

CONFINEMENT IN THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT

PROJECT PURPOSE:

The goal of “Confinement in the Land of Enchantment: Japanese Americans in New Mexico during WWII” (CLOE) is to reach a wide and diverse audience of New Mexicans and Americans about the histories of Japanese internment in the state, and to inspire thought and conversation about issues of citizenship, identity, and civil liberty. The project focuses on the stories of World War II Japanese confinement sites that were located at Santa Fe, Ft. Stanton, Old Raton Ranch (Baca Camp), and Camp Lordsburg in New Mexico. In addition to telling the stories of detainees held at each of these facilities, the project examines how the surrounding communities interacted with these camps. Stories of how various communities across New Mexico treated their Japanese and Japanese American community members are also explored.



*Fort Stanton is part of this project, but a sketch is not included in this packet. It served primarily as a German non-combatant detainee camp, but did house the Japanese from Clovis who went to Old Raton Ranch and some internees who were sent from the camp in Santa Fe.

IDENTITY

CITIZENSHIP

CIVIL LIBERTY

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Prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the FBI began to compile lists of persons considered to be dangerous to national security. These “enemy aliens” included Japanese language teachers, religious ministers, former Japanese Army veterans, fishermen, officials of Japanese association and Japanese Consulate offices, and those who had donated to Japanese Widows and Orphans funds or victims of Sino-Japanese War, among others. On December 7, 1941, the arrest of these individuals began. This project is designed to document the confinement of those of Japanese descent in sites located in New Mexico.

The team is currently in the final stage of a multi-year effort which is being completed by the New Mexico Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (NM JACL) and the Public Lands History Center (PLHC) at Colorado State University. It is funded in part by the National Park Service’s (NPS) Japanese American Confinement Sites grant program.

The project team is working to complete an outreach publication, historic markers, and web pages to be hosted on the New Mexico Office of the State Historian website. The publication will be distributed to all New Mexico public elementary and high schools, as well as public libraries. New historic markers will be placed in Lordsburg, Fort Stanton, and possibly at the site of the Old Raton Ranch near Capitan. The web pages will include interactive elements to tell the histories of the sites.

As a federal grant program, the JACS grant program requires the project raise matching funds. These funds must be non-federal dollars; we are required to raise \$1 for every \$2 awarded. The project has successfully raised more than half of the required funds so far.

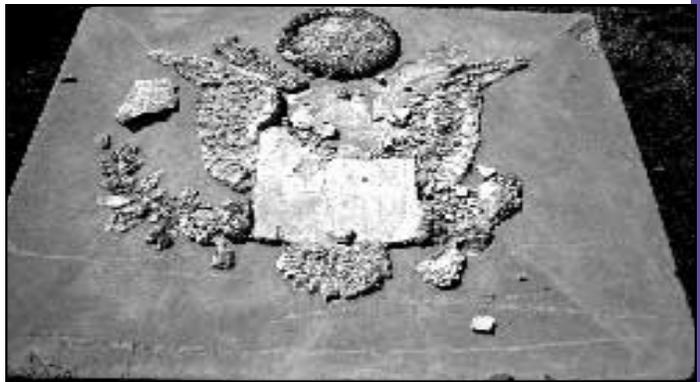
Internees at Camp Lordsburg, Courtesy of the National Archives



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Website

To ensure sustainability, the project will complete web pages that document the history of the New Mexico camps, experiences of detainees, and the effects of the camps on the surrounding New Mexican communities. The web pages will be hosted by the New Mexico Office of the State Historian, which is the official history website of the state. The website content and design will be developed through collaboration between the State Historian and the project planning board and will include video, interactive maps and timelines, and historic photos.



Stone insignia remains at Camp Lordsburg, Photo taken by CLOE team member

Public Outreach Brochure

A professionally published public outreach brochure that includes a historical context, brief camp histories, and stories of internees and community experiences at and near the New Mexican camps will be produced. It will include historic photographs, excerpts from oral histories, and other new and exciting research. The outreach publication will be distributed to elementary and high schools and public libraries across the state.

