Friends, neighbors, foes and invaders: Conflicting images and experiences of Japanese Americans in wartime Nevada

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FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS, FOES AND INVADERS:  
CONFLICTING IMAGES AND EXPERIENCES  
OF JAPANESE AMERICANS IN  
WARTIME NEVADA

by

Andrew B. Russell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Japanese Americans of the interior West also faced perils during World War II, up to and including the possibility of internment and mass relocation. Although Nevada contained relatively few Japanese Americans at the outset of the war, the "Japanese question" received serious attention across the state. Early on, Nevadans grappled with the question of what to do about Japanese residents, and these debates spawned vastly different outcomes. In March 1942 the question changed, as many Nevadans began to fear and oppose an expected influx of "California Japs" (Japanese Americans the government was excluding from neighboring states). In this "free" interior state, however, irrational fears dissipated relatively quickly after the West Coast relocation ran its destructive course. This study describes these conflicting images and experiences of Japanese Americans in wartime Nevada, arguing that local history profoundly affected responses to both "Japanese questions."
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This study is based primarily on interviews, conversations, and correspondence between the author and Japanese Americans who grew up in Nevada. I owe a tremendous debt to these many witnesses, now scattered across Nevada and the West. (Individual introductions are forthcoming.)

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I dedicate this work to my late mother, Sue Bergdal Russell (B.S.; M.A., UNLV). She stressed the importance of education, taught the fallacies of racism, and initially launched my "skinny caboose" on the tracks that have somehow led here.
INTRODUCTION

Scholars have already written extensively about Japanese Americans and their wartime experiences. Most works deal with Japanese populations of pre-war California and address the causes and effects of the mass relocation. The literature grew noticeably in the 1970s and 1980s, spurred on by the emergence of Japanese-American ethnic pride, Asian American studies, and the redress movement. That period found writers challenging prior theories, while the very latest scholarship has explored fascinating gender, generational, class, and rural-urban variations in Japanese American history.¹

The post-1970 thrust brought new perspectives to the study, but the expanding literature continued to emphasize California history. Little was published that dealt with Japanese Americans in Washington and Oregon or the territories of Hawaii and Alaska. While study has gradually expanded beyond California, to the north, south, and west, few scholars have looked east of California at Japanese-American life, history and wartime

experiences outside the camps.²

Indeed, the states of Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona are seldom mentioned in the major works, except in discussions of the interior relocation camps. This represents a large gap in the history. While dwarfed in comparison to California figures, each of these states contained sizable Japanese-American populations in the early twentieth century. We still know relatively little about the thousands of Japanese immigrants who ventured inland after 1900, about the children of those who

settled there, or about the ethnic Japanese who spent the war years "at large" in the relatively "free" interior. Perhaps between twelve and fourteen thousand Japanese Americans (or roughly one-tenth of the U.S. Mainland total) lived in the interior West at the outbreak of the war or moved there "voluntarily" soon afterwards.

These largely forgotten residents of the interior deserve more attention than they have received for several reasons. First, as Asian-Americanists have long realized the historical significance of a given group is not determined strictly by its size. The California Japanese, for example, comprised only one to two percent of that state's population during the early twentieth century, yet they had a tremendous impact on the agricultural and the political history of their state. These incongruities between numbers and influence are even more pronounced further east. In the interior, small groups of enterprising Issei (or Japanese immigrants) and Nisei (second-generation offspring) also made remarkable strides, even as the "Japanese problem" likewise became the subject of political debate at times.

Furthermore, the wealth of information that has come out of research on the West Coast cannot readily be applied to Japanese-American (or Nikkei) history inland. In Nevada, different environmental, occupational, and institutional forces created generally different, and internally diverse, experiences. Third, despite different textures of daily life in the interior, these immigrants and their families participated in the broader Nikkei experience. They shared culture, ties of kin and friendship, and common struggles that inextricably bind their story to the mainstream history. Finally, at the most crucial and best examined juncture in that history—World War II—scholars have published almost nothing of depth about these people and their experiences.

This thesis attempts to restore part of the missing fabric by exploring the wartime images and experiences of the Japanese in Nevada. Fewer than 500 Japanese Americans lived in Nevada on December 7, 1941. Still, their lives and the state's assorted reactions to the wartime "Japanese problem" are important. They may reveal something about
experiences, opinions, and decision-dynamics elsewhere in the interior West; they may even add a bit to our understanding of the West Coast disaster. Moreover, these peculiar and diverse Nevada outcomes (which have been noted but not analyzed by Nevada's historians), seem to hold valuable lessons about state and local history. Either way, this accounting argues that Nevadans—Japanese and non-Japanese—possessed a considerable degree of agency as Japanese-American "fates" were decided during World War II.

Since scholars have disagreed on whether "westerners" or "easterners" mainly controlled wartime outcomes, a brief look at the historiography is in order before outlining this argument further. Indeed, scholars began to view the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans in a different light in the 1970s. To that point, no reputable scholar had agreed with the U.S. Army's 1942-43 contentions that "military necessity" caused the mass relocation. Instead, those who wrote before 1970 generally emphasized West Coast pressures as they sought answers to why mass Japanese relocation unfolded.

Most writers of this early school called the relocation of the ethnic Japanese the nation's worst wartime "mistake," to be sure. Nevertheless, their explanations generally emphasized traditions of anti-Asian sentiment in California, the regional economic, political, and military pressures behind exclusion, and the snowballing growth of "wartime hysteria" on the West Coast. Frequently their accounts included positive aspects of the

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4 For some examples of the early studies that emphasized California-based racism, cultural divisions, military leaders, and hysteria as salient force behind Japanese exclusion see Dorothy S. Thomas and Richard S. Nishimoto, The Spoilage (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1946); (Continued on next page)
relocation experience. They often celebrated the heroic deeds of Nisei servicemen and other factors that led to peaceful resettlement and the post-war emergence of the Japanese as a "model minority."

In the seventies and eighties, as the battle for formal redress of wartime injustices raged, attention shifted away from regional dynamics. Washington, D.C., became the focus, and the ranker side of life in the concentration camps dominated the newer literature. Easterners like President Franklin D. Roosevelt, signer of Executive Order 9066 (the order that permitted mass removal of citizens), assumed a greater part of the spotlight. War Department bureaucrats like Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, his Assistant Secretary John J. McCloy, and Marshal General Allen W. Gillion were identified as anti-Japanese "conspirators," along with Major Karl R. Bendetsen—the likely master-mind of the "military necessity" rationale. Some writers also charged the State Department and the Department of Justice with plotting to intern Japanese in the Americas. In essence, the tragic tale of the West Coast evacuation became "The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps."


As historian Sandra Taylor recently observed, the revisionists were "harsher and more condemnatory . . . almost polemical in their criticism of the camps." They revealed evidence of federal intrigue and mismanagement that is difficult to dispute, but many also glossed over strong evidence that federal policy initially grew out of regional demands. Numerically in the minority, perhaps, the exclusionist forces of the West Coast included respected advisors and opinion-makers, like California's Attorney General Earl Warren, California Congressman Leland Ford, and a growing number of Pacific Coast politicians and pundits. Also contributing in 1942 to the long-held dream of "Jap exclusion" were institutions like the Hearst newspapers, the Sons (and Daughters) of the Golden West, the American Legion, organized labor, and the California State Grange.

Meanwhile, the defense of the Pacific went badly during the early weeks of the war. Civilian military leaders spun tales of "fifth-column activities" at Pearl Harbor to cover for their own mistakes. Racism and hysteria took hold of wartime California and provided much of the thrust for the last in a series of bitter anti-Asian campaigns. Major Karl Bendetsen stood as in important link between California and Washington, D.C. A West Coast-raised, Stanford-educated lawyer, Bendetsen thoroughly believed that "a substantial majority of Nisei [bore] allegiance to Japan and [were] well controlled and disciplined by the enemy . . . ." Here was the key sentiment that fueled evacuation policy, and it was, primarily, a West Coast notion.

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6 Taylor, Jewel of the Desert, xvii, which singles out Weglyn.

7 Grodzins, Americans Betrayed, builds the strongest case that "traditional antipathies" and western politics fueled evacuation decisions. However, Daniels has consistently pointed out that "fear, suspicion and loathing" for the Japanese was part of the "essential preconditions" that led to relocation—see, for instance, The Decision, 4-5. Even Weglyn, Infamy, 36, admits that "a tidal wave of cries for evacuation" lashed east from California in 1942 and influenced federal policy-makers.

8 Bendetsen has been described by Daniels as "a key figure in the decision-making process" and, by his contemporaries, as the "prime mover," and the (Continued on next page)
Bendetsen's like-mined associate on the Pacific Coast, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, was also a conduit for local, state, and regional sentiments as his "Western Defense Command" grew. Despite some attempts to remove DeWitt from the true field of policy-makers, he has resurfaced prominently of late in some works. The Headquarters of the WDC, located at the Presidio in San Francisco, has been characterized as "amateurish and panic-ridden," its Commander as equivocal, malleable, anti-enemy-alien, and increasingly anti-Japanese. Intense regional agitation in early 1942 seemingly reinforced DeWitt's belief that "a Jap [was] still a Jap," irrespective of birthplace.

Since the late 1980s (often referred to as the post-redress era), some scholars have aimed for a synthesis the two schools of thought. Personal Justice Denied, the findings of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, may have set the tone for post-revision interpretations. This extensive investigation accentuated West Coast racism and regional agitation as the driving force behind unmerciful internment and the mass removal of Japanese Americans from the Far West. In the Commission's words, "Through January and early February 1942, the rising clamor from the West Coast was heard within the federal government . . . ." Nevertheless, federal leaders and American racism were counted as salient agents as well. The "broad historical causes which shaped

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decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership" (emphasis added).

This investigation of Nevada proceeds, then, from the understanding that local, state, and regional actors profoundly influenced "decisions" and federal policy. Most of these actors were, of course, concentrated in California, along with most Japanese Americans of the mainland. Yet the West Coast (or Far West) is generally counted as the stage or setting, and the larger West was quickly drawn into the drama as evacuation plans materialized. To date, Nevada and its residents have largely been written out of the scripts for both the Far West and the "free" interior.

In terms of numbers, it is tempting to ignore Nevada, just as it is easy to explain away positive and negative outcomes as simply a matter of population distributions. Compared to California, Washington, and Oregon, Nevada's Japanese population of 1941 was minuscule; so was its "white" population. Militarily, Nevada was a distant second line of defense in DeWitt's Western Defense Command. Ultimately, no Nevadans were officially evacuated and no camps were built in Nevada, which further removes the state and its peoples from the major flow of events.

On the other hand, Nevada did contain military targets, Japanese Americans, and concentration camp advocates as tensions were escalating. And the Japanese under examination did possess land, businesses, housing, and jobs that other Nevadans may have hoped to obtain. Internment, as we shall see, was an all-too-real possibility for Japanese Nevadans—"evacuation" too. The latter possibility became more real in March 1942, when DeWitt declared Nevada and three other interior states (Idaho, Montana, and Utah) "military areas." The same proclamation added 933 new "prohibited zones" to the ones already designated in Military Area numbers 1 and 2 (western California, Oregon, and

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Washington as well as southern Arizona, and eastern California, respectively—the eventual exclusion zones).

Military Area No. 5, Nevada, was suddenly linked to DeWitt and the WDC. According to recent findings, DeWitt planned to "round up" all Japanese Americans in his expanded Command. Fortunately, "the War Department wouldn't let him," for whatever reason. Beyond this region-wide threat, Japanese Nevadans faced especially dangerous circumstances. While they formed the smallest group west of New Mexico, Japanese Americans of Nevada lived closest to the expanding zone of exile. As it was, some Nevada counties bordering the eventual exclusion zones contained more Japanese than juxtaposed ones within California and Arizona.

The case of Arizona and its still-mysterious "evacuation" seems to draw Japanese Nevadans even closer toward the eventualities of 1942. Arizona was comparable to Nevada. The two states shared the same prime military target (Boulder Dam, now called Hoover Dam), and they contained similar-sized Japanese populations. Geographically, Arizona sat to the south and east of Nevada in relationship to the vital western defense zones. That the Arizona side of Boulder Dam became exclusion territory—but not the Nevada side—raises the possibility that intrastate factors also influenced grand evacuation plans for the interior states.12

This study proffers no explanation for why Nevada did not become part of the evacuation zone. That question is better left to those researching the federal archives. Yet


12 Roger Daniels has informed the author that the line through Arizona was billed as a "military necessity" to protect Boulder Dam. The Arizona zone, which sliced down from the Dam to encompass mainly southern Arizona, also "protected" the Mexican boarder—see, for instance, Morton Grodzins, *Americans Betrayed*, 313—but curiously left New Mexico's boarder "unguarded." Apparently, no one has studied whether virulent anti-Japanese sentiment in Arizona, like the type recorded by Jack August in "The Anti-Japanese Crusade in Arizona's Salt River Valley," influenced the drawing and re-drawing of lines in Arizona.
it seems clear that the broader dynamics of "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership" also had the potential for doing great harm in Nevada. A wholesale disaster was averted by "luck" and by prior history. In most Nevada towns, local circumstances seemingly mitigated the first two factors, prejudice and hysteria. This afforded most Japanese Americans of the state a better chance to deal with the third, uncontrollable factor, failure[s] of political leadership.

Poor federal leadership and "bad luck" may have exacerbated the hardships faced by others Japanese Nevadans. Nevertheless, this thesis also argues that the worst Nevada outcomes were likewise rooted in local history. Immediate circumstances and local decision-makers contributed significantly to the mass internment and the mysterious "evacuations" of Japanese from the company towns of McGill and Ruth, Nevada.

As conditions would allow, however, Japanese Americans of Nevada more quickly overcame the prejudice associated with the wartime "Japanese problem." They confronted common and special challenges, hitherto unappreciated, but they helped turn the tide of prejudice relatively quickly. Just beyond the exclusion zones, in a state ultimately devoid of "concentration camps" and their surrounding controversies, most Japanese Nevadans were afforded a rare opportunity to profoundly influence—before and during the fact—the wartime treatment they received.

