the World War II incarceration program, took it over in 1942. It planned to use this facility to incarcerate ethnic Japanese, including American citizens from West Coast areas considered strategic to the war effort.

The Linebarger-Senne Construction Company was contracted to build the camp at \$4.8 million; it worked under the supervision of the Army Corps of Engineers. The land was heavily forested and swampy due to its proximity to the Mississippi River 5 miles to the east. Extensive clearing and draining were necessary, making construction at the site a difficult and slow-going task.

The camp was still under construction when the first inmates began to arrive. Ultimately the camp held administrative offices, schools, a hospital, and 36 residential blocks, each with twelve 20' by 120' barracks divided into several "apartments", as well as communal dining and sanitary facilities, all contained within a guarded barbed-wire fence.



Rohwer Relocation Camp was constructed in the late summer and early fall of 1942 as a result of Executive Order 9066 (February 19, 1942). Under this order, over 110,000 Japanese Americans and their immigrant parents were forcibly removed from the three Pacific Coast States—California, Oregon, and Washington. In all, ten camps were established in desolate sites, all chosen for their distance from the Pacific Coast. *The monuments found within the camp's cemetery are perhaps the most poignant record of this time.*

Rohwer Relocation Center was one of only two relocation centers located in the eastern half of the U.S.; the other was the Jerome Relocation Center, 30 miles southwest of Rohwer (*both in Arkansas*).



*Trucks carrying internees and their belongings enter the Rohwer Relocation Center, showing the railroad that bisected the entrance on the left.*

Built five miles west of the Mississippi River on federal land, near railway lines for easy transport of internees, Rohwer was deemed secure, isolated, and livable.

Construction of Rohwer began in late July 1942 and extended into January 1943, but by September 1942, the relocation center was already admitting evacuees. It was in operation from September 18, 1942, until November 30, 1945, *and held as many as 8,475 Japanese Americans* forcibly evacuated from California. Regardless of family ties, even immediate family members ended up in different relocation centers or were separated within a center due to overcrowding and logistical reasons.



Rohwer consisted of 500 acres of wood-frame barracks, covered with tar paper and divided into blocks with twelve barracks per block. Each block also contained a mess hall, a laundry, and a combination bath/toilet building. The barracks buildings were divided into six apartments of different sizes and housed 250 internees. The internees included first-generation Japanese nationals (*Issei*), and second- and third-generation Japanese Americans (*Nisei* and *Sansei*).



*These schoolchildren were placed in the Japanese internment camp at Rohwer.*

The overwhelming impression left upon the Caucasian teachers and administrators at Rohwer was that the Japanese-American pupils were generally more studious and interested in their studies than their Caucasian counterparts. They exhibited great pride in their academic achievements, a pride that was strongly reinforced by their parents and families.

The teachers who accepted assignments at Rohwer were often criticized by whites, and even the students did not always accept them immediately, but virtually all left with remarkable respect for the genuine interest and willingness of the Japanese-American students to learn.

The students also showed a strong proficiency in creative endeavors, which was particularly evident in the poetry they left behind. The theme that runs through the poetry composed by the Rohwer students is one of hope and an unswerving appreciation of natural beauty. Some of the poetry, however bittersweet, is patriotic.

The Rohwer Relocation Center housed a mix of generations with approximately 10% over the age of 60 and 40% under the age of 19. Over 10,000 evacuees passed through Rohwer Relocation Center during its existence, and over two-thirds of these were American citizens. The center closed in 1945, the buildings were removed, and most of the land was returned to agricultural fields.



*When the rains came in Rohwer, we could not leave our quarters. The water stagnated at the front steps.*

While in Rohwer Relocation Center, some internees volunteered to enlist in the U.S. Army. The volunteer soldiers from Rohwer and other relocation centers received assignment to the 100th Infantry Battalion, a unit within the United States Army's 34th Infantry Division, later activated into the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. This all-Nisei unit received recognition as one of the most highly decorated and respected in the U.S. Army. While the Japanese American men who had enlisted left Rohwer Relocation Center to fight for their country, their families remained behind as internees.

