

A PHYSICAL HISTORY OF THE JAPANESE RELOCATION CAMP
LOCATED AT RIVERS, ARIZONA

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PREFACE

Rivers, Arizona, the site of one of the two Japanese Relocation centers which were located in Arizona, no longer exists. Today the desert has reclaimed the area where more than 16,000 Orientals reluctantly lived. Thousands of Americans unknowingly pass within a few feet of its decaying foundations every year, for a modern highway, built upon the remains of a road fashioned in part by the Japanese, traverses the boundary of one of the camp sites of the Center. The large concrete skeleton of a modern sewage disposal unit stands nearby, to the knowledgeable an incongruity in its arid setting but merely an object of curiosity to the ordinary traveler. If one leaves the road and stumbles upon the ruins of the community, very little can be deduced except that there were many buildings and that they had been arranged in rectangles which were surrounded by roads. Here and there the remains of landscaping efforts can be seen, usually in the form of concrete pools or paths lined with rocks of the desert. Nearby, on the summit of a butte, stands a curious cluster of cement pillars, the remnants of a monument dedicated to Japanese-Americans serving in the Armed Forces of the United States and erected with pride by a people bearing the suspicion of

a nation. All of this is little known, even by the residents of nearby communities.

This thesis was written in the hope of perpetuating the memory of the Center by describing it as it existed then.

The inhabitants of the Community are very briefly dealt with in the pages of this paper for it would require a sociologist or psychologist to conduct properly a study of their attitudes and personal activities. Even if this were not the case the task of closely examining every facet of such a community would far exceed the limitations of this paper.

The advice and patience freely given by Dr. Herman E. Bateman is gratefully acknowledged. The staff of the University Library, especially Mrs. Lutie Higley, Mr. Cecil Welborne, and the Special Collections Section were of immeasurable assistance to the writer in his efforts to gather materials for this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

The Rivers Relocation Center, situated in south central Arizona, was the temporary home of over 16,000 persons of Japanese descent. Its two camps housed the evacuees in barracks buildings under the administration of War Relocation Authority employees. In this setting the Government provided food, shelter, education, and work opportunities. Using evacuee labor, Rivers not only provided its own foodstuffs but sent a surplus to other centers.

The Community was a curious composite of reality and artificiality. Self-government, community functions, family relationships, customary segments of community life were necessarily confined by governmental regulations.

Rivers was not a satisfactory substitute for the rightful homes and normal relationships denied to the Japanese, but it did represent a wartime government's best efforts to achieve a solution to a trying situation.

CHAPTER I

A SHORT BACKGROUND TO JAPANESE RELOCATION

In 1942, shortly after the United States was plunged into war with Japan, the approximately 127,000 persons of Japanese ancestry in America found themselves identified by many Americans as enemies or as sympathetic to the Japanese cause. These proud Orientals, although comprising less than one-tenth of one percent of the national population, were concentrated on the Pacific seaboard which had been declared a sensitive defense area vulnerable to enemy attack. They were summarily uprooted and placed in a series of detention camps in western and middle-western states. This action had serious sociological and constitutional implications and was, and is, the source of continuing controversy.¹

1. The literature concerned with the history of the Japanese in America is abundant. A convenient collection of short articles by various authors, all concerned with the Japanese prior to World War II, is found in Present Day Immigration With Special Reference to the Japanese, Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. XCIII (1921), ed. C. Kelsey (Philadelphia: 1921). An excellent analysis of the development of the exclusion laws is found in The Politics of Prejudice, the Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion by Roger Daniels (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962) Vol. 71. Two sources have often been used by writers concerned with the removal of the Japanese. The chief defense of the Government's position and a narration of the Army's role in the evacuation is

Japanese migration to the United States was negligible until the first decade of the twentieth century when poverty in Japan and a burgeoning American labor market brought some 50,000 immigrants to west coast states. Most of the newcomers were industrious single men who diligently set aside funds in order to return to Japan with their newly acquired capital or to arrange a wife's or bride's journey to America. Their frugality and willingness to accept inferior wages and working conditions soon caused consternation in rival labor forces, especially in the ranks of California agricultural workers.

This antagonism was expressed through several organizations with varying degrees of political power. In 1905 the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League was organized. It was backed by the Union Labor Party which harbored many avowed racists among its members. Many of the Union's members belonged to an organization called the Native Sons of the Golden West which was blatant in its racist proclamations. Prominent members of the Native Sons included

found in Final Report: Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943). This is the report of General De Witt. The War Relocation Authority publications provide brief but comprehensive and interpretive coverage of the evacuation. In general they are sympathetic to the Japanese. Perhaps their best all-inclusive publication is Wartime Exile: The Exclusion of the Japanese Americans from the West Coast (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946). It was written by Ruth E. McKee, a staff member of the War Relocation Authority. These last two sources were heavily relied upon for materials included in this chapter.

Hiram Warren Johnson and James D. Phelan, both former California governors and members of the United States Senate. Ulysses S. Webb, attorney-general of California and co-author of legislation designed to prevent Japanese acquisition of land through lease or purchase, was also a member.² In addition to these and other interested groups, politicians, finding that anti-Oriental attitudes reaped a rich harvest of western votes, contributed to the deterioration of United States-Japanese relations. The Federal Government, in an effort to prevent the passage of hard-line legislation prohibiting the immigration of Orientals, negotiated an unofficial Gentlemen's Agreement in 1908. This action appeased those who harangued for restrictive legislation since it limited Japanese immigrants to certain non-laboring classes.

From that time until the Exclusion Act of 1924,³ which officially ended Oriental immigration, most of the Japanese entering the United States were women.⁴ Often

2. A partial list of prominent anti-Oriental leaders who were members of the Sons of the Golden West can be found in Cary McWilliams' Prejudice, Japanese Americans: Symbol of Intolerance (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1944), p. 22.

3. U.S., Statutes at Large, XLIII, Part I, 153.

4. War Relocation Authority, The Evacuated People, a Quantitative Description, Dept. of Interior Publication (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), p. 69.

chosen as mates through matrimonial agencies which had the blessing and the aid of the Japanese consular office, they were popularly described as picture brides because of the method of selection. The equalization of the sexes and the resulting increase in the number of family units led to a sharp rise in the birthrate among the Japanese in America. This fecundity was an asset to their economic situation, for entire households were often used as laboring units. The use of family labor granted them an advantage in the marketplace where operating costs could dictate success or failure. This advantage also had social and political implications. The non-Oriental labor force, consisting primarily of male family members, found itself challenged or supplanted. It reacted with resentment and apprehension.⁵

A new problem confronted the racists. A generation of American-born Japanese, known as Nisei, would soon receive political power through the ballot box.⁶ In 1921 the controller of the State of California, John S. Chambers, who

5. DeWitt, Final Report, pp. 396, 416-27.

6. The Japanese in America can be divided into three categories: the Issei, Kibei, and Nisei. General DeWitt's Final Report defines them as follows: "Issei--any person of Japanese ancestry born in Japan. Kibei--any person of Japanese ancestry born outside of Japan who has been to and returned from Japan, particularly, American-born Japanese who have received some of their education in Japan. Nisei--any person of Japanese ancestry not born in Japan." DeWitt, Final Report, p. 514.

was also at the time chairman of the Japanese Exclusion League, illustrated the fear of the Nisei when he said:

California has gone as far as she could go under the federal and state constitution and the American-Japanese treaty. If she could have gone further she would have done so . . . one of the next steps would be the amending of the Constitution of the United States to the effect that children born in this country of parents ineligible to citizenship, themselves shall be ineligible to citizenship.⁷

A new malediction was brought forth to justify suspicion of the Nisei, namely, dual-citizenship. It was argued that Nisei children owed first allegiance to Japan as the country of their ancestry. This assertion was plainly an attempt to vilify the Japanese-American. While every child born of an alien in the United States technically had dual-citizenship, in reality this condition did not exist. The United States did not recognize the claim of any other country upon children of foreign nationals born in the United States (certain exceptions included children of embassy personnel).⁸

The Japanese were not of the comparatively familiar Western European origins, and their Mongoloid features readily identified or at least categorized their backgrounds to even the most casual observer. They were not easily

7. Annals of the American Academy, XCIII, 23.

8. For a discussion of the question of dual-citizenship see Wartime Exile, p. 39 ff, and Roy Malcolm's "American Citizenship and the Japanese," Annals, 77 ff.

assimilated into the mainstream of American life because of discriminatory laws prohibiting land ownership, inter-marriage with other races, and American citizenship. Their strong familial structure also tended to relegate them to Japanese ghettos in or in close proximity to major west coast cities. When Pearl Harbor was attacked, the Japanese in America were suffering from social isolation and were vulnerable to the fears and hostilities generated by the wartime situation. This vulnerability was intensified because the Japanese community was itself a divided house. Differences of age and culture created internal barriers. The older generation, or Issei, were alien, averaged sixty years of age, and adhered to a Japanese culture; the second generation, called Nisei, were American-born and thus citizens, had attained an average age of twenty-two, and possessed a culture more American than Japanese. To complicate matters, still a third differentiation was made within the community. The Kibei, American-born, had been schooled in Japan. This group often found their loyalties divided between the old and the new. These problems, sufficient in themselves, were heightened when Government raids shortly after Pearl Harbor resulted in the Internment of approximately 5,000 Japanese aliens. Those incarcerated were the

eldest and most influential community members, removed at a time when leadership was desperately needed.⁹

Soon after the formal declaration of war the American borders were closed to all persons of Japanese ancestry. Japanese assets were frozen and business licenses held by aliens were revoked. Tensions rose in the American community as attacks on the West Coast were anticipated and feared imminent. Rumors were abundant and included reports of plots to poison the populace, sightings of flaming signal arrows on mountainsides, and observations of an enemy reconnaissance flight over a west coast city. None of these reports was substantiated, but they greatly alarmed West Coast residents. The governors of Oregon, Washington, and California and the United States Attorney-General, Francis G. Biddle, made pleas for no witch-hunts. Most news media respected these requests. The Hearst press was a notable exception, and it unleashed a torrent of adverse publicity emphasizing the proximity of Japanese population centers to important installations on the West Coast. Further deterioration of the situation came when the realities of war were

9. Leonard Broom and John I. Kitsuse, The Managed Casualty, the Japanese-American Family in World War II, Vol. VI (1956) of University of California Publications in Culture and Society, ed. D. R. Cressey and others, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), p. 13.

brought sharply into focus by the arrival of the first refugees and wounded from Honolulu.¹⁰

In early January, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt warned against divisiveness in wartime. He reminded the nation that pitting race against race was a Nazi technique: "Divide and conquer. We must not let that happen here. We must not forget what we are defending: liberty, decency, justice. We cannot afford the economic waste of services of all loyal and patriotic citizens and non-citizens in defending our land and liberties."¹¹

The President's plea for toleration was of little avail. Despite it, a movement advocating physical action against those of Japanese descent quickly gained momentum. The same month that the President made his request California Representative Leland M. Ford, Republican, became the first Congressman to advocate removal of the entire Japanese population to concentration camps. His views were soon re-enforced by two congressional committees which were then considering the Japanese problem: the Committee on Defense and Alien Nationality and Sabotage and the House Select Committee on National Defense

10. McKee, Wartime Exile, p. 103

11. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Humanity on the Defensive--1924, Vol. XI of The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, compiled by Samuel I. Rosenman (New York: Harper Bros., 1950), p. 6.

Migration. Representative Martin Dies, Democrat, Texas, chairman of the House un-American Activities Committee, claimed that an expose of Japanese espionage was suppressed by the Government and that this suppression was partially responsible for the Pearl Harbor attack.¹²

The Seattle Naval District Headquarters warned of possible submarine attacks, mentioned reports of mysterious signal flares and blinkers, and in the same breath thanked the Canadian government for removing Japanese from the Canadian coast. The Los Angeles County supervisors passed a resolution calling for the removal of all Japanese aliens from the Los Angeles area. The California American Legion called for the establishment of Japanese internment camps. On January 28, 1942, the California Legislature banned "obvious" direct descendants of enemy nationals from taking Civil Service examinations and asked for the investigation of those already employed. In San Francisco, law enforcement officers requested the removal of all Japanese to locations at least 200 miles inland for the duration of the war.¹³

Mounting public hysteria furnished removal advocates with a very telling argument. It was their contention

12. New York Times, January 29, 1942, p. 15.

13. McKee, Wartime Exile, pp. 7-8.

that removal had to be affected to protect the Japanese from:

undeserved suspicions directed at them and from which they must be protected: first, the undeserved suspicions directed at them and which cannot be dispersed while they remain in proximity to defense areas, and the second comes from their own kindred whose disloyal intentions and possible acts will bring great humiliation and condemnation upon them.¹⁴

The noted columnist, Walter Lippman, journeyed to the West Coast and expressed concern over the Japanese problem. He advocated their removal and the curtailment of their civil rights. This, from such a well-known and respected writer, did much to influence public opinion on a national level. He was one of the first to contend that the absence of sabotage by the Japanese was an indication of organized trouble in the future. This view was later shared by Lieutenant General J. L. DeWitt, commander of the Western Defense Command and was used by him as a proof of the necessity of removal.¹⁵ By the second week of February, 1942, public concern was rapidly mounting. The California Grange, the American Legion, and the California Veterans of Foreign Wars joined the clamor requesting Japanese removal. There were numerous vitriolic personal attacks on Attorney-General Biddle's continued defense of

14. Ruth E. McKee, "History of the WRA to June 30, 1944," an unpublished paper prepared as a contribution to the Department of the Interior's War Records Project.

15. Final Report, p. 34.

the Japanese-Americans. A Lincoln's Day address by the mayor of one of America's largest cities illustrates the public's apparent willingness to curtail the rights of the Japanese-American population.

There isn't a shadow of doubt but that Lincoln, the mild mannered man whose memory we regard with almost saint-like reverence would make short work of rounding up the Japanese and putting them where they could do no harm . . . The removal of all those of Japanese parentage must be affected before it is too late. Those little men who prate of civil liberties against the interest of the nation and safety of the people will be forgotten in the pages of history while an executive in Washington who will save the nation against invasion and destruction will be entitled to a secure place beside Lincoln.¹⁶

Presidential proclamations had been issued, shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, which declared nationals and subjects of the Axis powers to be enemy aliens. The Attorney-General, through the Department of Justice, was charged with enforcing and administering these and succeeding executive orders and proclamations. Lieutenant General DeWitt, concerned with the need for action, had requested meetings with War and Justice Department representatives. These meetings were held in early January, 1942. General DeWitt recommended the establishment of prohibited areas in the coastal regions. This was done by the Attorney-General on the last day of January. These orders

16. Wartime Exile, p. 126, quoting Fletcher Bowron, Mayor of Los Angeles, Los Angeles Times, February 13, 1942, pt. I, p. 6.

affected aliens only. Since the Japanese community was a mixture of aliens and Americans, the Government was severely handicapped in its efforts to pinpoint and thus control alien subversion. Residences which housed American citizens as well as aliens could not be entered without the proper warrants. It was apparent that new legal steps would have to be taken so that declared security measures might proceed. On February 14, 1942, General DeWitt sent a memorandum to the Secretary of War recommending evacuation of all persons of Japanese ancestry from sensitive areas. The War Department drafted an Executive Order, and with the approval of the Justice Department it was presented to President Roosevelt. On February 19, 1942, Executive Order No. 9066 was issued. Under the powers granted by this order the evacuation of the Japanese-Americans began.¹⁷

The order was far-reaching. It provided for the exclusion of any or all persons from prescribed military areas with final determination to be made by the military commanders. All federal agencies were directed to assist in carrying out the order which included "the furnishing of medical aid, hospitalization, food, clothing, use of land, shelter, and other supplies, equipment, utilities, facilities, and services."¹⁸ To bolster the legality of the order, Congress

17. Final Report, pp. 26-27.

18. Final Report, p. 27.

within a month passed a law providing penalties for disobeying the executive order.¹⁹

General DeWitt issued Public Proclamation No. 1 which designated major areas in his command from which all persons of Japanese descent must leave. He advised them to remove themselves voluntarily.²⁰ Approximately 9,000 persons followed these orders and began an exodus inland. It soon became apparent that the inter-mountain states would not willingly accept these people who had been branded undesirable by coastal military and civil leaders. The resulting confusion caused General DeWitt to rescind his advice through the issuance of Public Proclamation No. 4 which forbade any further migration from military area No. 1.²¹ From this point on the evacuation moved forward in an orderly fashion through one hundred successive Civilian Exclusion Orders issued by General DeWitt which resulted in the emptying of area No. 1.²²

Early plans to evacuate and relocate the displaced persons in one operation were soon labeled impractical. It became evident that reception centers would have to be

19. U.S., Statutes at Large, LVI, pt. I, 173.

20. Final Report, pp. 32, 297.

21. Final Report, p. 105.

22. Final Report, p. 91, A specimen Exclusion Order is found on pp. 97-100.

established to quarter temporarily the evacuees for those days or weeks necessary to arrange their transfer from coastal homes to residences in the interior. The Western Defense Command established the Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) within its own ranks. Its mission was to "provide for the evacuation of all persons of Japanese ancestry from Military Area No. 1 and the California portion of Military Area No. 2 of the Pacific coast with a minimum of economic and social dislocation, a minimum use of military personnel and maximum speed."²³

The actual evacuation was handled in terms of the military priority of the areas involved. The evacuation area was divided into one hundred and eight exclusion areas. Normal evacuation usually spanned a period of a week and included posting the exclusion order, registration, processing, and removal. Efforts were made not to separate family units, and usually entire communities were sent to single locations. Evacuees were moved by the Army to fifteen temporary assembly centers within the military areas. The centers were near concentrations of Japanese

23. Final Report, p. 41.

populations.²⁴ The purpose of these centers was to (1) acclimate the evacuees to such community life, (2) to reduce the amount of travel initially needed, and (3) to keep the evacuees close to their homes for a time in order to facilitate the settling of their affairs. The services of appropriate government agencies were offered to assist the evacuees with personal or economic problems. The assembly centers were set up hastily at various race tracks and fairgrounds and were mere way stations until locations of a more permanent nature could be found outside the military areas.

Realization of the enormity and complexity of the evacuation led to a governmental decision to establish a separate agency, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) for the final settling of the Japanese into new homes. The decision was based upon two considerations: (1) the necessity of releasing the military command from such civil duties at a time of national emergency, and (2) the possible legal entanglement over the civil rights of the Japanese-Americans. The WRA was established by Executive Order No. 9102 on

24. The fifteen centers were located at: Puyallup, Washington; Mayer, Arizona; North Portland, Oregon; Santa Anita, Fresno, Marysville, Merced, Pinedale, Pomona, Sacramento, San Bruno, Salinas, Arcadia, Stockton, Turlock, and Tulare in California. These centers ranged in size from two hundred fifty persons at Mayer to 20,000 persons at Santa Anita.

March 18, 1942.²⁵ It was a division of the Executive Office of the President. Mr. Milton S. Eisenhower, then assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture, was named as its first director.

The functions of the WRA were to include provision for an equitable substitute for the home and way of life given up, to re-establish the evacuees as productive members of society, and to facilitate their re-assimilation into the American community. This last provision was to be implemented by the establishment and execution of a plan for relocating the evacuees.²⁶

25. Roosevelt Papers, XI, 174.

26. Final Report, p. 50.

CHAPTER II

THE WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY AND SITE SELECTION

At the time of its inception the primary responsibility of the WRA was to relieve the Army of the tasks of supervising and relocating the evacuees. The national emergency made it essential to keep demands upon military manpower at a minimum. Moreover, the Justice Department was becoming increasingly aware of the complex legal problems revolving about the civil rights of the displaced American citizens among the evacuees. It was felt that a civilian agency would be on firmer legal grounds than the military.¹

The Executive Order establishing the WRA was not an explicit directive, for the exact nature of the new agency's role had not yet been decided. Would its mission be one of detention or of resettlement of the Japanese? They could be confined for the duration of the war, given their freedom in all non-restricted areas, or perhaps partially confined for a specified time or in a certain location.²

Administrative personnel for the WRA were drawn from other Federal agencies, many from various sections of

1. Final Report, pp. 237-238.

2. Roosevelt Papers, XI, 174.

the Department of Agriculture. Milton Eisenhower's assistant was Elmer M. Rowalt, the Administrative officer of the Office of Land Use; Philip M. Glick, the Assistant Solicitor of Agriculture, became the Solicitor of the WRA. The Bureaus of Land Management, Indian Affairs, and Soil Conservation furnished many of the staff members of the various relocation centers. The War Relocation Authority was, in fact, located in the Department of Agriculture. Its financing was dependent upon some eight million dollars drawn from the President's Emergency Fund until congressional appropriations could furnish operating capital.³

At first government officials hoped that after a temporary stay at assembly centers, the evacuated citizens could move directly to new locations of their own choice in the interior western states. There they could start new lives. It was with this in mind that the military authorities at first urged voluntary evacuation. This plan failed because of a lack of efforts to prepare the interior states for receiving these people, and unpleasant situations rife with misunderstanding and resentment arose. The residents of the inter-mountain states felt that if these people had been a danger in their coastal homes, they would be no less dangerous as new neighbors. To clear up the various misunderstandings and to establish some sort of acceptable

3. McKee, "History . . .," p. 37.

solution to the problem, a conference was called at Salt Lake City, Utah, on April 7, 1942. Governors or other state officials from ten western states met with representatives of the removal agencies (the WCCA and the WRA).⁴

When the meeting convened the course of action which seemed most feasible to the WRA officials was one of establishing small camps modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps of depression days. In many cases actual CCC facilities were still in existence. There, as the evacuees waited to relocate, they could work on public projects, produce food for themselves and others, and perhaps manufacture materials needed by the military. They could have their own self-supporting, self-governed, communities.