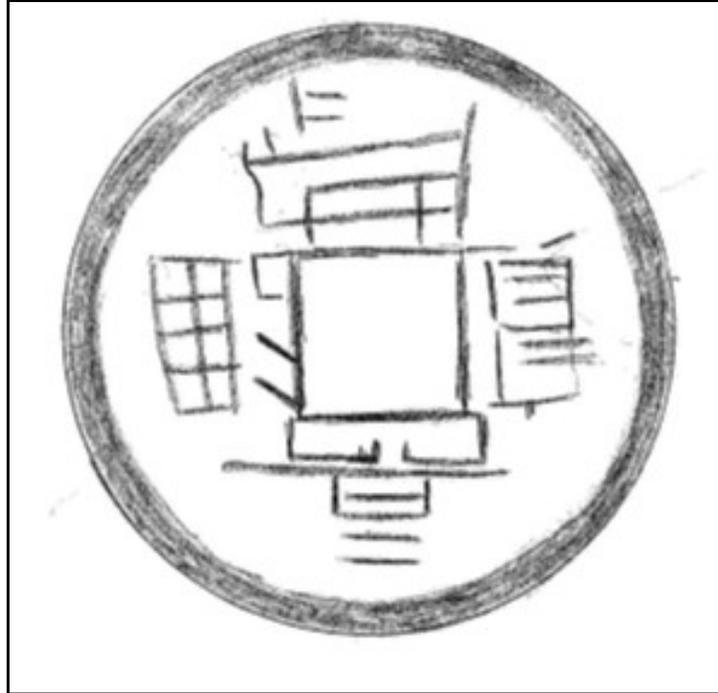


Remaining fireplace from Old Raton Ranch, Photo taken by CLOE team member

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Historic Markers

Historic markers for Camp Lordsburg and Ft. Stanton have been developed by the planning board, Van Citters Historic Preservation, and cooperating partners. Although Santa Fe already has a memorial marker in place, the team is considering installing a more visible roadside marker to help reach a wider audience. Because the original Camp Lordsburg site is located on private property, the Camp Lordsburg marker will be placed in the City of Lordsburg. The Ft. Stanton marker will be placed on the Fort property. A marker at the site of the Old Raton Ranch is currently being considered by the project planning board.



Drawing of coin found at Camp Lordsburg, Courtesy of Mollie Pressler

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Plans for Camp Lordsburg began in January of 1942, and the camp operated as an Internment and Prisoner of War Camp from June 1942 to June 1945. The camp was constructed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice (DOJ), run by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and administered by the U.S. Army under the authority of the Enemy Aliens Act of 1798. Japanese Issei (the first generation immigrants from Japan who were ineligible for U.S. citizenship) were confined at Lordsburg between June 1942 and 1943, after which point the population at Camp Lordsburg was German and Italian POWs.

On February 2, 1942, the Lordsburg Chamber of Commerce received the news by wire from Sen. Dennis Chavez that the War Department would construct an army cantonment at Lordsburg. A total area of 2,120 acres forming an “L” shape, and located approximately 6 miles east of town was seized by the U.S. government and when it was complete, the camp consisted of 283 buildings (including barracks, hospital buildings, officers headquarters, a recreation hall, latrines, and other support buildings); paved highways (the road from Highway 80 to the camp, portions of which are now POW Road); and electric, water, sewage, telephone, and gas systems.

Those who were confined at Lordsburg were transported by train under the cover of night, arriving at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. They were unloaded from the train at the Ulmorris siding some 3 miles north of the camp and then marched, flanked by guard companies, to the camp. The internees’ belongings were collected by a custodial officer and a set of green clothing was issued with the person’s number printed on each article. By November 1942, an inspection report by the International Committee of Geneva recorded a total of 1,523 Japanese men detained at the camp (mostly middle-aged and elderly)—92 from Alaska, 246 from Hawaii, and 1,185 from other parts of the U.S. predominantly along the West Coast.