In 1943, the WRA required all adults in Rohwer and the other camps to submit to a series of questions. Officially, it was presented as the registration process to obtain clearance to leave camp for work or school — and it was initially distributed only to the citizen Nisei who were eligible for *leave, before being extended to the first-generation Issei — but administrators soon began to focus instead on assessing the "loyalty" of imprisoned Japanese Americans.*

The "*loyalty questionnaire*," as it came to be known, *created anger and confusion because of two questions:* one asked Japanese Americans if they were willing to volunteer for military service (despite their mistreatment by the government and the army) and the other if they would "forswear their allegiance to the Emperor of Japan" (although many had never held such allegiance in the first place). The set-up of the questions was confusing and internees were suspicious of their true purpose.

*The loyalty questionnaire and subsequent recruitment efforts proved especially unpopular in the Jerome camp, located 27 miles south of Rohwer.* Only 2 percent of eligible men in Jerome (and in Rohwer) enlisted. Some 2,147 others, a quarter of Jerome's population, were classified as "disloyal" after giving unfavorable responses to the questionnaire.

*They were transferred to the "segregation center" at Tule Lake, California* The population decline, combined with earlier unrest over poor working conditions in the camp, *resulted in authorities closing the Jerome camp at the end of June 1944. A significant number of former Jerome's inmates were transferred to Rohwer.*

Rohwer Relocation Center Memorial Cemetery was planned and laid out in 1943-1944 and is set within a rectangular plot containing two historic monuments, 24 low-lying concrete headstones, two entrance markers, 64 concrete posts, a bench engraved with a sun and moon, and sidewalks. All were designed and built by the internees.

There are also 17 flowering cherry trees planted in 1994 to replicate part of the original design of the cemetery which also included water features and bridges. *The historic monuments within the Rohwer Relocation Center Memorial Cemetery were the largest and most elaborately detailed of all the relocation center cemeteries.*



*On June 24, 1945, a monument to commemorate all those who died while interned at Rohwer was dedicated at the cemetery.* The historic monument still stands and consists of a square base with decorative carving and urns at the four corners. The base supports a tall obelisk with a globe and an eagle on top. The base has inscribed floral patterns, and a star and circle alternately at the four corners. Decorative carvings and inscriptions in Japanese and English adorn the obelisk on all four sides. Of particular beauty are the egret and the peacock on the south face, which stands beneath a tree branch and a stylized rising sun.

The American eagle beneath the star on the east face stands as a silent testimonial to the patriotism of the Japanese American internees.

*An inscription on this, the tallest monument reads:*

**"May the people of Arkansas keep in beauty and reverence forever this ground where our bodies sleep."**



The second monument, sponsored by the Rohwer chapter of the USO and designed and built by internee Koheiiji Horizawa and his assistant Harry Fujioka, was dedicated on November 4, 1945.

It commemorates the soldiers of the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team who served in Europe during World War II. The names of the internees who enlisted from the Rohwer Relocation Center and were killed in action are memorialized on the monument itself.

**581 men joined the U.S. Army from this camp**, either volunteering or accepting their conscription into the legendary 100th Infantry Battalion, the famed 442nd RCT and MIS. **Thirty-one who came from Rohwer died in action, and their names are inscribed on the memorial, as well as a later memorial raised nearby.**

The monument has a base shaped like the lower portion of a tank with a tall, rectangular tablet and a star on top. The relief designs in the concrete feature an American flag with the colors painted into the relief on the east and west sides beneath a carving of an eagle.

*The inscription on the back of the monument reads:*

**"In memory of our sons who sacrificed their lives in the service of their country. They fought for freedom. They died that the world might have peace."**



*In 1982, a new granite monument topped with a bronze eagle commemorating both the 24 internees who died at Rohwer and those who died while serving in World War II, was dedicated at the cemetery.*

**The new monument, located near the two historic monuments, was suggested by Sam Yada, a former Rohwer internee living in Arkansas.** Mr.Yada was concerned that the original concrete monuments, which were deteriorating, would be lost, so he proposed a new monument for the cemetery to be made of a more durable material.

