
Spring 4-20-2015

Honorable Mention Contest Entry: A “Land You Could Not Escape yet Almost Didn’t Want to Leave:” Japanese American Identity in Manzanar Internment Camp Gardens

McKenzie P. Tavoda
Chapman University, tavod100@mail.chapman.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/undergraduateresearchprize>



Part of the [Political History Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), [Social History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tavoda, M.P. (2015). "A land you could not escape yet almost didn't want to leave:" Japanese American identity in Manzanar internment camp gardens (contest entry). *Kevin and Tam Ross Undergraduate Research Prize*. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/undergraduateresearchprize/5>

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Leatherby Libraries at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Kevin and Tam Ross Undergraduate Research Prize by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact laughtin@chapman.edu.

2. Essay

For my senior thesis in history, the use of the Leatherby Libraries was crucial to the development of my paper. Once I determined the direction of my thesis, I began using “Discover!” to locate research relating to my topic. Through the Library I accessed ProQuest, to seek out previous dissertations and theses relating to the history of Manzanar. Without the free access to ProQuest offered, the financial burden would have been prohibitive and would have limited my access to source material. Instead, I was able to consider sources from these scholar’s bibliographies, enabling me to seek secondary sources best suited for my topic.

I found many secondary sources and some primary sources in the library, such as Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston’s memoir *Farewell to Manzanar*, and most importantly, *Sakuteiki*, a modern translation of a Japanese gardening, by Jiro Takei. The styles of the gardens I found in Manzanar were crucial to my analysis. Leatherby Libraries’ search engines “Discover!” and access to “Jstor” enabled me to locate academic journal articles, videos, and periodicals. I was able to check out a documentary about Manzanar, enabling me to have more time to take notes and discern critical details. The Library’s provision of “Jstor” to students has been incredibly helpful throughout my academic career at Chapman. For my course of study, free access to *The Journal of Asian American Studies*, *The Journal of American History*, and *California History*, has been invaluable.

Online, I discovered two episodes of *California’s Gold* on Manzanar and realized that the Huell Howser Archives would have them available. I immediately located them on Chapman’s webpage that detailed the archives, and was then able to view them in the Archives; the interactive map added an additional perspective. At the exhibit, I spoke to Angel Diaz about Huell Howser’s experience, which sparked the her suggestion of an out of print book *Born Free and Equal* by photographer Ansel Adams which included autobiographical notes about his time visiting Manzanar during the war. I also found the book *Twice Orphaned*, with transcribed interviews from orphans in Manzanar who had their own park within the camp. Special Collections added another depth to my experience at Leatherby; the librarians are interested in helping expand knowledge by digging deep to seek out source material.

The Manzanar Archives are at the camp’s original site, four hours away from Chapman, because the proximity was manageable, I took several trips to analyze the gardens and research vital information only available there as it is not accessible online at this time. These archives hold an extensive collection of internee interviews on DVD. With prior permission, I was able to watch these the center and these reflections became the central primary source material for my thesis. The park rangers and excavators at Manzanar are passionate and very knowledgeable;

some gave me some of their own publications, not available anywhere else. Lastly, I was able to analyze photos of the gardens that were not accessible anywhere online because families, not famous photographers, took them.

In evaluating all the information I obtained, the primary sources were the most powerful in supporting my theory. I used the photographs and subsequent analysis from the books by Ansel Adams to illustrate what the gardens looked like and his message was depicted through photographic composition. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's memoir provided a wealth of quotes to explain how the Japanese Americans felt during their time in the internment camp. These quotes and translations of Japanese phrases were touchstones throughout my thesis. Most engaging were the hundreds of interviews at the Manzanar Archives, as former internees reflected on their lives and time spent in the camp. The Huell Howser episodes also included interviews with Japanese Americans and their thoughts of Manzanar further supported my argument.

