

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Manzanar War Relocation ~~Camp~~ Center

and or common Manzanar Internment ~~or Concentration~~ Camp

**2. Location**

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_  vicinity of Lone Pine

state California code 06 county Inyo code 027

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name City of Los Angeles

street & number 200 N. Spring Street

city, town Los Angeles \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state California

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Inyo County Courthouse

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

city, town Lone Pine \_\_\_\_\_ state California

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Manzanar War Relocation Center has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date July 30, 1976  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records National Register of Historic Places

city, town Washington \_\_\_\_\_ state DC

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved      date

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Manzanar War Relocation Center, an internment camp, is in Owens Valley, California, at the eastern base of the dramatic Sierra Valley and near Mount Whitney. The rugged mountain peaks form an impressive background for the dry desert of the campsite. To the east, the Inyo Mountains form the skyline. Formerly agricultural land, Owens Valley changed to its desert-like quality when the City of Los Angeles arranged to use the valley's water resources early in this century. In 1942, the U.S. Government set aside 6,000 acres in the valley for the establishment of a camp for the internment of persons of Japanese descent. Of this area, 640 acres were for the camp proper.

The 640-acre rectangle that comprised the 10,000-person capacity camp was originally surrounded by a barbed-wire fence with a watch tower at each corner and midway along each of the four sides. The fence and the towers are gone, but along the western side of the former camp the trace of the fence is visible by means of a row of posts, and the concrete foundation posts of the northwest tower remain.

At the main entrance of the camp, 1st Street, the inhabitants built two stone structures, each having a hint of Oriental architecture in its outline. The structure nearer the highway was a sentry post manned by Army personnel. The other was a police post manned by internees. On the walls of both, returning veterans of the camp have inscribed their names, often listing their room, building, and block numbers. The State of California has placed a landmark plaque on the sentry post.

In the beginning, the hastily built, one-story barracks were divided into rooms, each 20 feet by 24 feet and each housing a family. These barracks were arranged into 36 blocks of 16 barracks each. The dusty streets that separated the blocks can be traced in part. Common bathrooms, showers, laundries, and mess halls were located within the blocks. Here and there, concrete slabs with their drain holes and concrete posts that supported structures are found. Within several of the blocks, traces of former rock gardens survive. North of Block 23, near the orphanage site, are traces of the largest Japanese-style garden, Merritt Park, in the camp.

The southeast corner of the camp was the Federal administrative area with offices and staff housing. Ruins here are more extensive than elsewhere in the camp. Several rock walls and concrete slabs stand. Also, rock-lined flower circles and rock-lined paths are more prevalent than in the camp generally. One rock-walled circle marks the site of the camp flagstaff.

Northwest of the main entrance, and now having its own entrance from the highway, is the only substantial building remaining. This large metal building served as the school auditorium and is an Inyo County maintenance shop and garage.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
X 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		X other (specify) Wartime Internment Camp

Specific dates 1942-45

Builder Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which authorized the Secretary of War to exclude citizens and aliens from certain designated areas as a security measure against sabotage and espionage. As a result, 110,000 persons of Japanese descent, most of them American citizens, were forcibly removed from their homes in California, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska, and removed to permanent camps far from the Pacific Coast. Manzanar was the first of these camps. Here, in a scrubby desert, 10,000 of these people were herded into barracks without being accused of any crime or given any hearing or a trial. Thus, a long history of anti-Japanese agitation and legislation on the West Coast reached a climax. Eventually, most Americans came to the conclusion that a grave injustice had been caused these people and their constitutional rights had been violated. Meanwhile, the vast majority of Japanese-Americans remained loyal to the country despite this great adversity. Manzanar is symbolic of this drastic event in American history, an event that is a reminder that a nation of laws needs constantly to honor the concept of freedom and the rights of its citizens.

### Japanese-Americans

The arrival of the first Japanese immigrants in the United States in the 1880s was welcomed by West Coast promoters who were looking for cheap labor to replace Chinese after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. At first, Japanese were slow to enter the United States, although a number emigrated to the Kingdom of Hawaii to work on the sugar plantations. When Hawaii became a United States Territory in 1898, many of these Japanese were free to move to the mainland, eventually causing Californians of an anti-Asian persuasion to view the newcomers as part of an Oriental threat to the social well-being of the country. At the same time, Japan was developing into an industrial nation at an astounding rate, which also alarmed some Americans of a "Yellow Peril."