**NOTE:** After I retired from the USAF in January 1975 I was employed by the US Postal Service as a letter carrier (i.e. Mailman) for 23 years. During this time I carried a route that Sam Yada lived on. During the several years I carried this particular mail route I met and became a friend of Mr. Yada.

One time about a year after I began delivering his mail we were having a conversation and the subject of his internment came up. While not visibly upset about it, he said he never thought it was necessary, but understood the reason for it. We stayed friends until I moved to another location. He was a fine man who raised a wonderful family right here in Arkansas. *John Chamberlin*

**See additional information on the Yada Family on page 3048, in article # 543**



***The Cemetery***

There are also 24 concrete headstones at the cemetery. All are of a similar design which consists of a low tablet placed on a rectangular base, with a scalloped concrete flower holder positioned at the front. The top of the face of the headstone is decorated with a floral pattern which is a symbol indicating whether the deceased was Buddhist (a flower) or Christian (a cross). The deceased internee's name and birth and death dates are located within a rectangle beneath the symbol. **These represent the 24 internees who died while living in the Center.**

A National Park Service grant from the 2011 Japanese Confinement Sites Preservation Program has assisted in efforts to stabilize and restore the Rohwer Relocation Center Cemetery. As part of the grant, the University of Arkansas Landscape Architecture Program volunteered its services to produce a Historic American Landscape Survey report of the cemetery. This effort was aided by the University's Center for Advanced Spatial Technologies (CAST) which produced a high-density survey (HDS) of the cemetery and the surrounding site.

In addition, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock has worked with the Arkansas State University Heritage Sites program to produce interpretive mapping and establish educational kiosks and audio

tours for the Rohwer Relocation Center Memorial Cemetery. The Central Arkansas Library System also preserves creative artwork left behind by the internees, such as paintings adhered to paper.



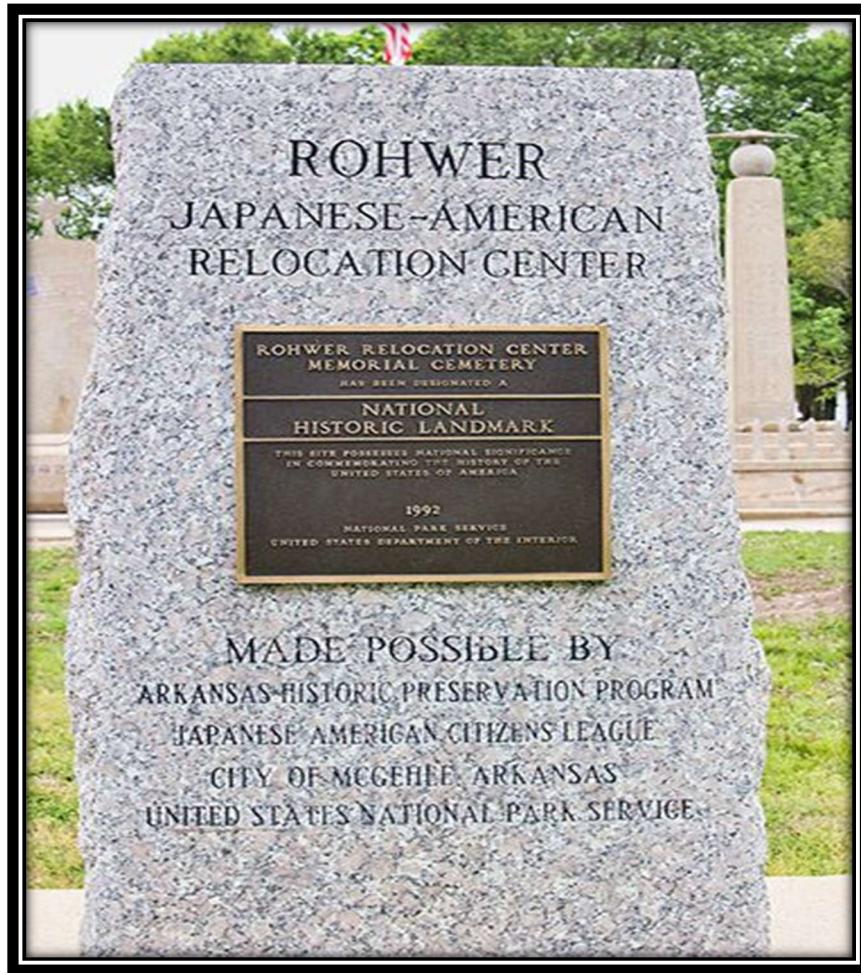
*Today, all that remains of the 500-acre Rohwer Relocation Center is the cemetery and a tall smokestack where the camp's hospital used to stand.* Neither of these is marked in any way to indicate historical significance. The rail line used to bring internees and supplies to the camp remains, though it is abandoned. *Some of the rails date back to World War II and before.* This rail line also served the Jerome War Relocation Center, which was located 30 miles (48.3 km) away.