It quickly became apparent that the views of the various state officials were very parochial, evidencing sharp reactions against any Japanese settling in their states. They favored detention of the Japanese and varied only in their views of which authority should have the responsibility. Their sentiments ranged from advocating complete internment under governmental control for the duration of the war, to requests for Federal funds to allow state detention programs to operate. In general, they would accept the Japanese only if their important labor potential could

4. McKee, "History . . . ," pp. 43-48.

be utilized by the states. Total detention under state or federal control with workers farmed out and under guard, for employment purposes, would be, to them, an ideal solution. Camps would be established with the understanding that there would be guarantees protecting the rights of the states involved and providing for subsequent removal after the cessation of hostilities.⁵

Faced with this attitude, Milton Eisenhower decided that the Japanese would not be able to enter private employment immediately, but would have to remain for a time in federally established, managed, and guarded projects. The Salt Lake City Conference was fundamental in establishing the size and nature of the Japanese Relocation Centers. The concept of the small camp was abandoned since the states would not accept any evacuees unless they were closely guarded, and the Army refused to furnish guards for camps of less than 5,000 people.⁶

Their hopes for small temporary camps dashed, the WRA officials then embraced the opposite extreme, that of providing large camps to contain the Japanese for the duration of the war. They soon realized, however, that those who wished to relocate in non-military areas should be

5. War Relocation Authority, W.R.A.: A Story of Human Conservation (Washington: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1946), p. 28.

6. McKee, "History . . . ," p. 47.

allowed to do so, especially if they were United States Citizens.⁷

Since the general public was reluctant to accept the Orientals in their midst, a program of gradual, controlled relocation was initiated. This system would allow the Japanese to be assimilated into outside communities after a process of preparation by the evacuees and a public relations campaign by the WRA. Field offices were established in the midwest and eastern states to facilitate evacuee placement and to help obtain housing and emergency aid if needed.⁸

In the first two years of the relocation process, the evacuees who desired to leave the centers were given a security check, had to have some means of support, and had to be peacefully accepted by their new community.⁹ After December 17, 1944, when the exclusion order which had banned the Japanese was rescinded, relocation was conducted on a truly national basis and all relocation requirements were lifted.¹⁰

7. Evacuated People, p. 15.

8. Evacuated People, p. 15

9. Evacuated People, p. 19.

10. Evacuated People, p. 47.

SITE SELECTION

Up to this time the Army had selected sites to be used as temporary camps for the evacuees. Now, on April 17, 1942, a "Memorandum of Agreement" transferred this responsibility to the WRA. This agreement, signed by the War Department and the WRA, stated that the WRA would select sites for relocation camps subject to the approval of the War Department.¹¹

With the responsibility for relocation firmly fixed and with the thought that the camps would be used for the duration of the war, the Western Defense Command was anxious to complete the rapid removal of the evacuees to them. The WRA was under great pressure to find sites for relocation centers. The Army, in its desire to expedite the removal of the Orientals from the assembly centers, not only agreed to help in obtaining sites, but also agreed to construct the centers.

Steps were taken to acquire land and facilities promptly. Upon recommendation of a site by the WRA, the Western Defense Command would obtain military clearance. It would then acquire the land through purchase or by lease agreements from other government agencies with the understanding that the WRA would compensate them from future congressional appropriations. While this was being done, the

11. Cited in Final Report, pp. 238-39.

Army, to accelerate the process even further, informed the states in question of the action, justifying it as a military necessity.¹²

After site approval the Army would begin construction of the camp which was to include

all facilities necessary to provide the minimum essentials of living, viz., shelter, hospital, mess, sanitary facilities, administration building, housing for relocation staff, post office, store houses, essential refrigeration equipment, and military police housing. (War Department construction will not include refinements, such as, schools, churches, and other community planning adjuncts.)¹³

The search for suitable sites was made by the WRA with the cooperation of various officials from other Federal agencies: the Soil Conservation Service, the Forest Service, the Office of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the Farm Security Administration, the Federal Security Administration, and the Federal Security Agency. These agencies furnished experts on water supply, soil, climate, crops, and other economic and physical factors.

Sites were required to meet certain minimum requirements. Each had to be cleared by the military to prevent proximity to strategic areas. They had to be located on public lands in order that improvements of the area made at

12. McKee, "History . . . ," p. 48.

13. Final Report, p. 239

public expense would not become private assets. If privately owned land was purchased to meet these requisites, it would continue to remain in public ownership after project use was terminated. Transportation and utilities had to be near enough to be utilized without expending a prohibitive amount of money or materials. Each area had to be able to hold a minimum of 5,000 evacuees because the military took the position that smaller facilities would result in a waste of manpower in the guard units. Water, soil, and climatic factors had to be satisfactory in order to provide year-round work opportunities in the nature of food production, war production, or public works.¹⁴

When WRA plans for relocation centers became public knowledge, many individuals wished to capitalize on them through the sale of private property. Some Congressmen desired locating the projects in their states because of the economic factors involved. Many of them seemed to know which areas were being considered and made it their business to familiarize themselves with these specific locations. Mr. E. M. Rowalt, in a letter to Mr. Fryer, the Regional Director of the WRA, complained that many persons calling his office knew more about the places than he, and he expressed a desire that a card file covering the areas be set

14. War Relocation Authority, "First Quarterly Report, March 18, to June 30, 1942" (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d.), pp. 6-7.

up so he could "talk intelligently when a Congressman calls."¹⁵

Over three hundred possible sites were considered initially and at least one hundred were physically examined by field inspection crews from the WRA and the assisting agencies. Rejections were based on a wide variety of reasons, ranging from size to military disapproval.

Some potential sites in Arizona were: Cortaro farms northwest of Tucson (rejected because of military objections); Fort Mohave (rejected because of the projected cost of establishing and developing the area); Beardsley (rejected, after what seemed to be final approval, as a consequence of a lack of military clearance from the Army Air Force); Gila, located upon the Gila River Pima-Maricopa Indian reservation.¹⁶

15. Letter from E. M. Rowalt to Mr. E. R. Fryer, May 8, 1942. (National Archives, University of Arizona Microfilm No. 1046) Much of the materials found in the remainder of this paper were taken from National Archives Records. Two types of record classifications were included: (1) Subject-classified General Files--These records were separately kept at each relocation center and include correspondence, reports, speeches, and administrative issuances. (2) Final Report of the Gila River Relocation Center, 1946--This is composed of the final reports of each division and section in the center. Some list no author and in most cases they are composites of various reports written by section and unit heads. Many of them are not dated.

The National Archives materials used were all on microfilm. The University catalogue number is Film 1046. If no author is listed this material is hereafter designated "Relocation Records."

16. Letter from R. B. Cozzens to Col. E. F. Cress, May 9, 1942.

Sites adequate to support 120,000 evacuees were to be selected by June 15, 1942, a WRA imposed deadline. When a Cambridge, Nebraska, site was rejected at the last minute because of an unattainable copper priority needed to build a power transmission line, the Rivers, Arizona, site was enlarged to accommodate 14,000 evacuees instead of the planned 10,000.¹⁷

Nine other sites were chosen besides the one at Gila, Arizona:

Colorado River. In western Arizona, this site was on desert land which had to be cleared and irrigated. The climate there was warm and dry.

Tule Lake. Situated in an old lake bed in northern California, this was to be the largest camp with 20,000 evacuees. In a dry climate with rich land, it had a short growing season because of its altitude of 4,000 feet.

Manzanar. Located in the Owens Valley in eastern central California, it was owned by the City of Los Angeles, but operated by the WRA. Because of poor soil and costly water, it was limited agriculturally.

Minidoka. A part of the Minidoka Reclamation Project in southern central Idaho, this center was limited by a short growing season, a cold climate, lava outcroppings, and a need for irrigation.

17. R. B. Cozzens

Heart Mountain. Near the east gate of Yellowstone National Park, this site was a part of the Shoshone Reclamation Project. It needed to be leveled and irrigated and was the coldest of the centers.

Granada. The smallest of the centers, with a population of 8,000, this land in southeastern Colorado was purchased by the Government. It required irrigation.

Rohwer. The most eastern relocation camp, Rohwer was located in the Mississippi delta region in southeast Arkansas. It was leased from a Cooperative sponsored by the Farm Security Administration. Although blessed with abundant rain and a long growing season, it was plagued with a constant drainage problem.

Central Utah. Also purchased by the Government, this site was located 140 miles south of Salt Lake City. It received eight inches of rain yearly, but because of its altitude of 5,000 feet the growing season was short.

Jerome. This project site in eastern central Arkansas was obtained from the Farm Security Administration. It was situated in the Mississippi River delta.¹⁸

THE RIVERS SITE

The WRA endeavored to use names from western history to designate each camp, and the name Rivers was given to the

18. "First Quarterly Report," pp. 8-12.

Gila Project in honor of one Jim Rivers, the first Pima Indian killed in action in World War I.¹⁹

Rivers consisted of some 17,000 acres of land leased from the Pima-Maricopa Indian Communities and situated in western central Pinal County, Arizona, in the valley of the Gila River.²⁰ Its elevation was 1,500 feet with a temperature ranging from twenty degrees in the winter to one hundred and seventeen degrees in the summer. The growing season in the area is two hundred and seventy days and the average rainfall is seven inches per annum. Native vegetation consisting of sagebrush, mesquite, and cacti, covered a large portion of the site.

The Gila Valley, about fifteen miles wide at this point, is made up of sandy alluvial loam about three feet deep, broken here and there by various rocky outcroppings and buttes. The Sacaton Mountains, forming a boundary between the Casa Grande and Gila valleys, are located about

19. Teletype message between two WRA Staff members; from Edwin Bates to John Baker, June 30, 1942.

20. Relocation Records, Special Collections, University of Arizona Library, Film 1040. The legal description of the land occupied by the War Relocation Center at Rivers, Arizona was:

Parcel A, approximately 7,200 acres under irrigation--all of sections 9,10,13,14,15,16, part of Sections 8, 11, 12, 17, 20,21, 22, 23, 24, in T. 4S., R. 5E.

Parcel B, approximately 8,000 acres of undeveloped land--all of Sections 18, 19, 30, part of Sections 7, 8, 17, 20, in T. 4S., R. 5E. All of Sections 13, 23, 24, 25, 26, 35, part of Sections 12, 14, 22, in T. 4S., R. 4E. All of Sections 1 and 2 in T. 5S., R. 4E.

three miles south of the project site and run in an east-west direction. Gila and Pima Buttes can be seen to the north and on the opposite side of the Gila valley. Larger mountains can be seen thirty to fifty miles away; the Sierra Estrellas on the west and the Malpais Hills and Mazatzal Mountains to the north and east.

The Rivers site was not likely to provoke much resentment from near neighbors. Phoenix, Arizona's capital city, was forty-seven miles to the northwest, Tucson was eighty-seven miles to the south. Chandler and Mesa lay twenty-two and twenty-eight miles respectively to the north. Casa Grande, the major railhead, was twenty miles to the south.

At the time the site was acquired from the Indians, through the Department of Interior, 6,977 acres of the land had been improved, leveled, and irrigated. This land was served by canals and pipes from the San Carlos Irrigation Project which supplied water from Coolidge Dam on the Gila River. This dam was approximately one hundred and eighty miles east of the project. The irrigated land had been planted in alfalfa in 1935, and for seven years it had served as pasture for cattle. The resulting improved fertility of the land made the immediate production of vegetables possible.²¹

21. War Relocation Authority, "Final Project Report, Operations Division, Agricultural Section, Gila River Project"

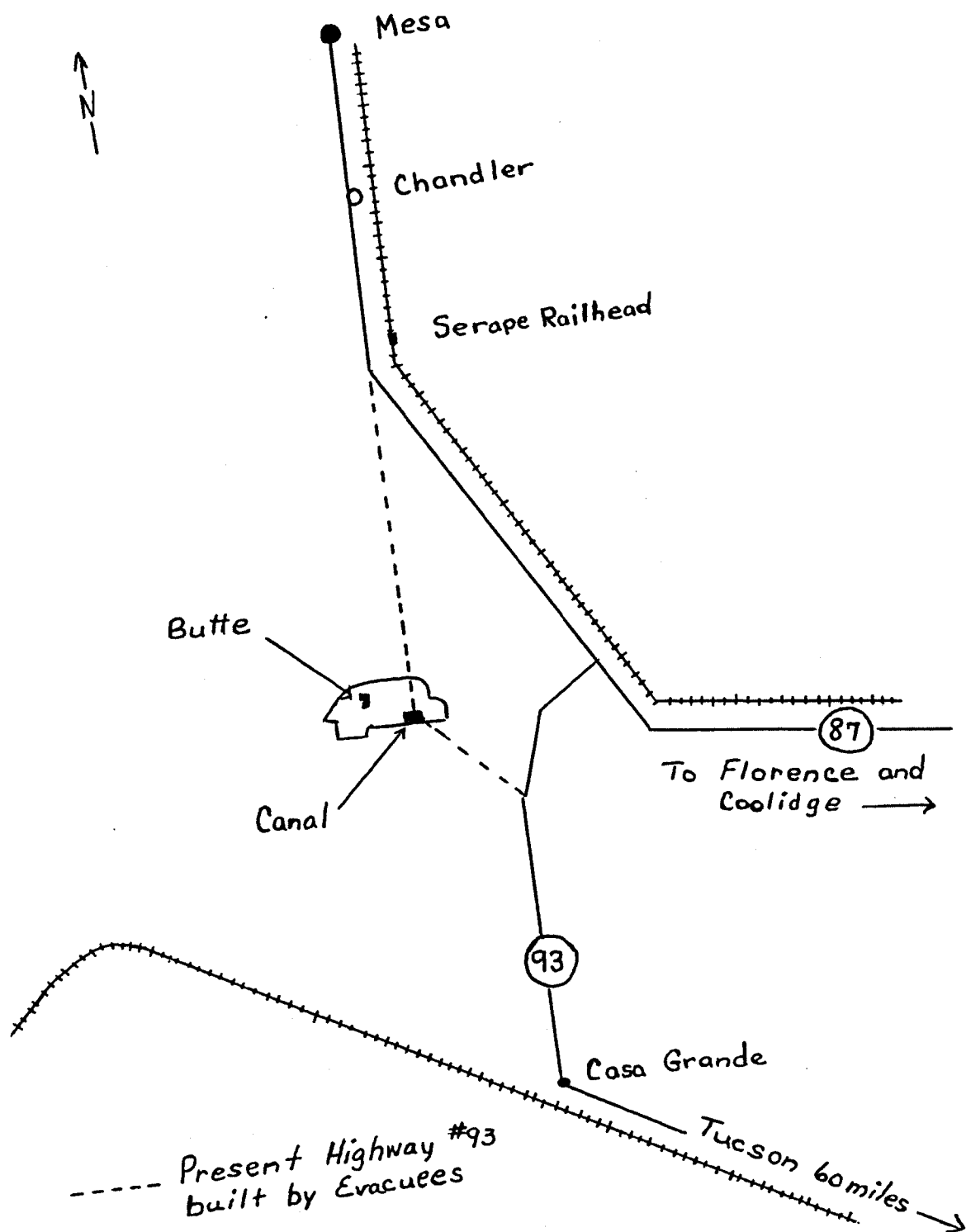


Fig. 1 Map Showing the Location of Rivers

The area of the project was in the shape of a crude, shallow arc running in a SSW-NNE direction. The arch of the curve was pointed to the NNW. The site varied in width from two to three and one-half miles and was approximately eight miles long. It contained two communities or camps about three and one-half miles apart; Butte to the west and Canal to the east. Canal (Camp No. 1), so named because it was located on the banks of an already established irrigation ditch, was the smaller of the two with 209.5 acres. Butte (Camp No. 2), nestled at the foot of a rock outcropping, Sacaton Butte, 300 feet high, had 789.25 acres in its community area. Although they covered less than two square miles these camps sheltered nearly 14,000 people, and comprised the third and fourth largest cities in Arizona at that time.²²

THE WRA-DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR AGREEMENT

On March 18, 1942, final permission was given, by the Secretary of the Interior to the WRA, to use the Indian lands for the Gila River project. The terms were stated in a Memorandum or Understanding signed by Acting Secretary of the Interior, Abe Fortas, and D. S. Myer, the Director of the War Relocation Authority.²³ In this agreement the

22. Gila News Courier, September 30, 1942.

23. Relocation Records, "Memorandum of Understanding Between the Director of the War Relocation Authority and the Secretary of the Interior," March 18, 1942, pp. 1-8.

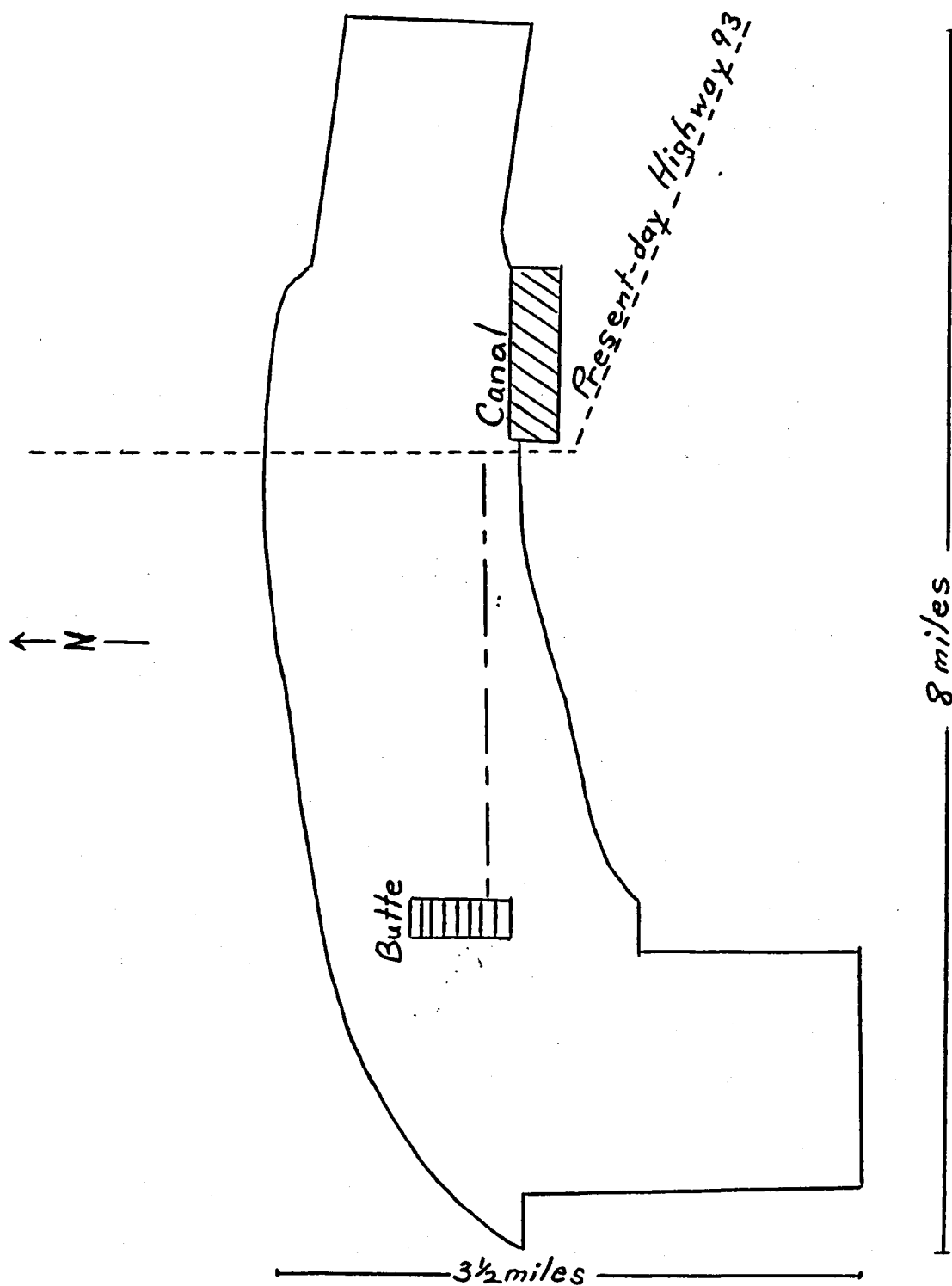


Fig. 2. Map Showing the Rivers Project
Source: Relocation Records, Film 1046, n.n., n.p.

Interior Department incurred no responsibility for the support or protection of the evacuees. This burden fell to the WRA which was, at that time, a division of the Executive Department.

The camp sites were leased on a five-year permit. The WRA paid one dollar per acre per annum for the undeveloped residence areas and twenty dollars per acre per annum for land previously improved. The WRA could terminate the permit by notifying the Department of the Interior six months ahead of the desired termination date.