The migration continued. In 1890 there were 3,000 Japanese in the United States. In 1900, 12,600 arrived, mostly from Hawaii. Between 1900 and 1908, 135,000 Japanese entered the country, many settling in California. Political and labor leaders, joined by newspaper publishers, began active campaigns against further immigration. Reacting to California's concerns, the Federal Government restricted Japanese immigration in 1908 ("The Gentleman's Agreement"), then prohibited it entirely in 1924. Also, Japanese who had entered the country were barred from citizenship. Meanwhile, California passed the Alien Land Law in 1913, which had the effect of preventing Japanese immigrants from owning land. Many Issei (first-generation immigrants), however, simply transferred their titles to their American-born children (Nisei).

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 640 acres

Quadrangle name Lone Pine

Quadrangle scale 1:62,500

UTM References

A 

04	397060	4066021
Zone	Easting	Northing

B 

04	398040	4064080
Zone	Easting	Northing

C 

04	3970000	4063070
Zone	Easting	Northing

D 

04	3960001	4065070
Zone	Easting	Northing

E 

Zone	Easting	Northing

F 

Zone	Easting	Northing

G 

Zone	Easting	Northing

H 

Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Erwin N. Thompson, Historian

organization Denver Service Center

date August 12, 1984

street & number 755 Parfet Street

telephone (303) 234-7509

city or town Lakewood

state Colorado

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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West of the camp and adjacent to it is a cemetery site. The inscription on a monument translates to English as the "Tower of Memory." Several burials are said to remain. At the northwest corner of the camp, the concrete footings of the hospital complex are found. Trees scattered along intermittent Bairs Creek in the southwest area offer some shade. Camp residents once had a picnic area here.

In 1945, the campsite was cleared of nearly all structures and returned to the administration of the City of Los Angeles in much the same condition as it had been before. The historically significant area is the 640 acres that comprised the camp at Manzanar and which was surrounded by a barbed-wire fence. It includes the cemetery site that lay outside the fence.

Outside the boundary of the camp, northwest of the northwest corner and near Shepherd Creek, is a 600,000-gallon water reservoir constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It is excluded from the recommended boundaries.

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Even before Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor sentiment against Japanese in America had reached a high pitch. December 7, 1941, lit the flame. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, returning from a hasty inspection of Hawaii, informed the nation that the attack had succeeded because of the effective fifth-column work in the Islands. In fact, there was no fifth column in Hawaii. Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt, commanding general of the Western Defense Command, wrote in February 1942:

The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become "Americanized," the racial strains are undiluted. ... It, therefore, follows that along the Pacific Coast over 112,000 potential enemies, of Japanese extraction, are at large today. There are indications that these were organized and ready for concerted action at a favorable opportunity. The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken.<sup>1</sup>

General DeWitt carried out Presidential Executive Order 9066, first attempting to have Japanese-Americans move from military zones voluntarily. State governments in the interior of the country generally refused to receive these people. Meanwhile, the Justice Department rounded up aliens who were considered potentially dangerous to the war effort. These included both German and Japanese individuals who were turned over to the Department's own internment centers.<sup>2</sup>

On March 18, 1942, the War Relocation Authority (WRA), first headed by Milton S. Eisenhower and then by Dillon S. Myer, was created to head the mass resettlement. The U.S. Army selected the first two camp sites, Manzanar in California's Owens Valley and Poston on the Colorado River in Arizona. The Army Corps of Engineers began construction at these two sites and eight other that were chosen by the WRA:

<u>Camp</u>	<u>Capacity</u>
Manzanar, California	10,000
Tule Lake, California	16,000
Poston, Arizona (3 units)	20,000
Rivers, Arizona (2 units)	15,000
Minidoka, Idaho	10,000
Topaz, Utah	10,000
Granada, Colorado	8,000
Heart Mountain, Wyoming	12,000
Jerome, Arkansas	10,000
Rohwer, Arkansas	10,000

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The Army oversaw the evacuation, which began in March and was completed by August 1942, and controlled most of the evacuees themselves until November when the War Relocation Authority took over camp administration. Manzanar, however, differed. It was filled to overflowing early in the process, its evacuees being moved there directly from their homes rather than being first sent to assembly centers, and the camp was turned over to the WRA on June 1, 1942.