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*There is a replica small-scale guard tower* that serves as an informational kiosk and visitors can take a self-guided walking tour along the southern boundary of the original camp.



**In 1974, the Rohwer Relocation Center Memorial Cemetery was added to the National Register of Historic Places, and in 1992, it became a National Historic Landmark.**



[National Historic Landmark Memorial](#)

There are also interpretive panels and audio *stations featuring the voice of actor George Takei, who lived at the Rohwer Relocation Center with his family in 1942, before being moved to the Tule Lake Segregation Center in California.*

Rohwer Relocation Center Memorial Cemetery, a National Historic Landmark, *is located* on the Japanese American Internment Heritage Trail off of Arkansas Highway 1, 0.6 miles North of Rohwer, AR, and 13 miles Northeast of McGehee, AR. For more information, visit the Rower Relocation Center Memorial Cemetery website or contact the McGehee Chamber of Commerce.

Rohwer Relocation Center Memorial Cemetery is featured in the National Historic Landmark Theme Study of Japanese Americans in World War 2. Rohwer Relocation Center Memorial Cemetery has been documented by the University of Arkansas through the National Park Service's Historic American Landscapes Survey program.

#### [REPARATIONS](#)

The last Japanese internment camp closed in March 1946. *President Gerald Ford officially repealed Executive Order 9066 in 1976, and in 1988, 42 years after the last camp was closed Congress issued a formal apology and passed the Civil Liberties Act awarding \$20,000 each to over 80,000 Japanese Americans as reparations for their treatment.*

After the Rohwer camp closed, 120 acres of the site were deeded to the local school district, with the remaining land sold to farming operations. Some 363 acres of the original site were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, and the cemetery became a National Historic Landmark in 1992. *Many buildings and structures remain standing in the portion of Rohwer that was not designated an NHL. The camp cemetery survives as the only site still identified as having been part of the internment center.*



In its summary of the Rohwer Relocation Center Cemetery, the National Park Service indicates that the cemetery's condition is threatened due to the deterioration of the grave markers and monuments, but that ownership of the site is unclear.

Deterioration is visible in photographs of the site. *Deterioration is discussed in a report from the National Park Service to the President.* The Find A Grave website lists 25 memorials for Rohwer War Relocation Center Cemetery.

#### **SHOOTING OF RESIDENTS BY A CIVILIAN AT ROHWER (NOV 1942)**

M.C. Brown, a tenant farmer on horseback on his way home from deer hunting, came across some Japanese Americans from the Rohwer camp, on a work detail in the woods. ]

He fired his gun, and one of the Japanese American men was struck in the hip by a pellet while another was wounded in the calf of the leg. The Japanese Americans were working in the woods under the supervision of a government engineer when the shooting occurred.

COMMUNIQUE No. 8

Nov. 17, 1942

## EVACUEES SHOT AT ROHWER

McGEHEE--A Japanese from the Rohwer relocation center was shot and slightly wounded Friday by a tenant farmer while working in the wooded area, the Arkansas Gazette said Saturday.

M. C. Brown, the assailant, tenant farmer on the Hilliard Stroud farm six miles northeast of McGehee, was jailed at Arkansas City Friday without formal charges after the shooting.

Brown told Deputy Sheriff H. C. Bowles that he was returning on horseback from a deer hunt when he met three Japanese in the woods. He allegedly called on them to halt but when they began to run, he said he fired one shot from his gun loaded with buckshot.