This is not to suggest that Nevada communities were islands unto themselves, basking in a spirit of home-town, brotherly love—or seething in local hatred. Declarations of war, escalating regional hysteria, re-emerging racist sentiments, and sweeping federal control measures certainly impact on Japanese Americans and popular attitudes across Nevada. Furthermore, Nevada become a central battle ground in an inter-regional dispute over which states should host "the evacuees" and how. Nevadans waged a fierce if splintered battle in favor of "concentration camps," preferably to be located outside Nevada.
Without a doubt, the local and regional "Japanese questions" of World War II receive serious attention in the Silver State. The *questioning* (figuratively and literally) evolved through two discernible phases. The first phase mainly entailed determining what, if anything, needed to be done about Japanese residents of Nevada. Nevadans made most of the key decisions on this issue, primarily at the local level. Formal and informal debate on the subject spilled over into March 1942—and beyond in some circles. That spring, however, focus shifted decidedly to questions about how Nevada should respond to the West-Coast "evacuation" and the perceived threat of a "mass influx" of Japanese Americans from California. Federal, regional, and state actors dominated during this second phase. A new image—the "California Japs" as "foes and invaders"—temporarily overpowered typical local tendencies to view Japanese Americans as "friends and neighbors."

Local factors seemingly came to the fore again, however, after evacuation plans were formalized. Conditions for most of the Nevada Nikkei improved relatively quickly thereafter. Human interactions, relative freedom of activity, and a redoubling of Japanese contributions "solved" most of Nevada's lingering "Japanese problems," well before the federal government took up the problem of reforming the negative images it helped to create.

This study of the "war years" begins with some extensive yet impressionistic background information. Before treading there, something should be said about the author's methods, terminology, temporal focus and goals. First, I did not approach the topic from any particular "school" of ethnic studies. Nevertheless, I have sought answers to causality questions, thus I have borrowed piecemeal from many models (ranging from "hybrid-Turnerism," to assimilation theory, to neo-Marxist takes on interracial labor relations). Somewhere within the eclectic construct there is a graduate student's intention of: 1) relaying data about Japanese Nevadans and Nevada reactions during the wartime crisis; and 2) constructing a thematic synthesis of that data. Hopefully, more accomplished scholars will profit from the first aim and forgive the excesses of the second.
My terminology choices also need to be explained at the outset. As is common in immigration studies, I sometimes use "the Japanese" to designate both the first and second generations. This only bears mentioning because so much controversy has clouded the question of Nisei loyalty during the war. Conversely, I often refer to the first generation as "Japanese Americans," even though they could not become U.S. citizens until 1952. Since most of the Issei of my study did rush to become citizens in 1952, I have "Americanized" Japanese names (i.e., placing family name last).

A more furious controversy has emerged in recent years over the terminology that one should use in discussing the wartime "evacuation" of the ethnic Japanese. Several scholars have pointed out that the terms evacuation, relocation projects, and especially "assembly centers" (crude compounds used to temporarily house uprooted Japanese Americans) are flagrant government euphemisms. However, substitute terminology, such as "Japanese American internment" within the "concentration camps," tends to confuse important distinctions. Internment camps were created and operated by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the army, and relocation camps were controlled by the War Relocation Authority (WRA). "Internment" is a misnomer for the typical wartime experiences of most Japanese Americans.

It is, however, an accurate description of the worst outcomes that affected the Nevada Japanese. Since there is considerable confusion and frequent misusage of terms, in both primary and secondary sources, this author has mainly adhered to the "official" (government) terminology to minimize confusion. He italicizes evacuation hereafter only when discussing Nevada's "unknown evacuation."

One final explanation is in order and, in this case, an apology of sorts as well. This concerns the temporal focus. Although World War II is an inescapable chapter in the history of most Japanese Americans, it is, perhaps, less natural that the first attempt at a

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13 Roger Daniels notes that internment "is not really the appropriate term" to describe the typical wartime experiences of Japanese Americans in Prisoners Without Trial, 27.
comprehensive history of Nevada's Japanese should also focus on the war years. The war did not define this group's history to the same extent as elsewhere in the Far West. The task of capturing that history may have been better accomplished too if so much attention had not been focused on the actions and attitudes of "outsiders." I apologize to the people who shared so much rich history of the Nevada Japanese with me, only to find a brief chapter highlighted herein.

I believe, however, that the war was a crucially important epoch in the lives of all Japanese Americans—Nevadans included. Furthermore, to understand their wartime experiences it seems necessary to take an encompassing approach to the images, the opinions, and the decisions of "outsiders." I have sacrificed details of a fascinating ethnic history in the hope of relaying more about race relations in Nevada (and, perhaps, other parts of the West) during a period of national crisis. It is hoped that this effort will help us defend our communities, our region, and our nation against future outbreaks of extraordinary racial prejudice.
CHAPTER ONE

THE NIKKEI IN NEVADA, 1905-1940

This introductory chapter canvasses the history of Japanese Americans in Nevada from 1905 to the eve of World War II. Its aim, in part, is to create an overview of the Nevada Nikkei experience out of scattered published and unpublished reports. Its unabashed purpose, however, is to accentuate connections and dichotomies between Nevada and California as the "Japanese question" was debated in the early twentieth century. The following chapter considers pre-war developments in White Pine County and highlights a major departure from the Nevada pattern. Together, these two chapters form a crucial analysis of Japanese-EuroAmerican race relations in Nevada leading up to the war. Promising no further departures from the main subject, this analysis begins with a brief look at "typical" discrimination against the Nikkei in California.

California: Nevada Neighbor, Anti-Japanese Nucleus

This history of anti-Japanese sentiment in Nevada must first be prefaced by some brief analysis of it at its undisputed wellspring—California. The briefest description of California's historic "Japanese problems" should itself be prefaced by stating that they fit into a pattern sometimes identified as the "California problem." Many white Californians viewed themselves as the West Coast protectors of true "Americanism," and they were "well practiced in the politics of exclusion" well before World War II arrived.1

California's lawmakers and town leaders had learned the statecraft of exclusion over generations. Such political aims played well in crisis situations. "Keep Them Out;" "Send Them Back;" "Japs, (Chinks, Indians, Okies, Mexicans) Not Wanted Here." It is hard to imagine how many times these words were scrolled on town sign posts or shop windows in the Golden State between 1860 and 1960. In short, Californians historically possessed a certain mean-spirited attitude, generally reserved for nonwhites and keenly focused on Asians prior to World War II.2

It did not help matters that the Japanese concentrated in California agriculture, where a well-defined class hierarchy stretched back to the days of the Mexican Land Grants.3 California growers at first recruited large numbers of Japanese as farm laborers but turned suspicious of the Issei when they put their outstanding talent for horticulture to their own uses. Whites attempting to break into the farming "aristocracy" were perhaps even more resentful of the Japanese. Because Issei men and women farmed side by side, often paid higher rents, and sustained their families on smaller profit margins, whites frequently labeled them "unfair competitors." Similar charges were levied against urban Japanese struggling to find their niche in California, as Chinese immigrants had tried to do in both settings during the late 1800s.4

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3 An excellent background case study and historiography on California agricultural is provided in Sucheng Chan, This Bitter-Sweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1960 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

4 Dozens of works address these themes, but one of the best remains Roger Daniels, The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion (Berkeley and Los Angeles: (Continued on next page)
Californians also accused the Issei and their offspring of being a "clannish" group that wanted—not to acculturate and assimilate, but rather to "conquer" the West Coast. "Only against Orientals," noted one analyst, "was it seriously charged that the peaceful immigrants were but a vanguard of an invading horde to come."^5 Propaganda warning of the "yellow peril" was at times epidemic in California, especially around 1905 and 1907, and again in 1912 and 1913. Californians pioneered the practice of legally restricting Japanese land-ownership rights with their 1913 and 1920 Alien Land Laws. They pressured Theodore Roosevelt into formulating the "Gentlemen's Agreement," which curbed the flow of Japanese laborers. Then, their political leaders fought again to insure that the 1924 Immigration Act excluded all "aliens ineligible for citizenship" [Japanese] from further immigration.6

Landmark legislation like this only reflects part of the institutionalized discrimination that confronted Asian minorities in California (and on the West Coast). Roger Daniels and Harry H. L. Kitano have drawn an important distinction between prejudice, which is a condition of attitude that leads to stereotyping and avoidance, and discrimination, which is a practice of depriving a group of economic and social opportunities through formal rules or laws. Legal discrimination is the most damaging stage in the development of poor race relations, as it often leads to the third stage, segregation. This latter condition of isolation opens the way for Stage 4, "extraordinary solutions" [like exclusion or evacuation] in times of extreme crisis.7

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5 Daniels, Politics of Prejudice, 68.

6 Ibid., passim.

Prejudice, discrimination, and *de facto* segregation were parts of the traditional culture of California, and this undoubtedly contributed to the extraordinary solutions decided upon in 1942. Less clear is the role that the Japanese American subculture (also in an advanced state of development in California) played as a background cause.

Most writers have waxed indignant over the fact that white Americans targeted Nikkei cultural institutions during the war. They point out that Japanese churches, language schools, business and political associations—communities—were not terribly unlike those formed by other immigrant groups. In the hands of wartime propagandists, the cultural institutions and cultural affinities of the West Coast Japanese were unfairly equated with American disloyalty and "fifth-column" activity.

These scholars have emphasized how particularly unfair it was to persecute the Nisei for the subculture they had grown up in and had rebelled against. Clearly, the second generation dreamed of joining mainstream American society as equal participants. Even the practice of sending American-born offspring (known as the Kibei) to Japan for part of their education was partly (or mostly) due to the fact that the Nisei faced restricted and uncertain opportunities in America. If the Japanese of California appeared "clannish," it was mainly because white society forced them to cling together and preserve culture for economic, emotional, and spiritual survival.8

There is also evidence, however, that the "cultural baggage" carried by the Issei reinforced externally imposed segregation and isolation. According to Edwin Reischauer, racism and a very strong sense of "we" versus "they" have long been ingrained in Japanese culture.9 A proud race, the Issei built a strong subculture rather than beg entry to, or live

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8 The works of Grodzins, Daniels, Weglyn and many other writers paint ethnic institutions as mainly a response to prejudice and assign them no legitimate role in the decision-making process of 1942.

marginally in, the broader society. The Nisei could rebel against the subculture only to a certain point. This was particularly true where racist California folkways and institutions were strongest.10

This detour into California history was made, not to resurrect old theories about the principal causes of internment and the evacuation, but rather as a prelude to discussions about racism and Japanese subculture in Nevada. Certainly racism and cultural forms played some role in shaping wartime outcomes in California. Similarly, one cannot hope to understand Nevada outcomes without first considering prior history and the factors affecting race relations across Nevada by the outbreak of the war.

Politics and Prejudice on the Desert Frontier

Historically, California has exerted a strong influence on politics, economics, and popular thinking in Nevada. This is particularly true for the powerful northwest region of the Silver State. The first session of the Nevada Territorial Legislature (1861) actually included several California residents, unsure exactly where they resided in relationship to the border. At that time, laws were passed which: restricted suffrage to white males; prohibited non-whites from giving testimony against whites in civil or criminal cases; barred non-white children from attending school with whites; and forbade miscegenous marriages between white people and black people, the Chinese, or American Indians.

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When Nevada became a state, it "adopted most of the [discriminatory] laws passed during that earlier era." School segregation quickly proved to be too costly, and most of these other laws were reversed or declared unconstitutional by 1881; the miscegenation law was an exception.

Even at this early phase, however, Nevadans were unconsciously shaping a more hospitable setting for the Japanese immigrant who would arrive later. In its early period of development, Nevada contained large numbers of immigrants. These "Restless Strangers" comprised nearly one-third of the total population in 1861, and that figure had increased to forty-four percent by 1870. As a result, Nevada's forefathers wrote safeguards protecting an alien's right to own property into the state's constitution, which was adopted in 1865.

When some Nevadans tried to restrict Japanese property rights in 1920, they learned that this would require a complex legislative process. Constitutional amendments required passage by two successive legislatures and the favorable vote of the people. Nevada's biennial legislature could not introduce an alien land law until 1925, one year after the people voted to remove the alien-property-rights protection. By that time, however, passage of the 1924 Immigration Act and other factors must have neutralized Nevada's anti-Japanese forces. Nevada was the only state in the Far West (one of the 1


^Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 382, which points out that the latter figure "contrasts sharply with the 14.4 percent for the United States as a whole."

^ Ibid., 245.
few in the intermontane West) that never passed and (Asian) alien land law.15

Nevadans did amend their miscegenation laws. As historian Phillip I. Earl has documented, a number of sensationalized cases of Japanese-white couples obtaining marriages licenses in Nevada brought this action about. In 1911, both houses of the Nevada State Legislature amended the law so it forbade intermarriage between whites and "any person of the Ethiopian or black race, Malay or brown race, Mongolian or yellow race, or the American Indian or red race." Nevada's new law lasted until 1959.16

Other anti-Japanese measures were debated in the legislature, including early ones that would have prevented Japanese from working on railroads and publicly financed projects.17 Yet Nevada politics in the Progressive Era was hardly characterized by anti-Japanese sentiment. Nevada's strong political ties to California attenuated after the turn of the century. Politicians became "more responsive to local institutions" and more "Nevada-oriented."18 Labor-backed measures directed at Asians went down to defeat; the 1920s attempts to pass a "progressive" alien land law fizzled. Indeed, organized labor (a traditional foe of Asian immigrants) remained a weak and splintered contingent during this period, and the Progressive movement (frequently anti-Japanese in its rhetoric) "was pretty much over [in Nevada] by . . . 1914."19 It seems that the 1911 miscegenation law was the


16 Earl, "Nevada's Miscegenation Laws," which documents how another sensationalized Japanese-American case, the Nevada marriage of Noriko Sawada to labor organizer Harry Bridges, finally brought the law down.


18 Elliott, History of Nevada, 233-34.

19 Ibid., 250; 233-249. As Elliott explains it, "radical" labor unions suffered from major defeats and growing unpopularity, while local issues and the growth of the Socialist Party further divided labor and the Nevada "progressives."
only successful piece of specifically anti-Japanese legislation to color Nevada's legal history. Nevada's less restrictive, less discriminatory political infrastructure influenced every other aspect of the Japanese experiences in Nevada.