In general, life in the camp was regimented. The internees were organized into two physical compounds. Each compound elected a “mayor” to represent it to the Army, International Red Cross, Spanish Embassy, State Department and any other agency with which they might communicate. Internees

organized a wide range of cultural and athletic activities within the camp, including a Japanese literature group, a watercolor and oil painting group, a musical instrument group, and a poetry society. In addition, there were regular Christian, Buddhist, and Shinto services and lectures. Internees had their own PX where they could buy toilet articles, shaving supplies, cigarettes and candy, etc.

In 1943, the Army sought to house POWs at Camp Lordsburg. With the departure of the Japanese civilian detainees in November of 1943, the Lordsburg Internment Camp was officially redesignated as the Lordsburg Prisoner of War Camp, where Italians captured in North Africa and Italy were held from the fall of 1943 to summer 1944. German POWs were also sent to Lordsburg between September 1944 and summer 1945.



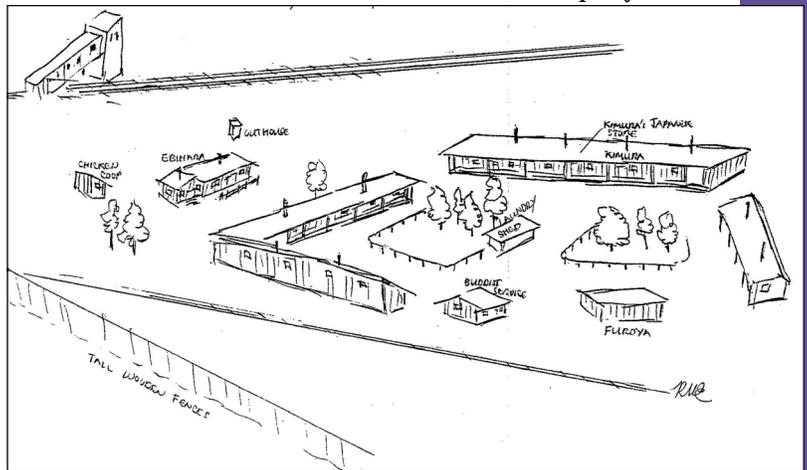
Photo of Camp Lordsburg, Courtesy of Mollie Pressler

CONFINEMENT IN THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT

In late January of 1942, 32 Japanese residents of Clovis, New Mexico, were uprooted from their homes and sent to an isolated, little-known confinement camp near Fort Stanton, called the Old Raton Ranch. The Clovis residents included the families of ten Japanese who were employed by the Santa Fe Railroad (primarily as machinists with top seniority), and who had arrived in the town between 1919 and 1922. In 1922 there was a union-led walkout and strike by the railroad shopmen that the Japanese workers refused to join. This contributed to ill feelings on the part of the Anglo workers and in turn, the railroad company favored the Japanese—they had a reputation as excellent workers who caused no trouble. Prior to World War II, the Japanese workers and their families lived rent free in a cluster of one-story buildings that were located 75 yards east of the roundhouse. Although the Japanese were largely isolated, the children attended local schools and some townspeople visited the compound to purchase fresh vegetables and items the families had imported from Japan.

On December 7, 1941, Santa Fe Railway Superintendent W. R. Harrison met with Clovis company officials. He also called the Anglo shop workers together and reported to his bosses in Chicago that the workers had expressed anger and resentment toward the Japanese. Harrison told the Japanese “to lay off work and to stay close to their quarters.” These corporate decisions made in response to a local crisis were the first steps of the eventual removal of the families to a confinement camp.