One Japanese was struck in the hip by a pellet and another was wounded in the calf of the leg.

The Japanese were working in the woods under the supervision of a government engineer when the shooting occurred.

Brown said he fired on the Japanese because he believed they were trying to escape from the Center. He believed the engineer was trying to aid them in getting away.

*Recent data lists the current population of Rohwer @ 25*

**PART THREE**  
**JEROME RELOCATION CENTER**  
**ARKANSAS'S SECOND RELOCATION CENTER**



The Japanese American relocation site at Jerome (in Drew County and partially in Chicot County) was listed on the [Arkansas Register of Historic Places on August 4, 2010](#). This Japanese American incarceration camp, along with a similar one built in Desha County, [eventually housed some 16,000 Japanese Americans forcibly removed from the West Coast during World War II](#).

[The Japanese American population, of which sixty-four percent were American citizens](#), had been forcibly removed from the West Coast under the doctrine of "military necessity" and incarcerated in ten relocation camps dispersed throughout the inner mountain states and Arkansas. This was the largest influx and incarceration of any racial or ethnic group in Arkansas's history.

[The Jerome Relocation Center was in operation for 634 days—the fewest number of days of any of the relocation camps.](#)

The Jerome site consisted of tax-delinquent lands situated in the marshy Delta of the Mississippi River's flood plain and was purchased by President Franklin Roosevelt's Farm Security Administration chief, Eli B. Whitaker. The lands, in dire need of clearing, development, and drainage, were in Drew and Chicot counties.

*The camp was built eight miles south of the small farming town of Dermott (Chicot County) and was connected by rail to the Rohwer Relocation Camp (Deshaw County) by the Missouri Pacific Railway system.*

The entire Jerome site encompassed 10,054 acres situated between the Big and Crooked bayous. The A. J. Rife Construction Company of Dallas, Texas, built the Jerome camp for \$4,703,347. *In operation from October 6, 1942, to June 30, 1944, Jerome held 8,497 Japanese Americans at its peak.*

The compound eventually became nearly 500 acres of tar paper, A-framed buildings arranged into specifically numbered blocks. Each block was designed to accommodate around 300 people in fourteen residential barracks with each barrack (20'x120') divided into four to six apartments. (This was the traditional military style for barracks, though the internees rebuilt or remodeled the insides.) Each block also included a recreational building, a mess hall, a laundry building, and a building for a communal latrine. *All the residential buildings were without plumbing or running water and were heated during the winter months by wood stoves.*



*One of the Classrooms*

The camp also had an administrative section that was segregated from the rest of the camp to handle camp operations, a military police section, a hospital section, a warehouse, and a factory.

section, a segregated residential section of barracks for white WRA personnel only, barracks for schools, and auxiliary buildings for such things as canteens, motion pictures, gymnasiums, auditoriums, motor pools, and fire stations.

*The camp itself was partially surrounded by barbed wire or heavily wooded areas with guard towers situated at strategic areas and guarded by a small contingent of military soldiers.*

The Jerome Center was officially declared open (although it was not completed) in September 1942, and its population reached 7,932 in January 1943.

The project director of Jerome was Paul A. Taylor until the last few months of the camp's operation. Eli B. Whitaker, former regional director of both camps in Arkansas, assumed duties as project director when Taylor took a higher position in the WRA.

The constant movement of camp populations makes completely accurate statistics difficult; however, as of January 1943, with a population of 7,932 that was engaged predominantly in agricultural work before the war, thirty-three percent of the men and women in the Jerome Camp were aliens—fourteen percent over the age of sixty.

Sixty-six percent were American citizens—thirty-nine percent under the age of nineteen. There were 2,483 school-age children in the camp—a full thirty-one percent of the total population.

The incarcerated Japanese American youth at the Jerome camp had the most negative reaction to the Army's forced loyalty and military draft program initiated in February 1943. Several hundred young *Nisei* (second-generation Japanese Americans, born in the U.S.) peacefully marched to the camp director's building and petitioned against the program.