The Issei of Nevada

Only 228 Japanese were found in Nevada in 1900, but by 1910 that figure had nearly quadrupled to 864 by the official U.S. Census count.\(^2^0\) It is likely that thousands of Japanese men passed through Nevada during this decade, with the peak influx probably occurring between 1904 and 1907. Most arrived as contracted laborers. Japanese labor contractors based in Salt Lake City and the Northwest supplied workers to most of the state's railroads, and there was a flurry of new railroad construction in those four years. Contractors also sent men for some of the major mining projects and agricultural ventures that (combined with railroad construction) pulled Nevada out of the economic doldrums of the late 1800s. Some independent Japanese had ventured into Nevada earlier to study English and work as house servants, miners, cooks and laundry men, also as petty criminals. These men and the few women who came to Nevada before 1900 were often grouped with the Chinese, however, the dominant Asian group of nineteenth-century Nevada.\(^2^1\)


In 1905 Nevada's newspapers began to take special notice of the Japanese, as documented by historian Wilbur Shepperson. His search located the mention of a modest but vibrant Japanese community taking shape in Reno that year. Sixty-five Japanese adults had organized a public celebration of Japan's military victory over Russia, which members of the University of Nevada faculty and some community leaders attended. About the same time came newspaper reports that some Japanese residents of Reno and nearby Sparks had formed the Chigin society, a group that successfully campaigned to drive out Japanese prostitutes and other "undesirable" members of the community.22

Soon after celebrating these events, however, the Reno press turned hostile toward the Japanese. Openly framing the question as a matter of race, Reno's Nevada State Journal lamented the Russian defeat and singled out the Japanese as particularly undesirable immigrants. Stories on the "yellow peril," similar to the type being read in California, circulated for a time in the newspapers of Reno and Tonapah (a mining center south of Reno).23

On the eastern side of Nevada, a 1906 influx of Japanese railroad workers sparked similar reactions, as addressed in the next chapter. But elsewhere in the state Issei laborers forged a permanent niche in the railroad industry and enjoyed better press coverage (which translates, in this field of study, into very little coverage). In 1906, newspapers of southern Nevada also took notice of a local Japanese problem. Residents of the newly-formed Las Vegas Townsite learned of a "bloody riot" involving Japanese and Korean workers pitted against whites in the nearby railroad town of Caliente. Nevertheless, the


23 Shepperson, Restless Strangers, 131, and "Immigrant Themes," 29, which cites the Nevada State Journal, 28 February 1905 and The Tonopah Daily Sun, 24 August 1907.
incident was reported objectively in Las Vegas, and Japanese workers soon settled into a long, peaceful, and productive stay in Clark and Lincoln counties.24

The San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake City Railroad that traversed southern Nevada even earned a reputation for hiring and promoting Japanese workers. Managers liked them for "their efficiency, ambition, long employment, and trustworthiness . . . ."

By 1913 the railroad counted about thirty Japanese foremen, more than any other western line apparently. Japanese often supervised Italian and Greek workers as well as their own countrymen, according to a contemporaneous account.25

By 1912, the region's largest industrial concern already employed forty or more skilled Japanese craft workers at its Las Vegas roundhouse and repair facilities. The Las Vegas Japanese worked as mechanics, boilermakers, painters, and in other skilled and semiskilled jobs. The presence of families connected to these workers in the twenties and thirties is another indication of advancement. Las Vegas's "Japanese Colony," located

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24 This riot, sparked off by a rail car accident and involving nearly 200 Japanese and Korean workers pitted against whites, is best covered in Phillip I. Earl, "Shots Fired In Caliente During 1906 Racial Conflict," NSJ, 10 April 1983. For more on Japanese railroad workers and farmers in southern Nevada see my undergraduate publication, Andrew Russell, "A Fortunate Few: Japanese Americans in Southern Nevada, 1905 to 1945," Nevada Historical Society Quarterly, 31; 1 (Spring 1988): 32-52. That article relied mainly on: Nanyu Tomiyasu, interview with the author, Las Vegas, Nevada, 22 March 1987; Nanyu Tomiyasu, interview with Mark French, Las Vegas, Nevada, 12 April 1977; Masako Yamashita Winsor, interview with the author, Overton, Nevada, 4 April 1987; Masako Winsor, "The Yamashita Family" and "The Ishimoto Family" in 100 Years on the Muddy, comp. Arabell Lee Hafner (Springville, UT: Art City Publishing Co., 1967), 241-245, and local newspaper articles. Clark County was not a focus of my graduate research project, but most of the new information gathered confirms the findings of my previous study. Therefore, I reserve primary-source citations for newly discovered sources or corrections, and I generally reference only my article when covering "old ground" about the Japanese in this region.

mainly within the railroad compound, may have numbered more than 150 men, women and children at its peak.26

The level of acceptance enjoyed by Issei workers in southern Nevada was remarkable, but other Nevada counties also saw Japanese railroad workers settle into an extended presence. Elko County claimed the largest concentration of these workers (approximately one third of the Nevada total) by the early 1920s.27 There is little evidence of opposition to Japanese workers in Elko County, judging by newspapers from the town of Elko. Curiously, Japanese figures for the railroads running out of Reno and Sparks dropped markedly, a matter that requires further investigation. It is quiet possible that "native" labor blocked the Japanese from gaining a strong foothold in the railroad industry in some parts of Nevada. Overall, however, railroad employment became one important niche for the Nevada Nikkei.

Others of those hoping to put down permanent roots in the deserts of Nevada turned to farming and business proprietorship—mainly laundry operations. It is no overstatement to say that the Issei pioneered the modern steam laundries of Nevada and contributed immensely to farming in most areas of the state. In these ventures, the Nevada "picture brides" and other Issei spouses that arrived in the teens and early twenties figured prominently. One man, ultimately of the laundry group, was railroad-hand-turned-businessman, Ejiro Matsui. Known by whites as Tom Matsui, Ejiro could trace his Nevada roots back almost to the turn of the century. He came to Elko to work for the Southern Pacific shortly after he immigrated to the United States in 1904. Around 1910 he quit the railroad and opened a pool hall in Elko.28 Pool halls served as important social

26 Russell, "A Fortunate Few."

27 Nevada, Appendix to Journal of Senate and Assembly, "Reports of the Commissioner of Labor, 1921," (Carson City: 1923).

28 Most of my information on Ejiro Matsui and the Matsui family comes from Judy Ishibashi, interview with the author, Las Vegas, Nevada, 4 October 1992. (Continued on next page)
havens for single Japanese workers, offering companionship, alcohol, and an atmosphere reminiscent of "the old country."

In 1912, Suyewo, an 18-year-old picture bride from Matsui’s home province of Kumamoto Ken, joined Ejiro in Elko. Suyewo was, reportedly, strong-willed. She did not want her children exposed to the pool hall business, so the "Elko Steam Laundry" was born soon after her first child. Three daughters and a son were eventually born to the couple in Elko. The family lived next door to the business, located on Silver Street, and all contributed to its operation while the children were growing up. The laundry did well through the twenties and thirties, often hiring Japanese workers who boarded with the family.29

Operating a business that catered primarily to a Euro-American clientele caused the language barrier and other forms of isolation to break down quickly in the laundry trade. Relations with, and attachments to, the larger community apparently transcended economics for the Matsui couple. Looking back, Ejiro and Suyewo felt they were treated like valued members of the pioneer community. Tom Matsui apparently had a sense of humor and periodically switched address numbers on the two buildings for his amusement; Suyewo earned a reputation as an expert fresh-water angler.30

Japanese laundries, like the Chinese laundries of the previous era, were soon accepted as a given in most Nevada towns. Elko, Lovelock, Winnemucca, Reno, Fallon, Pioche, Carson City—virtually all major towns of the state contained family-operated Japanese laundries in the early twentieth century. If a Japanese establishment was sold, another Japanese couple generally assumed ownership.

Judy is Ejiro’s granddaughter. She grew up in southern California and now lives in Reno. For description of Japanese pool halls see Ichioka, The Issei, 89.

29 Ishibashi, interview with the author, 4 October 1992.

30 Ibid.
Such was the case in Lovelock, Nevada. The Takenaka family sold a rooming house business in California in 1929 and moved to Carson City with their three small children. "Uncle Fukui" operated the Tokyo Laundry in Carson City in the 1920s. He asked his sister Tsuru and her husband Sennisuke Takenaka to come to Nevada and help with the business. Soon thereafter, the Takenaka couple purchased a laundry in Lovelock from a man named Nakamura, who had operated the business with his American-Indian wife. Tsuru, now in her late nineties, only recently retired from the "Up-to-Date Laundry" of Lovelock.

Issei agriculturists also figured prominently, and integrated relatively peacefully, in the thin history of successful farming in Nevada. The hostile deserts of southern Nevada again produced the most remarkable examples of racial tolerance and Japanese success in the farming sphere. But numerous Nevada counties benefited from the influx of Japanese farmers, which traditionally coincided with eruptions of the "California problem."

Such was the case when California passed its Alien Land Law of 1913, forcing the first group of Japanese farmers into Las Vegas. In 1914 the Las Vegas Age hailed the arrival of a "syndicate of Japanese capitalists" planning to acquire property and begin farming. It took several years (and, apparently, the arrival of wives) before Japanese farms became well established in Clark County. By the early 1920s, however, Japanese farmers were "leading the way" in developing local agriculture, to the continued delight of local newspapers and produce consumers on this desert frontier.

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31 Information on the Takenaka family and "Uncle Fukui" (whose first name could not be remembered) comes from Teruo (Ted) Takenaka, interview with the author, Lovelock, Nevada, 23 October 1992.

While many contributed to the rise, Yonema "Bill" Tomiyasu, his wife Toyono, and Bill's various business partners took the lead. The Tomiyasu family and its partners supplied as much as fifty percent of the produce consumed in Las Vegas in the 1920s and early 1930s. They also exported to Arizona and Utah and supplied fresh goods like asparagus and lettuce to the local railroad (by then the Union Pacific) for its Pullman dining cars. Bill Tomiyasu, as he was known, kept a meticulous farm diary and shared the findings of his experimental growth techniques with his neighbors, irrespective of color.

Southern Nevada's Moapa Valley benefited mainly from California's Second Alien Land Law of 1920. That law made the Yamashita and Ishimoto families quit California agriculture and move to the Mormon settlement of Overton, sixty miles east of Las Vegas. Although farming was well established there, these families likewise received a great deal of support and encouragement from the community, as they brought raw, alkaline land under production. Within a few years, local consumers were also enjoying the fruits of these ever-laboring families. Needless to say, southern Nevada did not join the movement to restrict Japanese farming in Nevada, which also emerged on the scene in 1920.

That movement, one of the worst anti-Japanese campaigns in the state's history, was centered in the northwest region of the state. Events occurring in the Churchill County town of Fallon sparked off the debate, but powerful forces in Reno (Washoe County) soon assumed the lead in a campaign which was to last several years. This pivotal conflict has been documented in "The Japanese in Churchill County," a 1956 report written by Fallon native Masa Kito Fujitani, and in a recent article by this author. More important than the

33 As I began graduate studies, my advisor provided me with a copy of Masa Kito, "The Japanese in Churchill County," a high-school study completed in 1956 (MS #399, Byrd Sawyer Collection, Nevada Historical Society, Reno), which paints a positive overall picture not unlike my article, "A Fortunate Few." After interviewing Masa, retracing some of her research, and contacting other past residents of Fallon, I wrote "Hearts of Gold and Hostile Times: Wartime Reactions to the 'Japanese Question' in Churchill County Nevada," In Focus: Annual Journal of the Churchill County Museum (1993-94): 57-86, much of which has been incorporated herein.
campaign itself is the story of how Japanese farmers managed to overcome the hostility that erupted near the California-Nevada border.

There are few signs of animosity against Japanese farmers anywhere in Nevada prior to 1920. People of the northwest region even seemed pleased when the Nevada Sugar Company built a sugar refinery near Fallon in 1911 and farmers began importing scores of Japanese contract laborers to plant and harvest the beets. According to Masa Kito's report, Fallon beet growers welcomed the Issei because they were willing "to do back-breaking work for low wages."

Dreams of sugar-wealth never fully crystallized in Fallon: pest infestation hampered beet-growing efforts and the plant soon closed. But independent Japanese agriculturists remained. By 1915 Sam Inamochi and Haruo Sasaki had each started a farm on leased acreage, and another Japanese had opened a profitable fruit stand in Fallon.34 Beets or no beets, Churchill County agriculture was destined to flourish when the Newlands Reclamation Project was completed in 1916. Creating Lahonton Reservoir near Fallon, this wonder of the Progressive Era helped double the value of Churchill farm property during the teens, and it increased the number of farm owners, managers, and tenants from 354 to 498.35

Japanese tenants were among them: the 1920 Census Manuscripts captured Sam Inamochi still farming with one employee and Minoru Endow also farming rented acreage with the help of Kataoka Shikanosuke, Keichi Hada, and Gen Nishiyama. Endow had come to the region around 1911 as an interpreter for the Japanese labor gangs. Sasaki was working as a hired man on George Leidy's farm by then because he lost his first farm to

34 Kito, "The Japanese," 5-6. See also Iwata, Planted in Good Soil, 624.

eel-worm infestation.36

At twenty-three total residents, the Japanese of Fallon were not numerically significant. That year, however, two developments converged and threatened to shatter their modest but noteworthy inroads into local agriculture. First, Fallonites suddenly took notice of the passage of California’s Second Alien Land Law, which put further restrictions on Japanese land ownership and leasing rights. Fears that it might cause a large influx of California Japanese were compounded when two Californians, Juichi Kito and his partner Kensuke Ito, bought an eighty-acre Fallon ranch—for $17,500 in cash.37 This became the first Japanese-owned farm in Fallon; the coinciding events ignited racial hostility.

Little did the newcomers realize it, but Fallon greeted Ito and Kito with hostility the moment they stepped off the train in Fallon. The Japanese farmers supposed that the crowd at the depot had gathered for a dignitary that would depart after them. Their friend Endow informed them later that the reception and the signs were meant for them.38 The Churchill County Chamber of Commerce then erected permanent notices at the railroad depot warning: "Japs Not Wanted Here." Editorialists called for an alien land law for Nevada, arguing that whites could not compete with Japanese labor and that their presence would reduce land values. Some residents petitioned the local Chamber of Commerce to push for federal Japanese exclusion.

