Breaking News

Japanese American Incarceration Artifacts
The Japanese American National Museum (JANM) announced on May 2 that it had acquired the collection of 400 pieces of historical art and artifacts that were scheduled for auction by the Rago Arts and Auction Center. These pieces were created by Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II and collected by historian Allen H. Eaton while he was researching his book, *Beauty Behind Barbed Wire: The Arts of the Japanese in Our War Relocation Camps*. Citizens and organizations mobilized to prevent the auction. At the JANM Gala Dinner when the announcement was made, George Takei remarked, “All of us can take to heart that our voices were heard and that these items will be preserved and the people who created them during a very dark period in our history will be honored.”

Uprooted: Japanese American Farm Labor Camps
*Uprooted*, an exhibit of photography from Japanese American farm labor camps during WW II will be in Twin Falls, ID from June 1-30 at the Twin Falls Center for the Arts. The exhibit’s time coincides with this year’s Minidoka Pilgrimage. On June 4, the Center for the Arts is hosting an open house from 6:00-8:00pm. On June 11, *Uprooted* curator Morgan Young will present a history of the labor camps in Idaho: Twin Falls, Rupert, and Shelley. The lecture will begin at 6:30 pm at 195 River Vista Place in Twin Falls.

Baseball Field Project Launched

In the February issue of this newsletter, we introduced the “Center Field” Project to rebuild one of the 14 ballfields that were spread throughout the camp. The goal is not to create just a cultural landscape but a field that visitors can actually play on.

Several steps have been taken to achieve this goal. The four acres that comprise the field were taken out of the 2015 agricultural permit. The field has been plowed and rolled. Bases and a home plate will be purchased and base lines laid down so that the field can be used during this year’s pilgrimage. This first field will look much like the fields did shortly after the camp opened in August 1942.

A number of people have voiced an interest in contributing to this project. Assistance from individuals and groups is welcomed. This assistance can be financial, in-kind donations of materials and labor, and additional information related to the importance of baseball to the incarcerees.

The park’s cooperating association, Discover Your Northwest (DYNW), and park partner, Friends of Minidoka (FOM), have agreed to accept donations for the project.

To donate to this project through DYNW, go to their website, [www.discovernw.org](http://www.discovernw.org), click “Donate,” click “Support one of our featured programs,” and click onto the “Minidoka Center Field” page.

Donations through FOM, can be mailed to: P.O. Box 1085, Twin Falls, ID83303. There will also be the opportunity to donate online through FOM within the next few weeks.

We are excited about this project and hope you will join us in “Building Center Field.”
Bainbridge Island: Exclusion Tag Project

As part of the community conversation surrounding the Bainbridge Performing Arts production of David Guterman’s book, Snow Falling on Cedars, the audience had the chance to express their reactions to the performance in a special way.

They were invited to share how the experience of exclusion related to their own lives. Messages were written on the back of tags very similar to those issued to Japanese Americans during the exclusion experience.

Completed tags were displayed during the March 30th commemoration ceremony at the Memorial Wall. They will be archived at the Bainbridge Island Historical Society. Comments reflected a variety of perspectives:

My beloved grandparents survived the Holocaust. They were Polish Jews who were forced to abandon family and flee to Russia and ‘Middle Asia’ for the years of the war from 1939 on. They lost family and had to wander through Europe working their way to the U.S. in 1951 to start anew. They never wished for anyone to have such an experience ever again.

In Memory: Frances Egbert

Before the return of the historic barrack block to Minidoka NHS, the Pilgrimage included a tour of the Jerome County IFARM. Pilgrims could tour the well-preserved barrack building that was part of the complex. Very often the guide for that tour was Francis Egbert. Francis had a profound respect for this part of Idaho’s history. He was a prominent member of the Jerome County Historical Society and provided tours for many years. The photo is of Francis doing a tour for a Girl Scout troop several days before his death on April 4th.

Thank you, Francis. We miss you.
Relocation of Alaska’s Japanese Residents

On April 25th, 1942, the Alaskan Defense Command started the forced removal of all Japanese Alaskans. Most were sent to Puyallup near Tacoma, WA and in late fall 1942 transferred to Minidoka.