*Closing of the Jerome Relocation Center, as the U.S. flag is lowered for the last time; June 30, 1944*

**The first of the ten relocation camps to close,** Jerome was used as a German POW camp until the end of the war in Europe. Today the site is mostly used as farmland, although a monument marks the former camp. The remnants of the hospital smokestack can also be seen south of the monument. **An internment camp museum opened in McGehee (Desha County) in 2013.**



*The World War II Japanese American Internment Museum is located at 100 S. Railroad St. in downtown McGehee.*

# JEROME RELOCATION CENTER

1942 - 1944

ON FEBRUARY 19, 1942, PRES. FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT SIGNED INTO LAW EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 9066, INTERNING OVER 120,000 PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY, AND THIS ACT IRREVOCABLY CHANGED THEIR LIVES. THE MAJORITY OF THESE PEOPLE WERE AMERICAN CITIZENS. AS A RESULT OF ALL THIS WAR TIME HYSTERIA THESE PEOPLE WERE FORCIBLY REMOVED FROM THEIR HOMES ON THE WEST COAST OF THE UNITED STATES AND ALSO IN HAWAII TO BE INTERNED BY THE WAR DEPARTMENT IN ONE OF THE TEN RELOCATION CENTERS LOCATED IN THE INTERIOR OF THE U.S.A. AT JEROME THERE WERE OVER 6,700 INTERNED FROM SEPTEMBER 1, 1942 AND THROUGH JULY 1944. THESE TEMPORARY SHELTERS WITH SHARED LIVING QUARTERS, COMMUNITY DINING HALLS AND BATHING FACILITIES WERE THE NORM. CONSTANT ON-GOING SURVEILLANCE BY THE ARMY SERVED AS A CONSTANT REMINDER OF EACH RESIDENT'S CAPTIVITY AND LOSS OF FREEDOM. THIS MEMORIAL IS DEDICATED BY THE JEROME PRESERVATION COMMITTEE AND ALSO THE JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZEN LEAGUE TO THOSE PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY WHO SUFFERED THE INDIGNITY OF BEING INCARCERATED BECAUSE OF THEIR ETHNIC BACKGROUND. MAY THIS MONUMENT SERVE TO REMIND US OF ALL THESE INCIDENTS AND INSPIRE US TO BE MORE VIGILANT AND MORE ALERT IN THE SAFE GUARDING OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL AMERICANS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR RACE, COLOR, OR CREED.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS/INFORMATION**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066**

**ISSUED BY PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT**

**FEBRUARY 19, 1942**

**WRITTEN 82 YEARS AGO**

**The President**

**Executive Order**

**Authorizing the Secretary of War to Prescribe Military Areas**

Whereas the successful prosecution of the war requires every possible protection against espionage and sabotage to national-defense material, national-defense premises, and national-defense utilities as defined in Section 4, Act of April 20, 1918, 40 Stat. 533, as amended by the Act of November 30, 1940, 54 Stat. 1220, and the Act of August 21, 1941, 55 Stat. 655 (U.S.C., Title 50, Sec. 104);

Now, therefore, under the authority vested in me as President of the United States, and Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate, whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and concerning which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion. The Secretary of War is hereby authorized to provide for residents of any such area who are excluded therefrom, such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary, in the judgment of the Secretary of War or the said Military Commander, and until other arrangements are made, to accomplish the purpose of this order. The designation of military areas in any region or locality shall supersede designations of prohibited and restricted areas by the Attorney General under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, and shall supersede the responsibility and authority of the Attorney General under the said Proclamations in respect of such prohibited and restricted areas.

I hereby further authorize and direct the Secretary of War and the said Military Commanders to take such other steps as he or the appropriate Military Commander may deem advisable to enforce compliance with the restrictions applicable to each Military area herein above authorized to be designated, including the use of Federal troops and other Federal Agencies, with authority to accept assistance of state and local agencies.

I hereby further authorize and direct all Executive Departments, independent establishments, and other Federal Agencies, to assist the Secretary of War or the said Military Commanders in carrying out this Executive Order, including the furnishing of medical aid, hospitalization, food, clothing, transportation, use of land, shelter, and other supplies, equipment, utilities, facilities, and services.

