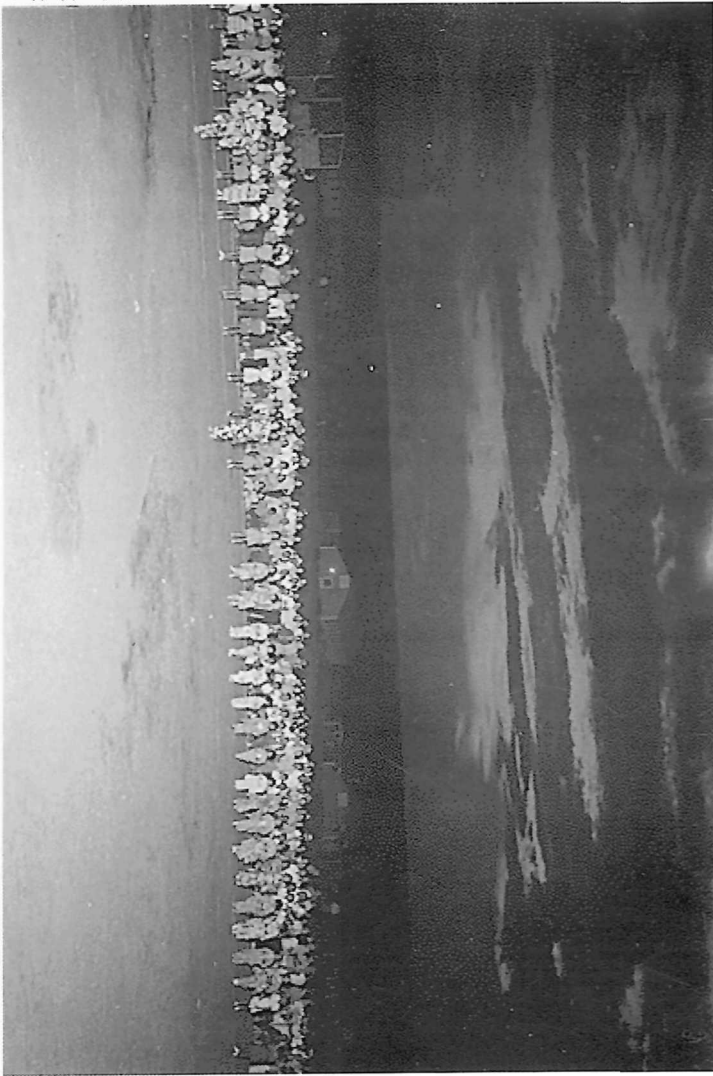




Amache, Colorado...

"...sprang up overnight where a short time ago only sagebrush, cactus, and Russian thistles survived the winter snow and the hot summer sun."

War Relocation Authority, 1943



National Park Service



Dorothea Lange

During World War Two, the Granada Relocation Project stretched across sixteen square miles of Prowers County.

AMACHE was one square mile surrounded by barbed wire fences and armed guards in watchtowers.

Amache was the 10th largest city in the state of Colorado. With 7,500 internees confined to a square mile, it was 50% more densely populated than New York City. Amache's residents were men, women, and children of Japanese descent, mostly native-born citizens.

On February 19, 1942 – two and a half months after the December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor by Japanese warplanes – President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the eviction and internment of persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast.

The War Relocation Authority (WRA) was a civilian agency established by executive order to organize the removal, relocation and internment of the relocatees. The WRA was empowered to employ personnel and purchase property as well as to design and administer all aspects of the internment camp program, including employment for the relocatees in civilian jobs or for WRA-managed industries.

Most of the internees had a week or less to dispose of any property they could not carry in two suitcases. Cars, stores, houses, pets, toys, and clothing were sold for pennies on the dollar or abandoned.

Of the 126,000 Japanese-descended persons then living in the U.S., two-thirds were native-born U.S. citizens.

Nevertheless, over 110,000 Japanese and Japanese-Americans were evicted from their homes and confined under armed guards in ten WRA camps scattered in isolated rural areas where harsh living conditions prevailed. Over 11,000 persons of German ancestry and 250 of Italian ancestry were also interned during World War II, as well as over 2,000 Japanese Latin Americans who were deported to the U.S. for confinement.