The agreement allowed the WRA to construct "wells, housing, storage, disposal plants, roads, public utilities," and other facilities it believed necessary. Land to be used for agricultural purposes could be used only under conditions consistent with sound agricultural and conservation practices. Proposed yearly agricultural programs and changes in the present irrigation system had to be approved by the Office of Indian Affairs. This approval was withheld only if possible harm would be done to the land by the programs or changes. Land development was to be encouraged when it was consistent with the overall planning of the San Carlos Project. When undeveloped land, renting at one dollar per acre, was leveled and bordered it could be farmed without charges for three years, since the approximate cost of development was sixty dollars per acre or three times the

yearly rent. Labor and equipment for these improvements were to be furnished by the WRA, and accurate records of the cost would be kept. According to the agreement the project was to be fenced; however this provision was never met by the WRA and probably explains why no vociferous protests were made when Indian livestock subsequently damaged vegetable fields.²⁴ Irrigation water was to be provided by the San Carlos Irrigation Project Office. A semi-annual payment of three dollars and sixty cents per acre-foot would be made in advance and would provide for operation, maintenance and water charges. Up to four acre-feet of water would be furnished at this price. The San Carlos Project assessed the other water users for water delivery and maintenance of the delivery system but levied no water charges as such. The average cost of an acre-foot of water for the calendar years of 1942, 1943, and 1944 was approximately fifty-five cents. The WRA during those same years paid over six and one-half times this amount for water used on lands already in production. If four acre-feet of water were not available the land rental would be adjusted downward and water would be shared with other San Carlos users. If water use exceeded four acre-feet, the project would pay

24. R. S. Davidson, "Final Agricultural Report," Operations Division, Agriculture Section, Gila River Project, November 28, 1943, p. 20. A part of the "History of Agriculture" in the War Relocation Files.

the usual rates assessed any other San Carlos Project customer. In this case the cost of the water would apparently drop radically. If the project put more virgin land into production the water used to irrigate it would be furnished at regular irrigation project rates.²⁵

The WRA also agreed to build a road, to standards agreed upon by both agencies, from the north boundary of the Indian lands, where Highway 87 intersects the Indian lands, south to Camp site No. 1 and then to the southeast to meet Highway 187. Provision was also made for a road connecting the two camps. Other roads could be built with the approval of the Project Director and the Superintendent of the Gila River Indian Reservation.

The Memorandum further provided for a permanent cemetery site for evacuee interment. This was never implemented for all deceased evacuees were either transported to another location or were cremated.

All of the above terms were renewable anytime if the war with Japan still continued. The evacuees were to be removed at WRA expense when the project terminated; and if funds were available they were to be removed within one year after the cessation of hostilities with Japan. The Indian

25. "Project Assessments (1938-1951), Project Apportionments (1938-1945)," from the files of the San Carlos Irrigation and Drainage District, Coolidge, Arizona; and "Memorandum . . . ," pp. 2, 4, 5.

lands had to be restored to a condition comparable to that previous to the establishment of the Center. This did not include the land leveled for agricultural purposes but did include the WRA-built irrigation laterals unless the Commissioner of Indian Affairs expressed a desire to let them remain.²⁶

26. "Memorandum . . . ," pp. 1-8.

CHAPTER III

THE FACILITIES AND CONSTRUCTION WORK AT RIVERS

The basic construction of Rivers was the responsibility of the Army. Building specifications and standards were determined by the WCCA and adopted by the offices of the Commanding General of the Western Defense Command and the Chief of Engineers. Construction plans were drawn up by the District Engineer's Office and submitted to the WCCA for approval. After approval, contracts were awarded by the Engineer's Office to a civilian construction company.¹ The contractors built the complete blocks, hospital complex, administrative area, warehouse area, auto repair shops, post office, cold storage warehouse, camouflage factory, some staff quarters, dormitories, and car shelters. Help was difficult to get, and to keep workers on the job, dormitories and stores were built to satisfy their needs. Work on the Gila Project began on May 5, 1942.² The

1. Final Report, p. 264.

2. Relocation Records, "Final Report of the Engineering Section, Basic Construction," p. 1. The primary sources of information concerning the construction at Rivers were this "Final Engineering Report . . . ," and "Appendix Four" of the Army's (J.L. DeWitt) "Final Report . . . ," entitled "Standards and Details, Construction of Japanese Evacuee Reception Centers," pp. 584ff. The Engineering Report is a part of the records of the War Relocation Authority.

projected cost was \$7,560,000 or about five hundred and four dollars per evacuee.³ While construction of supporting facilities continued for more than two years, the major contract work was completed on the first of December, 1942.⁴

THE BLOCK

The primary component of the relocation center was the "block," each one containing the necessary facilities for the housing and feeding of three hundred evacuees.⁵ Each block was given a number, and these block numbers ran consecutively through Canal and Butte Camps. A typical block consisted of fourteen barracks, one mess hall, two latrines, a recreation hall, a laundry, and an ironing room. The barracks were arranged in two rows, each row four hundred and seventy feet long (Fig. 1.). The buildings in the rows were longitudinally parallel and thirty feet apart. At the end of one of the rows was the mess hall, and at the same end of the other row was the recreation hall. The necessary service buildings, such as, latrines, laundry, and ironing rooms, were situated between the two rows of barracks in an area approximately 110 feet by 460 feet. Space for a children's playground was usually reserved in the open

3. Final Report, p. 272.

4. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," p. 1.

5. Relocation Records, "Construction of Buildings at Relocation Centers," pp. 2-5, and Final Report, p. 264.

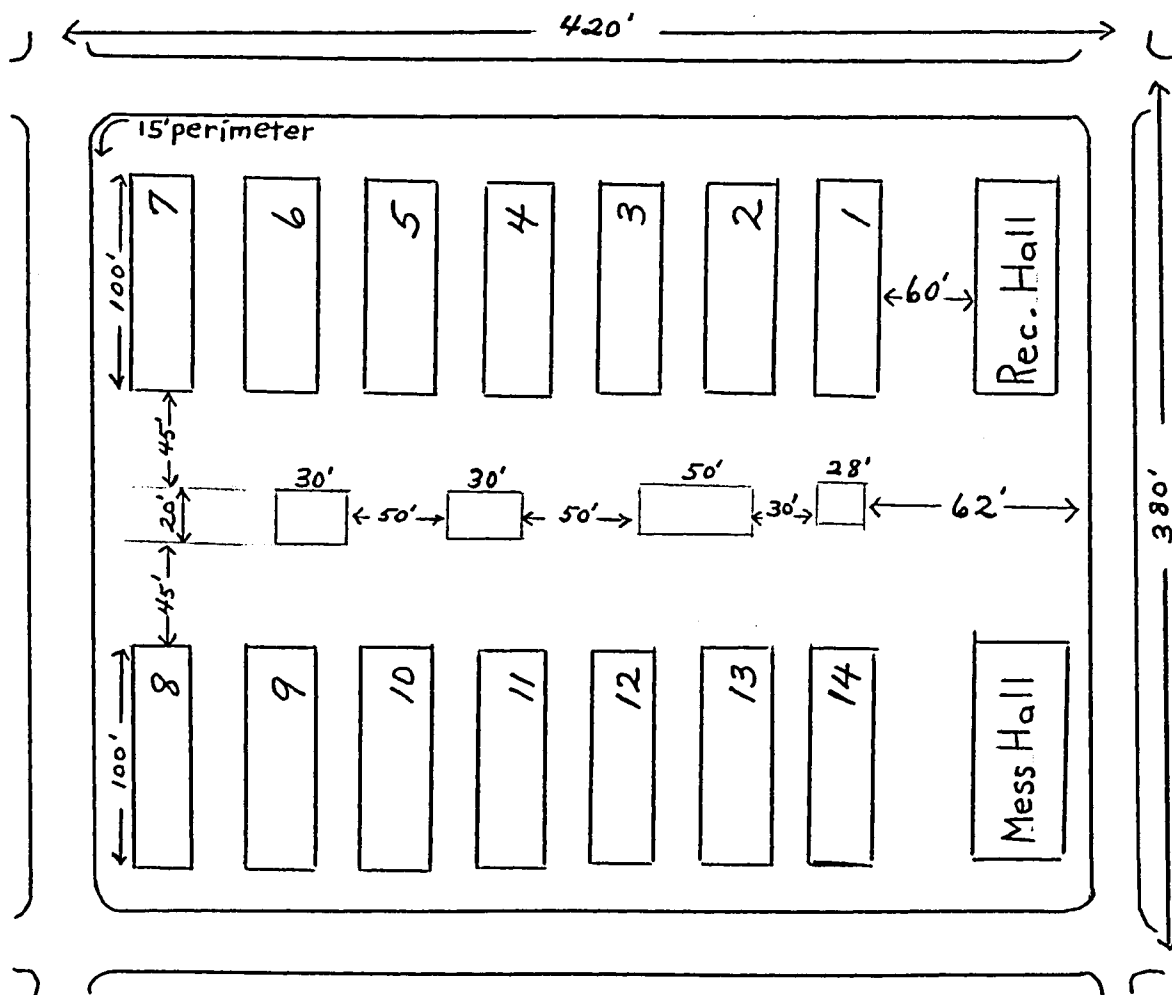


Fig. 3 Typical Block Plan

Source: War Relocation Authority, Record Group 210, Special Collections, University of Arizona Library, July 27, 1944.

area between the road and the service buildings at one end of the block. In most instances a graded and improved street lined all four sides of each block. In any case there was always a firebreak at least fifty feet wide separating the blocks.⁶

Since no precedent existed, authorities had been in a quandary for a time trying to decide on minimal housing standards. The prime requisites were, not comfort, but speed and ease of construction, economy, and sparing use of critical materials. It was decided to use a basic Theater of Operations design. This type of structure was intended for no more than five years of occupancy and was designed to house troops immediately behind war zones. This type of structure, offering only tar paper siding, pit latrines, and no flooring, would have been too crude to house women, children and old people, therefore, it was modified.⁷ Each barracks was a frame building 20 feet by 100 feet with a gabled roof, one-half inch sheetrock siding, and a slate-covered composition-shingle roof. One concession to the heat of the Arizona desert was a double roof to provide a limited degree of insulation. Single floors were used, but the unhappy combination of cracks caused by extreme dryness and the Arizona dust dictated the installation of a patented

6. Final Report, p. 264.

7. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," p. 2.

floor covering called Mastipave which gave a tight washable surface.⁸ The barracks were elevated above the ground eighteen to twenty-four inches, resting on wooden posts which in turn were placed upon concrete blocks one foot square.

Each barracks was divided into four, single-room apartments designated "A," "B," "C," and "D." Rooms A, B, and C were 20 feet by 24 feet, and room D was 20 feet by 28 feet. The A and D apartments had exits at the ends of the building while two doors on one side gave access to the center apartments.

The interior of the barracks remained unfinished with wood studdings and ceiling beams exposed. In the early months of the camp, when crowded conditions prevailed, these beams furnished a very convenient method of allotting living space since they were exactly four feet apart. In November of 1942, the work of partitioning the barracks was begun. Two hundred and seventy-five partitions were installed according to the following formula:

A family of two received three beams (12 feet by 20 feet).

A family of three received four beams (16 feet by 20 feet).

8. Robert K. Yeaton, "History of Rivers from 1942 to 1943," (War Relocation Records), p. 1.

A family of four or five received six beams (24 feet by 20 feet).

A family of six received seven beams (28 feet by 20 feet).

Special cases of single, elderly, or ill people received two beams each.⁹

Recreation halls were identical to barracks in their outside specifications. The interior was without partitions, however, and one end was fitted with double doors. An oil heater was the only inside equipment. These buildings served various functions including that of administrative offices, police stations, clubrooms, and churches. In fact, many of them were never available for recreational purposes.¹⁰

A mess hall could serve the population of an entire block at one sitting. Each was a frame building forty feet wide and one hundred feet long. Mess halls at Canal were raised upon posts and concrete blocks, but those in Butte rested upon concrete slabs. Cooking was done on hotel-size

9. Gordon G. Brown, "The Final Report on the Gila River Relocation Center as of May 20, 1945," (War Relocation Records), p. 38.

10. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," pp. 3-4, and Brown, p. 40.

gas ranges, and complete kitchen, refrigerated storage, dishwashing, and serving facilities were provided.

Statistics concerned with buildings in the blocks reveal the enormity of the building project. Five hundred and forty barracks totaled 1,080,000 square feet of floor space. Seventy-two latrines required 43,200 square feet of floor space. Thirty-six laundry rooms contained 36,000 square feet. Thirty-six recreation halls took 72,000 square feet and thirty-six mess halls required over 144,000 square feet.¹¹

Some evidence of governmental attempts to minimize evacuee discomfort was apparent. Showers and lavatory facilities were placed in positions convenient to persons averaging five feet in height. Electrical outlets were similarly positioned. Each apartment had one convenience outlet, and it was to be used for lighting purposes only because appliances were forbidden. Ironing rooms were furnished with additional outlets, and ironing boards were provided at the rate of six per one hundred evacuees. Uniquely, however, the ironing rooms were almost never used for their intended purpose. Within a short time they became vegetable storerooms for the mess halls and the evacuees ironed in their apartments with the administrations's tacit approval.

11. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," pp. 2-4.

Each recreation hall had ten electrical outlets for the use of evacuees with personal sewing machines, but there were very few of these in the camps.¹²

While the governmental standards specified adequate ventilation, heating, and electricity, these were in little evidence during the first months. In the Army's haste to evacuate the Japanese and in their desire to transfer the responsibility to the WRA, people were shipped to Rivers while the center was still under construction. They arrived in the midst of July heat after the misery of a waterless train ride during which many women and children fainted.¹³ The sight they beheld upon arrival included a desert stripped of its vegetation leaving little or no shade to provide relief from the hot sun, a maze of criss-crossing ditches being readied for utility lines, and partial-apartments furnished only with army cots. The furnishings would not be complete, however, until the installation of an oil stove after half of the winter months had gone by. Drinking water was located in new garbage cans in various locations those first weeks in July and August. The water

12. Final Report, "Appendix Four," pp. 584-85, and "Final Engineering Report . . . ," p. 4.

13. William M. Huso, "Community Government, Arrival of the First Evacuees," (War Relocation Records), p. 3.

they drank was hot. The water they bathed in was unheated.¹⁴

The task of assigning housing turned into a nightmare. Advance information on the evacuees proved to be faulty and assignments often left out one or more family members.¹⁵ Camp No. 1 was overcrowded for a year. Butte Camp opened on August 21, 1942, and it had a population of three thousand ten days later. The Canal facilities would hold four thousand eight hundred; but by August 31, 1942, its population reached five thousand four hundred, and for a few weeks some people were forced to sleep in the service buildings.¹⁶ Before the decision to add partitions, several families of two, three, or four members each would be assigned the same quarters.¹⁷ For instance, four married couples might live in one single-room barracks apartment.

It was in these crude, minimal surroundings that over sixteen thousand Japanese and Japanese-Americans of all ages and from many backgrounds existed for three years.

14. Relocation Records, A Year at Gila, printed by the Reports Office (Rivers, Arizona: 1943).

15. Huso, "Community Government...", pp. 1-3.

16. Brown, p. 15

17. Yeaton, p. 1.

THE HOSPITAL

It was the intention of the government to provide a hospital facility of one hundred and fifty beds for a camp of ten thousand, and one of two hundred and fifty beds for a camp of twelve thousand.¹⁸ After an initial period of tribulation and shortages, the Rivers Project measured up to these standards by possessing two hospitals with a total of two hundred seventy-four beds. An equipment shortage in the first few months of the Center's existence forced the use of facilities at the Indian Agency at Sacaton, Arizona. A hospital in a Canal barracks building opened in October, 1942. Later, when a large hospital opened at Butte, the Canal unit was operated primarily as a clinic with bed patients brought to Butte for more extensive treatment.¹⁹

The physical plan of the installation at Butte was similar to most Army hospitals. Ten wings or wards were situated in a row, longitudinally parallel and positioned at right angles to a corridor one thousand two hundred feet long. Some of the wings were joined directly to the major corridor, while others were connected to it by covered walkways. The hospital's service buildings, surgery wings, and mess hall were located opposite the row of wards on the

18. Final Report, "Appendix Four," p. 584.

19. Grace Lawson, "History of Rivers Community Hospital, September, 1942 to August, 1945," (War Relocation Records), p. 4, and "Final Engineering Report . . . ," p. 4.

other side of the long corridor. Administrative offices and staff quarters were situated at one end of the long corridor. The combined area of the hospital buildings was 58,554 square feet. The buildings were steam-heated in the winter and cooled by evaporation in the summer.

Facilities found in the hospital included: surgical wards for men and women, obstetrics, pharmacy, mess hall, several diet kitchens, outpatient clinic, laundry, nursery, tubercular wards, morgue, diathermy unit, ultra-violet equipment, dental laboratory, boiler room, and warehouse.

The hospital buildings presented a pleasing interior and exterior appearance. The outside walls were covered with six-inch siding in addition to the usual wallboard, and the interior walls were finished and painted a light yellow. Corridors were lined with windows and the hospital floors were soft yellow pine. The floors were covered with linoleum in 1945 because of excessive wear. The hospital grounds were very attractive with many shrubs and a well-cared for lawn masking the reality of barracks buildings elevated on concrete piers. A semi-circular drive leading to the administrative office entrances further enhanced the hospital's overall appearance.²⁰

The Rivers Community Hospital at Butte, while more than adequate in equipment and personnel, was the largest

20. Lawson, pp. 1-4.

single source of controversy in the center. Various factors were involved. Hospital positions had prestige, and evacuees vied for them. Consequently, any complaints concerning hospital employees were sure to provoke discussion and dissension. The hospital was also unique when compared to civilian or army hospitals for all evacuees received the same wages regardless of education, capabilities, or duties.

Another point of contention among the evacuees was that all appointive staff members were superior in rank to any evacuee, even if the Japanese were highly qualified doctors and nurses. Other complicating factors were: a fear of tubercular patients and an unwillingness of employees to expose themselves to the disease for the small salary allowed by WRA rules, a continual struggle to reduce the number of outpatient visits (as many as 5,000 a month), a poor or misunderstood staff, a rapid turnover in appointive personnel, and the Japanese diet.²¹

THE MILITARY POLICE COMPANY

A military police company of four officers and one hundred and twenty-six men was provided to serve as exterior guards, checking all persons entering and departing the relocation center. While Army plans called for a fence with

21. The report of Dr. Grace Lawson, the Chief Dietician at the Rivers Hospital, is a lengthy narration of tribulation. Further comments on the hospital's problems can be found in G. Gordon Brown's "Final Report . . . ," pp. 70-71.

watchtowers and lights to enclose the project, Rivers was happily deficient in this respect.²² One guard tower was erected, but since manning it would have imposed a serious burden upon the military police detachment, it was demolished and burned. Within six months a barbed wire fence which had been built around the camps was removed.²³ This last act was especially appreciated by the evacuees who had been informed that maintenance of the restrictive fence was to be their duty, not that of the Army. Camp boundaries were posted with substantially made signs in English and Japanese, warning against any illegal violations of the boundaries, from either direction.²⁴

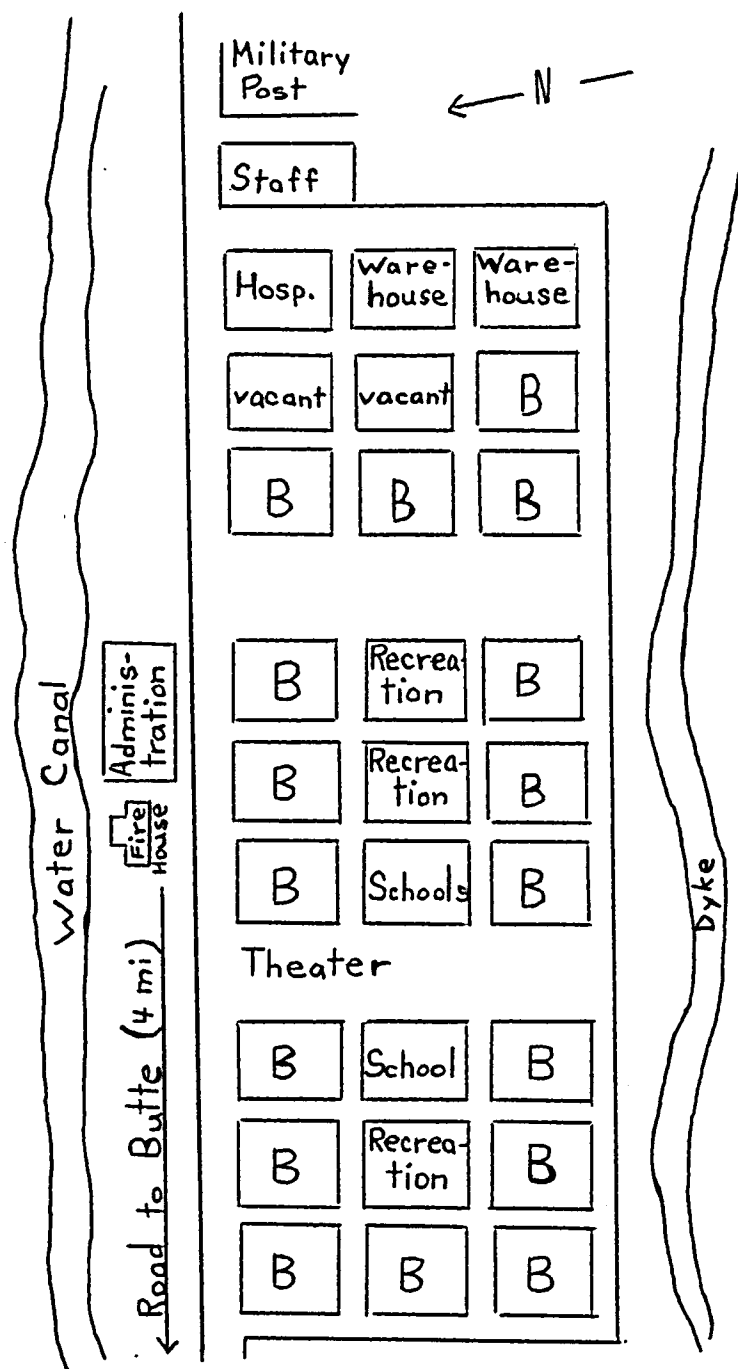
The military police camp contained eleven buildings including: a mess hall, three barracks, one officers' quarters, an infirmary, an armory, two recreation halls, a guard house, one auto repair shop, a washroom with toilets and lavatories, and a shop building. All except the auto repair shop and the shop buildings were conventional twenty-foot wide army barracks. They varied in length, the shortest being the infirmary which was twenty-eight feet long.²⁵

22. Final Report, "Appendix Four," p. 586.

23. Courier, April 15, 1943.

24. Courier, September 12, 1942, and September 19, 1942.

25. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," p. 9, also Final Report, "Appendix Four," pp. 584-86.