Within the Leatherby Libraries, the assistance from the librarians of both the Huell Howser Archive and Special Collections was superior; they understood the brevity of my project and appreciated my interest in pursuing the extensive resources available from their departments. The sources they helped me to uncover supported my argument and provided the necessary supplement to my trips to Manzanar. The library has a great depth of research material to offer, beyond what we typically think of in terms of a library, was instrumental in researching my thesis. I would have never considered before that Special Collections would have information regarding Manzanar and I did not realize how extensive the Huell Howser Archives were until I went there for myself and saw the archive room full of films and books. As I pursue graduate school, thanks to my experience with the Leatherby Libraries, no matter the library I visit for research, I will seek out their exhibits, special collections, and rare books sections because I now understand the abundance of information to be found there.

3. Summary

My senior history thesis regards the 11, 000 Japanese Americans who were interned in the Manzanar Relocation Center from spring of 1942 to fall of 1945. They were forcibly removed from their homes in Southern California and relocated to the internment camp, four hours into the California desert. *Issei*, who were first generation immigrants from Japan were not allowed to become American citizens and struggled to keep their families together as their *Nisei* children, second generation Japanese and legal citizens, grew up culturally divided between their parent's ethnic ties to Japan and their desire to be truly American. Once in the camps, many Japanese people navigated precariously along this dividing line. In the face of racial discrimination and war hysteria, they expressed their Japanese ancestry through their gardens, confirming that despite the social conditions of the camp, they were respectful Americans hoping to keep their families and communities strongly bound together through cultural displays of their heritage.

Despite their new home looking and feeling like a prison, the internees took the space and made it their own. Using themes derived from family and community, they made their barracks more homey and their "neighborhoods" more comfortable. The gardens contributed to this transformation and greatly enhanced their quality of daily life. A former internee recalled her mother often saying, *shikata ga nai* or "it cannot be helped." However, as soon as they arrived they began to challenge the tenets of the social organization set in place to control them. Creativity emerged as the internees began to reshape their new living conditions to meet their needs for self-expression and community affiliation. The skills those Japanese men had acquired in their prewar careers as gardeners were then put to use transforming the barren landscape. The resulting sceneries created in the camps exemplify the Japanese belief in *Gaman* or "perseverance and fortitude;" a reflection of their resilience despite having endured discrimination for decades.

At Manzanar, a small group of gardeners took back some semblance of their individual power by manipulating the desolate landscape into a place of beauty within the confines of a barbed wire fence. While it seems easy to believe people were motivated to create these gardens in defiance of an oppressive government, this does not seem to have been the case. Through the application of Japanese gardening techniques to a challenging environment, these gardens cultivated expressions of cultural identity and necessary communal space thereby enhancing the lives of the internees. These gardeners were able to enact personal authority over their confined space. Rather than disobedience, the gardeners of the Manzanar Relocation Center used their expertise as a means to express their freedom of self, enhancing their community by sharing parts of themselves that could never be restricted or taken.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Adams, Ansel. 1943. *Entrance to Manzanar, Manzanar Relocation Center*. Photographic print. As seen in *Born Free and Equal* by Ansel Adams.
- Adams, Ansel. 1943. *Monument in Cemetery, Manzanar War Relocation Center, California*. Photographic print. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002695986/>.
- Adams, Ansel. 1943. *Nurse Aiko Hamaguchi, patient Tom Kano, Manzanar Relocation Center, California*. Photographic print. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002695986/>.
- Adams, Ansel. 1943. *Pool in Pleasure Park, Manzanar Relocation Center, Calif.* Photographic print. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/manz/item/2002695985/>.
- Adams, Ansel. 1943. *Tojo Miatake [i.e., Tōyō Miyatake] Family, Manzanar Relocation Center*. Photographic print. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/manz/item/2002695405/>. As found on the Library of Congress online.
- Adams, Ansel, Wynne Benti, and Toyo Miyatake. *Born Free and Equal: The Story of Loyal Japanese Americans, Manzanar Relocation Center, Inyo County, California: Photographs from the Library of Congress Collection*. Bishop, CA, California: Spotted Dog Press, 2002.
- Albers, Clem. 1942. *War Relocation Authority Photographs of Japanese-American Evacuation and Resettlement; Series 8: Manzanar Relocation Center (Manzanar, CA)*. Photographic print. UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library. <http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/browse/jardaBrowse/Clem+Albers>. As found on the Library of Congress online.
- “Arai Pond in the Summer,” *Arai Family Photo Collection*. Photographic print. “A Place of Beauty and Serenity Excavation and Restoration of the Arai Family Fish Pond.” National Park Service U.S. Department of Interior.
- Arthur Ogami, interview by Richard Potashin. Walnut, California. Manzanar Archives. Transcript. September 9, 2004, 8.
- “A Walking Tour of Manzanar.” Manzanar National Historic Site, transcripts.
- “Best Garden to be Chosen.” *Manzanar Free Press*, October 8, 1942.
- Dewitt, John L. “Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry.” 1942. <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/sources/en-denshopd-p25-00049-1/>.
- Embrey, Sue Kunitomi and Hansen, Arthur A., and Mitson, Betty Kuhlberg. *Manzanar Martyr: An Interview with Harry Y. Ueno*. Fullerton, California, California State University, Fullerton. The Oral History Program, 1986.
- “For Better Living: Hobby Gardens Planned.” *Manzanar Free Press*, May 26, 1942
- “Garden Contest Won by B-34.” *Manzanar Free Press*, November 5, 1942.
- “Gardens: Harvest Time to be Here Soon.” *Manzanar Free Press*, June 9, 1942.