"We of America can bring no honor to ourselves nor commend Democracy and the American way of life to others by surrendering to hysteria, or by persecuting the enemy within our gates, little less the loyal, American-born and law-abiding Japanese who consider America their home."

**Rev. Rufus C. Baker,
Boulder Ministers' Association,
Letter to Colorado Governor Ralph Carr, April 17, 1942**



Bancroft Library

The War Relocation Authority operated makeshift camps in various places including the horse stables at the Santa Anita Race Track in southern California. Relocatees were assembled at these temporary facilities until ten permanent camps were hastily constructed in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming.

After assembling in towns and cities near their homes, the internees were transported in trains, trucks, and busses for confinement in camps that were strategically placed where labor was required in local agriculture or manufacturing, but far from population centers to reduce the possibility of escape.

Population in the camps varied from 7,500 persons at Amache to 20,000 at Poston in Arizona.

The WRA named the sprawling Granada Relocation Project for the small town of Granada at its center. "Amache, Colorado" was the postal designation so that mail for the internees would not overwhelm the town's postmaster. The fenced-in square mile where they lived is commonly referred to as "Camp Amache."



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The following persons, organizations and institutions were essential in their contributions to this brochure. Many of them have websites for further research.

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Colorado State Archives

Construction of Amache began June 12, 1942, with over 1,000 workers including 50 evacuee volunteers. The center opened in August 1942 and was filled to capacity by October. At its peak, Amache held 7,597 evacuees, two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens. They came from central and southern California. Lamar Mayor R. L. Christy suggested the name Amache in honor of the Cheyenne wife of John Prowers, a nineteenth-century cattleman for whom local Prowers County was named.

One-square-mile "Amache" was surrounded by barbed wire fences and six octagonal sentry towers that were manned by armed guards. Although the enclosure resembled a prison from the outside, inside was a small town including police and fire departments, a 150-bed hospital, stores, and a post office, as well as all the basic services including a newspaper, schools, churches and a cemetery. Professional inmate workers including doctors and teachers earned from \$12.00 to \$19.00 a month while Caucasian teachers were paid over one hundred dollars a month. Camp residents came from varied backgrounds. There were lawyers, dentists, engineers, scientists, businessmen, farmers, fishermen, gardeners, entertainers, and artists including a classical opera singer, and two Walt Disney cartoonists.



Colorado State Archives



National Archives

Pre-school, elementary, and secondary schools opened on October 12, 1942, offering classes for the nearly 2,000 school-age children held within the camp.

The school's isolation added to the usual educational challenges: Amache's school administrators complained, "unsatisfactory living conditions, unappetizing food, and transportation worries lowered the morale and enthusiasm" of teachers, noting "the rate of turnover was excessive."

"Frequently children showed a need for more sleep. Parents reported the problems confronting them in getting the children to bed early since the family lived in one room."

"All of these rebuffs and disappointments had their effects upon the morale and attitude of student groups. It was extremely difficult to teach the ideas and ideals of democratic society and to urge their relocation when constant reminders confronted boys and girls with evidences of prejudice and undemocratic procedures."

All quotations from: *Final Report of the Education Section*, Lloyd A. Garrison, Superintendent of Education, Granada Relocation Center, Amache, Colorado



National Archives



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The Granada Relocation Project included a vast expanse of fifteen square miles used to raise livestock and grow a wide variety of produce. It was one of the largest and most diversified agricultural enterprises of the ten internment camps.

About half of Amache's population had been gardeners or farmers when they lived in California. Over 3,000 of Amache's 7,500 internees were employed by the Granada Relocation Project.

The farm program included raising vegetable crops, feed crops, beef and dairy cattle, poultry, and hogs. Even the high school had a 500-acre farm, run by vocational agriculture students.

In May 1943, WRA agricultural projects at Amache encompassed 540 acres of vegetables, 1,650 acres of grain, 515 acres of alfalfa, and 2,895 acres of pasture. The land under cultivation encompassed 4,095 acres known as the X-Y Ranch and 5,688 acres known as the Koen Ranch. They were purchased by the WRA at the start of World War II. The intensive farming and animal husbandry conducted on the almost 10,500 acres of the Granada Relocation Project reserve required that the WRA purchase water rights from the Lamar, Manvel and XY canals, which flowed through the reserve and fed existing irrigation ditches.