In a mass meeting in early 1921, certain elements of the community agreed that all Japanese coming into Fallon would be met personally at the train station and turned back. The group decided to tell present Japanese residents to settle their affairs and leave; should

36 National Archives, Census Manuscripts, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920 Nevada. Vol. 1—with help from Masa Fujitani on "decoding" the spellings of Japanese names. A letter from Tomomi Ito to the author (hereafter "Letter from Ito") for Endow’s experiences; and, Kito, “The Japanese” for the failure of Sasaki’s first farm.


38 "Letter from Ito."
that not be effective, a boycott of all Japanese goods and industries would begin.\textsuperscript{39}

Nearby Lovelock debated the "Japanese question" as well, and the State Bar Association (based in Reno) assumed the responsibility of determining how alien land ownership rights could be revoked. Senators and assemblymen from Washoe County soon took the lead in the campaign to restrict Japanese farmers.\textsuperscript{40}

Meanwhile, a counter-movement had already surfaced in Churchill County. In mid-March, 1921, the community met at the Fallon Town Hall, mainly to hear landowners voice opposition to the boycott and to protest the activities of the Anti-Japanese Association. These supporters agreed that "Jap" farm owners were an unwelcome addition to the community. They argued, however, that Japanese stoop labor was essential if Fallonites were to compete with California growers.\textsuperscript{41}

Ira H. Kent, a local produce shipper and the owner of the largest market, reportedly led the counter assault. Opposition to the Japanese subsided thereafter. In 1921 large land owners began leasing small farms to Japanese sugar-beet growers, still hoping for growth in that industry. Other Japanese farmers came into the community during the twenties and thirties. It seems, however, that a \textit{de facto} policy was instituted whereby Japanese newcomers could not buy land, but could only lease farms under a "ninety-nine-year lease plan."\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{39} Kito, "The Japanese," 13, which draws mainly from the \textit{Churchill County Eagle}, 5 March 1921.

\textsuperscript{40} See Lovelock Review-Miner, 6 February 1920; 20, 27 August 1920; 3 September 1920; 21 January 1921; 11 March 1921; 5 May 1921. (These citations provided by Philip I. Earl of the Nevada Historical Society.) For Washoe County taking the lead in the anti-Japanese campaign see Reno Evening Gazette, 4 December 1920.


\textsuperscript{42} "Letter from Ito" and Kito, "The Japanese."
Juichi Kito and Kensuke Ito, soon joined by their wives Su and Shika, stood their ground. In 1922 the couples began raising Hearts of Gold cantaloupes. Over the years, the Kito-Ito farm produced assorted garden vegetables and livestock, but the cantaloupes became a main cash crop. The fruit soon developed into a golden crop for many Fallonites. Three years later, four other Japanese couples raised 100 acres worth and shipped them under contract to the Weaver Company in Chicago. Masa Kito remembered her family’s Hearts of Gold being shipped as far as Paris Island, South Carolina. These Japanese families came to be admired and respected by the Kents, particularly Ira L. Kent who gradually assumed control of the business from his father. The Kitos and Itos were not the first to raise Hearts of Gold locally, but they were great popularizers of the fruit that bore the Kent-Fallon logo.

Issei agriculturists, laundry operators, and railroad employees made significant contributions to Nevada’s growth in the early twentieth century. In many cases, they had to overcome great hardships—prejudice and discrimination among them—before their contributions came to be appreciated. Nonetheless, Japanese immigrants, particularly couples, built a niche in most Nevada communities in the twenties and thirties.

That niche was not based on strong subculture per se. If there were any Buddhist- or Christian-Japanese churches, local extensions of the Japanese Association, or actual Japanese language schools in Nevada during the early twentieth century, they have not yet been uncovered. In Nevada strong family ties and a dedication to hard work and sacrifice became the dominant "traits" of Japanese neighbors in the public mind. Levels of acculturation for the Nevada Issei are difficult to gauge, but they probably were higher than normal. Their struggles and gains paved the way for an extremely assimilated second generation, the Nevada Nisei.

The Nisei of Nevada

The number of Nisei in Nevada had barely surpassed the number of Issei by the outbreak of the Second World War. Nevertheless, this small group had already registered some remarkable accomplishments of their own, propelled by their parents and unusual Nevada conditions. Particularly for their parents, the near-total absence of the institutions of Japanese-American subculture created a certain void in the lives of the Nevada Nikkei. But it also created the opportunity—and the need—for greater participation in the mainstream society. While impressionistic, rather than quantitative, this brief section highlights a part of their accomplishments in an effort to demonstrate something about the processes of assimilation in this stretch of the interior West.

Masa Kito's history of the Japanese in Churchill County provides one excellent source of information about "Americanization" and assimilation in Nevada. Beginning with her descriptions of her siblings, strains of dual cultural influences show through. The Kito's first child, Meiko, was born in May 1922, according to Masa, and re-named May when she got to elementary school. Their second daughter they called Meriko, or Mary, because the name was easily understood and pronounced in Japanese or English. Next came Jun (or Junior) "the athlete" of the family, followed by Haru ("Spring") the "happy-go-lucky" daughter. Emi, "the brains of the Kito clan" was born next, followed by Aya, "the beauty," and Noboru, "the farmer." Last came Masa, "the tail end" [and chief historian] of the family. Their roommates, the Ito children, included a son, Tomomi, and four daughters, Yoshiko, Shizu, Takako, and Tomio.44

The small farm house they shared had only three bedrooms. Juichi Kito, a trained carpenter, lined the walls of these rooms with bunk beds. The two families lived in tight quarters, but according to Masakatsu Kito (an uncle who also lived there for a time during

44Ibid., 16-20.

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the thirties) "no one complained." The eldest of the three Kito boys and nine girls began elementary school with no working knowledge of English.

Without question, these "hearts of gold" were far more important to the Japanese farmers than any cantaloupe crops they raised. The Kito and Ito parents, like most Issei, considered education the prime nutrient in child development. Masa wrote that they were "gravely determined" that each child obtain as much education as possible. Part of their strategy was to have their daughters live with (and work for) Euro-American families in the Fallon area, following in the Japanese "school boy" tradition. Besides providing some relief for the crowded conditions at home, the alternate environment ensured that the "school girls," or au pairs, received intense exposure to American ways and customs, particularly the constant use of English.

May and Haru Kito spent much of their high school years living with the Bass family of Fallon. They performed household chores and helped cook for a large crew of farm hands. The Ito daughters, born in the mid twenties, worked similar jobs, and even the later-born remembered summer employment with nearby families, "washing dishes and cleaning house for fifty cents a month." Through these experiences, daughters learned many domestic "tricks of the trade" and taught their mother how to make delicious American-style breads and cakes. But the parents gained a larger reward from the constant emphasis on education and from stressing the need to find an "American" calling. Each

45 This and most of the following information was gathered from recent telephone conversations between the author and Kito and Ito family members, including Masakatsu Kito, Haru Kito Koto, Mary M. Kito Arita, Masa Kito Fujitani and Tomomi Ito. Part of the composite picture is drawn from Kito, "The Japanese," and some is from information sheets gathered at a recent Kito-Ito family reunion (copies at the Churchill County Museum, Fallon). Names used in the text generally reveal the sources and footnotes are used sparingly in this segment.

46 For more on the school boys and the first ripple of Japanese immigration, see Ichioka, The Issei. Most of the Kito daughters instead chose the French term "au pair" to describe their stints as domestic servants.
child graduated from high school and went on to pursue advanced education and training, which did not include studies in Japan. 47

The school system and these other American influences certainly molded the Kito and Ito children to a great extent. Nevertheless, Japanese values and customs were also a part of their upbringing, as was weekend "Japanese language school" taught by their mothers during the slow winter months. The family remained the focal point of their lives, and their recent recollections of growing up in Fallon emphasize experience on the family farm.

These recollections, gathered at a family reunion, do not contain much about classmates or friends outside the family or the Japanese community. Questioned about this, the Kito and Ito families have said that their school friends were Euro-Americans, but that holidays, picnics, and other social activities generally included only family and Japanese friends in the pre-war years. Nevertheless, like many Nevada-born Japanese, they quickly add that they "didn't know what prejudice was" until they left Nevada as adults, or, until the war came.

The fact that many Nevada Nisei left the state when they came of age may point to one stark social barrier—the one against interracial courtship and marriage. This barrier, erected by culture on both sides, showed few signs of deterioration, even in the 1930s. Some parents encouraged their children to move to California or elsewhere when they finished high school. Education and career advancement motivated the move. For example, Tomomi Ito left to attend the University of California at Berkeley in 1938; Nanyu Tomiyasu of Las Vegas was graduating from Berkeley in that year and all of his siblings also attended California colleges. But concern about finding a mate, on the parts of parents and offspring alike may have also contributed to this trend.

47 Most of the Nevada Kibei identified had reportedly been sent to Japan to care for aging relatives or for reasons unrelated to educational goals. The Nevada-born Kibei probably totaled no more than twenty by 1940.
In rough terms, the Nisei of Fallon were much like those elsewhere in Nevada. They enjoyed acceptance among their peers and open participation at school. Tomomi was in high school band and made All-State playing for the basketball team. He was taught, however, to make as few waves as possible in the larger community. He did not, for example, attend school dances. His parents encouraged youth participation in most activities. Still, the Ito and Kito parents (who had witnessed the worst of discrimination in California and Nevada) sensed certain boundaries in Fallon, even for their Americanized children.48

Real or imagined barriers apparently were less pronounced beyond the northwest portion of the state, except where it came to dating. The Takenaka family of Lovelock, the only Japanese in Pershing County after 1930,49 has reported no anti-Japanese attitudes in that community. Ted Takenaka stated that he was a "shy kid" but described a normal childhood. His brother, Hieeo, was more outgoing and participated in team sports. Their sister, Chizuko, was active in student affairs and competitive in academics. All of the children were baptized attendees of the local Episcopal Church. This isolated family also spoke Japanese in the home early on, but efforts to preserve Japanese among the children failed, as Ted remembers with regret.50

The Matsui children of Elko also enjoyed acceptance and equal participation in the normal activities of childhood. They did well in school, and the son, Yeiki Matsui, held the offices of Junior Class and Senior Class President. They participated in school associations, the 4-H Club, and various church groups, where their (white) minister encouraged them to pursue college. In a unified family effort, three of the children attended

48 I am grateful to Tomomi Ito for discussing frankly his parents's attitudes and concerns about interracial dating. At least while he was growing up, school dances were viewed as an unwise form of interaction.

49 Sixteenth Census, 1940 Population. II: 753.

the University of Southern California. The Nisei of southern Nevada likewise integrated and assimilated during the twenties and thirties.

Some generalities emerge from these few examples, and they seem to differ from the far-western norm. Other studies have revealed, certainly, the Nisei penchant for moving to the top of their class, of winning elections in schools where they represented a large student block, and of many Japanese Americans embracing Protestant religions. But the literature rarely if ever mention Japanese student officers in schools where they were few in number. Nor is there much mention of Japanese participation in non-ethnic Christian churches. While these developments were probably not unique to Nevada, they represent yet another important contrast between Nevada and California.

Much more could be said about these interstate contrasts and about Issei and Nisei success on the Nevada frontier. Since Fredrick Jackson Turner's day, the seminal "Frontier Thesis" has been attacked from many angles. Nonetheless, some of our best modern historians have continued to find truth in the notion that struggling western outposts, like the ones we have visited in twentieth-century Nevada, were more democratic, at least in spirit. The Nevada Nikkei and their "white" neighbors were were not living and thinking quite like their California counterparts by 1940. For a time, however, these discussions will leave historic California-Nevada contrasts and connections behind, and they will turn to an extreme local variation in the Nevada Nikkei experience.

51 Ishibashi, interview with the author, 4 October 1992, and Kimiko Ishibashi, "Growing Up in Elko, Nevada," p. 6, TMs for 7th-grade social studies class, 1989, [copy], in author's possession. Kimiko is Judy Ishibashi's daughter, and she interviewed her mother, her grandmother Akiko Matsui Abe, and her great-uncle Yeiki Matsui for this excellent report.

52 See Russell, "A Fortunate Few."

CHAPTER TWO

THE JAPANESE AND THE COMPANY TOWNS

In many respects, the history of the Japanese in White Pine County contrasts sharply with the profile already introduced. The fact that White Pine contained nearly 200 Japanese Americans by 1940, or well over one-third of the Nevada Nikkei population, is but one reason to view this region separately. A more important one is that virtually all Japanese persons interned from wartime Nevada came out of this county. More specifically, Nevada's mass internment and forced "evacuation" originated in the copper mining and smelting towns of Ruth and McGill, towns operated by the Nevada Consolidated Copper Corporation.¹ These dramatic events began with the rapid arrests of labor agents Eiichi (Roy) Muranaka and Shizutaro (Fred) Toyota. The incarceration and removal of sixty-six Issei employees quickly followed, and within six months nearly all Japanese Americans were "excluded" from Ruth and McGill.²

¹ This chapter and part of the following one draw from my article, "Japanese Casualties of the Company Towns: Nevada's Peculiar Case of Mass Internment and Forced 'Evacuation,'" Selected Papers in Asian Studies, New Series (publication of the Western Conference of the Association for Asian Studies), Paper No. 51, 1994. Nevada Consolidated (or NCCC) was once a part of Guggenheim Exploration, which became the Kennecott Copper Corporation in the 1930s. Then NCCC officially became known as the Western Mines Division of Kennecott. It was still known locally as Nevada Consolidated through the war, however, and operated much as it always had (local managers controlled daily operations, but major decisions were made by corporate superiors). To minimize confusion, NCCC is used exclusively herein.

² The removal of Japanese workers was recorded by the local and regional press and is mentioned in several histories of the area. As clarified in the following chapter, this peculiar case of "evacuation" had no connection to the better known evacuation of the West Coast exclusion zones.
Popular histories of White Pine County make only passing references to the internment and they avoid the protracted forced exodus altogether. These sources reflect local legend, which has it that federal authorities removed the Japanese to safeguard the area's "strategic" copper industry. Nevada historian Russell Elliott knew otherwise. Elliott grew up in the region and was in McGill during the early part of the war. In his best account, he suggests that suspicions and animosity within the company towns drove the mass internment. His *History of Nevada* offers that: "Most of the immediate reaction in the copper district apparently was due to fear of sabotage based on the fact that most of the Japanese there were aliens." It adds that decades of company-imposed segregation and long-standing "antagonism" on the part of "white workers" fueled the disaster.