George Izumi, interview by John Allen. Manzanar Archives. November 6, 2002.
<http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx>.

Henry Nishi, interview by Richard Potashin, Santa Monica, January 8, 2009, segment 22.

Howe, Graham, Nagatani, Patrick, and Rankin, Scott. eds. *Two Views of Manzanar: An Exhibition of Photographs by Ansel Adams/Toyo Miyatake*. Los Angeles, Regents of the University of California, 1978. As found at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles.

Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki. 1973. *Farewell to Manzanar*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Lange, Dorothea. 1942. *War Relocation Authority Photographs of Japanese-American Evacuation and Resettlement*. Photographic print. UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library.
<http://content.cdlib.org/search?facet=type-tab&style=cui&jardaBrowse-join=exact&relation=calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu&jardaBrowse=Dorothea+Lange&startDoc=1>.
As found on the Library of congress online.

"Landscape Designs Unique Desert Garden." *Manzanar Free Press*, June 30, 1942.

"Lawns... vs. Dust." *Manzanar Free Press*, August 12, 1942.

Louis Kado, interview by Jane Wehrey and Richard Potashin. Independence. Manzanar Archives. July 2, 2001.

Miyatake, Toyo. Arai Family Fish Pond. Photographic print. Toyo Miyatake Studios. Reproduced with the permission of Toyo Miyatake Studios.

Miyatake, Toyo. *Barracks, Manzanar War Relocation Center*. Photographic print. Toyo Miyatake Studios.
<http://www.toyomiyatake.com>.

Miyatake, Toyo. *Merritt Garden, Manzanar Relocation Center*. Photographic print, 1943. Berry Tamura Family Album.

Miyatake, Toyo. *Photograph of Mr. Ioki gardener at the hospital*. Photographic print. Courtesy of Toyo Miyatake Studio.

Rokuro Kurihara, interview by Richard Potashin. Manzanar Archives. May 10, 2009.
<http://archive.densho.org/main.aspx>.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Executive Order*.
www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=74&page=transcript.

Shirley Nogatmoni Okabe, interview by Alisa Lynch. San Jose. Manzanar Archives. January 30, 2013.

Statement of United States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry. "The Loyalty Questionnaire." 1943.

Susumu Ioki, interview by Richard Potashin. West Los Angeles. Manzanar Archives. July, 24, 2007.

Ueno, Harry Y., and Sue Kunitomi Embrey. *Manzanar Martyr: An Interview with Harry Y. Ueno*. Fullerton, Calif.: Oral History Program, California State University, 1986.

Madelon (Arai) Yamamoto, Interview by Erin Brasfield, West Los Angeles, California, September 12, 2006.

Madelon Yamamoto, interview by Richard Potashin, Independence California, Manzanar Archives May 6, 2011.

"What Happened at Manzanar: A Report." *Common Ground*, Spring 1943, pp. 83-88.

Williams, Arthur J.. *Reflecting on WWII, Manzanar and the WRA*. Victoria: Canada: Friesen Press. 2014.