National Archives



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Amache had the highest rate of volunteerism of all the camps: ten percent of the population volunteered for military service. Amache internees served in the highly decorated 442nd Regimental Combat Team and other units, as well as the Women's Army Corps and the Nurses Army Corps. Amache soldiers received 38 combat pins and badges for conduct under fire as well as various other medals and citations. While some internees embraced the opportunity to serve their country, others protested the idea of military service while they and their families were living under armed guard. In July 1944, eleven young men from Amache received 10 to 18 month sentences for draft evasion.

Overall, thirty-one Nisei soldiers from Amache lost their lives in World War II. In 1983, the Denver Central Optimist Club placed a monument with the following inscription at the Amache cemetery:

"Dedicated to the thirty-one patriotic Japanese Americans who volunteered from Amache and dutifully gave their lives in World War II, to the approximately 7,000 persons who were relocated at Amache, and to the 120 who died here during this period of relocation, August 27, 1942 - October 14, 1945."

Above: Blue Star Mothers with their sons-in-uniform.
Below, left: an Amache internee is fingerprinted for induction.
Below, right: Joe Yasuda, an Amache volunteer, killed in combat on the Italian Front, 1942.



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Colorado State Archives



LIFE IN CAMP

Life on the block at Amache centered on the mess hall not only for the three daily meals, but for meetings, classes and entertainment. The hall measured 40' by 100' and held up to 250 people.

"The meals are served cafeteria style, each individual lining up at the counter to receive his plate and then sitting down at a long wooden table. The kitchen personnel is composed entirely of evacuees." –WRA

Meals combined American and Japanese food, but the assembly-line service and mass seating made the traditional family mealtime impossible. The customarily close-knit Japanese family structure was further undermined by the institutional regulation of daily life.

The Granada internment center high school, with its multi-purpose auditorium/gymnasium, was reputedly the most expensive building in Prowers County, leading to complaints of WRA partiality toward the internees. On November 4, 1942, the camp newspaper, the Granada Pioneer, reported that the U.S. Congressman from northern Colorado, William S. Hill, wrote to the Greeley Tribune that he had received "many letters protesting the fine treatment received by Japanese in relocation centers," and that he sought to "squell rumors" about favoritism toward the internees.

The Granada Pioneer had noted in its first edition (published October 14, 1942) that the Assistant Project Director, Donald E. Harbison, announced that permits for internees to shop in the nearby town of Lamar had been "curtailed" because the small stores there could not accommodate camp inmate needs in addition to serving their normal customers. The internees were apparently "leaving little for farmers who go into town to exchange their eggs and produce for manufactured goods." The article noted that exceptions would be made for medical and dental emergencies, but only with a doctor's certificate.

Amache's population was soon served by a 150-bed hospital at the camp. Illness was a constant threat because of the dense concentration of the camp population. The Granada Pioneer regularly mentioned outbreaks of illness on various blocks and noted in the summer of 1944 that the camp must go "all out" to combat polio.

The residents of Amache soon became virtually self-sufficient. In mid-November of 1942, each residential block received five sewing machines and internees established a camp tofu factory by the fall of 1943. The camp consumer's cooperative, Amache Consumer's Enterprises Inc., was one of the largest in Colorado. Its 2,387 members owned nearly 5,000 shares and operated a clothing store, a variety store, a shoe store, a shoe-repair shop, a dry cleaner, a barber shop, a beauty parlor, a canteen, a watch repair shop, and an optometry shop. The coop's gross sales totaled over \$40,000 per month.

The many skilled professionals and craftspeople in the camp were a rich source of instruction for adult night classes that included typing, shorthand, English, dressmaking, drafting as well as arts and crafts including woodcarving, painting, embroidery, poetry, Japanese calligraphy, flower arranging, and bonsai. The recreation program included movies, plays, concerts, sports, talent shows, and exhibitions.

Half of the Amache population had been gardeners or farmers before their internment. They established ornamental gardens (often improvising ingenious methods of specialized irrigation and soil treatment) to soften the stark military camp regimentation. Amache's sandy soil becomes wind-blown when the native vegetation is removed, so gardening served a practical purpose along with the psychological function of "place-making" – giving one's environment a personal touch.