This order shall not be construed as modifying or limiting in any way the authority heretofore granted under Executive Order No. 8972, dated December 12, 1941, nor shall it be construed as limiting or modifying the duty and responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, concerning the investigation of alleged acts of sabotage or the duty and responsibility of the Attorney General and the Department of Justice under the Proclamations of December 7 and 8, 1941, prescribing regulations for the conduct and control of alien enemies, except as such duty and responsibility is superseded by the designation of military areas hereunder.

**Franklin D. Roosevelt**

**The White House,**

**February 19, 1942.**

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**COPY OF THE LETTER THAT ACCOMPANIED THE \$ 20,000 CHECKS**

**48 YEARS AFTER PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT SIGNED HIS EXECUTIVE ORDER**

**THIS LETTER WRITTEN 34 YEARS AGO**



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

A monetary sum and words alone cannot restore lost years or erase painful memories; neither can they fully convey our Nation's resolve to rectify injustice and to uphold the rights of individuals. We can never fully right the wrongs of the past. But we can take a clear stand for justice and recognize that serious injustices were done to Japanese Americans during World War II.

In enacting a law calling for restitution and offering a sincere apology, your fellow Americans have, in a very real sense, renewed their traditional commitment to the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice. You and your family have our best wishes for the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that appears to read "G. Bush".

GEORGE BUSH  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 1990

President Bush's letter mailed with the checks

TAKEN FROM A DISPLAY AT THE WW2 MUSEUM IN NEW ORLEANS  
**(ADDITIONAL DATA HAS BEEN ADDED)**



On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, allowing for the removal of any persons from Western coastal areas. This order paved the way for the forcible removal of those of Japanese descent from their homes and into camps. In all, roughly 120,000 men, women, and children were held without trial, and nearly 70,000 of those imprisoned were American citizens. **Ultimately, not a single Japanese American person was ever convicted of espionage or acts of sabotage against the United States.**

Lives were suspended for years. Those forced into camps had to liquidate their homes and businesses and suspend their studies and careers. Near the war's end, between 1944 and 1945, the "relocation centers," incarceration camps where Japanese Americans were forced to live, began to close. **Upon release, former internees were offered \$25 and a train ticket to their destination.** Many were left with nowhere to go. They had no lives and homes to return to. Because the experience was a shameful and humiliating violation of civil rights, many never spoke about it, even among their own families.

Only decades later (38 years) did the US government acknowledge this violation of civil rights. Spurred by a Japanese American movement for redress and authorized by **President Jimmy Carter**, a Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) **was organized in 1980 to gather and document facts relating to the WWII experience.**

#### THE COMMISSION FINDINGS

In **1982**, the commission published its findings in a report, Personal Justice Denied, which concluded that Executive Order 9066 and the incarceration of those of Japanese descent was **"not justified by military necessity" but rather was the result of "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership."**

If interested in reviewing this report, "Personal Justice Denied" the entire report is available as follows:

**Copy and paste the below link into your browser.**

**[https://www.google.com/books/edition/Personal\\_Justice\\_Denied/k1BBS5t1fs0C?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Personal_Justice_Denied/k1BBS5t1fs0C?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover)**

Following this report, in **1988**, President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act, enabling compensation to more than 100,000 survivors of the camps. From 1990–1993, formal apology letters were sent, along with checks for **\$20,000**. A total of **82,219** received this redress. For many, the time for **reparation had come too late**. (See the apology letter on page **2157C**)

Please note here that the Commission (CWRIC) was organized to gather and document facts relating to the WWII experience in **1980**, published their findings in **1982**, and President Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act, which authorized reimbursement to all involved in **1988**, but the first check was not sent out until **1990**, 10 years after the Committee was formed and 2 years after the bill was signed by the President.

During the time the War ended in **1945** and the time it was addressed by President Jimmy Carter in **1980**, 35 years had passed and 6 different Presidents had served, both Democrats and Republicans without taking any action on this matter.

Those imprisoned ended up losing between \$2 billion and \$5 billion worth of property in 2017 dollars during the war, according to the Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians.