1917 - Immigration Act (39 Stat. 874) Feb. 5, 1917 Sec. 3.

Secondary Sources

Alinder, Jasmine. 2009. *Moving Images: Photography and the Japanese American Incarceration* Illinois: University of Illinois.

Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities*. Brooklyn: Verso.

Armor, John, and Wright, Peter. comps. *Manzanar*. New York, Times Books, 1988.

Baxter, William K. "New Address — Manzanar. *Westways*, XLIV (August 1942), pp. 8- 11.

Beckwith, Ronald J.. "Landscape Gardens and Gardeners at Manzanar Relocation Center." *Discover Nikkei*. Jan. 5, 2008.

Block 9 Garden (Excavated). Dick Lord and Jeff Burton. Digital photograph.

Brooks, Lea. "Inyo Welcomes Manzanar Designation." *California County*, July/August 1992, pp. 20-21.

Burton, Jeffery F., and Mary M. Farrell. 2014. "A Place of Beauty and Serenity Excavation and Restoration of the Arai Family Fish Pond." National Park Service U.S. Department of Interior.

Burton, Jeff, et al. "Cultural Landscape Report Manzanar National Historic Site." *National Parks Service Pacific West Region*, 2006. <http://www.nps.gov/manz/parkmgmt/upload/Manzanar-CLR-LOW-RES.pdf>.

Burton, Jeffery F. *Three Farewells to Manzanar: The Archeology of Manzanar National Historic Site, California*. Tucson, Ariz., California: Western Archeological and Conservation Center, National Park Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1996.

DeBoer, Lucille. "Manzanar: A True Life Story." *The Album: Times and Tales of Inyo-Mono*, VI (Summer 1993), pp. 5-8.

Chang, Richard. ECHOES OF MANZANAR; The former WWII internment camp, now undergoing restoration as a national historic site in California, still resonates. *The Gazette* (Colorado Springs, CO). June 15, 2003.

Chiang, Connie Y. 2010. "Imprisoned Nature: Toward an Environmental History of the World War II Japanese American Incarceration." *Environmental History* 15 (2): 236–67. <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.chapman.edu/stable/20749671>.

"Children of Manzanar. *Massachusetts Review*, XXXIV (Autumn 1993), pp. 367-91. Colborn-Roxworthy, Emily. Manzanar, The Eyes of the World are upon You: Performance and Archival Ambivalence at a Japanese-American Internment Camp." *Theatre Journal* May; 59 (2): 189-214; 341. 2007.

Embrey, Sue Kunitomi. *The Lost Years: 1942-46*. 5th ed. Los Angeles, Manzanar Committee, 1987.

Garrett, Jessie A., and Larson, Ronald C. eds. *Camp and Community: Manzanar and the Owens Valley*. Fullerton, California State University, Fullerton, Japanese American Oral History Project, 1977.

Gordon, Linda, and Gary Y. Okihiro, eds. 2006. *Impounded; Dorothea Lange and the Censored Images of Japanese American Internment*. New York: W. & W. Norton and Company.

Gorman, John M. *I Remember Manzanar*. Bishop, California, Pinion Press, 1967.

Hansen, Arthur A., and Hacker, David A. "The Manzanar Riot: An Ethnic Perspective." *Amerasia Journal*, II (Fall 1974), pp. 112-57.

Hansen, Arthur A., Mitson, Betty E., and Embrey, Sue Kunitomi. "Dissident Harry Ueno Remembers Manzanar." *California History*, LXIV (Winter 1985), pp. 58-64, 77.