B = Regular living area of barracks and service buildings

Fig. 4 Physical Arrangement of Canal Camp (1943)

Source: A Year at Gila, n.p.

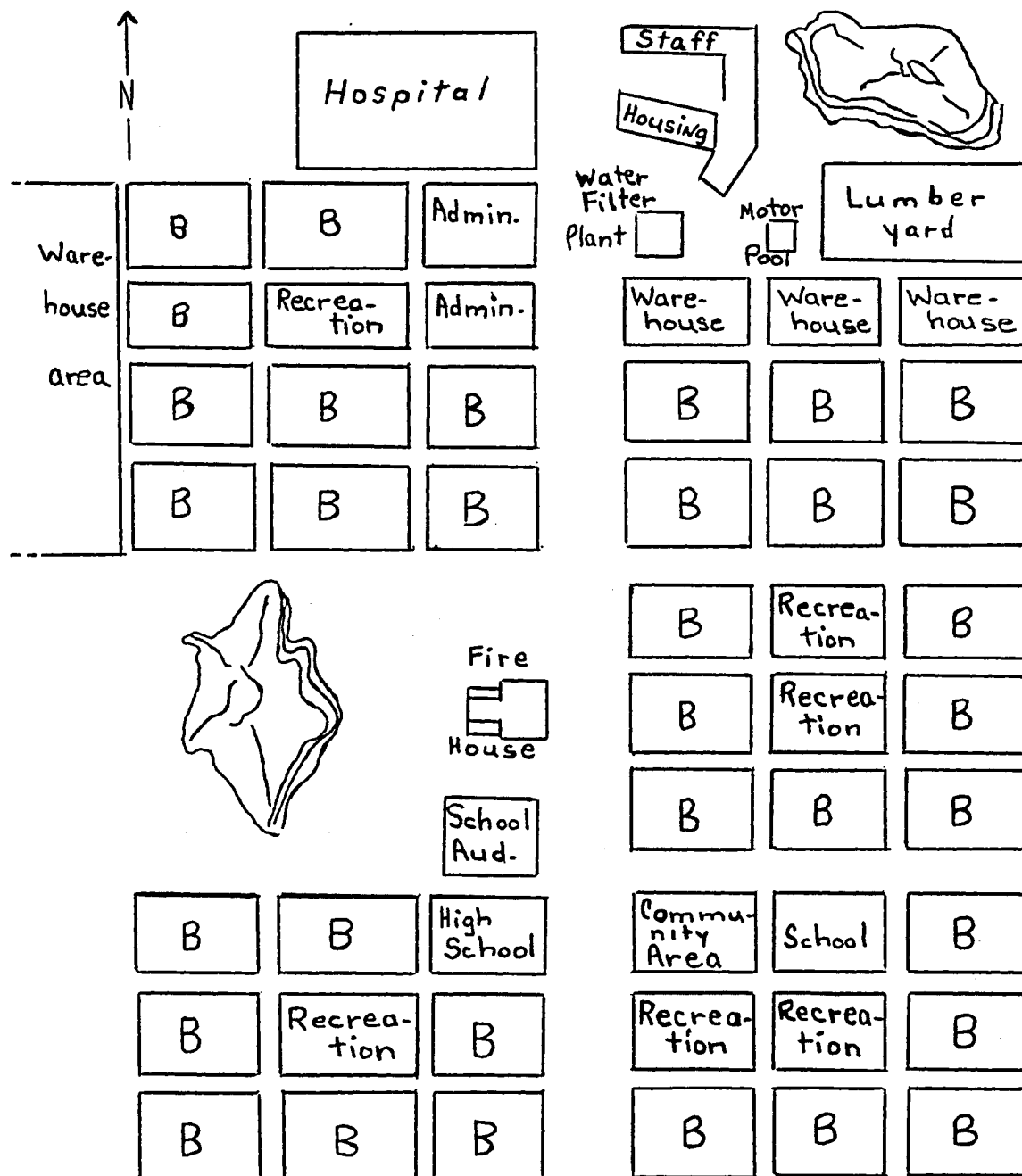


Fig. 5 Physical Arrangement of Butte Camp (1943)

Source: A Year at Gila, n. p.

MISCELLANEOUS CONSTRUCTION

In addition to the buildings in the blocks, many service, storage, and specialty structures were located within the boundaries of Rivers. Some were a part of the initial building program, the responsibility of the Army, and many were built at various times during the existence of the Center. The following facilities were included.²⁶

Warehouses -- Dry storage. Rivers had forty-one dry storage warehouses, built under an army contract. They rested upon concrete foundations, had concrete floors, composition shingles, and sheetrock siding. Each was the size of a regular barracks with eight foot sidewalls, and together furnished the project with 82,000 square feet of storage space.

Cold Storage. Important facilities at Canal and at Butte, the refrigeration units were primarily used for meat storage. Each was 20 feet by 100 feet, regular barracks size, but had a redwood lining of one inch boards on the interior with eight inches of an insulating material in the walls and ceiling. The buildings rested upon cement slabs but had wooden floors with six inches of insulation between the wood and the concrete. Each had a small meat cutting room on one side. Seven-horse power compressors furnished

26. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," pp. 1-17, also an unsigned report, "Construction and Buildings at Relocation Centers."

the refrigeration for each warehouse. Together the facilities contained 9,800 square feet.

Car Shelters. Three car shelters were built at the Rivers Center, two with floors and one without. They all had cement block foundations, and each had the same exterior dimensions as a barracks building. These garages did have a singular distinction, however, for they had six inch redwood siding. One can only imagine the thoughts of the evacuees who lived in rough sheetrock-covered homes, when they beheld these redwood clad shelters for redwood was an expensive luxury for any structure, much less a garage. Its use could probably be attributed to the wonderful workings of a war-time bureaucracy.²⁷

Auto Repair Shops. The camps had equal repair facilities with one shop in each. A shop was 40 feet by 100 feet with a girder of 2 inches by 8 inches running the length of the building, held up with wooden posts. The shop at Canal had ten-foot sidewalls, while the one at Butte had twelve foot sidewalls to provide access for trucks. Toilets and lavatories were included in each.

Administration Buildings. Canal had a single administration building; Butte had two. These buildings presented a pleasing appearance since they had exterior siding

27. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," p. 8.

of wood and interior walls of sheetrock. All had concrete floors. They provided a total of 18,000 square feet.

Post Office. This building was situated near the administration building at Butte. It had an area of 2,560 square feet and consisted of a 20 feet x 100 feet barracks building with a 20 feet x 28 feet addition. It rested on wood post foundations and had heavy wooden floors to adequately support the counters used for the mail service.²⁸

Fire Stations. Following government recommendations, each camp was provided with a fire station. Canal's contained one truck compared with two at Butte. Floors were of concrete. The roofs were high and flat. A right angle wing on the rear of each building provided quarters for the firemen. The total area provided by the stations was 3,704 square feet.

Net Factory. Located on the edge of Butte, this complex consisted of twelve buildings: one large warehouse 60 feet x 400 feet, six large sheds 24 feet 6 inches x 200 feet open on one side, and five garnishing sheds 26 feet 4 inches x 250 feet. This group of buildings served as a motor pool and service center for the transportation division after the camouflage factory was discontinued.

Staff Housing. The WRA erected several additional housing units for the appointive personnel including both

28. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," pp. 1-17.

apartments and dormitories. Construction was similar to those erected by the Army: flat-roofed, insulated with sheetrock, and containing normal household plumbing, heating, and cooling facilities.

Ice Houses. One such structure was built for each camp. They were small insulated buildings, 20 feet x 28 feet, with concrete foundations and floors.

Dairy Buildings. Various types of construction were provided for the dairy unit.

Milking Barn: 36 feet x 105 feet. This gabled roof barn had concrete floors sloping to the north to facilitate cleaning and drainage. The walls were five feet high and were made of concrete blocks. The roof did not rest upon the blocks, but upon wooden posts instead. The resulting opening between the walls and the roof provided ventilation while the roof still furnished adequate protection from the elements. The barn provided stanchions for fifty-eight cows.

Milk House: 20 feet x 60 feet. This structure had wallboard interiors and wooden siding on the exteriors. A cold storage room, refrigeration, pasteurization, and sterilization equipment was provided. The building had a concrete floor and a gabled roof.

Feed Warehouse: 20 feet x 100 feet. This warehouse was similar to a windowless barracks building.

In addition to the above buildings, sixteen feed lots with concrete troughs and mangers were built.²⁹

UTILITIES AND PUBLIC WORKS

Rivers was complete with gas, electric, and water service for evacuee and administrative use. The various systems were built under government contracts.

The Water System. In such a hot climate a more than adequate water supply was a necessity. Tremendous demands were made upon the supply. Canal consumed 500,000 to 1,200,000 gallons a day, and Butte used 600,000 to 1,500,000 gallons each day. This was approximately 250 gallons for each resident per day. This use was in addition to the water devoted to irrigation.³⁰

While irrigation water was received from a reclamation project, the evacuees used water from four deep wells, two in each camp. These wells were four hundred feet deep and were dug expressly for the Center. The necessary water pumps were electric turbines, one on each well. Two additional electric booster pumps were used in Canal to lift water to the storage tower.³¹

29. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," pp. 1-17.

30. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," pp. 21-22.

31. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," pp. 20-22.

Large water storage systems were provided in each camp with both systems using elevated tanks to provide gravity flow. In Camp No. 1 water was pumped into a 300,000 gallon surface tank with float switches installed to maintain a desired water level. From this reservoir it was raised by booster pumps to a 50,000 gallon tank mounted on a wooden tower. The Butte system included a single 300,000 gallon tank situated on the top of Sacaton Butte and water from the wells went directly into it.³²

This water system occasionally could not satisfy the Center's demands upon it and at times the water shortage was critical. Butte could use the water as fast as the pumps would furnish it and in periods of heavy usage the storage tank would dry out and develop cracks thus compounding the water problem. In the spring of 1943, when a serious water shortage threatened the health and safety of the inhabitants, steps were taken to water the grounds with project irrigation water instead of well water. The Project Director also made a plea to conserve water at this time. He raised the possibility of water rationing and the banning of the use of coolers for several hours each day. He also told the residents not to water lawns or turn on evaporative

32. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," pp. 20-22.

coolers before noon unless the temperature reached one hundred degrees.³³ As the water problem increased and the southern section of Butte exhausted its supply each night, the possibility of a major fire became a very real spectre.³⁴ With a concentrated population housed in frame buildings, normal spring temperatures ranging from ninety to one hundred degrees, and with the steady afternoon winds of the desert, the thought of a conflagration in the barracks or supply area was not a pleasant one. The water supply did fail when a fire destroyed an automotive-parts warehouse in March, 1944. In this case, however, the breakdown was the result of a power failure and not that of an overloaded water system.³⁵

The network of water pipes servicing Rivers would have been a credit to any city of comparable size. Together the camps had over fifteen miles of water pipes. This figure looms larger when one considers that water outlets were only in central locations and not in each apartment. The system itself was a circulating grid with no dead ends. Eight-inch water mains served as arterials which were laid beside the streets and connected to six-inch mains servicing individual blocks. Smaller pipes tapped these mains and

33. Reported by the Gila River Courier, June 8, 1943.

34. Courier, April 29, 1943.

35. Courier, March 7, 1944.

served to deliver the water to the desired locations. Major piping in Canal was made of sixteen gauge steel with welded joints; while in Butte the pipes were cast iron with lead caulked joints. The Canal contractor neglected to treat the pipe joints with a preservative and leaks soon caused many headaches. An average of four occurred each day. In a situation where serious water shortages already existed, such a water loss could not be tolerated.³⁶

Electricity. Coolidge Dam was the source of power for Rivers with the U.S. Indian Irrigation Service Office at Coolidge, Arizona furnishing the service. More than thirty-two miles of wire in an overhead line carried the power to the camp from Sacaton, Arizona, and over four hundred and fifty poles were installed within the Center's boundaries. Camp outlets were of the regular 110 volt or 220 volt variety.³⁷

Gas. Gas was purchased from the El Paso Natural Gas Company and was delivered from an existing line less than two miles from Canal. It was originally planned to use natural gas for all heating, but a limited supply dictated barracks heated with fuel oil stoves instead. The principal project consumers were the mess halls and the hospital. The hospital was the only major installation to use natural gas

36. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," p. 23.

37. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," p. 25.

for heating. Approximately 42,000 cubic feet of natural gas and, in the winter, 7,000 gallons of fuel oil were used each day on the Rivers project.³⁸

Telephone. Telephone lines were brought to the camp from Casa Grande. A total of three trunk lines serviced one switchboard in each camp. Phone service in the camps was limited to offices, warehouses, and fire phones. The installation of the fire phones was made by the Army Signal Corps with one phone for each block.³⁹

Sewage Disposal. Sewage disposal, in conformity with Army planning was by means of a water-borne disposal system which could accommodate seventy-five gallons daily for each resident.⁴⁰ The disposal plants, one for each camp, were constructed by civilian contractors at a cost of over \$125,000 each. Both systems had an adjoining ten-acre plot, which, when leveled, bordered, and divided into strips, served as evaporation tanks for the effluent. In the southwestern desert, this evaporative method of disposal was very successful and the system worked efficiently, with little or no odor nuisance involved. The installation of a pumping station at the Canal sump to carry the sewage to the plant was necessary since the plant was situated one-half mile

38. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," p. 2.

39. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," p. 25.

40. Final Report, p. 272.

west, on a line with the west-southwest corner of the camp, at a higher elevation than Canal. The ruins of this system are the most visible sign left on the camp site.⁴¹

MAINTENANCE

The Maintenance Division, a section of Transportation and Supply, had the responsibility of servicing and maintaining the minor electrical and plumbing units as well as the various camp buildings. Fifteen to sixty evacuee workers were employed in this division as plumbers, electricians, and carpenters, the number depending upon immediate need. The project carpenters were especially in great demand throughout the existence of the center. In addition to building alterations, one curious duty that befell them was the task of constructing over 3,500 pieces of furniture for the schools on the project.⁴²

Other maintenance crews, these in the Engineering Division, were given the task of servicing equipment. This included sewage disposal plants, refrigeration units, boilers, major water systems, and coolers. As a rule the Center's machinery was of good quality, and few problems were encountered. The single exception to this was the

41. "Final Engineering Report . . . , " p. 24.

42. Courier, September 12, 1942.

electrical system which was often plagued with failure during summer electrical storms.⁴³

Janitorial services were a duty of the Grounds Section for about a year, then the janitors were placed in the Engineering Division. A peak crew of one hundred and forty-two workers and six foremen maintained seventeen administration buildings and two hundred and twelve block structures.

An important adjunct to Rivers were the grounds' crews. It was their unsung but important duty to attend to trash disposal, salvage, landscaping, and irrigation of the camp areas.

Trash was carried in trucks to nearby pits. Tin cans were cleaned and flattened. In this manner Rivers salvaged and contributed 150,000 pounds of tin plate to the war effort.⁴⁴ Rubbish carriers were mostly older men who performed this duty through a sense of community pride.

In the relocation center, situated in strange desert surroundings, landscaping was an important morale booster. The camps must have been an immense challenge since, in the beginning, the evacuees were faced with a raw, ugly, brown wound on the desert floor. Within two years this area was transformed into a veritable green oasis with 25.2 acres of

43. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," pp. 19-20.

44. E. W. Nichols, "Personal Narrative and History of the Grounds Section, Gila River Project," (War Relocation Authority), p. 3.

lawn; 4,949 square feet of flowers; 6,884 shade trees; 3,800 ornamental and evergreen shrubs; and 19.5 acres of leveled recreation areas. A grounds' crew of forty men leveled and planted, using four small Ford-Ferguson tractors in their work. A limited quantity of seeds were furnished by the WRA. More were given by Arizona firms, individuals, and the evacuees themselves. Trees and shrubs were received from Casa Grande, Mesa, and Phoenix, and included various citrus trees and evergreen shrubs.⁴⁵

Foraging gardeners confiscated two hundred cottonwood trees from the dry wash that was the Gila River.⁴⁶ This activity of the grounds' crew, while limited to public, staff, and administrative areas, was not without its effect on the evacuees. They were encouraged to beautify their homes, and a rivalry sprang up between blocks over flower gardens. Some went to great lengths to make their individual areas enclaves of beauty, many with pools and fountains. Lawns, flowers, and shrubs were irrigated by gravity flow from the nearby irrigation ditches.⁴⁷

45. Nichols, pp. 3-4, and Ernest C. Hendrick, "Narrative Report," (War Relocation Records), p. 2.

46. Courier, April 8, 1943.

47. Courier, September 12, 1942, and September 25, 1942.

ROADS

Roads in and out of Rivers were built and maintained by the Engineering Division. Primary roads had a sub-grade twenty-eight feet wide with an oil surface twenty-two feet wide. Since the camps were in an isolated area adequate roads had to be constructed to accommodate the flow of supplies to and from the railheads, first at Casa Grande and then at Serape, Arizona. Fifteen miles of oil-surfaced roads were built connecting the east boundary of Canal Camp with Highway 87. The WRA initiated road construction by appointive and evacuee crews and then contracted the later stages of construction. It was completed in December, 1943. A surfaced road also connected the two camps, and in Butte it made a large loop through the camp to the warehouse and administrative areas.

A road, eight miles long, connecting Canal with Highway 187 leading to Casa Grande was never surfaced. All streets within the Center were improved by the contractors. The Gila Project was responsible for constructing forty-nine miles of graded roads and twenty-one miles of farm and service roads at a total cost of \$572,919.67.⁴⁸ At the present time the entire segment of U.S. Highway 93 between

48. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," pp. 14-15, and Karl M. Fisher, "Final Construction and Maintenance Report," (War Relocation Records), p. 3.

Highways 87 and 187 is laid upon the roadway built by the Rivers Relocation Center.

CHAPTER IV

ADMINISTRATION

The structure of the Center's Administration was typical of many government agencies with a system of divisions and departments. Like others it had a formal chain of command to insure accountability to authority.

These Administrators faced the rather thankless task of managing people who did not ask for or want management. One primary aim was to insure at least minimal subsistence levels, consistent with the humanitarian principles which served as a foundation for the American Democracy. These same principles dictated some effort to provide at least partial self-government for the evacuees.

Administration of the relocation camps was under the jurisdiction of a National Director appointed by the President of the United States. When the WRA was transferred from the Executive Department to the Department of the Interior on February 16, 1944, continuity of policies was achieved when the Secretary of Interior delegated his new powers to the director of the WRA.¹

1. War Relocation Authority, "Administrative Notice No. 38," February 19, 1944.

Broad policies for the WRA were initiated in Washington, but it was the Project Director's responsibility to implement them if instructions were not specific. Generally the Administration on a camp level tended to weigh decisions solely in terms of restrictive regulations rather than of building constructive community atmosphere. Administrative orders and instructions, procedures, regulations, and organizational charts too often reduced the range of evacuee participation in community operations. Attempts to establish firm community responsibility were hindered by the fact that ultimate decisions and accountability were in the hands of officials who received orders not from the community but from a centralized agency.²

The actual administration of the Center was divided into six major sections or departments, all under the command of the Project Director. Three of these units were concerned with the actual operation of the camp. These were: (1) the Community Management Division which was concerned with the evacuees themselves, (2) the Administrative Management Division which dealt primarily with supply and accounting problems, and (3) the Operations Division, responsible for the actual physical operation of the camp, including transportation, fire protection, and maintenance. The remaining three divisions were smaller and worked with

2. Brown, p. 32.

and were responsible directly to the Project Director. They were: (1) the Reports Division which spent its time compiling reports received from each project section, (2) the Legal Division which furnished legal services to both the administration and the evacuees, and (3) the Employment Division, responsible for the never-ending task of recruiting and hiring appointive and evacuee personnel. All staff positions were under Civil Service.³

In the first year of the Project many misunderstandings arose because the evacuees believed that all policy was arbitrarily made by local staff members. In an effort to remedy the situation a viable method was worked out whereby a committee of staff members would mold the staff point of view, and a group of evacuees (usually members of the Community Councils) would formulate a representative evacuee viewpoint. It was hoped that the Project Director would then take the views of both groups into consideration when issuing directives.⁴

Staff members lived either in nearby communities or on the camp sites. Facilities at the Center consisted of insulated, flat-roofed apartments with ceilings and walls of sheetrock. Each apartment had oil heating, evaporative cooling, toilets, and showers. They could be rented

3. A Year at Gila, n. p.

4. Brown, p. 32.

furnished or unfurnished. A Government directive allowed an expenditure of \$200 to \$400 for apartment furniture. The cost depended on whether or not it was a housekeeping apartment. Utilities were furnished and yard work and landscaping was done by the evacuees. Single men lived in flat-roofed dorms, divided into small rooms. Each room had duct heating and cooling. All rents were minimal: \$25 a month for a two-bedroom housekeeping apartment with bath; \$7.00 each for two single persons in the same apartment; a barracks room cost \$5.00 a month. A mess hall for appointive personnel was an added convenience and meals could be obtained for 35 cents each.⁵

Staff members and their families were almost completely segregated from the evacuee community after working hours. They lived normal lives with free-travel privileges and a salary comparable to off-site pay. If they desired, they could send their children to schools in Casa Grande, which offered to pick them up by bus.⁶ One important inconvenience was the problem of transportation to and from nearby shopping areas. Project trucks made scheduled runs to these towns, but they were allowed to carry only

5. War Relocation Authority, "Administrative Instruction No. 31," August 24, 1942.

6. Relocation Records, Memorandum from W. C. Sawyer to L. H. Bennett, July 11, 1944.

evacuees. This was one factor that was responsible for a high turnover among the appointive personnel.⁷

COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT

The WRA considered the establishment of community government essential to the Americanization program in the centers. It was the Project Director's duty to establish, within seventy-five days after seventy-five percent of the residence units were occupied, a commission for the express purpose of preparing a plan for such a government.⁸ At Rivers the commission specified a community-council system, and a temporary body was elected in the fall of 1942. This group appointed a committee to draft a constitution to be submitted to a vote of the people. Subsequently, the general populace endorsed the document, and it was sent to the WRA offices in Washington, D.C., for approval. The Rivers Constitution was returned practically as written and was accepted by the people in September of 1943. Permanent councils were then elected in the same month.⁹

7. Bennett, p. 29.

8. War Relocation Authority, "Administrative Instruction No. 34," August 24, 1942.

9. War Relocation Authority, "Community Government--Gila, Yearly Report, July 1944," Community Analysis Report No. 51a.

The Community Council had as its primary function the enactment and enforcement of laws to govern the relocation center and was also to provide for penalties for violations of such regulations. Both the laws and the penalties promulgated by the Council were subject to approval by the Project Director. They could not be contrary to WRA policy or state and federal statutes. The Council was also to establish such committees, boards, commissions, and other offices as needed and to appoint persons to the resulting positions.¹⁰

One permanent commission was created by the constitution. This was the Judicial Commission which acted as judge and jury for trials of law breakers. It was implemented in the latter part of 1944 when the necessity of sentencing some juvenile delinquents had caused a rather delicate situation. It was felt that it would undermine evacuee confidence in the Administration if the Director had to sentence the children of the residents. Besides relieving the Director of an unpleasant task the change paid dividends, for it made the people more aware of their responsibility to support law and order. It became evident

10. War Relocation Authority, "Constitution of the Gila River Relocation Center," pp. 1-4.

to them that the Commission was an extension of the people's will.¹¹

Other representative commissions brought into being by the council included:

Juvenile Commissions. Formed to deal with problems of juvenile delinquency, these groups had comparatively few occasions to function actively for there was little delinquency in the camps.