Russell Elliott was correct in pointing to the primacy of local influences, but his various accounts overlook a great deal. Personally acquainted with numerous figures involved, and privileged to company records, McGill's home-town historian offered no testimony or evidence to support his views. His three known accounts are practically devoid of names and characters, and Elliott's most recent book, *Growing Up in a Company Town*, adds little of value about the McGill Japanese. The latter does contain, however, some misinformation about Shizutaro Toyota's family that probably grew out of the McGill myth-mill. Elliott is one of Nevada's most accomplished historians, and the

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5 Fantastic legends have grown out of these events, the cruelest being the one claiming that Shizutaro Toyota's son, Taro (Fred Jr.), turned his father in as a spy. Elliott seemingly accepted the myth, writing: "Fred Toyota, Jr. [was] forced to choose between loyalty to his father and his nation, maintaining loyalty to the latter." He adds that the young man worked for the FBI, served in the armed forces, and only visited McGill occasionally during the war—see Russell Elliott, *Growing Up In a Company Town: A Family in the Copper Camp of McGill* (Reno: Nevada Historical Society, 1990). Actually, Fred Jr. (Continued on next page)
purpose here is not to highlight how he was duped. It is to call attention to the fact that this peculiar chapter demands considerably more attention.6

Revision must begin with the prewar history of the Japanese in White Pine County, which was unique in Nevada terms and probably in terms of broader Japanese American history as well. This chapter might have been entitled "The Ely Anomaly," which has a catchy and dismissive ring to it. But the history of the Japanese in Ely, the county seat located between Ruth and McGill, fits better into the typical Nevada patterns described in the previous chapter. Anomalous developments were confined mainly to the company towns, which receive most of the attention in this chapter.

Despite the dangers of contributing to the historic segregation of these two groups, the peculiarities surrounding Japanese history in the company towns cannot be ignored. As described by a key player in this drama, Fred Toyota's wife Kame, "This case is very funny and there is no other like it."7 Kame was referring in part to the mass internment and wartime happenings. But she also recognized that this strange case involved "27 years" of history and a "camouflage" that had long clouded race relations in the company towns.

continued working for Nevada Consolidated and remained in McGill with his mother and one sister, until the family secured the release of his father in 1944 and they all moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, as more accurately explained in Jack Fleming, Copper Times: An Animated Chronicle of White Pine County, Nevada (Seattle: Jack Fleming's Publications, 1987), 136-138. The spy-buster myth was vehemently denied and damned by every Japanese-American source cited below. Elliott's earliest account of the internment can be found in Russell Elliott, "History of Nevada Mines Division, Kennecott Copper Corporation." TM's written under a commission from Kennecott ca. 1956, [copy] Nevada Historical Society, Reno. Calling the internment an "unfortunate meeting of people and events," this account renders all blameless. Still, therein Elliott more rightly observed that Fred "offered his services" to the U. S. Army and the FBI (as explained below). Taro, however, was never selected into the ranks of either.

6 Invaluable for correcting local myth is "The Toyota Family Papers" housed in the Japanese American Research Project, Collection 2010, Department of Special Collections, University Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles (cited hereafter as "Toyota Papers," followed by box and file numbers), particularly the wartime letters of Kame Toyota (Mrs. Fred Toyota).

7 Ibid., Kame Toyota to unidentified official (probably U. S. Attorney for Nevada Thomas O. Craven), 26 January 1944, box 145, file 8.
Japanese Immigrants to White Pine County

Japanese immigrants had certainly entered this region of Nevada earlier, but the first large influx of Japanese into White Pine County occurred in 1906. This inflow coincided with Nevada's twentieth-century mining boom and the introduction of methods to process the low-grade (porphyry) copper deposits of the area. Around this time, investment capital was secured through a partnership between the infant Nevada Consolidated Copper Company (NCCC) and the wealthy Guggenheim family of New York. With that union, Nevada's Steptoe Valley stood poised to become one of the great copper-producing regions of the West.®

The infant copper company put engineers and laborers to work designing and building the mine site at Ruth and milling facilities on the old McGill Ranch, about fifteen miles northeast of Ruth. It also began constructing a railroad in 1906 with backing from its eastern partners. The Nevada Northern would span 140 miles and connect the copper district to the Southern Pacific railroad-town of Cobre in Elko County. The Utah Construction Company of Salt Lake City built the Nevada Northern with the help of a sixty-four-man Japanese section gang.9

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8 For the best account of Nevada Consolidated's early development see Russell Elliott, Nevada's Twentieth-Century Mining Boom: Tonopah, Goldfield, Ely (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1966; repr., 1988).

9 Ibid. The 1906 arrival of the Japanese was determined by examining NCCC company records housed at the East Ely Railroad Depot Museum, with the aid of Curator Sean Pitts. The number of Japanese employees fell to fifty-two in October and to thirty-three by June 1907, as noted in Nevada Northern Railroad, Payroll Ledger Books, 1906-1907. This source is cited as "NNRR Payroll" hereafter. Other resources at the Museum, used extensively herein, are also abbreviated as: Nevada Consolidated Copper Corporation, McGill Plant, Payroll Ledger Books, "McGill Payroll," and Ruth, Payroll Ledger Books (soon to be transferred to East Ely from the Nevada State Historical Society, Reno) as "Ruth Payroll." The author also draws from a collection of service records for Ruth's Japanese employees of the late teens and early twenties, which he calls "Ruth Service Records" (copies in his temporary possession, thanks to Sue Fawn Chung).
Workers completed the link from Cobre to Ely one month after the Japanese contingent arrived. Nevertheless, scores of Japanese remained in the area thereafter, completing tracks between the mining and milling facilities at Ruth and McGill. Among other contributions, they helped construct McGill's amazing hi-line trestle, which spanned 1,720 feet and carried Ruth ore cars to the mouth of the McGill reduction works.

As was common, these Japanese workers were exploited. Labor contractors based out of state typically collected a monthly fee from each man through the local crew foremen, and the foremen often took "translation fees" to handle dealings between the Japanese crews and white supervisors. Foremen also took cuts from their men's pay for sending remittances to relatives in Japan.10

Companies like the Nevada Northern also took a share of Japanese earnings, often paying them a lower wage than other immigrant and non-immigrant workers. When the company hired the Issei to work on permanent section maintenance crews, the latter probably severed their ties with the major contractor. Nonetheless, pay disparities between the Japanese and other immigrant laborers continued until 1908, and the company also denied hospital privileges to the Japanese during this early period.11

The 1910 Census reflects a substantial decline in the Japanese work force of White

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11 By 1907 the Japanese worked in smaller section gangs dispersed throughout the region. They usually worked under a Japanese foreman but sometimes worked in ethnically mixed crews. On average, Japanese laborers earned $1.75 per day in August 1906, but that increased to $1.85 by September. Greek and Italian laborers earned $2.00 to $2.25 per day and paid $1.00 per month into the hospital fund--see, NNRR Payroll, 1906-1908.
Pine after railroad construction ended. The smaller maintenance crews that remained came to be stationed at McGill Junction (about mid-way between Ely and McGill), Decoy, Duck Creek, Goshute, Cherry Creek, and Cobre over the ensuing decades.

Japanese labor arrived in the company towns of Ruth and McGill under different circumstances, also extending back to 1906. That year the Guggenheim family and their corporate extension, Guggenheim Exploration, wrested control of Nevada Consolidated properties from the locals who had staked the original mining claims. The new owners may have brought in the first Japanese crews that helped finish the Northern. In any event, the Guggenheims also owned the Bingham Canyon copper mine near Salt Lake City, and their Utah Copper Company quickly came to oversee the Nevada properties. This strange union between a collection of Nevada mining settlements, developers in Utah, and corporate owners in the East would color local Japanese history in the years to come.

Daniel C. Jackling introduced open-cut mining, or pit mining, to the region and soon became Managing Director of both Utah Copper and Nevada Consolidated. Definitely by 1910, Jackling had come to favor Japanese labor and contracted with Daigoro Hashimoto of Salt Lake for over 200 Japanese and Korean laborers to help construct the Bingham-Garfield Railroad. When this project was completed, Utah Copper hired most of the Asian crew on at the Bingham Canyon mine, where they worked under independent

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13 Although they performed similar duties and worked for the same parent company, the railroad gangs of the Nevada Northern lived outside the company towns and figure little into the rest of these discussions.

14 For some of the changes brought to the district by this union, see: Harvey O'Connor, *The Guggenheims: The Making of an American Dynasty* (New York: Covici Friede, 1937), 276-80, and Elliott, *Nevada's Mining Boom*, 182-190. Although other copper companies were active in the region throughout this period, NCCC clearly dominated the economy and social fabric of the county. The other concerns did not employ Japanese labor, apparently, so they are not a concern of this study.
labor bosses. Many worked as powder men, performing the dangerous but well-paid work of setting off charges in the copper pit. According to one biographer, other western mine operators viewed Jackling’s Japanese labor force as a radical "innovation"—a way to "short-circuit labor trouble by avoiding troublesome native Americans as much as possible..." The Japanese were strong and industrious, fed themselves on rice and a shred of meat and understood discipline and loyalty. 

Native workers and union organizers viewed the "innovation" as a threat. But when a strike erupted at Bingham Canyon in 1912, Japanese labor was not an issue of major contention. Poor living conditions and a corrupt Greek labor boss had fomented discontent among the Bingham crews, and, in time, the Japanese joined the Greek-led battle against Utah Copper.

Indirectly, the Bingham strike of 1912 precipitated the second influx of Japanese into White Pine County when it spread to the Guggenheim properties there. The Ely Central Labor League (dominated by conservative craft unions of the American Federation of Labor, or AFL) stood in opposition to striking. According to Elliott, no major conflicts existed between employees and Nevada Consolidated at the time. Nevertheless, the strike spread to McGill and Ruth on October 2 at the urging of union radicals. Violence resulted: two McGill Greeks were shot and killed by company guards and Nevada’s governor

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17 For an account of the strike and fairly harmonious ethnic relations at Bingham, see Helen Z. Papanikolas, "Life and Labor Among the Immigrants of Bingham Canyon," Utah Historical Quarterly 33 (1965), 292, and Kasai, "Japanese Life in Utah," 341. Contrary to the rhetoric of labor leaders, the Issei took an interest in labor’s struggle and sometimes sought entry into the unions, which was almost universally denied. For an exception, see Yuji Ichioka, "Asian Immigrant Coal Miners and the United Mine Workers in America: Race and Class at Rock Springs, Wyoming, 1907," Amerasia Journal 6 (Fall 1979).

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intervened with state troops. Compared to Bingham, however, the White Pine strike was mild, and it ended within the month.\(^\text{18}\)

The second wave of Japanese immigrants to the county arrived in the wake of the strike, mainly to fill the shoes of fast-exiting Greeks. Greek immigrants comprised a sizable percent of the unskilled labor force and helped lead the McGill rebellion (although other Greek Americans opposed it). The settlement agreed upon by labor and management stipulated that strikers would be reinstated in their old positions, but the company was selective in rehiring. Combined with a large, unrelated exodus of Greeks (many were returning to Europe in haste to fight in the war between Greece and Turkey), the strike had created openings at the mines and milling facilities. A group of over one hundred Japanese arrived in December 1912 to help fill the void.\(^\text{19}\)

Daniel Jackling appointed Shizutaro "Fred S." Toyota to lead this massive Japanese influx. Born March 18, 1885, Toyota was a native of Urasaki, Hiroshima Prefecture, and had studied English in high school before emigrating to the United States in 1905. He had worked on the Nevada Northern and other lines, often serving as an interpreter, and in 1910 he became a permanent bookman for the Bingham Garfield Railroad. Two years


\(^{19}\) Ibid. Elliott addresses some of the developments in the wake of the strike but fails to mention the entry of the Japanese. For some reason, Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 311, has the Japanese first entering White Pine in 1908. There may have been another "Japanese influx." In a notebook of the late Wilbur Shepperson there is confidential information from "Russ" Elliott that the company paid train fares of $16.60 each to bring 75 Japanese to McGill from Bingham, Utah in May 1907. Only about 30 made it to McGill, and they turned out to be Korean. Apparently, they were quickly replaced by Greeks and Austrians, and they do not appear in the 1910 Census Manuscripts—see the uncataloged Papers of Wilbur Shepperson, "Nevada Immigrants Notebook, G," Nevada Historical Society, Reno. The existence of selective re-hiring practices and the exodus of Greeks was gathered from newspaper stories in the Ely Daily Mining Expositor (hereafter, EDME) and the White Pine News (Ely and hereafter WPN), which appeared in December. News of the "Labor Scarcity in Ely," due to the Greek exodus, reached as far as the Nevada State Journal, 6 January 1913—also found in the notes of Wilbur Shepperson. Strangely, the local newspapers also overlook the entry of the Japanese, by my search of them through January 1913. Just over 100 Japanese suddenly appear on the Ruth and McGill Payrolls for January.
later, Toyota was "put in charge of the Japanese labor camp[s] at Ruth and McGill under the supervision of D. C. Jackling . . . ."20 In 1914 the company reassigned him strictly to McGill, where he remained as Japanese labor agent for the next twenty-seven years.

Eiichi "Roy" Muranaka soon assumed the role of labor agent, or "Japanese boss," in Ruth. We still know little about Muranaka's background, but the Japanese section of the 1920 Census Manuscripts (which he narrated at the company chow hall) indicates that he was born around 1888, that he immigrated in 1910, and that he was literate in Japanese and spoke English. Most of the Japanese first-comers to Ruth were powder men, no doubt helping to combine two smaller mines into the massive Liberty Pit open-cut mine. But the Ruth powder men were not paid more than common laborers, in contrast to their Utah counterparts. When the major excavation was completed, most Japanese became track laborers, who performed the also dangerous but more grueling task of building and clearing steam shovel tracks within the pit. McGill's Japanese workers also found their niche at the bottom, mainly as track workers but also as general laborers in the mill and smelter.21

The company towns of McGill and Ruth evolved differently from the rowdy camp at Bingham Canyon and most industrial towns of Nevada. The NCCC towns were developed in accordance with the philosophy and practices of paternalism and welfare capitalism. Dan Guggenheim, who oversaw the parent corporation when Ruth and McGill were built, viewed the captains of industry as the modern industrial counterparts of the

20 Prewar biographical sketch of "Fred S. Toyota," Toyota Papers, Box 145, File 2. This source states that 250 Japanese arrived in December of 1912.