- Harris, M. "History and Significance of the EMIC/ETIC Distinction." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 5 (1976): 329-50. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2949316>. Harth, Erica.
- Helphand, Kenneth I. 2006. "Stone Gardens: Japanese American Internment Camps, 1942-1945." In *Defiant Gardens: Making Gardens in Wartime*, 155-266. San Antonio: Trinity University Press.
- Hirasuna, Delphine. 2005. *The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps 1942-1946*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press.
- Hosokawa, Bill. *Nisei: The Quiet Americans*. New York: W. Morrow, 1969.
- "Jap Exodus to Owens Valley Under Way" *Intake*, April 1942, pp. 12-13.
- Kunitomi Embrey, Sue. 1972. *The Lost Years 1942-46*. Los Angeles: Manzanar Committee.
- Kurashige, Lon. 2002. *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History or Festival in Los Angeles, 1934-1990*. Berkeley: University of California Press. *Ethnic Identity and*
- Landis, Christopher. *Pilgrimage: Images from Manzanar, Essays and Photographs by Christopher Landis*. Fullerton, California, The Lyceum Press, 1989.
- Lawrence and Low. *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*.
- Manzanar Commercial Club. *Manzanar, Owens River Valley, Inyo County, California*. Manzanar, California, Manzanar Commercial Club, 1910, 1919.
- Manzanar Committee. *The Manzanar Pilgrimage. A Time for Sharing*. Los Angeles, Manzanar Committee, 1981.
- Manzanar Committee. *Reflections in Three Self-Guided Tours of Manzanar*. Los Angeles, Manzanar Committee, 1998.
- Manzanar Committee PR, "Nishi Family Returns To Manzanar To Help Rebuild Historic Bridge At Merritt Park," Manzanar Committee (blog), May 31, 2011, <http://blog.manzanarcommittee.org/2011/05/31/nishi-family-returns-to-manzanar-to-help-rebuild-historic-bridge-at-merritt-park/>.
- "Manzanar... An Impression." *California Monthly*, August-September 1945, pp. 28-29, 49-50. Online.
- Masaoka, Mike, and Hosokawa, Bill. *They Call Me Moses Masaoka*. New York, William Morrow and Company, 1987.
- Merritt, Ralph P. "Pete', Jr. *Death Valley — Its Impounded Americans: The Contribution by Americans of Japanese Ancestry During World War II*. Death Valley California, The Death Valley '49ers, Inc., 1987.
- Miyatake, Atsufumi, Fujishima, Taisuke, and Hosoe, Eikoe. eds. *Toyo Miyatake Behind the Camera: 1923-1979*. English trans. by Paul Petite. Tokyo, Bungeishunju Co. Ltd., 1984.
- Nakamura, Robert A. 2002. *Toyo Miyatake: Infinite Shades of Gray*. Documentary. Japanese American National Museum.
- Neiwert, David A. *Strawberry Days: How Internment Destroyed a Japanese American Community*. New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Ng, Wendy. 2002. *Japanese American Internment During World War II; A History and Reference Guide*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Ohrn, Karin Becker. "What You See Is What You Get: Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams at Manzanar." *Journalism History*, IV (Spring 1977), pp. 14-22, 32.

- Rancourt, Linda M. "Remembering Manzanar." *National Parks*, LXVII (May-June 1993), pp.30-34, 46.
- Rabinow, Paul "Ordinance, Discipline, Regulation: Some Reflections on Urbanism" in Setha Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga. *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*. London: Blackwell. 2003.
- Robinson, Gerald H. 2002. *Elusive Truth: Four Photographers at Manzanar*. Nevada City: Carl Mautz Publishing.
- Ross, Christopher. "Return to Manzanar." *Americana*, XIX (April 1991), pp. 55-58.
- Takaki, Ronald. 1987. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans, Updated and Revised Edition*. United States: Little, Brown and Company.
- Takei, Jiro, and Marc P. Keane. *Sakuteiki, Visions of the Japanese Garden: A Modern Translation of Japan's Gardening Classic*. Boston, Mass.: Tuttle Pub. 2001.
- Tamura, Anna Hosticka. "Gardens Below the Watchtower: Gardens and Meaning in World War II Japanese American Incarceration Camps." *Landscape Journal*. January 2004: 10.
- Taylor, Frank J. "Wizard with Rocks." *Saturday Evening Post*. August 1961.
- War Relocation Authority, Manzanar Relocation Center, Manzanar, California: 1942-945*. N.p., TecCom Productions, 1987.
- Wenger, Gina L. "Documentary Photography: Three Photographers' Standpoints on the Japanese-American Internment." *Art Education* 60 (5).doi:10.2307/27696238.