The ornamental gardens around the Amache school may have been in response to a comment by the Amache school principal who wrote, "passage from room to room, to library, office, or lavatory, could be attained only by stepping out in the periodic fury of dust and sand." Researchers at an archeological dig at Amache have noted that dozens of schoolchildren submitted landscaping plans for the school.

REDRESS AND REPARATIONS

" . . . nations that forget or ignore injustices are more likely to repeat them."

- Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians

There were many different approaches to repairing the injuries caused by the forced removal and internment including a \$24 billion class action law suit against the U.S. government. Although the suit was disallowed, it was credited for motivating Congress to craft its own redress bill rather than let the courts decide the amount of reparations payments.

In 1988, Congress passed legislation that apologized for the internment and awarded \$20,000 to living survivors of the camps. Many Japanese victims of wartime hysteria continue seeking justice for their losses and suffering, including Japanese Latin Americans who were forcibly removed from their home countries and interned in the U.S. during the war.

HOME ON THE RANGE

The one-square mile internment camp area was surrounded by a four-strand barbed wire fence, with six watch towers along the perimeter. Equipped with searchlights and staffed by armed military police, the Amache towers were unique for their octagonal lookouts. The only gate was near the center of the north side of the fence about one-half mile south of U.S. Highway 50.

Like most of the relocation centers, buildings and streets were laid out on a north-south grid within an area about one square mile. The 560 buildings at Amache were constructed differently from the other nine camps. Instead of post-and-pier foundations, Amache's barracks generally had concrete perimeter foundations with brick floors, although many buildings had slab foundations. Also, the relocatee buildings had fiberboard or asbestos shingle siding, rather than the tarpaper common at most of the other relocation centers.

Amache had 30 residential blocks. Each block included twelve barracks used for living quarters; one for the mess hall; one for recreation. Many blocks used their recreation barracks as a community hall for groups such as the Red Cross, the Boy Scouts, the YMCA, nursery schools, and churches.

Each block also had a multiple-use building with a laundry area, toilets and showers. There were no toilet facilities in the barracks, so internees had to walk through the dark and cold of night or brave blizzards and dust storms to reach the military-style latrines. Lack of privacy for personal hygiene was one of the fundamental complaints in all the internment camps, especially among the elderly.

The slab foundations of most of Amache's mess halls, communal latrines and laundry buildings are still in place. Barracks' foundations are unusually intact at Amache. The barracks at the other relocation centers rested on concrete blocks, but Amache's barracks have concrete perimeter foundations, some rising about two feet above the ground on complete concrete slabs.

The small building at the cemetery has a concrete foundation, brick walls, and a corrugated metal roof over a wood frame. It was apparently constructed by evacuees to store cremated remains and is depicted on the September 1944 WRA map, just west of the gravesites. Shortly before the camp was closed, evacuees placed a polished granite memorial inside to honor those who died at Granada. The stone is chipped in several places by rifle slugs.

Following closure of the camp, the agricultural lands reverted to private farming and ranching. The camp buildings were demolished or sold to school districts, the town, and the University of Denver.

Today, the only surviving signs of the existence of "the tenth largest city in Colorado" -- the Amache Relocation Camp -- are the small brick structure housing the granite slab memorial, the cemetery, a reservoir, roads, and building foundations.

The camp was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on May 18, 1994, and designated a National Historic Landmark on February 10, 2006.

GOVERNMENT BY THE PEOPLE

The internees, with the exception of the Issei (first-generation Japanese), composed the camp's governing body. Representatives were elected from each block for the Block Managers Assembly. Five of the block representatives were chosen to serve on an executive council with three WRA administrators. The council passed laws and regulations in addition to the WRA regulations, and appointed the judicial and arbitration commissions.

The Amache Post Office was managed by five Caucasian civil service personnel who were assisted by an internee postmaster and six internee clerks. Fifteen internee mail carriers made one delivery a day to the residents.

