

Manzanar



WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY
 WARTIME CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION
 Presidio of San Francisco, California
 May 3, 1942

INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY



ing Area:

When your presence is required at a meeting of the Los Angeles War Relocation Authority on the first Monday of every month, please contribute as much as you can to the War Relocation Authority in the form of a check or cash to the point of distribution.

Respectfully, dated May 3, 1942, all persons in the above area by 12 o'clock noon, per residence after 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., representative of the Commanding General.

In a family, or in case of grave emergency, as indicated by this evacuation to the following or other disposition of most kinds of personal goods, books, automobiles and other property.

By, or the person in whose name most of the Civil Control Station in member families on Monday, May 4, 1942, or between





In 1942 the United States Government ordered over 110,000 men, women, and children to leave their homes and detained them in remote, military-style camps. Two-thirds of them were born in America. Not one was convicted of espionage or sabotage.

In this booklet, you will read the story of a person who lived this history, in his or her own words.

MARGARET D'ILLE GLEASON

Camp: Manzanar, CA

Address: WRA Staff

Housing Area



I was born Margaret Lillian Matthew in Springfield, Illinois, November 20, 1879. My parents Winfield Scott Matthew and Marion Lillian Pomeroy were both

graduates of Northwestern University and married on Christmas Day 1877. I was the first of their 12 children.

My father was a Methodist minister, and we moved often. My parents had five children by 1887 when we traveled by train, with my grandmother, to Los Angeles. There, Father was dean of the University of Southern California. We moved to Berkeley in 1892 when Father became editor of the *California Christian Advocate*. He commuted to San Francisco on the ferry and was there when the 1906 earthquake struck. My father said the sorrows and toils of those awful days were beyond human words.

After I graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, I taught school for a brief period. In 1903, I joined the national staff of the YWCA. For five years I traveled, organizing groups of girls in the preparatory schools of New England and other eastern states.

It was my younger brother, Allen Matthew, who first introduced me to UC Berkeley freshman Ralph P. Merritt. No one was more surprised than I to meet Ralph again many years later when he became project director at Manzanar.

I was called to Japan in 1908 where, for ten years, I was a secretary of the National YWCA. It was during this time that I learned to love and admire the Japanese people and culture. During the Russian Revolution, 1918 to 1920, I served the Indochinese Red Cross in Siberia doing relief work for the Russians. I was based in Vladivostok. Returning to the United States, I again joined the national staff of the YWCA, working with the financial division. In 1927, I became General Secretary of the Oakland YWCA.

I was 56 when I married Arthur D'Ille in October 1935. We had met in Siberia, where he was in the U.S. diplomatic services. For a year and a half we lived happily on an avocado ranch in Vista, Southern California. When he died, I moved to San Francisco and took up social work with the California State Relief Administration. A friend described my work as "visiting the poor people living in abandoned boats at Hunter's Point."

I was 63 when I moved to Manzanar War Relocation Center as the chief of Community Welfare and head counselor. My experiences in Japan decades earlier were important for helping me to understand Japanese culture and Japanese Americans.

The central office of the Community Welfare Section was established in Block 1. Our small office was

equipped with one cupboard, two long tables, and benches. We had a corner for private interviews behind two screens. There were no desks, chairs, files or telephone and only one typewriter.

During 1942, the Community Welfare staff usually met each day to discuss our work and policies. A training course with lectures and discussion about social work philosophy and policy was conducted by Harry and Lillian Matsumoto, superintendents of the Children's Village, the only orphanage in a War Relocation Center. During the war, it housed up to 101 children, newborns to teenagers.

Our staff meetings and training programs were often hampered by language. Many older people spoke and read only Japanese while most young people spoke and read English. Since not everyone spoke both languages, we had a combination of older and younger employees. Language and cultural questions were a constant consideration. The question of how far Japanese language, culture, ideals, and manners should be recognized in a community whose background was Japanese but we felt should increasingly be a part of American life, came up repeatedly. We attempted

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to unite both cultural patterns, but worked constantly toward future American understanding.