Alaska Issei were arrested after Pearl Harbor and spent the war years in POW camps in the American Southwest. The Alaska Issei were separated from their families and wore clothes marked with “POW.” Many Issei males from Oregon, Washington, and California were allowed to return to their families after hearings determined their innocence; Alaskan Issei were not afforded these types of hearings. This left many families without their respective family heads.

After the War many Japanese Alaskans found it difficult to return home. The Immigration and Naturalization Service required a permit to depart Seattle, Japanese Alaskans were required to submit five copies of the State Department’s “Alien Application for Permission to Depart from United States” form. This process continued to evolve and delayed many Alaskans who could not keep up with the paperwork and changing bureaucratic regulations.

By November 1945 the last restrictions were removed for returning Japanese Alaskans, but many still faced a long journey home. Individuals returning to remote villages not served by commercial transport had to wait for the Army to transport them.

The expulsion of Japanese Alaskans weighed heavily on communities all over Alaska. This prompted residents to pass the Alaska Anti-Discrimination Act in 1945, the first law of its kind in the United States.

Seasonal Park Ranger Kevin Haney conducted research related to the forced evacuation of Alaska’s Japanese. The map and text are the results of his research. You can link to a larger version of this map through our website, www.nps.gov/miin, or the park’s FaceBook page.

In Next Month’s Issue

- Baseball Field Update
- Pilgrimage Memento
- Book of the Month – Baseball Saved Us
- Herrmann House Rehabilitation Update
- Civil Liberties Symposium update
- Visitor Center Update

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Book Corner:

Looking After Minidoka: An American Memoir

Neil Nakadate

In his introduction to Looking for Minidoka, Neil Nakadate wrote, This book explores the territory between memoir and history. It is a Japanese American story, though not ‘the’ story, since no individual or family can ever be more than a variation on a theme. This is the story I found - a gathering of smaller stories that constitute a larger one - when I went looking after Minidoka.

The book spans three generations of a Japanese family in Oregon from immigration to the end of the twentieth century. Nakadate uses family stories, poetry, cartoons, maps, and photographs to help bring his family’s history alive.

The book was published in 2013 by Indiana University Press and is available in many bookstores.

A photo of Katsumi, Mary, and Neil Nakadate is superimposed over the artwork of Kenjiro Ncuru.
Bainbridge Island: Echoes of the Taken

A bas-relief bronze sculpture, "Echoes of the Taken," was unveiled at this year’s March 30th commemoration of the forced removal of 227 Japanese Americans and legal resident aliens from Bainbridge Island.

Heidi Wastweet, a leading American medallist and sculptor, was asked to design a sculpture for the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial. Her developing awareness of the Japanese American incarceration motivated her to create the sculpture. She was particularly inspired by photographs taken on March 30, 1942. In an artist statement she shared how she pulled those observations together in clay: The four characters represent four different emotions – the young girl represents innocence lost, grandpa shows dignity, auntie is grief, and the soldier is shame. Gouged below the surface are the citizens taken away, many who never returned. Only their absence remains.

The piece was sculpted in her studio and cast in Tacoma, WA. It is a local story told for the whole nation.

Working with private mints, she has produced over 1000 coins, medals, tokens, and rare coin replicas since 1987. In 2001, she opened her own studio and in 2013 she moved to San Francisco. She is serving a second four year term on the Citizen’s Coinage Advisory Committee for the US Mint in Washington, DC. She has also created a number of public art pieces including the University of Washington Medal of Honor.

Volunteer Opportunities at Minidoka NHS

In recent meetings in Seattle, park representatives were asked about park project needs and about opportunities for individuals or groups to contribute. The superintendent noted that collaboration is a high priority. She also noted that some of the projects could be student intern projects, when there is such an interest and if they meet school requirements. The park has agreed to create a project opportunity portfolio and make it available to anyone who is interested in helping.

The portfolio will be split into two categories: projects that could be done off-site and those needing to be done on-site. Examples of what could be done include: uncovering historic footpaths; site clean-up; writing articles; conducting research and interviews; creating educational and junior ranger programs; and organizing documents and photographs.

If you have a desire to help the park – in any capacity – please contact Carl Ash at 208-933-4125 or carol_ash@nps.gov.

Buhl 8th grade students and the pile of trash collected around Fire Station No. 1.