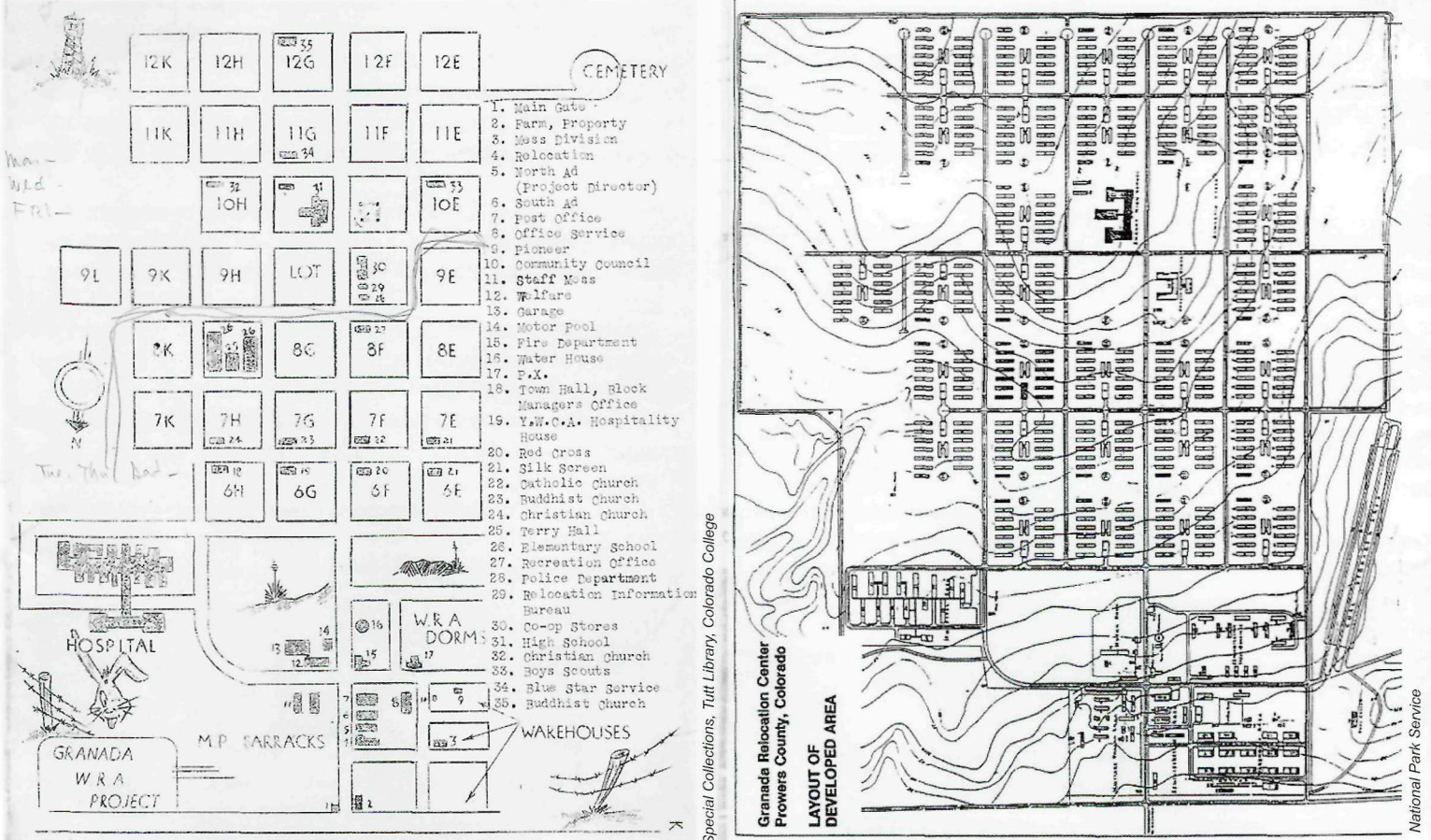
The Amache Fire Department was equipped with two up-to-date Ford pump trucks. Three crews of eight to ten firefighters worked rotating eight-hour shifts under the management of Caucasian supervisors and an internee fire chief. Each block also had volunteer auxiliary firefighters.

The Amache Police Department was headed by a Caucasian security officer and modeled on an urban police force with an internee chief, a dozen captains and sergeants, and forty-eight patrolmen who worked eight-hour shifts. The Military Police who guarded the camp perimeter were not responsible for internal law enforcement.