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Manzanar War Relocation Center, 1942

and those of modern young Japanese Americans. The close life under crowded housing conditions aggravated this clash of ideas. Grandparents wished to control their grandchildren in discipline, manners, food, and sleeping habits. Parents' control of selection of their children's mates was accentuated in the camp. Young people's lives were constantly under the eye of their parents and others. Children had difficulty finding space, time, and quiet for homework. There were often strong differences of opinion between the older and younger Japanese Americans. Our staff stood between the old Japanese thinking and extremes of modern ideas, with an effort to unite family life and development. We tried to urge preservation of the best in both ways, and the need for preparation for the future on the basis of reality and not prejudice.

On Thanksgiving Day, 1942, my old friend Ralph Merritt became project director of the War Relocation Authority at Manzanar. As he walked into the mess hall where the 200 staff gathered for Thanksgiving dinner, I waved my hand beckoning him. I was a friendly

and familiar face. He was relieved to find me Manzanar's Community Welfare director. Ralph later said that with my background and long acquaintance with Japanese people, I was the "right person in the right place at the right moment to minister to the needs of the 10,000 evacuees living behind barbed wire fences."

On Sunday afternoon, December 6, 1942, the turbulent forces that had been at work broke into a mass riot like a thunderstorm over the Sierra Nevada. It was a tragic affair—no one person was to blame. There was no one cause. Many grievances of many kinds created uncontrollable mass emotions. Late that night, the final tragedy was enacted with the gunfire that wounded and killed men.

In the day and nights after the riot, the internees at Manzanar refused to come out of their barracks to do any of the necessary work for a city of 10,000 people. It was a dead city. No children came out to play. No lights burned at night. Days went by and Ralph could find no way to bring about the normal way of living, where children played and went to school, and people went about their daily routines.

Two weeks following the riot, Ralph was sitting in his office listening to telephoned instructions to 'get tough.' Kindly, I asked him what he planned to do. "Ralph Merritt, have you forgotten your Christian upbringing?" I asked. "Have you forgotten that this is Christmas and what Christmas means?" I said there was a warehouse full of presents that had been shipped to Manzanar by churches and friends who wanted to

give Christmas happiness to the more than 1,000 children living behind barbed wire. I suggested Ralph send trucks and men to the mountains to cut trees and bring them back to the camp to set up in front of each barracks, decorated with lights; and that presents should be distributed the day before Christmas so people could prepare Christmas trees for Christmas morning.

I reminded him there was a Children's Village at Manzanar, which was under my department. The babies and teenagers had picked up by the Army from Alaska to San Diego as 'security risks.' I proposed we arrange a great children's party at the Children's Village on Christmas Eve. That night, Ralph, his wife Varina, and I walked through the dark, dead camp to our Children's Village where happy voices welcomed us. We sat Japanese fashion on the floor surrounded by excited, happy children while the Christmas scene of shepherds and wise men was enacted upon a little stage. Then, there was Santa Claus and presents and we began to sing Christmas carols.

As we sang, we suddenly realized that there was more singing than the voices of the little children gathered in that room. Ralph got up and quietly walked out into the night. The clear moon and stars were shining over the Sierras. From out in the darkness, Christmas carols were being sung by children outside the village.

Ralph looked out on the upturned faces of boys and girls of Japanese ancestry, born in America, American citizens, from our own schools, who were standing

there in the night singing Christmas carols along with the children of the village. We called out to wish everybody a Merry Christmas and they wished all of us a Merry Christmas. Then Ralph, Varina and I stood alone watching the star that was above us. Ralph turned to me. He said, "Peace has come again to Manzanar."

I was 67 when I met Manzanar visitor George Gleason, formerly a YMCA secretary in Japan. Manzanar closed in 1945, and George and I married on February 9, 1946. We moved to Los Angeles where I lived for eight years in the midst of many old and new friends, enjoying two auto trips across the continent, and one into Western Canada.

From my two marriages, I acquired three stepdaughters and six grandchildren. I loved them as a mother and grandmother.