The Japanese-Americans arriving at Manzanar found themselves in miserable circumstances. Rows of 20 by 100-foot, tarpaper-covered barracks were their living quarters. All other facilities were communal. One woman later recalled,

They used cheap pine wood /for walls/. The knots would fall off so we could see into a neighbor's room, and we could hear the shocking sound of voices, complaining, arguing bitterly. We weren't used to this. Our family was a gentle family. I was deeply upset because our daughter was listening, and I couldn't shut it out.<sup>3</sup>

By their own efforts, however, the internees gradually improved their living conditions as far as circumstances allowed. Doctors and medical supplies slowly improved in quality and quantity. After severe shortages, school supplies became more plentiful. The internees established a chicken ranch, a hog farm, and a pickle factory. For a time, the camp manufactured camouflage materials for the military.

A picture has sometimes been drawn of Japanese-Americans living passively in these camps throughout the long months of internment, accepting their fate calmly. In fact, episodes of turmoil and violence occurred in nearly all the camps. Manzanar was no exception. In December 1942, six masked men attacked a suspected informer for the camp administration. The latter identified one of the attackers who was jailed. A mass meeting was held to protest the arrest. Negotiations breaking down, an angry crowd regathered and vowed to "get" other suspected informers. The camp director ("project director") then called in military police. The crowd refused to disperse; the military police threw tear gas, then opened fire. Two men were killed and nine wounded. The suspected leaders of the riot were removed from Manzanar and eventually were resettled at Tule Lake, California, after that camp became a center for dissenters from all the others.

As 1942 ended, the War Department decided to establish a Nisei combat team for service in Europe. Volunteers had to pass a loyalty review by answering a questionnaire. This poorly written document resulted in deep divisions within the camps. Some people refused to answer questions concerning loyalty on the basis their legal rights were being denied. Deep and troubling rifts among the

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internees developed. In the end, men from Manzanar volunteered for the Army, and the all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team went on to glory in Italy and France. Another 3,700 Nisei served in combat areas in the Pacific War, mainly in intelligence functions, where they won the admiration of Army and Marine officers in the Central Pacific and elsewhere.

As the war progressed, more and more American leaders questioned the justification for continuing the relocation camps. As the months passed, more and more internees received permission to leave the camps, for military service, college, farm work, and the like. Manzanar's population declined to 5,000 in 1944; the camp was closed in 1945. Forty years later, Japanese-Americans continue to make annual pilgrimages to this scene of their incarceration.

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Footnotes

1. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, Personal Justice Denied, Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment Of Civilians (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), p. 6.
2. Department of Justice internment centers are not to be confused with the ten relocation or internment camps to which the general West Coast Japanese population was moved. Since 1942, there has been much debate over the names of the latter camps. Although some Japanese-Americans prefer the term "concentration camps," the application of this term to the horrors in Europe make it unacceptable to other Americans. The U.S. Supreme Court refused to use the term in 1944. The term "internment camp" allows for confusion between the ten camps and the Justice Department's detention centers. "Relocation camp" is innocuous.
3. Fred Barbash, "In Desert Camp, Life Behind Barbed Wire," The Washington Post, December 6, 1982.

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Conn, Stetson; Engelman, Rose C.; and Fairchild, Byron. Guarding the United States and Its Outposts. The Western Hemisphere. United States Army In World II. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964.

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Hosokawa, Bill. Nisei, The Quiet Americans. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1969.

The Mazanar Committee. Extracts from "A Brief History of Manzanar," and "Self-Guided Tours of Manzanar," 1981.

Nomura, Shi. "Manzanar Pilgrim's Travel Fact Sheet," and "Camp Manzanar Points of Interest, Supplement Part II," 1980.

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Boundary Description

Starting at a point where Highway 395 meets a dirt road entering the highway from the west 2,950 feet southeast of the intersection of Highway 395 and Shepherd Creek, then in a straight line along the west side of Highway 395 southeast for a distance of 6,250 feet to where Highway 395 meets a dirt road entering the highway from the west, then in a straight line in a southwesterly direction along the north side of that dirt road and projecting the line beyond the turning of that road for a total distance from Highway 395 of 4,250 feet, then in a straight line in a northwesterly direction until it reaches the east side of a northwest-southeast dirt road, then continuing in a straight line along the east side of that road to its end, then in a straight line along the south side of a dirt road in a northeasterly direction to the point of beginning.