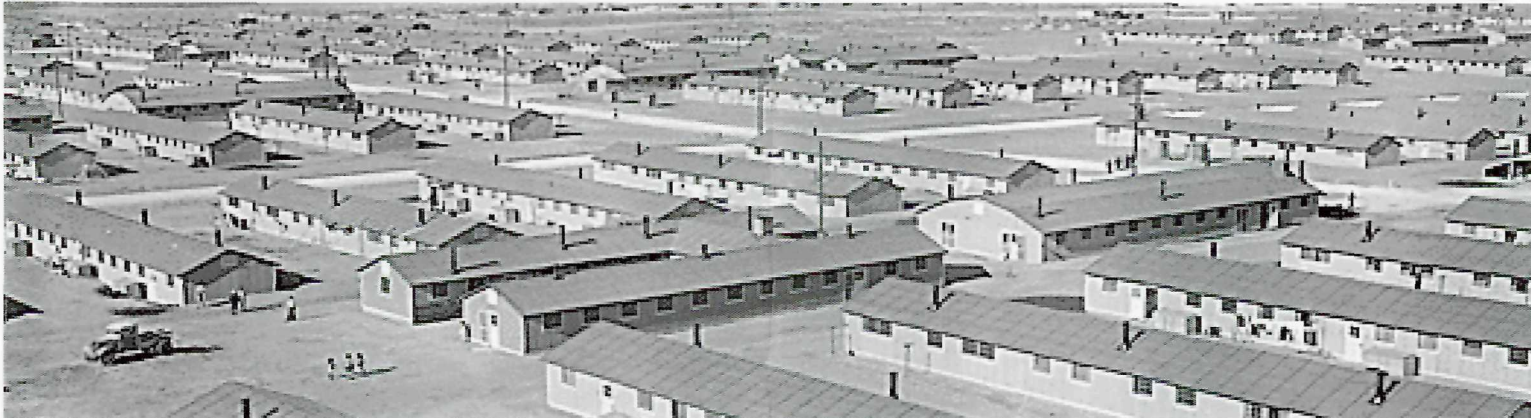
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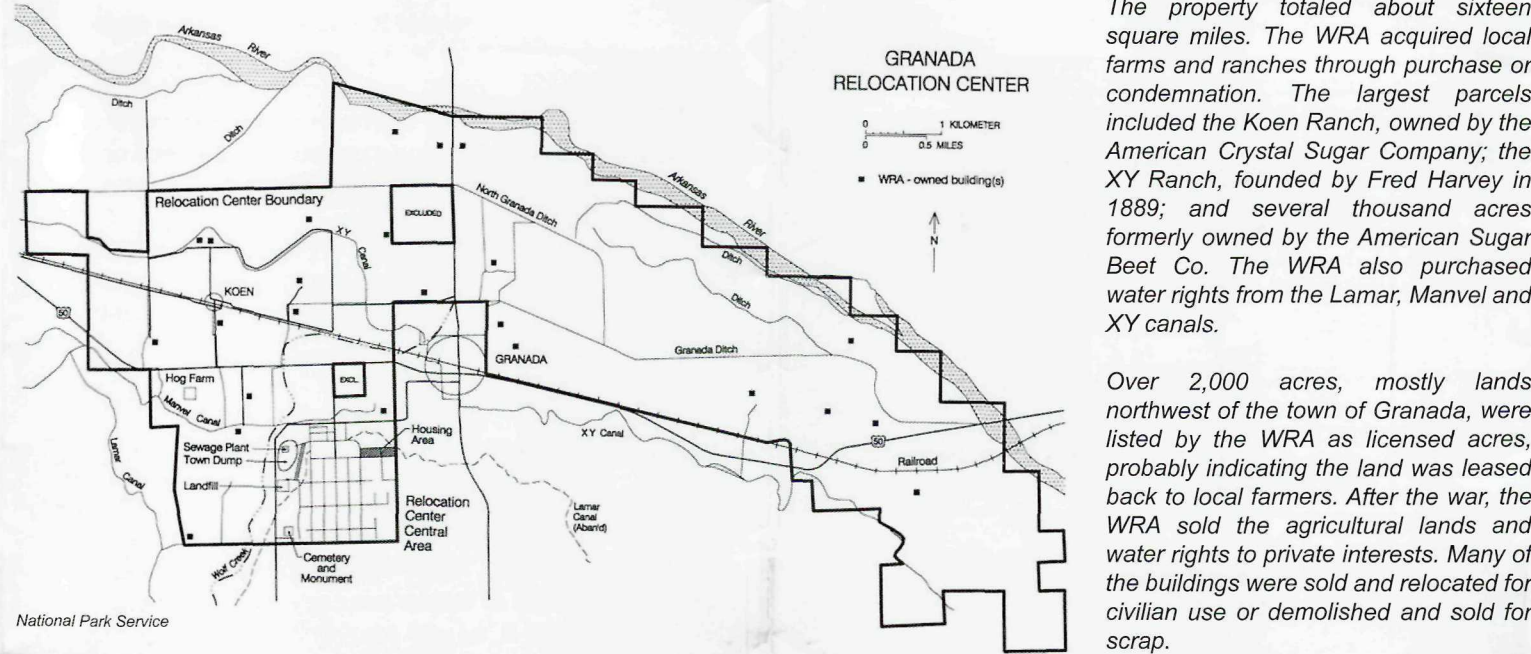