Manpower Commissions. These were to settle the matter of work priorities at a time of serious manpower shortages. This step was taken in an effort to enable necessary services to continue to operate.

Recreation Commission. This group helped coordinate the recreation programs of the two camps.¹²

Numerous boards and committees were also established as needed. They usually were outgrowths of various standing committees or were formed to meet specific problems. These groups often filled an important function by holding discussions of specific questions prior to the regular council meetings. Each council had a permanent executive board which received a salary so they could devote all of their time to the problems of the community.¹³

11. "Constitution," pp. 8-9, and Bennett, pp. 51-53.

12. Bennett, pp. 50-53.

13. Bennett, p. 50.

Block managers had been utilized as temporary community representatives until a permanent government could be established. For a time they competed with the Community Councils. The position of block manager continued to be prestigious because these functionaries were very close to the evacuees and had held office longer than the councils. One manager was heard to remark, "We are the Government; the Community Council is a child's toy." Nevertheless, as the reputation of the Councils increased the influence of the Block Managers lessened.¹⁴

Community Government faced many difficulties at Rivers. When it was about to become a reality the evacuees were of the opinion that it would be a tool of the Administration. They were a practical people and as unwilling guests of the Government it seemed logical to believe that they could not be allowed much latitude in their decision making. It was paradoxical that when a council gained a considerable measure of success it would lose the confidence of a large portion of the community. Since they were a restricted people they felt that a truly representative council would have to struggle for what was rightfully theirs. Therefore if there was no dissension the council was considered acquiescent or subservient to the Administration.

¹⁴. Brown, Community Analysis Report, July 1, 1944, p. 14.

Consequently the goals of both the Community and the Administration could never be simultaneously achieved because they were diametrically opposed.¹⁵

If this was not handicap enough there were many staff members who resented Community Government and felt that besides accomplishing very little it interfered with their management of the community.¹⁶

In conclusion it can be said that Community Government was an asset in that it gave the people confidence in their own abilities, provided an outlet for grievances, and did allow them a certain latitude in managing evacuee affairs within the framework of WRA regulations. It should be remembered that all responsibility was upon the shoulders of the Project Director and it was therefore unrealistic if not impossible to grant the evacuees latitude which might jeopardize or encumber his legal accountability.

15. War Relocation Authority, Community Analysis Weekly Trends No. T-2, n. p., and Brown, Community Analysis Report, July 14, 1944, pp. 3-4.

16. Brown, Community Analysis Report, July 14, 1944, n. p.

CHAPTER V

EDUCATION

The establishment of an adequate school system was a necessity in the relocation camps, not only from the practical standpoint of complying with state laws, but to indoctrinate the children of this suspect group in order to insure their future role in the democratic process.

Executive Order 9102 gave the WRA the authority and the responsibility of initiating a program to provide essential educational services in the relocation centers.¹ After the schools, both elementary and secondary, were established, the WRA was to have full financial and administrative responsibility over them. Administratively, the educational system was under the Community Management Division, with the Superintendent of Schools being directly responsible to the Assistant Project Director in each center.² The schools

1. U.S. Executive Order No. 9102. The bulk of the materials used in the chapter concerned with education was found in the "Final Report of the Educational Program 1942-1945" by William F. Miller. Also important was "Closing of School Narrative Report, Secondary Schools" by E. F. Kemp and "Closing of School Narrative Report, Elementary School" by Alice Marshall. All are a part of the WRA Relocation Records.

2. Miller, p. 1.

were to operate eleven months of the year; this included one hundred and eighty days of classroom instruction and a six weeks summer program. The summer program consisted of on-the-job training or remedial work. Attendance regulations and graduation requirements were to meet the standards demanded by the individual states concerned, thus facilitating admission to local state institutions of higher learning.³

THE STAFF

A Superintendent of Schools was retained in July, 1942, the same month as the arrival of the first contingent of evacuees. Shortly thereafter high school and elementary principals were employed, and an immediate effort was made to obtain teachers. Secondary school teachers had to have a Master's degree or its unit equivalent, while elementary school teachers were required to have a baccalaureate degree.⁴

Regular educational staff members were Civil Service employees, but evacuees were utilized in certain positions. At first it was the policy to employ teachers already certified by the State of Arizona, but this practice was later revised, and an effort was made to recruit teaching personnel from all over the country in order to provide evacuee contact

3. War Relocation Authority, "Administrative Instruction No. 23, Supplement No. 2," August 24, 1942.

4. Miller, p. 8.

with people from various parts of the nation. After this change it was rather unusual for an Arizona teacher to be retained.⁵

Recruiting and retaining capable faculty members was a constant problem. After the first school year (1942-1943) salaries on the outside were higher than the Civil Service wages offered in the Center. The result was a serious problem of teacher turnover. Although the complete school system required only seventy-five teachers, two hundred and twenty-six were employed in the three years of its operation. When the schools closed, only sixteen of the original staff remained. At no time had all the educational staff positions been filled.⁶

New teachers were given a rapid but extensive orientation which included distribution of WRA materials, a map of the camps, and an introduction to terminology peculiar to camp life. After talks with his principal, the new teacher was put under the supervision of an experienced staff member for one or two days before taking over a classroom.

A rather successful effort was made to utilize evacuees as teachers and teacher-assistants. Since classroom

5. War Relocation Authority, "Administrative Instruction No. 23, Supplement No. 2," August 24, 1942. Also Miller, p. 8.

6. Miller, pp. 4-5.

teachers had to possess a degree and assistants were usually required to have at least two years of college work, a training program was established with the cooperation of the Arizona State Teachers College at Tempe, Arizona. That institution furnished teacher-trainers to give extension work to the evacuees. The College generously considered units earned at the relocation center to be regular resident credits. The first year each student was charged five dollars, and in succeeding years the fee was set at one dollar per unit. This nominal charge barely covered the cost of the program. Forty-eight earned college credits the first year (1943-44) and thirty-three the next. Some earned as many as sixteen units in an academic year. This training was primarily of a practical, on-the-job nature with an almost immediate introduction to classroom teaching. The trainee assumed regular instructional duties from four to six hours each day under a Supervisor of Teacher Training from the Tempe school. Evacuees entering into this program brought to it a variety of experience ranging from two years or less of college work to the master's degree.⁷

Educators comprised the largest appointive group, and unlike the staff members in other administrative divisions, they played a leading role in the community, taking

7. Marshall, n.p.

part in various charity, youth, and community service programs in addition to their ordinary classroom duties.

PHYSICAL PLANT

The state of the physical plant of the Rivers educational system varied from ridiculous inadequacy to excellence, depending upon the chronological period examined. It was a paradox that in 1945 when facilities were at their best, the Center was nearing the end of its existence.

The Rivers Center had four schools. Each camp had one senior high school and one elementary school. Original plans calling for expensive, permanent school buildings had been discarded and the schools were established in regular barracks buildings built through army contracts.⁸ Each school occupied all or a portion of a standard "block" of fourteen barracks. School buildings had the usual four rooms, no ceilings, and partitions constructed of one-half inch plasterboard. Since thirty-five to sixty children occupied every room, such flimsy dividers were of little use in dampening classroom sounds and the noise problem was appalling. The school barracks were modified during the second school year (1943-44); thereafter the buildings contained three classrooms instead of four. In addition,

8. Kemp, p. 3.

closets were built in each classroom, the windows were moved to the north side of the buildings, and ceilings were installed.⁹

Canal school buildings occupied a full block, while the Butte facilities utilized two blocks. Consistent with the physical plant the enrollment of the Butte schools was always twice as large as that of Canal. In some respects Canal seemed to be used as a way station with constant population shifts to Butte as evacuees relocated. This probably explains the differences in the size of the school populations.¹⁰

In addition to the barracks constructed by the Army, facilities were added by the WRA in the winter of 1943-44. Four buildings were erected in each camp: a science laboratory, a domestic science building, a shop, and an auditorium-gymnasium. The auditoriums were not completed until the fall of 1944, and since the center was closed in the fall of 1945, they were used only one year. Both auditoriums were of similar construction, with six-inch siding, a slate-composition roof, cement slabs for dressing room floors, and raised wooden floors resting on concrete pillars for the gymnasium proper. The main room, 80 feet x 96 feet at Butte and 50 feet x 84 feet at Canal, was flanked by a wing on each

9. Courier, September 12, 1942, and Miller, p. 13.

10. Kemp, p. 1.

side which served either as dressing rooms or storage. The central gymnasium area had a stage at one end and a projection booth at the other. The play area was relatively free of supporting pillars, since a series of clear-span trusses were used. There was no ceiling, and the peak of the roof was twenty feet high. The Butte auditorium was heated with four oil furnaces. Two similar units heated the Canal building. The classrooms which were built by the WRA had a standard barracks width of twenty feet. The one exception was the Butte shop which was forty feet wide, but the length varied from one hundred and ninety-four feet for the Butte home economics building to eighty feet for the Canal shop. With these additions the physical facilities of the Rivers School system were not only adequate, but in some ways were superior to other Arizona schools of comparable size.¹¹

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

In order to facilitate the establishment of the Center's educational system the Arizona State Board of Education cooperated with the WRA. The State Superintendent of Schools appointed an advisory board of prominent educators to furnish counsel when needed. The program and curriculum, arrived at through the efforts of a professional curriculum advisor and teacher committees, conformed to state standards

11. "Final Engineering Report . . . ," pp. 10-11.

and the Center could therefore utilize the existing state rating agencies. For a brief time consideration had been given to a plan specifically designed for relocation center schools by Stanford University, but it was discarded in favor of one designed to provide maximum correlation with the Arizona course of study. It had been hoped that the accrediting body for Arizona, the North Central Association, would rate the Rivers system; but the temporary nature of the facilities precluded this possibility. However, Rivers did receive a "B" rating from the State of Arizona. This was a very acceptable designation, usually accorded to parochial and private schools.¹²

Canal schools used an 8-4 plan with a four year senior high school, while Butte had a 6-6 system with a high school which included grades seven through twelve.¹³ The difference in systems, in all probability, came about because of the necessity of adapting the school to the existing physical plants. In Butte the high school filled one block and the first six grades filled another block, hence the rather unusual division. The more conventional plan in Canal was feasible since the entire system was housed in one block and could be arranged in any convenient manner, merely by assigning the necessary classrooms within the single block.

12. Bennett, p. 16, and Miller, pp. 16, 44.

13. Miller, p. 7.

The academic program of the Rivers schools was much like that of any other Arizona school of comparable size. Americanization and education for relocation were major school objectives from the outset and every opportunity was used to implant these ideas. Pageants, programs, and lectures were employed to instill an appreciation of American ideals and goals. It was relatively easy to convince the children that relocation was desirable and this in turn often resulted in a change of adult attitudes. Each high school had a Relocation Department with a profusion of literature concerned with the transfer to outside schools and communities. Sunday meetings were held in these departments for all of those interested.¹⁴

Overall educational goals were: to made educational progress, to help students adjust to the shock and loss of removal, to prepare them for reentry into normal communities without undue retardation, and to develop desirable ideals and attitudes of citizenship.¹⁵

When Rivers opened an immediate problem was that of placing hundreds of students in the correct classes. Most had no formal proof of work completed, and the school officials had to rely on the memory of the pupil until official transcripts could arrive at a later date. The magnitude of

14. Miller, pp. 38, 40, and Kemp, p. 2.

15. Miller, p. 15.

the task can be imagined when it is realized that one hundred and forty-four different California schools were represented, furnishing Rivers with an average attendance of 2,900 students.¹⁶

Canal Schools opened their doors October 12, 1942, and Butte began classes seven days later. Attendance figures remained relatively stable for the duration of the center in spite of the continual egress of relocating evacuees.

<u>High School Attendance</u>	<u>Elementary School Attendance</u> ¹⁷
1942-1943 -- 1,893	1942-1943 -- 1,552
1943-1944 -- 1,469	1943-1944 -- 1,127
1944-1945 -- 1,358	1944-1945 -- 1,307

Graduation requirements included English, social studies, mathematics, a science laboratory, and physical education. Southwest history, choir, band, orchestra, vocational courses, and a choice of foreign languages were typical of the elective classes. Seventeen credits were necessary for graduation, one more than many Arizona schools required. A total of eight hundred and seventy-seven students graduated from the Rivers school system in the three years of its existence and an average of 22.4

16. Miller, pp. 3, 18.

17. Bennett, p. 17.

percent of those graduating continued their education in colleges and universities.¹⁸

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Extra-curricular activities were deemed an important element of the Americanization process in addition to their function of morale building; moreover, it was felt that club membership would give the students a necessary feeling of security. The Butte Elementary School administrators evidently considered these activities indispensable for they required membership in at least one club.¹⁹ There were eleven extra-curricular organizations in the elementary schools with an average total membership of seven hundred and fifty. Twenty-two clubs in the high schools maintained a total average of 1,500 members.²⁰ The organizations included some with national affiliations: the National Honor Society, Quill and Scroll, and the Girls' Athletic Association. It was regrettable that two national organizations, the 4-H and the Future Farmers of America, would not extend recognition to the Japanese-Americans at

18. Miller, Table V and VI, n.p. Also Miller, pp. 26-28.

19. Marshall, n.p.

20. Miller, p. 37.

Rivers. Local chapters successfully functioned in spite of the snub by the national organizations.²¹

A partial list of others included: music clubs, Spanish clubs, Hi-Y, fine arts clubs, and the Associated Students clubs. The latter furnished student government, and its spirited elections did much to lift the morale of the student body.

LIBRARY FACILITIES

A most important segment of camp life, embracing both the school and community, was the library. Each school eventually had an entire barracks building for a library. These remained open each evening from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. because barracks life was not conducive to studying. Libraries were also housed in recreation halls. These local facilities were primarily for adult use and they utilized the same collection and catalog as the school libraries. The use of books printed in English were encouraged but collections did include volumes printed in Japanese. By 1945 the combined libraries could boast of over 5,606 books. Visiting educators from Arizona schools were especially envious of the extensive magazine collection

21. Arthur L. Griswald, "Terminal Report--Community Activities Section," Relocation Records, January 11, 1946, pp. 40-41.

at the Center. As much as five hundred dollars was spent each year on magazine subscriptions.²²

EXTENDED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

A logical extension of the educational system at Rivers was the nursery school program. Principal objectives were to develop some degree of proficiency in the everyday use of English and to establish desirable habits and attitudes, especially in the area of personal hygiene. Another important consideration was to release more adults from child care duties therefore enabling them to do project work. The staff of the nursery consisted of approximately twenty evacuees. Morning and afternoon sessions were held, each of two and one-half hours duration.²³

A flourishing adult education system offered both academic and vocational subjects. In a three year period, 8,452 enrollees took advantage of the opportunity to increase their education. Here again, the underlying theme was Americanization; and, if possible, courses included social events to introduce evacuees to American pastimes.

The most popular courses were the English classes, for many elderly Japanese desired enough knowledge of the language to communicate with relatives in the service.

22. Kemp, p. 13.

23. Marshall, n.p., and Miller, p. 24.

These classes were grouped according to varying levels of proficiency and they were numerous enough to enable an evacuee to enroll in any given level without waiting more than a few days for a new session to begin.

All courses were conducted at night, and classroom time varied from two to fifteen hours a week. About forty subjects were offered, ranging from history to cosmetology. Courses emphasized preparation for relocation. Certificates recording the number of class hours spent and the degree of proficiency reached were awarded to those completing a course.²⁴

OBSTACLES TO EDUCATION

No narration concerned with the Rivers school system would be complete without some mention of the unbelievable handicaps which it suffered in the first year of the operation. It is a tribute to the students and the teachers alike that in spite of the multiple difficulties, a testing program showed the students to be 22 percent (two months) ahead of the national average. They were shown to be slightly above the national norms in I.Q. and aptitude ranges. Furthermore no school refused to accept Gila credits when graduates entered institutions of higher learning.²⁵

24. Miller, pp. 29-31, 34.

25. Miller, pp. 21, 51.

In the first year (1942-43) of operation the schools of Rivers were plagued by shortages or inadequacies of almost every type of equipment and facility. Many of the 3,445 students enrolled at Rivers in the fall of 1942 had been attending California schools situated on lovely campuses. In the short interval of a few weeks they were faced with dust, heat, barracks classrooms, and miserable, minimal facilities. Classrooms were small, inadequately lighted, and poorly sealed against the entrance of Arizona dust because no suitable interior covering sealed the large cracks in the floors until the summer of 1944.²⁶ For the first few weeks the pupils had to traverse ditches being dug for camp utilities. Their thirst under the torrid Arizona sun was quenched by warm water obtained from containers placed at various outdoor locations.

While a shortage of staff members constantly plagued the center it was especially critical in the first months. The pupil-teacher ratios of 1:35 in high school and 1:40 in elementary school were goals never reached for the average was nearer 1:40 and 1:60 respectively.²⁷ Equipment and supplies were very meager and classrooms had had no writing paper, textbooks, or pencils, blackboards, chairs, tables, benches, or stoves. The staff rose to the

26. Kemp, pp. 2-3, and Miller, pp. 1-5.

27. Kemp, p. 9.

challenge, however; and the camp junkyard became a prime source of school equipment. Sheets of wrapping paper stretched over a wall served as blackboards, and orange crates became raw material for furniture in the elementary schools. In the first months students sat on floors, kegs, boxes, or crude benches. The winter of 1942-43 was unusually cold, but no heat was available until the end of January when stove installations were begun. Classes sometimes met outside around a roaring bonfire, resulting, at least once, in the arrival of the Center's fire equipment. In the spring, summer, and fall months heat was the primary problem with the temperatures sometimes rising to 115°. Summer session students suffered in the absence of evaporative coolers. The physical education classes found it nearly impossible to conduct their program under the summer sun. Gymnasiums were not available until the 1944-45 school year.

Often the only existing texts for a class would be those brought from California by the evacuees. In one instance a single mathematics text was shared by three teachers, each having access to it for two days and planning the lessons a week in advance.

Commercial classes, faced with a drastic shortage of typewriters, taught fingering through the use of cardboard keyboards. Fifteen students would use an actual

machine with each having a five minute turn. In an effort to alleviate the problem the school officials issued periodic appeals for personal typewriters to rent for \$1.50 per month, but results were negligible. In spite of the many difficulties all classes took the standardized tests and received high ratings.²⁸

Requests for equipment had to be accompanied by the necessary priorities and had to run the gauntlet of governmental procedures. By the end of the first school year some equipment was starting to arrive, but typewriters did not come until the fall of 1944.

A most distressing problem was that of sagging student morale. In addition to the demoralizing effects of removal, the crudeness of the educational plant seemed to intensify student bewilderment and confusion. No one building could accommodate the student bodies and the resulting outdoor assemblies which were held the first two years did little to promote any feeling of unity or cohesiveness. In the face of these conditions, an effort was made to establish extremely high academic standards. While at first glance this seemed unrealistic, these standards soon made it plain to the students and parents that only the facilities were makeshift. These demands helped

28. Kemp, pp. 2-3, 9-12, and Miller, p. 15. Also Marshall, n.p.

establish a pride in their school which was bolstered by the establishment of student government and various national student organizations. When the auditoriums were completed, furnishing a convenient place for assemblies, there was a visible lift in student morale. Many relocated students wrote letters commenting on the relative ease with which they could cope with a new school after measuring up to the Gila standards.²⁹

Unique situations existed in the schools at Rivers. English classes were a problem because many students heard only Japanese spoken at home. An aim of the social studies classes was to "sell" other parts of the United States besides California. An agriculture class project involved planning and landscaping the school grounds. Woodworking classes had to build furniture before they could sit down; they also built head gates for irrigation, and growing boxes for the nursery. Music classes started without instruments, music, or records. The various choral groups had trouble with English diction. School attendance was mandatory through high school, and officials had little trouble locating truants within the confines of the camps. A student could work on the job and receive one-half unit by working one hundred and eighty hours. The school

29. Miller, pp. 23, 51.

newspaper suffered the peculiar handicap of having to go through government channels to obtain paper in order to publish.³⁰

Within the Project the slightest difficulty would usually be a source of dissatisfaction, complaint, and conflict. When viewed in this light the cooperation given to the educational program by the residents of Rivers was remarkable. The schools seemed to be the focal point of community hopes and nothing was done that could disrupt them. Some indication of the esteem in which the evacuees held the educational system was apparent in the membership of the Parent-Teacher Associations. More than one thousand evacuees joined.³¹

Perhaps the best measure of the success of the Rivers schools was the performance of its graduates. High test scores and ready acceptance by the various institutions of higher learning throughout the country confirmed the excellence of the Project educational system. This high quality was attained in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds. Much of the credit must go to the educational staff which gave freely of itself to the children of

³⁰. Miller, pp. 2, 15, Kemp, pp. 8-11, and Marshall, n.p.