For the last four years of my life, I was an invalid, and for the final two and a half months was confined to my bed. Even so, my life was rich in outgoing and incoming love, in wide interests and in friendships reaching around the world.

Based on my experience at Manzanar, I hope today's young people will protect civil liberties and stand up for one another. Recognize, appreciate, and show respect for people of different ethnicity. At one time or another, we were all immigrants to this country. I pray young Americans continue to practice the values on which our country is based: freedom and justice for all.

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MANZANAR Free Press

MANZANAR

Location: Inyo County, California, at the eastern base of the Sierra Nevada.



Environmental Conditions: Temperatures can be over 100 degrees in summer and below freezing in winter. Strong winds & dust storms are frequent.

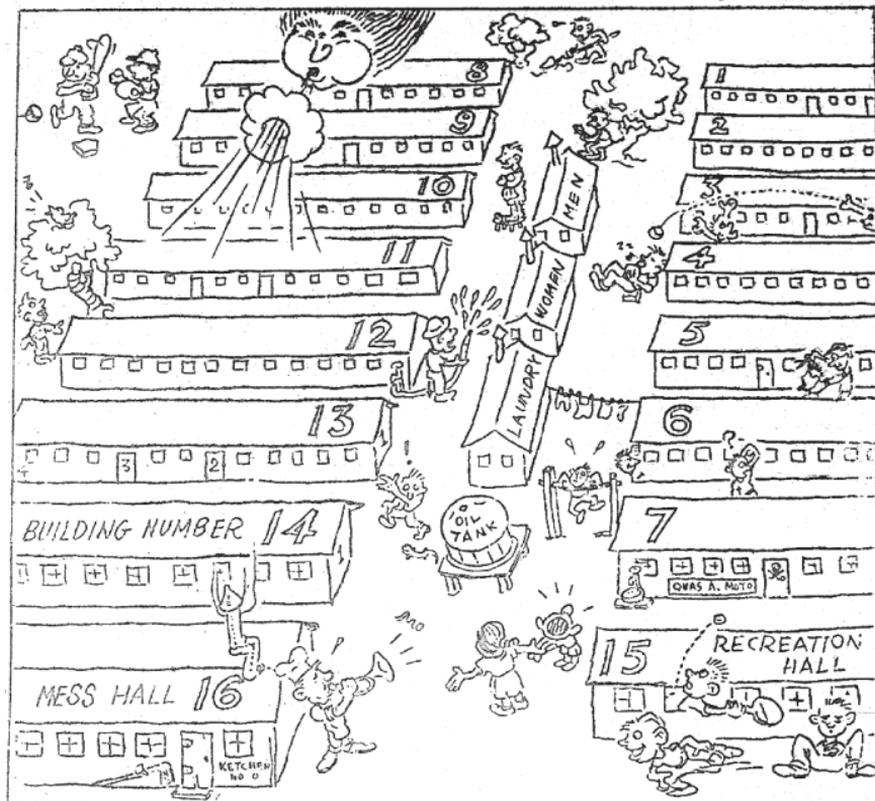
Acreage: 6,000

Opened: March 21, 1942 as a Reception Center and June 1, 1942 as a War Relocation Center.

Closed: November 21, 1945

Max. Population: 10,046 (September 1942)

Demographics: Most internees were from the Los Angeles area, Terminal Island, and the San Fernando Valley. Others came from the San Joaquin Valley and Bainbridge Island.



LIFE IN A MANZANAR BLOCK

Wind and Dust

This wind and dust I have to bear
 How hard it blows I do not care.
 But when the wind begins to blow -
 My morale is pretty low.

I know that I can see it through
 Because others have to bear it too.

So I will bear it with the rest
 And hope the outcome is the best.

- George Nishimura, age 16 (1943)



Manzanar Cemetery, Winter 2002.

This booklet was developed by the park rangers at Manzanar National Historic Site in partnership with the the individuals profiled and their families.



The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. To learn more about your national parks, visit the National Park Service website at www.nps.gov. To learn more about Manzanar National Historic Site, please visit our website at www.nps.gov/manz.

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