In addition to the actions of Harrison, in general the railroads, mines, and other industries that employed “enemy aliens” had turned quickly to the FBI to obtain advice on what to do about their Japanese workers in the face of restrictions being imposed. Within hours, for instance, the White House ordered that enemy aliens were not to board trains or be close to “vital facilities” like rail yards. Yet the FBI and the military also told the companies and local authorities that “no publicity” should be given to these actions. The outward impression was that corporate executives were making these tough decisions on their own, while vague and evolving federal policies were actually in play. Therefore, while “local factors” were certainly important to what happened in Clovis and elsewhere, the government was probably much more involved than previously identified.



Sketch of Japanese housing at Santa Fe railroad in Clovis, Courtesy of Roy Ebihara

On January 19, 1942, the government sent four U.S. border patrolmen to Clovis to assume control of the situation. They arrived in town that evening and, according to one of them, found the families “huddled in their compound . . . , very muchly [*sic*] in fear for their lives.” He added that the railroad felt the Japanese workers could not be employed in “vital war industry” because of the “extreme danger of sabotage.” Protective guard was established for the next four days as a solution was sought, and on January 23, the Japanese people were “taken into custody and evacuated from Clovis.” An Albuquerque paper added several days later, and the remembrance of at least one detainee confirms, that the Clovis Japanese went to a “concentration camp” near Fort Stanton, transported in government cars.

They arrived at the Fort Stanton Military Reservation, a detention camp for some 400 German non-combatant detainees, at around 7:00 a.m. on January 24th. It was soon decided that Fort Stanton would not suffice and that the detainees would be moved to an abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps camp twelve miles away, known as Old Raton Ranch. The Japanese families spent almost a year there in harsh and extremely isolated conditions. The fourteen-acre camp had nine buildings, two electric generators, abundant water, and no fences or security guards, but it also had an inadequate sewage disposal system and was in a general state of disrepair. No government money was spent on camp repairs, but the Japanese used materials on hand to improve their conditions, and by June they were managing a thriving garden with many different vegetables flourishing.

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In February 1942, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) acquired an 80 acre tract of land from the New Mexico State Penitentiary (1 ½ miles from the center of Santa Fe). The tract held an abandoned CCC camp that was constructed in 1933 to house 450 men. In less than 2 months, the camp was converted into a confinement center to house 1,400 people. The INS saw this as a temporary holding facility to house West Coast detainees until the California hearing boards could determine their fate. The first internees arrived in mid-March and by April 1942 the camp population was at 826 people. During the next three months, five separate Alien Enemy Hearing Boards occurred and, as a result, the camp population steadily declined: the hearing boards released 523 and ordered 302 interned in Army custody. On September 24, 1942, the last internee departed and by November the camp was deactivated and left in the hands of a caretaker staff.

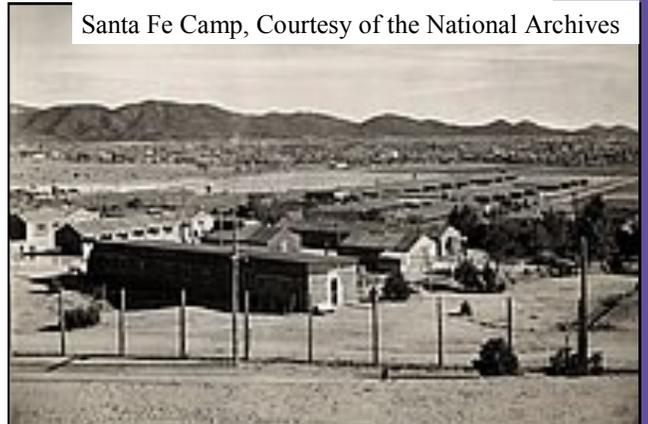
In February of 1943, the Army transferred all the civilian internees in its custody to the INS. As a result, the Santa Fe camp was reactivated and expanded to hold 2,000, augmenting the original buildings with prefabricated Victory Huts. During the camp's operation, a total of 4,555 individuals passed through. During their time at the camp the internees questioned their standard of living under the Geneva Convention. The government issued clothing, purchased food and provided housing in the CCC barracks and Victory Huts (which were eventually replaced with new barracks).