³¹. Miller, pp. 23, 39.

these Japanese-Americans who had been so abruptly situated in the middle of the American desert.

CHAPTER VI

EVACUEE EMPLOYMENT AND MAJOR WORK PROJECTS

Food production was a primary function of the Gila Project and the Agriculture and Transportation Divisions were quite necessary to the production processes. Although the farms employed more workers than any other division, several other work possibilities existed. These ranged from limited defense work projects to positions in the Community Cooperative.

EVACUEE EMPLOYMENT

Employment could not be forced upon the evacuees. An Administrative Instruction declared that all work done in and out of relocation centers by the Japanese had to be voluntary.¹ While the Government provided subsistence, food, housing, and medical services, cash compensation was given only for work or in certain welfare situations. Three levels or rates of wages were paid to those who chose to work:

1. \$12 per month--for new workers and apprentices.
2. \$16 per month--for ordinary workers not in category one.

1. War Relocation Authority, "Administrative Instruction No. 27," Employment and Pay," September 1, 1942.

3. \$19 per month--for workers responsible for the supervision of others, for professional people, or for extremely hard labor.²

Pay was kept at a low level because of Congressional insistence. It was felt that no evacuee wage should be more than that received by the lowest rank in the armed forces.³ This minimal wage scale was a constant source of frustration to the appointive personnel and the evacuees. Staff members were acutely conscious of the low work output of the evacuees, and the Japanese could see no reason to over-exert when they received less than one dollar for an eight hour working day.

The Rivers Co-operative. Private enterprise was not allowed within the boundaries of the relocation centers for it was feared that successful businesses might induce a reluctance to relocate on the part of the evacuees.⁴ Nevertheless, necessary community services had to be provided. The solution was to establish a co-operative, a profit-sharing enterprise, for the benefit of shareholders. The Co-op at Rivers grew from a small canteen to a big business with an average inventory valued at more

2. Huso, "Report on Preliminary Stages of Evacuee Employment," War Relocation Authority, July 4, 1943, p. 6.

3. Thomas Reynolds, "History of the Gila River Camouflage Net Factory," Relocation Records, (Rivers), p. 1.

4. War Relocation Authority, "Administrative Regulation No. 26," August 25, 1942.

than \$100,000; peak monthly sales of \$115,000; and a monthly net profit of more than \$9,000.⁵ The Government encouraged its establishment, but at the same time clearly disassociated itself from any liability or financial responsibility.⁶

The Co-operative was begun without capital through the invited and willing speculation of a few outside business concerns which advanced credit, merchandise, and even shipping fees. These businessmen were quick to realize that in a community which was growing in multiples of five hundred (the number of evacuees in most incoming trains), but which lacked any private business, any venture of this type was almost sure of success.

All off-project arrangements and transactions connected with the business had to be handled by the Superintendent of Business Enterprises, a rather prodigious task for the lone staff member assigned to the Co-op. This was his lot because no evacuees could leave the confines of the Center. The same restriction resulted in banking-by-mail to accommodate the profits of the business which dealt only with cash.

Because the Japanese were not eager at first to invest their capital in the venture, it was begun with the

5. Bennett, pp. 23-24.

6. James L. Shelly, "History of Gila River Co-operative Enterprises, Inc.," Relocation Records, p. 1.

aforementioned cooperation of local business. After the operation was a success and had been in operation for about a year, actual incorporation was begun. Eventually more than 8,000 persons became shareholders in the concern.⁷

The amount of soft drinks sold by the Co-op is illustrative of the scale of merchandising undertaken by that business. In the summer heat the evacuees drank great quantities of soda, and three 1,000-case lots were used each week. More could have been sold but it could not be obtained.⁸

Community enterprise was not confined to the usual sale of merchandise over the counter. Several chain stores conducted a successful large-volume business through catalog sales. Barber shops, radio repair, laundries, dry cleaning, and other services in demand were operated through the Co-op. Often the high prices set by the Office of Price Administration would result in illicit private enterprises conducted in homes. Massage, sale of Japanese language newspapers, dressmaking, barber shops, laundry service, and maid service could be obtained outside of the Co-op. Many of these prohibited services, especially the

7. Bennett, p. 23.

8. Bennett, pp. 23-24.

laundry and maids, were patronized by staff members much to the distress of the Project Officials.⁹

Camouflage Nets. The idea of weaving camouflage nets originated with evacuees at the Santa Anita Assembly Center and through their efforts the Army was sufficiently impressed to invest \$125,000 in the construction of a net garnishing plant at Rivers. Preliminary attempts to recruit workers met with little success because of the low wage scale.¹⁰ Evacuees understandably objected to performing the rather monotonous, routine work for the standard WRA rates which amounted to about six cents per hour. A solution to the dilemma was found when the Government contracted the work to the Southern California Glass Company of Los Angeles, California, thus making it possible to circumvent the low wage scale dictated for government employment.¹¹

Evidently everyone concerned underestimated the capacity of the Japanese worker. Pay was based upon an estimated output of 750 to 1,000 square feet of finished netting each day per individual, with bonus pay for footage in excess of 1,000 square feet in a single day. The

9. Relocation Records, "Report on Private Enterprise," n.n. (Gila), October 23, 1943.

10. Bennett, p. 29.

11. Reynolds, p. 2.

workers, after one week of training, averaged 1,800 square feet each day with some achieving 2,500 to 3,000 feet. An industrious evacuee could earn ten to thirteen dollars in a single day. Evacuees worked a forty-hour week, and an employee's gross income from the net factory could easily exceed \$200 per month. Since their subsistence was dependent upon the work of other evacuees in the community the council decided that a part of this lucrative pay should be placed in a community trust fund to be shared with residents of the Center at a later date. This amounted to about 25 percent of the average factory worker's gross income.¹²

The net factory employed over 500 evacuees. These workers were obtained from the limited pool of volunteer workers available for normal project service, maintenance, and food production positions. This competition for evacuee labor resulted in a serious labor shortage. Compared with the scant wages allowed by the Government, the income of networkers must have seemed astronomical. What evacuee wished to labor as a farmer in the Arizona sun for a meager sixteen dollars a month when, with application, he could nearly obtain this in a single day in the net factory?¹³

12. Reynolds, pp. 3-6.

13. Huso, "Report on Employment . . . ," p. 11.

The construction of camouflage nets was a matter of weaving strips of burlap into a standard fish net suspended upon an adjustable-height frame. A pattern approved by the Army was hung above the net and the colored strips of burlap were woven in to conform to it. Nets of six different sizes were made utilizing nine colors of burlap. The entire net operation lasted five months until, without warning, it was discontinued. In those few months some eighty million square feet of netting had been produced; the total payroll had amounted to approximately \$400,000. Of that amount over \$67,000 went into the community trust fund.¹⁴

Since the camouflage project was considered to be work directly connected with the war effort, the net factory employees had to be American citizens in order to avoid breaking the rules of the Geneva Convention.¹⁵ Although the evacuees took great pride in their work neither the WRA nor the local administration ever made any efforts to publicize this evacuee contribution to the American war effort--a fact resented by the workers and the community. Two nationally known figures, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and Westbrook Pegler, visited the net factory but in spite of

14. Reynolds, pp. 6-10.

15. U.S.A., "Convention between the United States of America and Other Powers," Treaty Series No. 864, "Prisoners of War," July 27, 1929, Chapter 3, Article 31, p. 46.

this, the apparent news blackout continued throughout the duration of the war.¹⁶

Ship Models. A second war effort industry was located in Rivers from March of 1943 to January of 1944. Ship models were constructed for use as training aids by the Armed Forces. This project was conducted with the aid of the Naval Training Section in Washington, D.C. More than six hundred scale models of allied and enemy vessels were built in the evacuee shop. These ships were built in assembly-line fashion and had a scale of fifty or sixty feet to the inch. Detail was exact and met Navy specifications. The fact that one seven-foot model of a heavy cruiser was put on display in New York and Washington by the Navy Department was an indication of the quality of workmanship in the Center. When the shop was notified to discontinue the manufacture of the models and to turn instead to production of transparent plastic models which would facilitate the study of cargo placement, new orders were eagerly awaited. Instead, the entire ship project was cancelled. It was felt that the crucial cargo specifications were too classified to be entrusted to residents of a Japanese relocation camp.¹⁷

16. Reynolds, p. 8.

17. Hoyt A. Martin, "Final Report Historical (sic)," a report on Rivers' industry, Relocation Records, May 1, 1945, pp. 1-4.

AGRICULTURE

The fruition of Rivers as a primary agricultural supply house was a result of the WRA policy to

produce as large a percentage as possible of the crop and livestock products needed for the feeding of the evacuees. If land and labor in addition to that needed in the production of subsistence crops and livestock products are available, they should be used in the production of commodities needed in the war effort.¹⁸

That part of the policy statement pertaining to the production of food for evacuee purposes was effectively realized at Rivers. The Gila Project not only furnished all produce and stock needed by its own people but assisted in supplying the other centers as well. All foodstuffs raised at Gila were bought from the Center at market price by the Government. This cost was then charged against the Project budget. Most of the food was used by WRA projects, the exception was thirty-one tons of watermelons, which, in 1944, were shipped to the Army Quartermaster in Phoenix for consumption by local military units. In no case did any of the Project food compete upon the open market.¹⁹

Rivers was extremely successful in its agricultural endeavors. It was the most important center in terms of food production, partially because the warm climate made it

18. War Relocation Authority, "Administrative Instruction No. 14," February 15, 1945.

19. Bennett, p. 27.

possible to harvest vegetables during the winter months. It furnished approximately one-fifth of all food used in the relocation centers.²⁰

Crops. The choice of crops for production at the centers was made by the central WRA Offices. Selection of the varieties of food crops was carried out according to the following criteria (listed in the order of importance): (1) the amount and quality of land available, (2) the availability of labor and equipment, (3) the amount of vegetables needed for food, (4) the desirability of the vegetable in the diet, (5) the yields per acre and the adaptability of these vegetables to soil and climate, (6) the seasonal distribution of harvest dates, and (7) the ease of storing and shipping. After vegetable crops the order of priority was (1) feed crops, and (2) land conditioning crops or those needed to aid the war effort. Each center submitted its tentative agricultural program to the Washington Agricultural and Engineering Division each year by November first. This program indicated proposed acreage, estimated yield, and the amounts to be consumed and stored. The Washington offices would then make decisions as to what and how much each center should grow.²¹

20. Courier, August 28, 1943.

21. "Administrative Instruction No. 14."

As soon as the WRA had negotiated a land agreement with the Indian Service, work began on the necessary land preparation to facilitate vegetable production. This preliminary work was done in July of 1942 by appointive personnel with limited equipment. The farm area was covered with about two feet of sandy loam needing large amounts of water, but which was especially suited for continuous vegetable production. The average slope was one to three percent, or, with terracing, about fifty-three feet per mile. Since the land at that time was in alfalfa, it had to be releveled and rebordered for vegetable production.²²

The 6,977 acres of the farm project were split into ten farms of seven hundred acres each.²³ Every farm was divided into units with one evacuee foreman and two subforemen in charge of each subdivision. One evacuee Assistant-Superintendent was placed over the total truck and field crop operations. Every unit had its own equipment, seeds, supplies, and staff and although this was obvious

22. R. S. Davidson, "Final Agricultural Report," Operations Division, Agricultural Section, Gila River Project, Relocation Records, pp. 1, 10, 15.

23. There is a disagreement between the Agricultural Reports concerning the manner in which the farm acreage was divided. The report of Davidson (p. 10) had the land separated into eight units while Bennett's "History of River..." (p. 26) states the land was divided into ten farms. Since Mr. Bennett was the Project Director, it was his statement which was incorporated into this paper.

duplication, it was felt that the competition it provided was good for evacuee morale and served as a production incentive.²⁴

The two major plantings during the year, spring and fall, produced forty-two varieties of vegetables and fruit at Rivers, many of them raised for the first time in Arizona. They ranged from carrots to daikon (a Japanese vegetable used for pickles and resembling an extra-long white radish) and from cauliflower to Ao uri (a large Japanese cucumber).²⁵ Vegetables were displayed at an annual fair held in Rivers at harvest time where blocks, not individuals, competed for honors in a produce competition. These contests were not without the arguments, common at most fairs, over the decisions of the judges. To the outsider the size and variety of produce shown was nothing short of spectacular. This amazing success in truck farming might be considered the antecedent to the success of present day Arizona farm operations.²⁶

24. Davidson, p. 10.

25. The list of food crops grown at Rivers includes "Ming beans, soy beans, string beans, beets, broccoli, cabbage, cantaloupe, carrots, casaba, cauliflower, celery, sweet corn, cucumber, Armenian cucumber, daikon, egg plant, garlic, honey dew, lettuce, Mizuna, mustard green, Chinese cabbage, dry onions, green onion, parsley, green peas, bell pepper, Irish potatoes, icicle radish, red radish, spinach, Shigiku, Shiro Uri, Ao uri, Italian Squash, summer squash, strawberry, Swiss chard, Takana, tomatoes, turnips, watermelon," Davidson, p. 7.

26. Arizona Farmer, July 17-31, 1943.

Vegetables were an especially vital ingredient of the daily diet of the Japanese. The evacuees were allotted three hundred and twenty pounds of vegetables per individual per annum, about twice the normal American consumption.²⁷

Root crops thrived at Rivers. One six-acre field of turnips yielded seventeen and one-half tons of topped, first quality turnips per acre. A forty-three acre field of daikon, believed to be the largest single plot of this vegetable ever grown in this country, was harvested in 1943. In spite of the supposed impossibility of successfully raising cucumbers, a five-acre field of them produced a bumper crop. Watermelons also thrived, and in 1944 fifty-four tons of the fruit were shipped out of the camp for Government use. This shipment was surplus, in excess of the Center's needs.²⁸

In the first nine months of the Center's operation, eighty-four carloads of produce were shipped to other centers. This was done in spite of almost non-existent packing and storage facilities. Sacks were filled in the fields. Later, modern accommodations, including a packing shed, box machine, ice-shaver, and rollers, made the task much easier, and more efficient. Peak crop production was reached during the second year (1943-1944) and much food

27. Courier, October 31, 1942.

28. A Year at Gila, n.p., and Davidson, p. 6.

was shipped to other centers: a total of one hundred forty-four carloads or 3,027 tons of vegetables. The Gila Project consumed an additional 1,777 tons.²⁹

One successful agricultural venture was the result of a mixture of Japanese tastes and wartime shortages. Seeds were in short supply, especially those of the vegetables grown in the Orient and loved by the evacuees. With the help of some evacuee donations, a seed farm was begun at Gila, furnishing seed for Rivers and other centers as well. Beginning with eighty acres and later increased to one hundred and twenty-five acres, this project produced thirty-four varieties of seed and represented the first major production of seeds in Arizona.³⁰

The Center could boast of two nurseries which not only maintained hotbeds so that various vegetables could be transplanted to the fields, but furnished shrubs, trees, and flowers to the Grounds Section for beautification of the staff and administrative areas. They also provided cut flowers and floral designs for all occasions including weddings, funerals, parties, and to the hospital and churches.³¹

29. A Year at Gila, and A Second Year at Gila, printed by the Reports Office (Rivers, Arizona: 1944).

30. Davidson, pp. 9, 12.

31. Davidson, p. 9.

Feed crops, including barley, maize, and alfalfa were grown in addition to the food crops. In one season three crops necessary to the war effort were produced: forty acres of long staple cotton, sixty-six acres of flax, and forty acres of castor beans.³²

A situation, peculiar to Rivers, arose when it became very difficult to secure men to work as irrigators in the alfalfa pastures. Pasture irrigation evidently gave slight satisfaction since it seemed to produce very little when compared with work in the vegetable fields. Baling hay was also a task which was unfamiliar to and disliked by the Japanese.³³

Livestock and Poultry. There was no government owned livestock or poultry at Rivers before early 1943. Until then local farmers rented project land to pasture their herds. Some 5,000 cattle were grazed at a charge of eight cents a head, per day, furnishing a daily income of \$400 for the WRA. This income was almost enough to pay the cost of the irrigation water being used by the project.³⁴ The livestock program at Rivers began on January 4, 1943, when evacuee workers began constructing shelters, pens for the swine, and dairy units. Poultry and beef units were

32. A Year at Gila.

33. Davidson, p. 25.

34. Davidson, p. 13.

soon added, and by May 22, 1943, thirty-six dairy cattle, seven hundred and twenty Mexican steers, and fifty purebred Poland China gilts arrived from California. Two thousand chickens were added in May, providing both meat and eggs.³⁵

The hog program fared especially well despite a lack of shelter. The warm climate helped sustain an average of 6.4 pigs per litter. The fine pasture and the use of kitchen garbage produced pork of exceptional quality.³⁶ Garbage removal was contracted to a firm from Mesa, Arizona, which transported the edible refuse to the pigpens. During the watermelon harvest even these four-legged disposal units were glutted and the contractors had to carry the surplus melon rinds to a field where they were dried and burned. Up to fifteen tons a day were handled in this manner.³⁷

Until adequate refrigeration facilities were installed at the Center, beef and swine were shipped to Phoenix, slaughtered, dressed, and returned to the Center in refrigerator trucks. The Project herds furnished at least sixty hogs and sixty cattle each week for the Center's kitchens.³⁸

35. Davidson, pp. 11, 12.

36. Davidson, p. 11.

37. Nichols, p. 3.

38. Bennett, p. 31, and Davidson, pp. 22, 24.

The following figures illustrate the scale of food production when the Center was at the height of its activity in fiscal year 1944.³⁹

Value of Vegetable Crops	\$320,000
Value of Feed Crops and Pasture	\$ 63,955
Value of Livestock Products	\$279,838
Total Estimated Value of Livestock, Vegetables, and Field Crops	<u>\$663,793</u>

A further breakdown of one of the above components, that of the livestock products, produces the following figures.⁴⁰

Hogs Slaughtered	1,583
Weight of the Hogs	458,110 pounds
Poultry Slaughtered	3,370
Eggs Laid	59,775 dozen
Beef Slaughtered	1,916
Weight of the Beef	1,535,445 pounds
Gallons of Milk Produced	57,405

39. Davidson, p. 7.

40. Davidson, p. 7.

The importance of Rivers as a food producing unit is evident in the following table which gives the final summary of agricultural products at the Center.⁴¹

Vegetables	43,986,912 pounds
Feed Crops	13,877,000 pounds
Seed Crops	29,500 pounds
Miscellaneous Crops	55,660 pounds
Strawberries	26,034 pounds
Beef	5,888 head
Hogs	4,648 head
Eggs	182,513 dozen
Milk	164,475 gallons
Poultry Meat	15,171 head

In 1943, when livestock units were begun, efforts to find an evacuee for the position of Assistant Superintendent failed. The foremen on these units consequently were under the charge of a Livestock Superintendent, a new appointive position. This lack of job candidates was the result of little experience in livestock farming in the agricultural background of the evacuees.

Farm Problems. Wages paid to farm workers were at standard project rates and all received the same pay whether for collecting garbage or for being a foreman.

⁴¹. Davidson, p. 18.

Since the absolute necessities were provided by the Government the Japanese could see little advantage in performing arduous tasks for the same pay they would receive for a job requiring minimal effort; consequently, a negative evacuee attitude towards project work was nurtured and a simple chore normally needing the services of a few would often require many.⁴²

In the fall of 1944 a temporary setback was encountered in the farm program when the entire appointive staff of the Agricultural Division resigned to go on a government mission to Arabia. A new staff was hired within a short time however. Vacated positions in the evacuee labor forces were usually filled by elevating those in the unit in question.⁴³

Farm implements for Rivers were purchased from local dealers, while track-laying equipment was secured from various Arizona contractors. In an operation of such size, the maintenance of this equipment was a continuous task. Mobile lubrication units and fuel trucks, performing their functions in the fields, seemed to solve at least part of the maintenance problem.⁴⁴

42. Davidson, p. 15.

43. Davidson, p. 16.

44. Davidson, p. 19.

Difficulties commensurate with any farm operation of comparable size were to be expected. The services of a full-time veterinarian were needed because livestock had to be vaccinated whenever practical, and cattle had to be branded. Trespassing stock from local farmers was a continual problem. No fence was ever erected around the entire project, and even though these animal forays resulted in damage to vegetable fields through trampling and grazing, no practical solution was ever found. The irrigation system often carried muddy water in the late summer at the time when transplanted vegetables would be stunted by it. Summer heat forced the utilization of night lighting in the poultry laying houses in order to promote better feed consumption. A horde of grasshoppers descended upon the fields in the fall of 1944 and the spring of 1945. Despite efforts to use various poisons and the burning of some pasture land to halt their progress, some vegetable crops were damaged.