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### THE JAPANESE-AMERICAN MEMORIAL



*"Here We Admit A Wrong"*

### A FEW FOLLOW-UPS

Justice Murphy of the Supreme Court expressed the following opinion in *Ex parte Mitsuye Endo*: said:  
I join in the opinion of the Court, but I am of the view that detention in Relocation Centers of persons of Japanese ancestry regardless of loyalty is not only unauthorized by Congress or the Executive but is another example of the unconstitutional resort to racism inherent in the entire evacuation program. As stated more fully in my dissenting opinion in *Fred Toyosaburo Korematsu v. United States*, 323 U.S. 214, 65 S.Ct. 193, racial discrimination of this nature bears no reasonable relation to military necessity and is utterly foreign to the ideals and traditions of the American people.

One of the most stunning ironies in this episode of American civil liberties was articulated by an internee who, when told that the Japanese were put in those camps for their protection, countered "If we were put there for our protection, why were the guns at the guard towers pointed inward, instead out outward.

"Here we admit a wrong," President Ronald Reagan said as he signed the Civil Liberties Act. "Here we affirm our commitment as a nation to equal justice under the law."

Presenting a citation to the 442nd, President Harry Truman said: "You fought not only the enemy, but you fought prejudice — and you won. Keep up that fight and we will continue to win to make this great republic stand for what the Constitution says it stands for the welfare of all of the people all of the time."

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About 800 Japanese-Americans were killed fighting for a country that held members of their ethnic group and some of their parents in captivity; their names are on the D.C. memorial.

If interested, more information about this article is available at The National Archives by copying and pasting the below link into your browser.



<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/japanese-relocation>

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### THE LEGAL LEGACY

Several significant legal decisions arose out of Japanese-American internment, relating to the powers of the government to detain citizens in wartime. Among the cases which reached the US Supreme Court were *Ozawa v. United States* (1922), *Yasui v. United States* (1943), *Hirabayashi v. United States* (1943), *ex parte Endo* (1944), and *Korematsu v. United States* (1944). In *Ozawa*, the court established that people defined as 'white' were specifically of Caucasian descent; In *Yasui* and *Hirabayashi*, the court upheld the constitutionality of curfews based on Japanese ancestry; in *Korematsu*, the court upheld the constitutionality of the exclusion order. In *Endo*, the court accepted a petition for a writ of habeas corpus and ruled that the WRA had no authority to subject a loyal citizen to its procedures.

Korematsu's and Hirabayashi's convictions were vacated in a series of *coram nobis* cases in the early 1980s. In the *coram nobis* cases, federal district and appellate courts ruled that newly uncovered evidence revealed an unfairness which, had it been known at the time, would likely have changed the Supreme Court's decisions in the Yasui, Hirabayashi, and Korematsu cases.

These new court decisions rested on a series of documents recovered from the National Archives showing that the government had altered, suppressed, and withheld important and relevant information from the Supreme Court, including the Final Report by General DeWitt justifying the internment program. The Army had destroyed documents to hide alterations that had been made to the report to reduce their racist content. The *coram nobis* cases vacated the convictions of Korematsu and Hirabayashi (Yasui died before his case was heard, rendering it moot), and are regarded as part of the impetus to gain passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.

The rulings of the US Supreme Court in the Korematsu and Hirabayashi cases were criticized in Dictum in the 2018 majority opinion of *Trump v. Hawaii* upholding a ban on immigration of nationals from several Muslim-majority countries but not overruled as it fell outside the case law applicable to the lawsuit.

Regarding the Korematsu case, Chief Justice Roberts wrote: "The forcible relocation of U.S. citizens to concentration camps, solely and explicitly based on race, is objectively unlawful and outside the scope of Presidential authority."

Former Supreme Court Justice Tom C. Clark, who supported the US in the relocation", writes in the epilogue to the book *Executive Order 9066*:

The truth is—as this deplorable experience proves—that constitutions and laws are not sufficient of themselves...Despite the unequivocal language of the Constitution of the United States that the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended, and despite the Fifth Amendment's command that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, both of these constitutional safeguards were denied by military action under Executive Order 9066.

## **DISCLAIMER**

PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT EVEN THOUGH THIS INFORMATION  
HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM WHAT APPEARS TO BE AUTHENTIC WEBSITES  
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