Under the government rules, ethnic food preferences could be accommodated, provided that "a balanced diet was preserved." Using this provision, the camp generally provided rations to accommodate more fish and rice and less meat and potatoes. During 1942, the camp purchased food from local suppliers, which strained civilian sources and caused public resentment. When the camp reopened in 1943, the Army quartermaster general provided the rations. These were supplemented by a 19-acre irrigated tract and a poultry farm that the internees established adjacent to the camp to supply fresh vegetables, chickens, and eggs. In addition, the canteen stocked specialty foods for private purchase, including those that the Red Cross sent from Japan.

From the Japanese surrender until April of 1946 the Santa Fe camp continued as a holding and processing center as the DOJ closed camps and released internees.

Historical sketch summarized from John J. Culley, "The Santa Fe and the Justice Department Program for Enemy Aliens," in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, ed. Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry H. L. Kitano (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1986), 57-71.

Santa Fe Camp, Courtesy of the National Archives



AN INCIDENT AT THE CAMP

In 1944 a group from Tule Lake arrived in Santa Fe wearing Rising Sun sweatshirts. The camp administration ordered the group to surrender the shirts or there would be disciplinary action – the new Issei internees said they would not. Eventually there was a search of the camp to confiscate the shirts – many of which had had the emblem cut out. The administration was then determined to transfer the 3 ring leaders (Aoki, Tamura, and Kamdea) and a crowd gathered. At that point the camp guard was almost surrounded, but they charged the crowd, which retreated and then rallied. Eventually the guards took control; the event lasted approximately 10 minutes. Four internees were hospitalized and 360 were segregated into the stockade and denied any official standing or recognition. It was later revealed that 17 men, believed to be leaders in the riot, were sent to the segregation camp at Fort Stanton and were later repatriated to Japan, while other participants were given sentences of up to 30 days in the stockade.

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The JACS grant program that has made the CLOE project possible requires a match in the form of \$1 for every \$2 the project uses. All contributions to the project, of any amount, are greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in offering financial support we have a gift account at Colorado State University dedicated exclusively to the project. Checks can be made out to the **CSU Foundation** with a note in the memo line indicating the name of the project (**Confinement in the Land of Enchantment**).

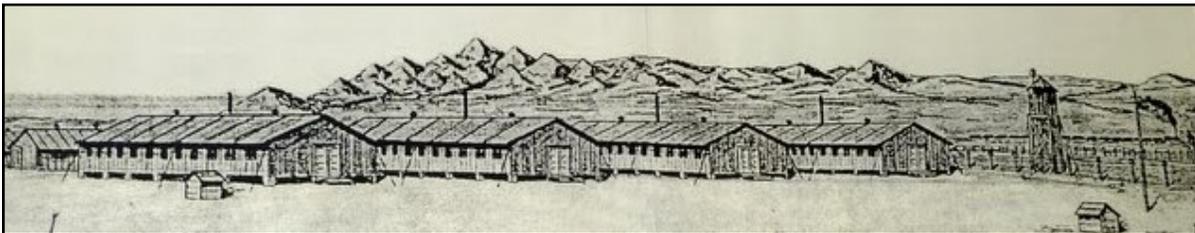
Please send checks directly to Colorado State University's Public Lands History Center at:

Public Lands History Center, Colorado State University

1776 Campus Delivery

Fort Collins, CO, 80523-1776

Please also indicate if you would like to be listed as a project donor in the outreach publication.



Camp Lordsburg 1943, Courtesy of the Lordsburg Hidalgo County Museum

Thank you for supporting the CLOE project. Your generosity helps preserve this important piece of history and ensure the NM confinement sites and the stories of the individuals incarcerated in them will be remembered.