21 Ruth Payrolls, January 1913, list almost all Japanese as "powderman," and the Liberty Pit Mine was created about this time. Combined sources indicate that perpetual track work, which included repairs, re-routing, and adjustments of rails to fit the changing seasons, became the main occupation of the group, while National Archives, Census Manuscripts, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Nevada, Vol. 2, lists virtually all Japanese workers in Ruth and McGill as track men or laborers, living at "Japanese quarters."
"medieval barons, surrounded by faithful, well-fed and happy [industrial] yoemanry." Guggenheim heartily embraced Welfarism, while state and federal leaders also lent support to this strategy for combating labor unrest in heavy industry. Actively, and with some success over the years, managers of NCCC tried to forge a stable, tractable, and more productive labor force through town grooming.

Corporate managers came to provide many benefits to workers and their families. They included: well-constructed and affordable housing; recreation facilities; provisions and coal at reduced prices; and free electricity, water, and sanitation services. County residents as a whole profited from good hospital care, provided by Nevada Consolidated at a nominal fee, and reduced taxes, since NCCC assisted in constructing and maintaining schools and police and fire protection.

These benefits, however, required a trade-off. A lower than average wage scale was part of the company's bargaining offer. Furthermore, the best interests of White-Piners were not uppermost in the minds of corporate officials—local, regional, or national. Nevada Consolidated's influence on county and state politics remains unexplored. The company's control over Ruth and McGill, on the other hand, was nearly absolute according to Elliott and others. Among other disadvantages, company-towners were denied basic political representation. And, although NCCC did not own or manage most local businesses, it held lease on Ruth and most of McGill and tinkered with their general economies. It had almost unrestricted control of the livelihoods of its resident population.


and unnatural control over people's life-styles. The company apparently decided where people lived and worked on criteria of race, ethnicity, and "class."  

The town of McGill had already taken shape on the lower alluvium of the Duck Creek Mountains when the Japanese newcomers arrived. Five fine homes, known as "The Circle" and occupied by top management, sat about half a mile southwest of the great smelter. Just south of the Circle was the Upper Townsite (later known as Middle Town), a collection of comfortable but similar-looking homes occupied by skilled workers and their families. 

Below and to the west of the Upper Townsite stood the boardinghouses, bunkhouses and smaller homes of the unskilled workers, an area known as the Lower Townsite. That part of town was divided between "whites"--native Americans and Northern-European immigrants--and "foreigners," immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. The company further divided the "foreign" section (mostly shy of amenities like indoor plumbing and family dwellings) into "Greek Town" and enclaves of other immigrant groups, in the tradition of East Coast cities.  


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24 Elliott, *Nevada's Mining Boom*, 218-229. Elliott reports that most residents willingly accepted the trade-off, and he paints a fairly positive picture of McGill. For a far more critical view of company policies and their effects on class struggle see David M. Anderson, ""Such Contented Workers": Mine-Mill Organizers in the Ely, Nevada Copper District, 1920-1943" (M.A. thesis, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1994).  

"Jap Town" (as whites called it) sat on something less than prime real-estate. To the east stood the smelter; to the west lay the noxious slag deposits that accumulated below the townsite. Next to it ran the channel that carried the chemical laden waste material from the smelter in a thick, muddy current, which Japanese workers crossed by way of a bridge. Segregation in housing and employment at McGill was strict before World War II. Southern and Eastern Europeans rarely moved from the category of unskilled to skilled worker or from their ethnic enclaves to the better homes of Middle Town. No Japanese were able to advance up or out.

Less is known about early Ruth, but haphazard settlement soon gave way to orderly development. The 500 men working there in 1910 considered the mining camp "a pleasant place to live." According to another source, the first NCCC mine superintendent lived on Vanderhoef Hill and exercised austere control over Ruth. E. E. Vanderhoef permitted no saloons early on and "hired no man with cigarette stains on his hands." When F. E. Grant replaced Vanderhoef as Superintendent in 1918, moderation became the rule. The company built some saloons and pool halls and even allowed a few prostitutes to operate behind a fenced compound close to the finer homes on the hill (by then known as Grant Hill).

The Japanese lived at Copper Flat, an extension of Ruth located near the Liberty Pit Mine. Although White Pine author Effie Read describes Copper Flat as a "melting pot" (home to Japanese, Greeks, and American-born whites), living quarters and work crews

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26 The smelting deposits would dry in the flats and winds would blow a fine, irritating dust back across McGill, as described in most histories of McGill.

27 Elliott, *Nevada's Mining Boom*, 230-231, supported by my own reviews of NCCC payroll records.

28 First quote is from Stanley W. Paher, *Nevada Ghost Towns and Mining Camps* (San Diego: Howell-North Books, 1980), 233; the second is from Read, *Lang Syne*, 34. Read inaccurately states that the Japanese were first brought in under Grant. Also see Elliott, "The NCCC," 188.
were separated by ethnicity. Read added that Copper Flat contained "Japanese bunk houses, a bath house, a noodle parlor, and a Greek pool hall as well. The Japanese had a few gardens and grew their favorite kinds of vegetables plus a few trees."\(^29\)

Local writers have provided some worthwhile information, but their descriptions of the "Jap towns" are vague and riddled with mistaken notions. The following section tries to penetrate more deeply into the internal and external social forces affecting the Japanese and race relationships in Ruth and McGill in the pre-war years.

**Social Signposts Pointing Toward Disaster**

During the thirty-year existence of these Japanese towns, very little about their physical make-up or their residents' economic and social standing changed. A categorical (rather than chronological) approach to analyzing the group and its relationships to the larger community is therefore used in the following discussions. Exploring three broadly defined categories (demographic factors, economic factors, and cultural factors) this section identifies and assesses cumulative problems that put the Ruth and McGill Japanese at a great disadvantage by the outbreak of the war.\(^30\)

Demographics frequently play an important part in immigrant experiences. In the case of the Japanese of Ruth and McGill, the size, nationality, gender, and age structure of


\(^{30}\) This analysis profited from several oral interviews, including: Sam Hase, interview with the author, Ely, Nevada, 18 October 1993; Nobuo Nakashima, interview with the author, East Ely, Nevada, 21 October 1993; Norman Linnell, interview with the author, McGill, Nevada, 19 October 1993; Elsa Culbert, interview with the author, McGill, Nevada, 19 October 1993, and Hideo (Heed) Iwamoto, interview with the author, Salt Lake City, Utah, 9 February 1995. Hase and Nakashima were born in White Pine County in 1919 and 1931 respectively. Linnell is slightly younger than Sam Hase. He is of Scandinavian descent and has lived in McGill most of his life. Culbert moved to Ely in 1938, when her husband became assistant pharmacist at Steptoe Drugs; later they operated a pharmacy in McGill. Iwamoto came to work at McGill in 1939 or 1940 and eventually married one of the Toyota daughters, Kimiko. In combination, these people were able to provide useful insights about the Japanese towns (although they do not necessarily agree with my analysis).
the population undoubtedly influenced wartime outcomes. Statistics alone—"the numbers game"—will not tell the whole story. But a demographic profile will provide insights and a foundation for discussion of other key factors.

In combination with 1920 Census Manuscripts for Ruth and McGill, a collection of service records for Ruth employees offers some valuable information on the Japanese immigrants who entered the company towns. The following profile is based on a sample of fifty Japanese employees of Ruth, hired between 1918 and 1923, with additional data being drawn from the Census.\footnote{ibid.}

Virtually all of the Japanese employed by Nevada Consolidated early on were Issei; most were in their thirties by 1920. Slightly less than half of the Ruth sample (23) were single, and of those listed as married (21) or widowed (6), approximately two-thirds had one to three dependent children living with wives or relatives in Japan. None from the sample had wives or children in the United States, and only four women show up in association with the Japanese labor force of Ruth and McGill in the 1920 U. S. Census—out of a population of 149. Only three infant children appear, so much a novelty to the census-taker, apparently, that documents erroneously list them as "aliens."\footnote{ibid.}

Most of these workers were of the \textit{dekasegi} orientation identified by Yuji Ichioka. They were sojourners, seeking wealth in America and working to support families back home, probably with the intention of returning to Japan one day. Under deductions for dependents, all but three of the married men in the Ruth sample, and all but one of the widowers, asked that an average of half of their pay be sent to relatives in Japan. It is

\footnote{Fifty Ruth employees from Ruth Service Records, essentially those whose last name began with A-F, were analyzed for the following profile. National Archives, \textit{Census Manuscripts, Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Nevada} was also consulted to draw some generalities. Unfortunately, the census-takers at Ruth and McGill were far too general. All but a couple of Japanese at Ruth, for instance, were listed as unable to speak English, which is possible, but they are also listed as illiterate in Japanese, which seems unlikely.}
perhaps more surprising that about half of the single men were sending home between one-third and three-fourths of their yearly income.\(^{33}\) If intentions were to bring family over, workers would have invested more money in America, as required under Japanese emigration law. Relatively close age differences between husbands and wives (averaging about seven years), are more indication that these women were not picture brides. Lost in these statistics are some, certainly, who did have ambitions beyond building for a future in Japan. But that category probably moved out of the mining business for other pursuits.\(^{34}\)

The Japanese towns were not well suited for families in any case. Sixteen miles of narrow-gauge track spiraled down into the Liberty Pit, making nearby Copper Flat a constant din of steam shovels, ore trains, and miners marching to and from the pit. The bunkhouses most Japanese shared in Ruth and McGill (ten-room, barracks-type structures housing ten to twenty miners) were not designed for families either.\(^{35}\) Whatever the intentions of the early mine and mill workers, the 1924 Immigration Act ended immigration from Japan, eliminating any option of bringing family over.

Fred Toyota had brought a twenty-three-year-old bride, and former teacher, Kame, to McGill in 1917. A few other women spent time in the company towns over the years, often doing domestic service work for company officials while their husbands worked the tracks.\(^{36}\) Women and thus children, however, were rare in these Japanese colonies.

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\(^{33}\) This survey of Ruth Service Records more correctly reveals what workers intended to remit at their hiring date, it should be noted.

\(^{34}\) Ibid. Those who did seek more permanent settlement, like several Japanese residents of Ely who came to the area working for NCCC, moved into farming or small businesses. Ichioka, *The Issei*, explains that the *deka*egi orientation of most early immigrant laborers began to be replaced by a desire to settle more permanently in America after 1910. Men who wanted to stay were encouraged to move out of mining and railroad work.

\(^{35}\) The Sakai legal file, cited below, includes a diagram of a typical barrack.

\(^{36}\) In Hase, interview with the author, 18 October 1993, Sam remembers a few women living in Ruth and McGill over the years. By the late 1930s both towns had some housing for Japanese families. However, U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the* (Continued on next page)
In the 1930s the Japanese towns did see a third Japanese influx, this one dominated by the second generation. Pushed by hardships of the Great Depression, some Nisei from farms in Utah and elsewhere came to work as laborers for NCCC. In a sense, however, it seems they too were "sojourners." Sent here to help support families elsewhere, most did not intend to settle permanently in White Pine County. They were a minority within the Japanese population and almost as socially isolated from Euro-Americans as the Issei. In short, there was no significant change in the demographic structure over a thirty-year period.

Further stifling strong community bonds was a nearly constant turnover in the work force, Japanese and non-Japanese. Throughout the period under discussion, minor strikes, temporary shut-downs, and major economic down-turns led to lay-offs. The Japanese employee pool fluctuated between an apparent high of just over two hundred working the tracks and mill equipment for NCCC in 1917, to a low of fifteen workers in 1921. A few Issei had long service records by the mid-1930s, but each year saw many personnel changes as well. The fifty Ruth Japanese sampled, for instance, worked at the mine an average of only seven months before terminating employment permanently.

Though faces changed, the Japanese maintained a strong presence in the company towns. Each Japanese colony probably numbered between seventy and one hundred

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37 Hase, interview with the author, 18 October 1993, recounts the entry of Nisei into the labor force during the depression. He remembers "quite a few" Nisei in the 1930s (Ely, Ruth, and McGill each had Nisei basketball teams that would compete with each other). But the 1940 Census lists only 59 Nisei in White Pine County, and most were not employed in the company towns.


39 Ruth Service Records. It should also be noted that the general turnover rate for NCCC and the mining industry was high, probably higher than the Japanese average in this case.
residents over the extended time frame; Ruth’s total population fluctuated between 1,000 and 2,000 and McGill’s total was between 2,000 and 3,000. Using an estimate of eighty Japanese living in either community at any given time, the Japanese would account for two to four percent of McGill’s population during the twenties and thirties and upwards of six percent of the Ruth total. That is many times greater than the Nevada average and even rivals California county figures. Although there was no shortage of immigrants in either town, the Japanese comprised the largest "non-white" minority until 1942.40

In sum, this demographic profile suggests a number of problem areas for the Ruth and McGill Japanese, which go beyond a "large" Issei presence at the outset of the war. Both Japanese towns were overwhelmingly male and mostly composed of immigrants who had arrived with strong ties to their mother country and few English-language skills. Constant turnover occurred in the work force, yet company policy and sufficient population levels worked to sustain separated ethnic housing. And finally, the Japanese were indeed the largest racial minority group in the company towns. While their numbers were fading by 1941, the towns still contained the "critical mass" that some sociologists and social historians blame for prejudice.41

Unquestionably, economic relationships played a key role in wartime events as well. Elliott suggests that a lower Japanese wage-scale led to lingering grievances on the part of white workers; others, like Read, bluntly point to the Japanese internment as the


41 For example, in his study on the sources of lingering anti-Japanese prejudice in California in the 1930s, Edward Strong wrote: "the comparatively large number of Japanese in the state, emphasized particularly by their concentration in certain localities . . . made every other charge against them so significant." See, Edward K. Strong, Jr., *The Second-Generation Japanese Problem* (Stanford: University of California Press, 1934), 149.
"cure" for depressed wages in the district. Neither assessment seems accurate. Nonetheless, the labor sphere was fraught with problems and acrimony directed at the Japanese.