Internees' camp guide (upper left). Note that the map of the camp intended for use by internees is oriented with the south at the top and north at the bottom as was the Asian custom. This may have been done to accommodate the first generation Issei for whom the map could easily be marked to show important landmarks and boundaries since many of them could not read or write in English. The map at the upper right has been rotated to show south at the top so that it corresponds to the internees' guide. This official WRA map is a standard ordnance-type map showing buildings, improvements, topography, roads, waterways, etc., and would have been intended for official use. The Main Gate is shown at the center of the bottom of both maps.



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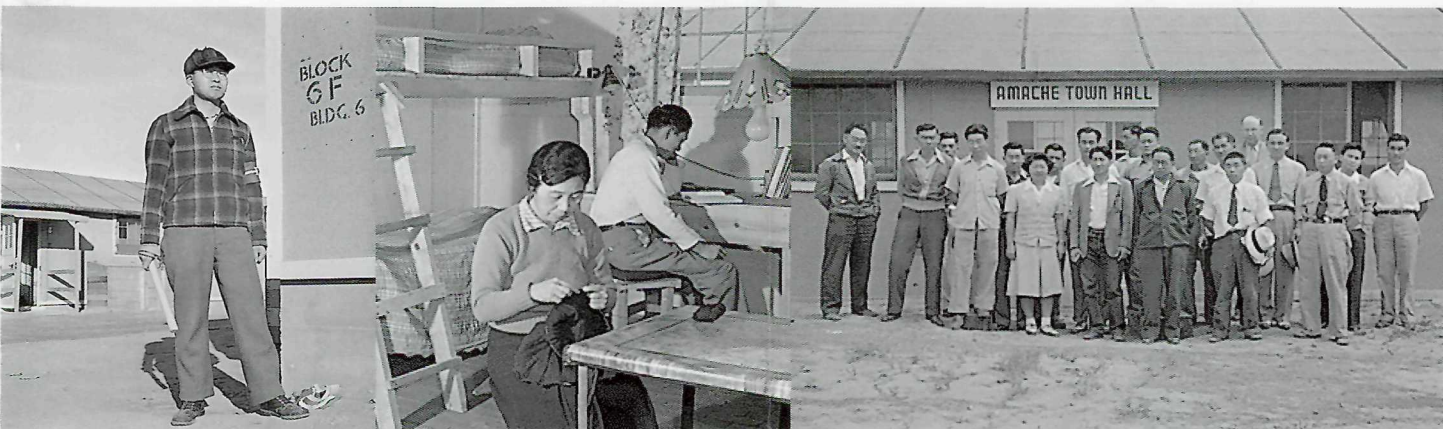
The greater Granada Relocation Project (map below) stretched across Prowers County, with the town of Granada at its center. Amache Relocation Center is shown as a grid in the lower left. The Arkansas River is on the north and the Santa Fe Railroad runs through the middle.



National Park Service

The property totaled about sixteen square miles. The WRA acquired local farms and ranches through purchase or condemnation. The largest parcels included the Koen Ranch, owned by the American Crystal Sugar Company; the XY Ranch, founded by Fred Harvey in 1889; and several thousand acres formerly owned by the American Sugar Beet Co. The WRA also purchased water rights from the Lamar, Manvel and XY canals.

Over 2,000 acres, mostly lands northwest of the town of Granada, were listed by the WRA as licensed acres, probably indicating the land was leased back to local farmers. After the war, the WRA sold the agricultural lands and water rights to private interests. Many of the buildings were sold and relocated for civilian use or demolished and sold for scrap.



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