The Project farms were a tremendous success in spite of huge overhead costs and the low vegetable prices paid by the Government. The fields furnished the largest single source of work for the Center, using from one hundred and fifty to eight hundred evacuees, depending upon the season.⁴⁵ No one was forced to work and the thriving

45. Davidson, pp. 13, 20.

fields were a tribute to evacuee industry. The Agricultural Division of Rivers made a significant contribution to the war effort and to the residents of the center by furnishing food, livelihood, and vocational training.

TRANSPORTATION

The Operations Division of the Gila Project, which was responsible for supplying transportation, suffered the wartime shortages and inconveniences borne by the general populace, but it also endured the added handicap of bureaucratic red tape. In spite of this, it managed to provide adequate services for evacuees and administration.

Although some project employees were present during the initial construction period, no vehicles were then available, and transportation was obtained by borrowing three vehicles from another government agency. The situation had changed by the time the camp opened, however, and the transportation section had twenty-five cars and fifty trucks for use. By December of 1943 a peak inventory of two hundred and seventy-eight road vehicles was reached. Many of them were vehicles formerly belonging to the evacuees, purchased by the Government. Trucks obtained in this manner usually were not heavy enough to withstand the rigors of supplying a city of 13,000. Evacuees must have had the unusual experience of meeting their former

possessions on the streets of the relocation camp, a reminder of a way of life which, for them, no longer existed.⁴⁶

Demands made upon the transportation section were considerable. The nearest railhead was Casa Grande, twenty miles away, and supplies had to be transported to and from the terminal by truck. Usually thirty-four men and ten trucks made the journey every day.⁴⁷ The Center was responsible for a great increase in the amount of freight handled by the Casa Grande station. The Rivers freight, as much as fifteen carloads each day, more than equaled the total volume of materials which had normally passed through the station in one year. This was in spite of the fact that the line was a major route for the Southwestern states. Outgoing cargo amounted to approximately ninety carloads of produce every three months. In the second year of operation, trucks from the center carried 90,000 tons of freight. Loading and warehouse facilities were then built at Serape, seven miles south of Chandler, Arizona, and all freight was received or shipped from there.⁴⁸

47. Courier, October 24, 1942.

48. Courier, April 8, 1943. The report of Tom B. Vinson, "Final Report of the Gila River Project, Motor Transport and Maintenance Section, Rivers, Arizona," (Relocation Records) covers the period between August, 1944 to January 15, 1946, and it provided most of the information on the Transportation Section.

Another important duty of the Transportation Section was that of conveying personnel to and from the railheads. In addition to handling this normal traffic, two mass movements of evacuees were transported entirely in project vehicles. Two thousand and twenty-four persons arrived from the Jerome Relocation Center, and one thousand and eight hundred Japanese who were being segregated because of political sentiments were taken to the Casa Grande railhead, on their way to Tule Lake, California.⁴⁹

The provision of a shuttle service of sorts was another function of the Transportation Section. In the first months of the Center's existence the only place to purchase supplemental supplies was the canteen located in Canal Camp. For the Butte residents the seven-mile round trip through choking dust and often in high temperatures, in many instances with their arms laden with packages, was most unpleasant. Evacuees attempted to hitchhike with Government vehicles which traveled between the camps, but this practice was frowned upon by the administration. When a bus service was begun, the evacuees evidently tried to compensate for the miles they had walked by using the service as a pastime. A permit system eventually had to be implemented to reduce the use of busses as recreation.

49. Vinson, p. 3.

Another transportation burden was the necessity for ferrying farm laborers to their daily work sites.⁵⁰

Evacuees were transported to and from the local bus stations and railroad depots at all hours of the day and night. Eventually regular shuttle runs were established, and it then became the duty of the passengers to make connections. No public transportation facilities were provided to the Center except when it was being opened and closed, that is, when large profits were assured. Even then they were furnished only after considerable pressure from Washington.⁵¹

A Project bus at first carried staff members to their homes in the Phoenix area, but an administrative order later limited its route to the Chandler area.⁵² No provision was made for staff travel to local communities for shopping or to bus and railroad facilities. In fact, a project bus could carry only evacuees, and if staff members or their families would happen to arrive on the same train as evacuees, the evacuees would be accommodated while the staff members had to arrange their own conveyance. Only newly arriving or departing personnel could use project transportation. This arrangement was greatly resented by

50. Courier, September 12, 1942 and October 31, 1942.

51. Vinson, p. 3.

52. Cited by the Gila News Courier, August 19, 1944.

the staff and their families, and several left Rivers because of this inconvenience.⁵³

Drivers and mechanics were evacuees working under the direction of staff members. These staff members had to have a valid driver's license from a state while evacuee drivers were checked by the Transportation Division and Internal Security. At the height of the activity at the Center, two hundred and fifty evacuees worked for the Transportation Division.⁵⁴

Under the best of conditions, maintenance of any sizeable fleet of vehicles in the midst of wartime shortages would be a formidable task, but circumstances peculiar to Rivers amplified the burden. When shop equipment had been allocated to the various relocation centers, Rivers had been omitted; and by August, 1944, sixty-five percent of the Center's vehicles were inoperative because of maintenance or repair problems. Until the spring of 1944 when equipment finally began to arrive from other centers, major maintenance was done at the Indian Agency at Sacaton, necessitating a round trip of twelve to fourteen miles. A small, inadequate shop was established the first year at Canal, and in 1943 another was opened at Butte. The facilities were so limited that most repair work was done upon

53. Bennett, p. 29.

54. Vinson, p. 7, and Bennett, p. 29.

the ground. Inches of dust would swallow any tools forgotten by the mechanics and summer heat and blowing dirt were further aggravations. In the summer of 1944 the Transportation Department moved into buildings formerly occupied by the camouflage factory which had been purchased by the Government. These furnished adequate shop and garage areas for the remaining months of the Center's existence.⁵⁵

The inventory of road vehicles was large and varied including: fifty-three cars, twenty-eight pickups, seventeen panels, eighty-four stake, fifty-three cargo, six bus and ambulance, fourteen semi-trucks, one derrick, one wrecker, eleven dump, three fire, three carryalls, and four tankers. All vehicles had governors attached which were often circumvented by the evacuees for the sake of more speed.⁵⁶ In 1944 a new program of maintenance and vehicle record-keeping was initiated by a new equipment and maintenance supervisor. Until this time no regular method of accounting for vehicle use had been enforced. Vehicles had often been appropriated by individual staff members for personal use, leaving few, if any, for general service. Amid many loud but unofficial lamentations a limited number

55. Vinson, pp. 1-2, and Bennett, p. 17.

56. Vinson, p. 10, and Bennett, p. 27.

of vehicles were made available to the staff for use in the Center and then only by presentation of a written request.⁵⁷

The military system of trip-tickets depended upon mileage records, and it could not be used because of a crippling shortage of working odometers. After unsuccessfully attempting to obtain spare parts through regular government channels, the supervisor dispatched mechanics to Phoenix auto salvage yards. Through trading, purchase, and improvisation, most vehicles were returned to service and accurate mileage records were thereafter kept.

Maintenance was further handicapped by a continuous shortage of trained mechanics. Because of the wartime conditions a mechanic drew premium wages in the local economy. WRA wages could not compete with them. The situation was such that no mechanics were ever obtained through Civil Service procedures or through the Federal Employment service. Regular recruiting trips were made to Phoenix by the staff but never in the years of the Center's operation were all of the mechanic positions filled.⁵⁸

57. Vinson, pp. 9-10.

58. Vinson, p. 5.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMMUNITY

The people of Rivers, like those in most communities, were occupied with living harmoniously together, raising children, seeking some degree of personal worth, and worshipping their god. Despite being wards of the Government with all immediate needs provided, they participated in organized and unorganized community activities.

Living in a barracks situation made the establishment of a normal family environment extremely difficult. Mealtime had previously been an occasion or opportunity for discussion, but project living greatly hindered any effort to retain family rapport at the dinner table. Children and adults stood in line to enter the mess hall and once inside, the young people could sit at mess tables with friends instead of members of their family.¹

Bathing, toilet, and laundry facilities were segregated and in outside buildings therefore the home became simply a place to sleep. To complicate matters the living quarters could hardly have been considered inviting since no furniture was issued except for the metal army cots.

1. Courier, September 12, 1942.

Further strain was placed upon the solidarity of the home by the well-meant government policy of encouraging outside activities which resulted in even less time spent in the barracks apartments.

Since the Federal authorities provided everything needed for subsistence, including food, clothing, shelter, education, and entertainment, little remained for the family to provide. The children raised in these circumstances tended to partially reject some of the usual attitudes of revering and respecting the authority of the Japanese family.

Because the Government was directly or indirectly responsible for most of their tribulations, the evacuees tended to consider the property of that Government as a community possession. The Japanese, usually noted for their scrupulous honesty, became skilled at appropriating various project materials for their own use. While very little was ever taken from fellow evacuees; nevertheless, the respect for the property of others must have suffered when children could observe their elders stealing government property. These actions were often carried out in the face of specific and threatening governmental admonitions which further emphasized their immorality.²

2. Nichol, p. 42, and Courier, January 14, 1943.

The Administration was distressed to realize that the tenets of democracy seemed less real to the evacuees than the restrictions imposed upon them by their democratic government. It therefore became the policy to encourage any activity which might help to stabilize the community. Religious, social, and athletic endeavors provided the bulk of community activities. The following material is a brief and very general accounting of those activities.

Religion. There was nearly complete freedom of religion in the relocation centers, with Shinto, which was associated with Emperor worship, being the only faith with restrictions imposed upon it. Many religious sects were represented in the camps and their services were held in various recreation halls. Permission to build denominational church buildings could have been granted by the Project Director to interested groups inside or out of the Center but no applications for such construction were received at Rivers.³

Camp occupants were primarily Buddhist, with a large Christian minority which was divided into at least eight denominations. Most of these sponsored some type of weekly service, a Sunday school, and a young people's organization. Every effort was made to prevent proselytizing

3. War Relocation Authority, "Administrative Instruction No. 32." August 24, 1942.

within the Camps and visiting religious officials were never allowed to remain in the Center overnight. The various beliefs generally furnished a cohesive force in evacuee life. Buddhist funerals were especially important in this respect for they represented a culmination of the religion and served to bind the Buddhist community together.⁴

Social Organizations. Numerous social organizations existed at Rivers. Most were merely to entertain or to provide an outlet for individual interests, and they reflected no particular culture. However, a few did exist which typified either the Oriental or Caucasian background.

Groups which were primarily Oriental in character included clubs whose objective was to perpetuate Japanese dance and literature through study, readings, and performances or to emphasize physical culture. The Center's Administration was disturbed by the nature and actions of two such societies which tended to foster Japanese nationalism. Their stated purpose was to perpetuate Sumo, a popular type of wrestling, and Judo, a form of self-protection. Since both had male memberships, required a measure of discipline, and were conducted in Japanese, they were sometimes used by some Japanese to instill propaganda and to further

4. Bennett, p. 10, and Brown, p. 60. Shinto priests were interned for the duration of the war.

nationalistic tendencies. The authorities chose to ignore these clubs, neither encouraging them nor taking any steps to forbid participation in them.⁵

Those groups which were American in nature were those familiar to most Americans and need no lengthy explanation. They were centered around such groups as the YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and various hobby organizations.

Each community had clubs for older men and for older women. The women's clubs concentrated upon sewing and other feminine skills while the men's groups usually played games and read. The games often included gambling in one form or another which was forbidden but as long as they were merely the pastimes of small groups the authorities made no move to specifically forbid them.⁶

Sports. Physical activity was important in camp life and the American sports of football, basketball, and baseball were represented by organized teams and leagues. These sports were played in season, and each was vociferously supported by the community. Baseball was extremely successful and by the time Rivers closed the twenty-two

5. Brown, p. 57.

6. Brown, pp. 57-58.

league teams each had its own field.⁷ Golf and tennis were also popular although the playing facilities were rather limited.

Activities. The general activities of the Rivers community were typical of those in many small American cities. They were initiated by evacuees or the Community Activities Section. Weekly dances for the young people were held in block mess halls with the music furnished by local talent or by recordings. Amateur shows were ever-popular with the Japanese, and Oriental and American acts often appeared upon the same program. Since the community had to turn inward for practically all of its entertainment, there was an almost continuous parade of model airplane contests, garden competitions, pet shows, fashion shows, baby shows, and festivals.

One unique community project was the construction of a large monument to bear the names of the Japanese-Americans from Rivers who were serving in the Armed Forces. This was the only such monument in the relocation centers. It was situated on the top of a small rock outcropping in Butte Camp and was quite elaborate, including a reflective pool and a ramada. The Camp's water tank, higher and on the same butte, furnished the water for the pool. The

7. Arthur L. Griswald, "Terminal Report--Community Activities Section," Relocation Records, January 11, 1946, p. 43, and Courier, September 12, 1942.

ramada, containing concrete benches and commanding a panoramic view of Butte Camp and the Gila River Valley, was reached by a pleasant winding path landscaped with rocks and desert foliage.⁸

At the base of the same hill, just below the monument, was another community project, an amphitheater which utilized the natural slope of the land. A stage was built, at first very crude, but later including dressing rooms for stage productions. Its primary function, however, was its use as a movie theater. Films shown there and in a similar theater built in Canal were selected by a group of citizens and were presented once a week along with various American propaganda films. There was no formal charge for this entertainment, but a collection of pennies and nickels was usually taken. As the center approached its closing date, there was evidence of more dependence upon things Japanese. In one instance an old silent film showing the Japanese Navy evoked wild applause. Perhaps it was merely a form of retaliation for the endured months of propaganda films.⁹

8. George Nishimura, "Community Council Historical Report," Relocation Records, May 1944 to August 1944, p. 2. Mr. Nishimura was the Chairman of the Butte Community Council.

9. Courier, January 19, 1943; October 14, 1942, War Relocation Authority, "Weekly Trends--March 1 to March 7, 1945, p. T-11, and Arthur L. Griswald, "Terminal Report--Community Activities Section," (Rivers), January 11, 1946, p. 25.

Other community efforts resulted in the construction of picnic areas in locations scattered throughout the camps, and the landscaping of these areas and the various community buildings.¹⁰

Much time and material was expended in an effort to make individual barracks a pleasure to behold. Many fountains and pools were constructed between, around, and near to the cement barracks supports. A tasteful use of desert vegetation and the artful construction of rock gardens did much to improve the general appearance of the area. Their desert homes were evidence of the industry, talent, and resourcefulness of the Japanese.

In summation, the Rivers community, almost totally dependent upon its own resources, relied upon a great variety of social and athletic events for its release from an otherwise monotonous existence. It also found time to cooperate in the construction of several worthwhile projects which considerably enhanced their immediate surroundings.

THE POPULATION

In size, Rivers, like other relocation camps, rapidly grew to be a community of thousands in a span of weeks instead of the years normally required by an ordinary American city. The first contingent of evacuees consisted

10. Griswald, p. 26.

of some five hundred volunteer pioneers who arrived in July of 1942. In a little over a month more than 8,000 Orientals arrived and took up residence in the Center. Termination of the facility came with a similar abruptness, and an average of 1,600 persons departed in each of the final three months of the Center's operation.¹¹

A preponderance of Gila residents had been transferred to the Arizona site from various assembly centers although almost 3,000 persons came directly from the Stockton-Fresno, California, area without passing through any assembly centers.

The original homes of the Rivers' evacuees were largely in two locales: (1) Central California from Sacramento to Fresno, and (2) Southern California from Los Angeles to the Mexican border. The Rivers population was comprised of Japanese from the lower economic ranks. If they were from central California they most likely had been small farmers or farm laborers while those from Southern California had been residents of the suburbs. There was a noticeable lack of Japanese from the San Francisco Bay area.¹²

11. Brown, pp. 14-15, and Evacuated People, p. 21.

12. Brown, p. 14.

The restrictive immigration laws that had been enforced in the United States were reflected in the composition of the Rivers population. From the time of the Gentlemen's Agreement the immigration of males was drastically curtailed and until 1924 when Japanese immigration was entirely halted, women between thirty-five and fifty-four made up the largest group of Japanese entering the United States. This accounts for the large proportion of older men in the relocation centers. Their wives were, on an average, ten years younger than they. The same conditions also were responsible for the relative shortage of individuals, especially men, between the ages of thirty and thirty-nine in the centers. Despite the fact that the young men between twenty and twenty-nine were proportionately more numerous than their counterparts in the overall American population, the Center was deprived of much of their potential. Approximately forty percent of this age group were members of the Armed Forces of the United States. These factors furthermore offer an explanation of the shortage of non-alien men needed for work in the defense projects and to serve in the community government. Efforts to speed relocation were handicapped for the same reasons. The young men who would ordinarily be the most aggressive,

venturesome, and productive segment of a normal population was in the extreme minority.¹³

While the Rivers Community was of a decidedly artificial nature the normal patterns of human existence continued; births, deaths, and weddings occurred with approximately the same frequency as in an ordinary community. Two hundred fourteen marriages were performed with the Center but no divorces were granted. One curious feature of the Gila Project was the establishment of a honeymoon cottage: a barracks apartment furnished with double bed, dresser, chests, lounging chairs, tables, lamps, and desks, all donated by a San Francisco hotel.¹⁴

Six hundred and sixty-two babies were born in Rivers and were dutifully entered as a part of the admission statistics. Two hundred and twenty-one people died at Rivers from its inception to its closing. The death rate increased in late 1944-45, but it must be remembered that by then most of the young adults had relocated and the populace had an abnormally high proportion of older people. The nominal death rate was remarkable when the factors involved are considered, i.e. a large number of elderly people, a drastic change of climate, and subsistence furnished through Government auspices. There is little

13. Evacuated People, pp. 69, 92, 95.

14. Courier, October 31, 1942.

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF EVACUEES ADMITTED
TO THE RIVERS RELOCATION CENTER^a

(Center-to-Center Transfer Not Counted)

<u>Total Admissions</u>	<u>Number of Evacuees</u>
Direct Evacuation	2,935
Voluntary Evacuation.	18
Assembly Centers.	10,290
Seasonal Work	118
Births.	662
Institutions	76
	<hr/>
Total	14,099

a. Evacuated People, p. 9.

TABLE 2
POPULATION SOURCES FOR
THE GILA RIVER RELOCATION CENTER^b
(Not Including Transfers)

<u>Assembly Center</u>	<u>Number of Trains</u>	<u>Number of Arriving Evacuees</u>
Turlock	10	3,575
Stockton	1	220
Pinedale	1	40
Santa Anita	3	1,271
Fresno	1	156
Tulare	10	4,942
<hr/>		
Direct entry without passing through an assembly center	7	2,938
		<hr/>
Total Population at Rivers by October 27, 1942		13,140

b. Brown, p. 14.

question that federal efforts in behalf of evacuees were a major factor in the comparatively normal record of births, disease, and deaths.¹⁵

THE NEWSPAPER

In the managed community produced by interning the Japanese at Rivers, communication between the people and the Administrative authorities was, at its best, ineffective. The Orientals, plunged into the strange world of confinement, were fearfully attuned to inference and rumors of events which could further complicate their lives. With this in mind, the order was given in the fall of 1942 requiring each relocation center to establish a project newspaper. Such publications were for the purpose of "keeping evacuees informed of administrative decisions affecting their interests and of general activities within the relocation centers."¹⁶ These papers were to begin publication as soon as practicable and were to utilize WRA personnel until evacuee staff members could be found. The same directive intended the newspaper to become a part of a center's Co-operative enterprise, but at Gila it remained an integral part of the Administration: a division of the Reports Section under the immediate jurisdiction of the

15. Evacuated People, pp. 9, 143, 145, 150.

16. War Relocation Authority, Administrative Instruction No. 8, Supplement No. 4, October 15, 1942.

Project Director.¹⁷ This situation might have been the result of the use of the paper by the Center's Administration to issue official pronouncements. An announcement in the first issue stated an intention to use this publication to make WRA policies known and to transmit community government decisions and regulations.¹⁸ It was also expected to publish factual materials furnished or requested by the Project Director.¹⁹

At first glance it would appear that the paper was relatively free of administrative harassment. The evacuee staff had a free reign, short of libel, personal attack and other "utterances contrary to the general welfare."²⁰ It must be admitted, however, that a single man, the Project Director, could determine what was detrimental to the welfare of the populace. If, in his opinion, the newspaper showed a lack of responsibility, he could suspend its publication.²¹ In addition, the wages, printing materials, office space, and machinery needed to produce the paper

17. A Year at Gila, July 1943, n.p.

18. Courier, September 12, 1942.

19. War Relocation Authority, Administrative Instruction No. 8, Supplement No. 4.

20. War Relocation Authority, Administrative Instruction No. 8, Supplement No. 4.

21. War Relocation Authority, Administrative Instruction No. 8, Supplement No. 4.

were furnished by the Government and all of these could be obtained only through the Project Director.

The publication's name was The Gila News Courier. It was at various times a bi-weekly, tri-weekly, and again a bi-weekly paper. It had an average circulation of 4,000 copies and was distributed free of charge to all Center families. There were no advertisements on its pages, and it was produced as economically as possible by means of a mimeograph machine.²²

The newspaper normally had twenty-eight staff members including editor, reporters, artists, clerks, translators, circulation manager, and mimeograph operators; however, the continual relocation of staff members often resulted in fluctuations of staff size. Evacuees holding positions on the newspaper staff received the same wage as those on other camp duties, although students from the high schools working as part-time helpers received either credit or wages. In the last months of the paper's publication these young people served as regular staff members; in fact, the average staff member's age at that time was sixteen.²³

22. A Year at Gila, n.p. The Courier was bi-weekly from its first issue on September 12, 1942, to December 14, 1942, and between October 31, 1944, and September 5, 1945, when the last issue was printed. During the intervening period it was tri-weekly.