A balanced appraisal of economics, however, should also look beyond interracial labor relations to passive, negative factors in the large economy. The wartime disaster may have been fueled by animosity, but it was effected because of widespread indifference. The modified boss system itself contributed to Japanese isolation from the larger economies and social fabric of the towns, and this may be the proper place to start.

Some McGillers still remember Fred Toyota as "what you would call, King of the Japs."\(^4\)\(^2\) Despite the racial slur, there is some truth in that description. Much like the NCCC managers, Toyota and Muranaka held far-reaching power over the lives of their "subjects," including the power to fire at will. By the mid twenties, the bosses also controlled the bunkhouses, where most of the Japanese lived, the boarding houses, where they ate, and the club houses, where they socialized.

Still, if Fred Toyota was "king" of Japanese Town, the memoirs of Kame Toyota recount something far short of a regal life-style. After taking on the responsibility of running the boarding house, the Toyotas rose every morning between 3:00 and 4:00 a.m. to prepare meals for the McGill crew. At dawn Fred left the house on his long daily rounds. Fred Toyota had recurring stomach problems, probably work related, and never took a vacation after he came to McGill in 1912 because he felt his job demanded constant attention. Kame's accounts add that much of what Fred Toyota earned he lost over the years through unreclaimed loans to his workers.\(^4\)\(^3\)

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\(^4\)\(^2\) Linnell, interview with the author, 19 October 1993. With the exception of Elsa Culbert, the four McGill residents I spoke with consistently and casually used the term "the Japs."

\(^4\)\(^3\) See especially Kame Toyota to [NCCC managers] Messrs. Kinnear, Huffer, Larson, and Morgan, 9 June 1942, p. 9, Toyota Papers, Box 145; File 8.
Shizutaro's income came from a company salary, from boarding fees, and perhaps from some rent royalties from the company. He did not take a commission from his workers, as under the old boss system. His wife further revealed, in her wartime letters to the DOJ, that the assets she brought with her from Japan, later invested in U.S. commercial stocks, represented the bulk of their family assets. Better off than regular employees, Fred Toyota earned his paycheck and commanded the affection and respect of his men.

Although the system worked to the satisfaction of the Japanese and the company, it had some passive, negative consequences. Not the least of these was that it relieved the company of fundamental responsibility for—and contact with—its Japanese workers. It is probably safe to assume that to management at Nevada Consolidated the Japanese were nothing more than numbers in the payroll ledger books, a trite phrase today, but anathema to the philosophy and practices of welfare capitalism. In the small towns of McGill and Ruth, it was not uncommon for the top officials to know some workers by their first names. Japanese names, however, were considered too hard to pronounce. Those names were changed to Frank, Joe, Bill, or the condescending "Charlie" by whites on the

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44 NCCC Payroll, McGill, lists monthly deductions from the checks of almost all Japanese employees going to "F. S. Toyota," and the size and relative uniformity of those deductions indicate that they are for room and board. Toyota was also receiving a separate monthly salary check of $119.50 in 1941, his position listed as "Jap. Board. House Steward." Kame's letters (Toyota Papers, Box 145, File-folder 8) clarify that Fred was not a commission boss.

45 Kame's letters state that her family was mainly living off stock dividends from major corporations (like NCCC-Kennecott) during the war. Letters to her from internees demonstrate great respect for Fred, even when he was no longer "boss." A sure sign of a disgruntled work force was a strike against the boss, and by extension the company (see Ichioka, The Issei, 74-75), and there is no indication of any labor unrest among these crews.

46 This point is demonstrated in the memoirs of NCCC General Manager Jack C. Kinnear, which mentions his friendship with some workers but contains absolutely no mention of the Japanese. see Jack Kinnear, Fifty Years in Mining (Kennecott Copper Corporation private publication, 1967).
job site. The only Japanese names that really meant anything to management were "Fred" and "Roy," and when the bosses were arrested, the link between the Japanese and management was severed.

Japanese connections to the larger economy of the company towns were equally tenuous. Between 1912 and 1941 the Japanese were not proprietors of any thriving businesses in Ruth or McGill, nor did they patronize white-owned businesses of the towns. Room and board arrangements precluded normal grocery shopping, while special amenities like liquor, housewares, ethnic foods, and Japanese reading materials were delivered to the community by rail, bus, or Japanese merchants and peddlers from Salt Lake City. Apparently, the Japanese rarely had outstanding credit accounts at the saloons, mercantiles, dairy outlet, banks, or other institutions that typically advanced credit to workers and their families. Many Issei laborers did frequent (generally on Saturday nights) the gambling halls, saloons, and red-light district of Ely, known as "Bronc Alley" [sic]. The positive effect of these types of interaction, however, is questionable.

A quick contrast might be drawn to the more economically diverse Japanese community of nearby Ely. Japanese Americans there had long been involved in the laundry trade, farming and stock-raising, restaurant operations, and in working at various wage-jobs that put them in daily contact with the general public. Ely-area businesses operating at

47 This practice is noted in Ichioka, The Issei, 26, as it developed during early Japanese immigration. Various sources indicate that this was standard practice in White Pine County too.

48 Hase and Iwamoto interviews provide descriptions of how Japanese goods were obtained, while Reverend Jerry Hirano of the Salt Lake City Buddhist Temple recently shared insights on how fish sellers and other merchants made the rounds in Nevada.

49 See McGill Payroll for lack of deductions. Fred Toyota held saving accounts for several of his men at the McGill Bank by the late 1930s as revealed in the Toyota Papers. The Saturday-night activities of the Japanese laborers are discussed in Hase, interview with the author, 18 October 1993, which says the Issei laborers were some of the "best customers" of the white prostitutes of Ely, and in Iwamoto, interview with the author, 9 February 1995. Both stress that the Nisei avoided the brothels.
the outbreak of the war included the Ishii family's truck garden, the Oki family's pig farm, the Ely Home Laundry, the Yokohama Laundry and Cleaners, the Tokyo Dry Cleaners, Tom's Noodle Shop (the oldest establishment in town), and a Japanese barber and bath. As in other Nevada towns, business activities like these fostered cross-ethnic ties and diminished interracial hostility.

The relationship between Japanese and "white" workers played a central part in wartime events and it demands special attention. Newspapers indicate that the roots of animosity stretched back to the first influx of the Japanese. The Ely Daily Mining Expositor (which proudly bore a union label in its masthead) supported efforts to keep White Pine County a "White Man's Camp" in 1907. It joined with an alliance of building trades unions and announced labor's desire to maintain "harmony" in the region. The best way to insure that, it stated, was to employ only "white labor, meaning thereby an American citizen."

The Japanese accounted for only a small part of the labor force in the county between 1907 and 1912. Apparently, no Japanese worked in the mining camps, where anti-foreign feeling was most intense. Mass hiring of Greeks and other Southern Europeans ignited the foreign-labor controversy. Nonetheless, the Expositor launched particularly cruel attacks against Japanese and "Hindoos," presenting the latter as "a poor class physically" and even "more treacherous, if possible," than the Japanese.

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50 See, Cheryl Nakashima (Nobuo's spouse), "Japanese in White Pine County During World War II," TMs written for college course ca. 1991, [copy] East Ely Railroad Depot Museum. Within a week of Pearl Harbor the Yokohama Laundry and the Tokyo Cleaners became the Star Laundry and the Nevada Cleaners, respectively. Indications are that most customers of these businesses were Euro-Americans.

51 EDME, 25 December 1907, as found in Elliott, Nevada's Mining Boom.

52 See, particularly, EDME, 29 October; 2, 5, November; 25 December 1907; and 23 May 1908. Opposition to foreign labor is discussed in Elliott, Nevada's Mining Boom, 254-258.
Despite this early campaign, opposition to foreign labor—even the Asian variety—had subsided by 1912. During earlier labor unrest in the district, Greeks and other immigrants (excluding the Japanese) had taken sides with radical unions, which accepted immigrants into their ranks. Although these labor groups quickly lost support and influence in the region after the 1912 strike, immigrant labor had made gains and had carved out a niche. The "Gentlemen's Agreement" of 1907-08, in conjunction with NCCC efforts, probably worked to quell intense opposition to the Japanese specifically.

Under comfortable surroundings and company controls, the copper camps were relatively free from labor agitation after 1912. A general acceptance of the immigrant's place in the labor force developed. "Foreigners" were relegated to performing difficult and unpleasant work in the copper pits and around the mill, at wages respectable "white men" did not care to accept. An extensive study of local labor by David M. Anderson suggests that conservative AFL trade unions (un-official bargaining agents in the district) and Welfarism stifled the development of worker consciousness. As Elliott also noted, skilled workers came to occupy a prestigious place in the hierarchy of the company towns. There was, however, stratification among the immigrant laborers as well. The Greeks were at the top; the Slavs (or "Bohunks") were in the middle; and the Japanese occupied "the lowest rung of the social ladder . . . ."

While Elliott's descriptions of the local pecking order are sound, his suggestion that anti-Japanese sentiment "stemmed from their accepting lower wages and a longer working day than the white workers" is inaccurate or confused. On average, as illustrated by


54 David Anderson, "'Such Contented Workers'". Anderson found Elliott's assessments of White Pine labor history to be conservative and biased.


payroll books, Japanese hired after 1912 received less than most whites. Nonetheless, they earned the same pay as any immigrant or white in the "laborer" job classification. At various times, the Japanese did work nine-hour days, instead of the standard eight, but they received just compensation for the extra work at an overtime rate of pay. Perhaps Elliott meant to suggest that some Japanese came to perform duties of a more skilled nature without demanding higher pay, or that there was antagonism over their accepting overtime while most others would not.57

Outright hostility probably had more to do with the Great Depression than with any ancient memories of actual wage disparities in the region. During the early 1930s, both the mine and the mill shut down for extended periods. When they produced, they rarely operated at full capacity.58 These devastating downturns also affected the Japanese, but possibly not to the same extent as other workers. Some Japanese remained employed during the depression.59 Other Japanese may have been able to "tough out" the hard times in Ruth and McGill with help from Muranaka and Toyota (i.e., through reduced boarding fees or loans).

In a circuitous fashion, it also worked to the advantage of the company to keep the Japanese active. The company extended credit to other employees for food and housing

57 Elliott, Nevada's Mining Boom, 229, approaches this interpretation in stating that "economic distinctions" between foreign and white labor involved a different wage scale for "similar services." My findings are from NCCC payroll books and Ruth Service Records. The 1913 McGill payroll lists most of the Japanese working part-time as "laborers," at $2.90 per day, and part-time as track laborers at $3.55 per day. These were the going rates for anyone in those positions, but also could suggest company manipulation of wages. However, these dual listings appear only briefly. Although most Japanese workers were still listed as laborers in 1941, several were listed as "labor sub-foremen, repairman's helper, furnace helper, and power-house laborer," which may indicate that they were performing work in the skilled category but being paid at a lower rate.

58 Elliott, "History of Nevada Mines Division," Chapter X.

59 The author had time only to review McGill Payroll, April 1934, where he found a small Japanese crew and very few whites working.
during slow-downs, a way of keeping workers on hand. This was also a way of hedging company losses, since these "loans" were reclaimed when work resumed. Japanese workers, however, were not participating in this system: any sustenance debt they accumulated was to their bosses, not the company. Ultimately though, they did occupy company housing and use certain services, so it was best to work them whenever possible. Moreover, track maintenance had to go on regardless of output, which also helps explain why Japanese track men worked for periods of the depression (albeit at greatly reduced hours) while few others worked at all.

In 1936 a Works Project Administration observer happened to sketch a valuable picture of racial tension in the ranks of Ruth labor. He reported 150 Japanese living in Ruth (no mention of McGill), adding that "their paychecks are all made out to one man who settles bills they run at the company store and acts as banker for the group." More to the point, he noted strong opposition to the Japanese, "native miners insisting that they help to lower the wage scale." Other data suggests that the WPA man was misled on all counts. But whether or not his report was correct or complete, the animosity he detected was real and intense.

The same can be said about the Japanese labor situation as a whole. Perceptions about the Japanese and their effect on the wage scale were distorted: intensive, eventually

60 This was a fairly common practice in company towns, as explained in, Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism*.

61 Thanks again to David Anderson for directing me to: Work Projects Administration, *The WPA Guide to 1930s Nevada: Nevada Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 252. For a similar assessment see Effie Read, *Lang Syne*, which says the Japanese were handled through an "interpreter and agent, Roy Murenake" [sic] who "collected a fee from each Jap but did not work for the company."

62 There is a possibility that Muranaka acted as a paymaster of sorts, but in Ruth and McGill each man was issued a separate check--see McGill Payroll and Ruth Payroll. The Japanese were not responsible for the wage scale, and these population figures for Ruth seem inflated.
successful efforts to unionize NCCC's "contented workers" cured disparities in pay between White Pine and other regions in 1943—well after Japanese removal. Still, many workers blamed Japanese co-workers for labor's failure to effect its desired wage increases.

By combining economics with numbers we can come closer to an explanation for some of the hostility that surfaced during World War II. In this unusual history, however, it is also necessary to look back at the effects of culture as cause in the development of local racism. Borrowing from Robert Park, culture is loosely defined here as: "the sort of order existing in a society which has a cult or religion. It preserves the morale and enables the group to act collectively." This order, embodied in institutions, "enables us in our society to act with unanimity in times of danger ... [and] face the physical 'evil forces.'" Armed, admittedly, with an incomplete picture of the entire "order" existing in the company towns and the Japanese enclaves, this final segment looks at some of the cultural institutions that were actively at work on race relations in pre-war White Pine County.

Looking back on the twenties and thirties, writers have pointed to White Pine High School in Ely as one of the county's premier institutions. To most people, the high school was the embodiment of all the county held sacred—virtue, cleanliness, Godliness, knowledge, patriotism, and sports-prowess. To the immigrants of the county, the classrooms, school yards, and playing fields were equalizing agents—places were barriers came down for children and partly for their parents. To the latter, schools symbolized hope

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63 Anderson, "Such Contented Workers," viii, explains that Mine-Mill "initially met frustration" but eventually became the accepted bargaining agent for most of the area's copper workers in October 1943. Unrelated demographic shifts and new labor relations laws (not "Jap" removal) paved the way for reform.