23. Ethel A. Flemming, "Final Report of the Reports Office," Relocation Records, p. 7.

The Courier was printed in two languages: English and Japanese. The Japanese section was begun in October, 1942, and it was continued through the last edition. This served to keep the Issei informed since most of these elderly Japanese read little or no English. A rather delicate situation arose over the contents of the Japanese news section because no administrator seemed able to translate it in order to check the contents. An evacuee joke made the rounds at this time that probably was not appreciated by the Administration. It was suggested that one headline in the Japanese section had read "Hail to Tojo."²⁴ Proof of the official concern about the problem were orders limiting the contents of the Japanese section to a strict translation of the English section.²⁵ Evidently even then there was much squabbling among the paper's employees over what constituted a correct translation because each had his own version of a true translation no matter how slight his knowledge of the language. The competent Kibei who wrote the translations for almost three years seemed to be continually embroiled in arguments with the Administration and fellow staff members over the veracity of his work.²⁶

24. Flemming, p. 3.

25. Cited in the Courier, March 18, 1943.

26. William Huso, "Final Report of the Relocation Division," Relocation Records, Part IV, Chapter 6, p. 150.

The paper was remarkably innocuous and even a careful perusal of its pages reveals little that could upset or stimulate. Normal statistics, i.e. births, deaths, sicknesses, and marriages, were duly recorded along with folksy reports of teas, parties, and school events. Only serious incidents of law-breaking such as assault, major theft, or murder were published. Although the Courier was not above mentioning the wartime epithet, "Jap," and sometimes would caustically reflect a humor connected with camp life; overall it was a bland synthesis of administrative and community announcements interlaced here and there with crude cartoons and sports news.²⁷

In spite of their common ancestry, the Japanese in many ways were noticeably heterogeneous in their community life. The physical separation of Canal and Butte camps sparked a degree of loyalty and competition in their residents. Since the Butte staff was closer to administrative operations, its members tended to scoop the Canal representatives and often seemed to monopolize the news space. Further conflicts arose when the Christian minority demanded equal news coverage with the large Buddhist majority.²⁸

27. Brown's "Final Report. . ." contains a rather comprehensive report of Community attitudes and problems which indicates that the Courier's blandness did not accurately reflect the community.

28. Flemming, p. 6.

Two portions of the paper were especially appreciated, one by the Administration and one by the evacuees. The Government was necessarily concerned with evacuee relocation and for a time a separate relocation supplement was printed. It would list job opportunities with descriptions of favorable localities which presented work possibilities. It also kept a running tally of those who had relocated, along with their addresses, in order to impress the populace with the feasibility of finding a better life elsewhere. This separate section was discontinued in early 1943 because it was feared it would be considered evident government propaganda and therefore would be disregarded. Nevertheless, by the summer of 1943 the Courier was plainly a vehicle through which the Administration advocated relocation.²⁹

From the evacuee point of view the sports news was of prime importance. Outside of Administrative news the sports section was allotted the most space. The newspaper gave tangible support to the athletic program by fielding baseball and basketball teams. The publication's staff must have been gratified and perhaps a little chagrined that this section was so carefully read for on at least two

29. Flemming, p. 15.

occasions an adult delegation was on hand when the Courier office opened to protest faulty sports reporting.³⁰

Special editions of the Courier were published on Thanksgiving, New Year's, Christmas, and July 4th. Because July 20th was the anniversary of the opening of the Center, that date was chosen to issue special commemorative year-books. This was done in 1943 and 1944. They were appropriately entitled A Year at Gila (1943) and A Second Year at Gila (1944). These contained a resume of the year's tribulations, achievements, and events. A calendar with drawings by staff members was also distributed in these same years. Other printing was done on the Courier equipment, for any department at Rivers could utilize it if a publication was needed in its work.³¹

The Community Analysis report stated that even though the paper was widely read and factual, there remained misunderstanding of Administrative statements because of the nature of the community with its rampant rumors and distortions of fact. Perhaps it would have been impossible to produce a vital, inspirational newspaper when it was necessarily totally dependent upon the Federal Government. Nevertheless an effort was made, and the paper

30. Flemming, p. 8.

31. Flemming, p. 9, and A Year at Gila.

was published for the duration of the Center's existence. It printed its final edition on September 5, 1945, when the few remaining staff members relocated.³²

CAMP PROTECTION

Police duties outside the Center's boundaries were handled by a Military Police detachment. These soldiers had no jurisdiction within the camps and could enter the Center only if their presence was requested by the Project Director. If he did ask for their aid the entire camp, including the Director and the appointive personnel, would then be temporarily placed under the control of the military.³³

The police detachment patrolled the boundaries of the Center. The perimeter of each living area, Canal and Butte, was for a period of six months marked by a three-strand barbed wire fence but the entire Project was never fenced. Instead, the boundaries were conspicuously signed with warnings in Japanese and English which forbade trespassers from either direction.³⁴

32. War Relocation Authority, "Communication," Community Analysis Report No. 21 (Gila), November 24, 1943.

33. Bennett, p. 11.

34. Bennett, p. 11, and Courier, September 12, 1942, September 19, 1942.

Protection against fire was the task of several full-time fire crews. They were ably assisted by volunteer units in each camp.

Internal Security. Inside the boundaries of the Center an Internal Security Police Force had the chief responsibility for the protection of the life and property of the evacuees and for maintaining law and order. State and Federal officials were called upon to investigate felonies and to manage felons, but all other irregularities were under the jurisdiction of the local police.³⁵

The Chief of the Internal Security Section was a Caucasian, but the body of the force was drawn from the ranks of the evacuees. Qualifications were few: the men had to be at least twenty-one years old, in robust health, loyal, and had to have a good reputation in the community. The average age of an Internal Security member was thirty-two. Most of them were American citizens but a few Issei were employed and they proved to be most effective in public relations work, especially with the influential older generation in the community. A majority of the members of the force had a high school education and a large number had some university training, often in law or social work. Although none of them had any actual experience in

35. John W. Nichol, "History of Internal Security," Relocation Records, pp. 32, 46.

police work, an adequate training program corrected this situation.³⁶

Internal Security had humble beginnings with its first station operating from an ironing room in Canal. It eventually occupied quite adequate quarters in both camps. The force began with a group of fifty evacuees, and it reached a peak strength of one hundred and twenty evacuees and twelve staff members. The latter were recruited from police forces in various cities in the United States. In the early days of the organization the members were called "wardens," but the Japanese emphasis upon prestige caused the Administration to change the title to "officer." The word, "warden," had carried a connotation of service instead of command; therefore, respect and prestige rose sharply after the new term was adopted.³⁷

There was little crime at Rivers. This was indeed fortunate because the police force operated despite certain handicaps peculiar to the Center. One curious deficiency was the complete lack of any detention facilities. If there occurred a serious breach of the peace, the county jail at Florence, Arizona, located thirty-seven miles from Rivers, was used. While this seemed to be a tenable

36. Nichol, pp. 2, 3, 9, 20, and Courier, September 12, 1942.

37. Nichol, pp. 1, 2, 3, 17, and Bennett, p. 11.

situation, it was quite unrealistic because seldom were any police vehicles available or in any sort of condition to transport officers and prisoners that distance. The number of functioning vehicles for all Internal Security operations, including the protection of seven thousand acres and over fourteen thousand people, never exceeded four. The net result was that there were very few custody arrests. Any attempts to make such arrests were further complicated by the necessity of a warrant signed by the Project Director. Consequently, a suspect was usually allowed to return to his dwelling after merely giving a statement. The actual arrest might take place three days to a week later.³⁸

Two sources of discord were the lack of uniforms and a ban against firearms. Uniforms were needed for the morale of the force and to enable the population to recognize easily a policeman in case of need. A uniform stimulated respect, recognition and cooperation. There was only one issue of uniforms in the three years the Center existed. Since no replacements or clothing allowance was given, patches soon gave way to strange combinations of uniforms and civilian clothes and finally to complete civilian attire. This problem was never formally recognized by the Government and was never resolved. Sporadic efforts

38. Nichol, p. 38.

were made by community members to raise money for uniforms, but they were not successful.³⁹

The question of arming the police was a particularly thorny one. Rattlesnakes were especially common in the area, and Arizonians living in the same area more than twenty years later were still loath to walk the desert at night without a weapon or at least an adequate light. One could also doubt that many law officials, in cities comparable in size to Rivers, would willingly perform their nighttime duties without some type of personal protection. In the Center, however, evacuee police officers were forbidden to carry firearms. The rule stated that evacuees could not carry or possess firearms. This prohibition against carrying or possessing firearms within the confines of the Center was absolutely inflexible. The community of thirteen thousand people had to be protected night and day. Boundaries were patrolled by teams of men in vehicles or on horseback. Camp areas were split into five districts for security purposes, and the police covered these areas on foot. Warehouses in the Center contained hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of Government equipment and evacuee property, but not so much as a nightstick could be carried by the evacuee police. This single regulation often was

39. Nichol, pp. 7, 29.

responsible for difficulties encountered in the recruitment of men for the police force.⁴⁰

Crime at Rivers usually fell into five categories: gambling, theft, disorderly conduct, liquor violations, and traffic violations. By far the greatest breach of the law was the theft of government property. One can realize the extent of this pilfering by noting the pleas, threats, and ultimatums issued by the Project Authorities.⁴¹

The apartments in the camps were furnished only with army cots, and there was no other furniture of any kind. The Administration encouraged individual initiative in efforts to beautify the barracks, but made no provision for obtaining needed materials. The most appropriated item was lumber for use in the apartments. Construction in the camp was almost continuous, and it was not difficult to filch lumber to build furniture, porches, partitions, or baseball backstops. It seems ironic that these suspected Orientals created a problem when they purloined lumber through a desire to participate in America's national sport.

Normally a list of stolen goods would not be absorbing reading, but the following items taken at Rivers

40. Nichol, pp. 27, 28, 36, 37.

41. Nichol, pp. 42-43. In an editorial in the Courier on January 14, 1943, Director Bennett stated that anyone caught stealing Government Property would be turned over to a Federal Court.

presents a rather humorous and revealing picture. Most of all it provides a healthy respect for Japanese ingenuity.

Partial list of stolen items⁴²

5,000 board feet of lumber--all taken at one time

stoves--regular barracks equipment which required tools for installation

twenty truck cushions--for living rooms?

one hundred and fifty chairs--taken from schools

a school "SLOW" sign--taken within twenty-four hours after it was erected

all of the chains and plugs from the laundry rooms--
These were used as zoot-suit watch chains.

a stage which was built for a Christmas play--This action brought dire threats from the Project Director.

When juvenile delinquency started to become a problem, a few young men were sentenced to short jail terms at Florence by the Community Judicial Commission. After their return the additional sentence of keeping their hair cut to a length of an inch and one-half and of working under the jurisdiction of Internal Security for a period of six months was imposed upon them. Within a short time the juvenile problem practically ceased.⁴³

42. Courier, November 4, 1942; November 14, 1942; December 19, 1942; December 2, 1942; and January 14, 1943.

43. Nichol, p. 49.

Fire Protection. The Rivers Relocation Center was adequately served by two fire stations, one in each camp. Each was manned by evacuee crews headed by a Chief who was a staff member recruited for his experience in various city fire departments. Each station maintained three platoons of nine men which provided twenty-four hour protection for the Center. These crews were reenforced by an emergency manpower pool consisting of a five hundred member voluntary auxiliary. The fire crews were given daily drill while the auxiliary received frequent instructions in fire fighting. Additional men worked, under the direction of the chiefs, as fire inspectors, periodically inspecting the one thousand and three hundred project buildings for possible fire hazards.⁴⁴

Each building on the project contained preventive measures in the form of two fire extinguishers. The Butte hospital had the additional protection of a sprinkler system.⁴⁵

Stations were well equipped. Canal had one fire truck, and Butte had two. Each was a combination pumper and hose-carrier. Portable chemical equipment was also maintained in the stations. In addition to the fire

44. Bennett, p. 33.

45. Final Report, p. 276.

fighting apparatus, the stations contained sleeping quarters and lavatory facilities for a working crew of nine men.

The measures taken both to extinguish fires and to prevent them were evidently successful because only two fires of any size occurred in the Center during the years of its operation. Any harsh criticism of the department because of these two failures might well be mitigated by conditions in existence at the time: one of the fires, a feed warehouse, was located several miles from the stations, and the other, an auto parts warehouse, burned during a power failure which precluded any aid from deep-well pumping stations.⁴⁶

Fire protection for a city the size of Rivers, itself a formidable assignment, was doubly difficult in the tinder-dry climate of southern Arizona with its extreme summer temperatures normally well in excess of one hundred degrees. Add to this the barracks style of living with a great number of people crowded into a small area, and the record of the Rivers Fire Department was one in which the Center's residents could take pride.

46. Bennett, p. 33.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CLOSING OF THE RIVERS RELOCATION CENTER

When the Gila Center began operation in 1942 its population had been gathered under duress. The Japanese had been forced to leave all that was familiar, and they found themselves living in the Arizona desert. Now, paradoxically, many of these people were not willing to leave their new surroundings. In a world seemingly fraught with uncertainty the Center with its orderly way of life offered a measure of continuity. Therefore, after the announcement in December, 1944, that Rivers would close on or before November 15, 1945, many evacuees reacted with shock and disbelief.¹ Rivers had given security to them, and they were not ready to surrender it.

California was reopened to the Japanese, and relocation then became a necessity instead of a possibility since their exclusion from that area had been the primary justification for establishing the centers. All relocation camps were to be closed by January 2, 1946. If any were to be terminated earlier, their residents were to be given an advance notice of at least three months. Relocation

1. Brown, "Final Report . . . ," p. 17.

efforts were intensified, and by December 31, 1944, most Japanese who could easily find employment had relocated.²

War Relocation Authority officials had a very difficult time deciding which centers would be terminated first. Such a disparity of opinion existed that they finally resorted to the establishment of criteria to determine the order of closing. Factors considered were: climate, local community relations, physical facilities, agricultural possibilities, site ownership, relocation record, transportation cost, cost of operation and staff efficiency. The individual centers were then measured against these criteria and each was assigned a rating which could vary from one to twenty-five points. The centers which accumulated the smallest total scores were to be closed first. According to the results of this process, the Arizona Centers were fourth on the closing schedule.³

To expedite the final process, visiting between centers was curtailed, schools were to be closed in June, 1945, and no additional evacuees were to be accepted in the projects. Pressure was placed upon local officials

3. War Relocation Authority, "Relocation Forum--Order of Closing," October 6, 1943.

by the assignment of daily and weekly relocation quotas by the national offices of the WRA.⁴

In the last few weeks of the Center's existence individuals were given departure dates. At first a general time was suggested, but if an evacuee did not or would not choose a specific date within two weeks after the suggestion was given, a date would then be selected for him. Moreover, if he would not indicate a desired destination, he and his baggage would be transported to his legal residence.⁵

Most of the Japanese left by bus, and to accommodate them the Greyhound Lines installed a full-time agent at the Project in the last weeks of its existence. People traveling by train were taken to the depot at Phoenix, Chandler, or Casa Grande. The largest group to leave in a single week numbered six hundred. The last to depart was a contingent of Hawaiians who left on chartered buses on the tenth of November, 1945.⁶

Up to 5,000 pounds of baggage per evacuee family was shipped at government expense to their home. Because the Center had several warehouses filled with property

4. Courier, August 11, 1945.

5. War Relocation Authority, "Administrative Order No. 289," August 1, 1945, p. 2.

6. Douglas M. Todd, "History of Gila River Project, August 1, 1945, to November 15, 1945," (Rivers) pp. 7-11.

belonging to the Japanese, the crating process itself was a formidable task. It was begun in February, 1945, and had soon used all available lumber. There was a shortage of crating material until a center official made trips to various Army air bases and arranged for delivery of over fifty carloads of boxes. An additional two hundred thousand feet of lumber was purchased in nearby communities. In the last weeks of the Project an acute shortage of workers developed since most evacuee laborers had left or were soon to leave. It then became necessary to give the crating materials to the Japanese so they could prepare their possessions for shipment. Project employees then moved the crates to warehouses where they were picked up by commercial trucking companies, often on the same day the owners departed. The material would be deposited at the door of the evacuee's new or old home. Up to 100,000 pounds a day was handled in this fashion, and it was not unusual for it to reach its destination within three days.⁷

As the date of closing drew near, steps were taken to phase out the facilities. Shortly after the announcement of the projected closing date, orders were issued forbidding the purchase of more livestock, and procedures were initiated that would result in the liquidation of camp property.⁸

7. Todd, pp. 9-12.

8. Davidson, pp. 17-18.

In January, work was begun on returning the agricultural land to alfalfa production. Nothing was planted after February, 1945, and as the spring crops were harvested the storage, packing, and shipping facilities ended their operations. The final crops were field-packed, and most of the vegetables were sent to other centers. Livestock was either declared surplus and sold to other government agencies, shipped to remaining centers, or disposed of at public auctions. Poultry was slaughtered for the mess halls at Rivers. After final use, the agricultural machinery, equipment, saddle horses, and supplies were declared surplus.⁹ All surplus property was then transferred to the Department of Interior to be used by its agencies. If not utilized there, it was released to the Government's disposal agencies.¹⁰ The land contract expired on October 7, 1945, and was not renewed. The Agricultural Division closed on July 31, 1945.¹¹

Project buildings were stripped of all items of value which were not considered a part of the structures; however, much of the mess hall equipment and utility systems were sold as integral parts of the buildings. Both

9. Davidson, pp. 17-18.

10. War Relocation Authority, "Administrative Order No. 290," August 6, 1945.

11. Davidson, p. 15, and Courier, August 1, 1945.

the buildings and the separate items were disposed of as surplus property in the same manner as the agricultural equipment. Goods that were perishable or of little value could be sold at auction to local wholesalers or given to tax-supported or charitable institutions instead of being declared surplus.¹²

Drugs and narcotics from the hospital stores received special consideration. They were inventoried and shipped to the United States Treasury Department, Bureau of Narcotics. Medical equipment was disbursed to other government agencies. None of these items, large or small, could be sold at the site.¹³

The National Archives in Washington, D.C., received the complete files of the War Relocation Authority with surplus or duplicated files going to the University of California.

Materials belonging to the community as a whole were either given away or were disposed of at greatly reduced prices. Remaining Community Chest funds were parceled out as scholarships. Library books were sold to

12. War Relocation Authority, "Administrative Notice No. 325," November 15, 1945.

13. "Administrative Notice No. 325."

residents at one-fourth their value, magazine subscriptions were sold, and books for children were given away.¹⁴

As barracks were emptied of occupants, water and sewer lines were disconnected. Only the major water mains continued to function, a precaution taken against serious fires which could raze the deserted camps. Electricity remained on, and street lights burned every night until the buildings were sold and removed. Skeleton crews of appointive personnel were retained as fire guards. One of their sad duties was to destroy nearly three hundred dogs and cats left by the Center's residents.¹⁵

With the construction of Rivers a complete community had been carved out of the Arizona desert almost overnight. It encountered the problems found in other American cities, but had to contend with many others also. The wartime situation had imposed the indignity of physical restraint and communal barracks living upon the residents of Rivers. Their familial antecedents made them suspect to their neighboring communities, and social intercourse was

14. Courier, August 18, 1945.

15. Nichol, p. 71.

not only non-existent on a practical basis, but was not welcomed by those outside the Center's boundaries.¹⁶

In the productive Arizona soil these people created an oasis of grass, trees and running water to make their life bearable. They produced such a variety and abundance of crops that their Arizona neighbors not only noticed them, but imitated them.

The Japanese, from their position in the relocation camps, never rejected their American heritage, but on the contrary, willingly gave their time and efforts to scrap drives, blood donations, Red Cross campaigns and countless other activities. Most important of all, they volunteered their lifeblood in the form of sons and daughters who served in the armed forces. These young people compiled an unmatched war record in both Europe and Asia. They did so in spite of restrictions on their movements even while in uniform, and while bearing the scorn of a portion of the populace who pointedly disregarded prominent service ribbons and evident battle scars.

16. There were many evidences of Arizona's rejection of the Japanese: Governor McFarland came to the Center to work out an agreement to prevent Japanese from settling in Arizona (Courier, June 19, 1943); unlike other states there was no office to assist in locating jobs for Japanese in the State; the Courier (October 17, 1942) quoted the President of the University of Arizona as having said, "We are at war, and these people are our enemies." when speaking of the Rivers residents; the Board of Regents refused to allow the Japanese to take extension work; and the incorporation of the Gila Co-op was fought by a legislator because it would "injure" Arizona businessmen.

The American Government should receive credit also, for, while the entire process of evacuation and relocation was regrettable, once it embarked upon the task great efforts were made to preserve some semblance of dignity and self-sufficiency for the evacuees. In the midst of impersonal, regimented camps which resembled the military bases so familiar to the American soldier, the evacuee was encouraged to better his education, to socialize, to participate in recreational activities, and to control his own community government.

Food was always plentiful, even if its composition was a source of controversy; medical care was superior; housing was generally adequate; and academic instruction for their children was excellent.

The Japanese were encouraged to leave the centers if they would agree to relocate in non-military areas. When an evacuee made such a decision every effort was made to facilitate his entrance into the unfamiliar community. Those who remained in the centers were transported back to their homes or to the destination of their choosing when the exclusion orders were rescinded.

Canal closed on September 28, and Butte closed on November 10, 1945.¹⁷ Row upon row of buildings then stood silent in the Arizona desert. Over sixteen thousand

17. Todd, pp. 9-10.

Oriental had been returned to a more familiar way of life, and America's awesome experiment in the evacuation and internment of an entire ethnic group was finished. The procedure had taken less than four years, but its effects on the country and the evacuees would be felt for many more.

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