64 Robert Park, Race and Culture (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950), 16.

for their children's future in America, but parents also earned direct benefits through helping their elementary-school aged children with English studies. Finally, to the offspring of the Japanese, Greeks, Italians, Slavs, Mexicans, Norwegians, and "native stock," schools were places where the racial prejudices carried by parents got in the way of fun and were pushed aside.®®

Almost totally denied the positive effects this institution had on race relations were the Japanese colonies of Ruth and McGill. With the exception of the Toyota children, those two towns apparently produced only one White Pine High graduate, George Yasumatsu.®® In contrast, the smaller Japanese community of Ely sent no fewer than twelve children to high school between 1934 and 1943, and most were very active in sports and other extra-curricular activities.®® The company towns did not have the Nisei population base to spread the English language or familiarize the Issei with American ways, nor was Nevada Consolidated sufficiently advanced in Welfarism to sponsor language or "Americanization" courses.®®

®® Nakashima, interview with the author, 21 October 1993, mentions that his mother was a trained nurse when she arrived in America but learned English through helping her children study. For seemingly accurate descriptions of race barriers coming down at school see Elliott, Growing Up, 31-32.

®® George graduated in 1943, see Blue and White, 1943. George's father died when he was young and he was raised by his mother (a Euro-American) in McGill. After graduating he joined the all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team and was killed in Italy. His picture hangs with photos of other veterans on the wall of the McGill Club. Frank Yasumatsu, a brother to George, continued working at the smelter in McGill during the war and may have graduated earlier from White Pine High.

®® Blue and White, issues 1935-1943. The Hase children and the Miyama/Nakashima children (who had different fathers) were the most numerous, but the Kihara, Yokomizo, and Oki Nisei from Ely helped fill the roll books, along with the Endows and Kawamotos from railroad families in outlying areas.

®® For common "Americanization" practice under Welfarism, see Brandes, American Welfare Capitalism. Local Greeks registered an appeal for English courses to reduce social barriers and job-related accidents in 1919 (WPN, 12 January 1919), but immigrants had to settle for "self-help" programs.
The exceptions, the Toyota children, were exceptional indeed. Taro (Fred Jr.) was elected Student Body President by his classmates at WPHS in 1938. Fred won supporters from being a star athlete and top student. He was also a member of the Bobcats Association and the Service Club, groups that helped keep order, maintain school spirit, and assist with various odd jobs around the school grounds. His sisters, Yoshiko, Toshiko, Shizuko, and Kimiko, were very intelligent, popular, and active in various clubs. Toshiko graduated toward the top of her class and went on to become one of the first female Nisei physicians. But the Toyota children were distanced from others in a negative sense too. When the final bell rang, the Ely Nisei returned to their ethnically mixed neighborhoods, while the Toyotas went home to segregated McGill.

As the Nisei grew into young adults, they carried their bonds of friendship with them. Inevitably, those friendships influenced two generations on both sides of the racial divide. White Pine resident Elsa Culbert remembers that when her husband would see Sam Hase, Fred Toyota, George Miyama, or their Euro-American friends hanging around the corner by the Ely drugstore where he worked, he would send them down to the house to "keep them out of mischief." Elsa gave the teens milk and cookies and she remembers the prized set of miniature boxing gloves Fred Jr. gave to her son after he was born.

She did not associate with the parents of these children. Nonetheless, Elsa can remember "Soap Suds" (George Miyama's stepfather Takichi Nakashima, as he was universally known around Ely), Mrs. Hide Nakashima (who was "sharp" at betting horse races), and the other "beautiful families" of the Ely Japanese community. She did not

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71 Culbert, interview with the author, 19 October 1993.
know Fred Sr. and Kame Toyota, however, and there is little evidence of any whites socializing with the Toyota parents.

Religious institutions and the bonds they can foster probably played some role in local race relations as well. From what was gathered, the Japanese of the county had little connection with Mormonism and Catholicism, the dominant faiths in the region. Buddhism was probably the faith of choice among virtually all of the Issei in the area, yet they had no temple or organized services. At times, a traveling Buddhist priest would come to White Pine from Salt Lake to perform services and say prayers for the dead in the Japanese section of the Ely Cemetery.72

The Nisei of Ely (and perhaps McGill) were welcome at the Methodist Church in Ely; some attended Sunday school there but interest in church activities varied.73 Local ministers made no apparent effort to reach the Japanese living in Ruth and McGill. Nor, however, are there glaring signs of hostility toward the Japanese under the guise of Christianity, apart from some Ku Klux Klan cross-burnings that took place in Ruth, McGill, and Ely during the early 1920s.74 It cannot be ignored as a source of fundamental division between the larger society and the Japanese, but it does not seem that religious institutions contributed much to hostile feelings.

72 A practice that continues with support from the Ely Japanese community today, see Nakashima, interview with the author, 21 October 1993 and Iwamoto, interview with the author, 9 February 1995. This section is dirt and gravel and segregated from the rest of the cemetery, unlike in most Nevada towns.

73 Sam Hase says he and his siblings attended the Methodist Church—Hase, interview with the author, 18 October 1993; Nobuo Nakashima says he did not feel he fit in and that Japanese children were not baptized—Nakashima, interview with the author, 21 October 1993.

74 These coincided with the rise and quick demise of the Klan in Nevada, see Craig F. Swallow, "The Ku Klux Klan in Nevada During the 1920s" (M.A. thesis, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1978). Some people used to tell Hide Miyama, when she was married to her first husband, "well, they're going to burn the cross tonight, so you better stay home," as revealed in Nakashima, interview with the author, 21 October 1993.
Political ideology was another matter. Although NCCC kept political activity to a minimum in the company towns, the company seemingly fostered a strong sense of Yankee patriotism in the region.\textsuperscript{75} As Japan emerged as a military power, and as it grew to be a competing, expanding force in the Pacific, patriotic Americans became increasingly concerned. Japanese national pride was likewise very strong among many Issei, particularly those whose strongest family ties were still in Japan. The Sino-Japanese War caused emotions to escalate on both sides.

We can now only speculate about the national leanings of the Issei in the company towns over the extended period. There are, however, some indications of mixed sympathies leading right up to the war. On the one hand, some Japanese in McGill had pursued a practice of buying scrap aluminum foil from the youngsters of the town (who stripped it from cigarette packages found around bars, the McGill Club and Victory Club). They sent this "gin kami" (silver paper) to Japan for its war effort. Some of these aluminum balls would be found when the FBI ransacked the living quarters of the Japanese.\textsuperscript{76}

On the other hand, if some of the Ruth and McGill Issei remained sympathetic to Japan—before the war, others apparently developed strong loyalty to this country. Mr. and Mrs. Toyota were fiercely committed to America and went through a complicated process to have the Japanese portion of their children's dual citizenship status removed. According to Kame Toyota, the entire McGill group agreed to support America when war with the

\textsuperscript{75} Elliott, \textit{Nevada's Mining Boom}, 222, says that "McGill was strongly Republican . . .," but that political activity was kept to a minimum by the company. David Anderson has made some interesting observations about how NCCC fostered patriotism to distract workers from other concerns.

\textsuperscript{76} The author heard about children selling aluminum during an informal interview with a man who grew up in McGill. Iwamoto confirmed that aluminum balls were found during the FBI search. Consider also (but cautiously) Read, \textit{Lang Syne}, 259, which tells how a "Jap spy" was apprehended in Reipetown, just west of Copper Flat, back in the early part of the century.
United States broke out. Ruth Issei Yoshehiro Mitsuhata also registered his American loyalty rather defiantly. He bought, through a friend, $1050 worth of U.S. Defense Bonds just before he was forcibly removed from Ruth.77

One final and crucially important institutional relationship that needs to be examined is the one involving Japanese residents and White Pine law enforcement, a mix of county and company policemen.78 It seems the Japanese had long been isolated from the standard legal system of the county. Back in the early twenties, the Japanese communities of this region had, according to one source, their own system for handling trouble-makers. Disguised as a traveling gold peddler, a man known as the "Sin dai" would visit the Japanese settlements of the area to meet with community leaders and ask if there were any persons who were causing problems and needed to be "taken care of."79 There is no solid evidence that his services were ever employed locally, but it seems the Sin dai was more than a legendary figure. He represented a system of community policing from within and not through the authorities or procedures of the host society.

At times, however, the Japanese and the law met. In a situation that was very atypical of Japanese settlements, including those in Ely and McGill, violent incidents were fairly common at Copper Flat.80 These contentious outbreaks, which only involved Issei

77 For an account of difficulties having Japanese citizenship status removed see Kame Toyota's letters, wherein she claims that hers were the only children of the county who were strictly Americans. Actually, the problem of dual citizenship being conferred at birth ended with an amendment to the 1924 Japanese Nationality Act (see Ichioka, The Issei, 206); thus the younger Nisei of White Pine were not Japanese citizens. For Mitsuhata see Ely Daily Times (hereafter EDT), 2 January 1942.

78 The county sheriff and his deputies handled criminal activity but the company supplemented law enforcement in Ruth and McGill with town watchmen.

79 See Nakashima, interview with the author, 21 October 1993.

80 There were a number of murders. In 1927 F. Ito was shot and killed at Copper Flat by Louis Horimoto, possibly because the former was romantically involved with the latter's wife, see White Pine County Coroner, "Inquest over the Body of F. Ito," White Pine County, Nevada, 7 July 1927, and EDT, 7 July 1927. On 17 April 1937 J. Sakai shot and (Continued on next page)
in conflict with other Japanese, may have been symptomatic of larger social problems like an absence of families. And, when Roy Muranaka married a Euro-American woman and took up residence in Ely, \(^81\) "lawlessness" may have increased. One thing is certain: crimes occurred and county law enforcement remained a distant entity to the Japanese.\(^82\)

In contrast, alienation from law enforcement in McGill apparently had more to do with stronger internal controls. Fred Toyota would not let his men gamble in McGill after 1930, and whatever "vice" they sought had to be found in Ely. The boss and the company provided recreation in McGill, including Japanese films, sports programs, and an indoor swimming pool enjoyed year around by all residents.\(^83\) Kame Toyota could proudly report in her letters to the DOJ that there was not one murder case in Japanese Town's thirty-year history. Nevertheless, contact with legal authorities was minimal there too. If the combined Japanese communities had any friends among the "cops" of the county when the war started, they would not surface.

_____ killed Y. Yamada after a heated argument. Both were laborers in the Liberty Pit, and Sakai was sentenced to life in prison, see White Pine County Justice's Court, "State of Nevada vs. J. Sakai," 19 April 1937, and EDT, 17 April 1937. In 1933 workman T. Tanaka fell on the job and struck his head, and the fatal accident was reportedly the result of a quarrel, see White Pine County Coroner, "Inquest over the body of T. Tanaka," White Pine County, Nevada, 19 September 1933. The Coroner’s inquests and court records cited here and below are at the White Pine County Courthouse, Recorder's Vaults, Ely, Nevada. Local newspapers also report several fights between Japanese workers at Copper Flat that resulted in serious injuries.

\(^81\) In the 1930s Muranaka married a "very nice [white] lady," Ann, who was an ex-prostitute, and the couple lived in Ely—see Nakashima, interview with the author, 21 October 1993. Similar to Kame Toyota, Ann made appeals to the DOJ on behalf of Roy and the Ruth internees, but little else has been uncovered about the Muranakas.

\(^82\) Also see the sensational case of an attempted triple murder and suicide involving a Japanese perpetrator, a covert gambling operation, and baffled law enforcement, detailed in my article "Japanese Casualties."

\(^83\) These films also showed in Ruth and Ely (where whites also attended) and were brought in by an independent company. Toyota stopped the McGill showings in 1939, probably because of the Sino-Japanese War. Japanese propaganda sometimes colored these films, but Hase, Nakashima, and Iwamoto remember them mostly as "tear-jerkers," comedies, and samurai stories.
This estrangement from the legal institutions of White Pine County would have
direct, negative consequences during the war. This was, however, just one symptom of a
grander problem—the fundamental divisions between the Japanese enclaves of the company
towns and the people and institutions of the larger community. The preceding descriptions
offer insights on how this pervasive isolation developed. More difficult to illustrate is the
racial prejudice that contributed to—and grew from—these divisions. Relying again on
Park, he offered that: "All our so-called racial problems grow out of a situation in which
assimilation and amalgamation do not take place at all, or take place very slowly." The
Japanese of Ruth and McGill were, by no means, completely cut off from the larger
community or constantly subjected to harsh treatment. Still, assimilation and
amalgamation had proceeded at a snail's pace in both towns. By the outbreak of the war,
the stage was set for disaster in this corner of Nevada.

84 Park, Race and Culture, 353.

85 Kame Toyota's letters and the Nisei interviews used herein stress that the Japanese of
McGill had few problems before the war and that the Toyota children had many friends.
CHAPTER THREE

NEVADA'S VARIED RESPONSES TO THE FIRST
WARTIME "JAPANESE QUESTION"

It would be absurd to view the wartime experiences of the Nevada Japanese, positive or negative, as the predictable outcome of local history introduced in the previous chapters. Declarations of war and the ensuing crisis certainly introduced new circumstances, external agencies, and grand federal decisions that impacted on lives and outcomes in Nevada. Nevertheless, a strong body of evidence indicates that prior history and local circumstances profoundly influenced initial and protracted responses to "Japanese Questions" in wartime Nevada. Local factors were very influential during debates over the first question, which involved determinations of "loyalty" and decisions regarding the wartime fate of the Nevada Japanese.

Before readers are subjected to this argument, they deserve a listing of the supposed federal, state, and local agencies involved in Nevada "decisions." The first group, made up of federal functionaries, appears to represent a formidable block. The FBI and other extensions of the DOJ, including Nevada's Alien Enemy Hearing Board, might be included here as well as two U.S. Attorneys for Nevada (Miles N. Pike and Thomas O. Craven), not to mention Lt. Gen. John DeWitt, the War Department, and all others involved in creating grand evacuation policy. Powerful figures at the state level were Governor Edward P. Carville and Hugh A. Shamberger, Director of the State Council of [civilian] Defense. We might also group Nevada's congressional delegation in the state category, although little is known about their conduct or opinions during the crisis.
County sheriffs, defense council executives, and town and county politicians apparently commanded the most influence locally. Also in the local category were newspaper publishers and editors, who frequently held (in addition to propagandizing rights) key positions of authority in their counties. Local business people and common neighbors, who could affect such things as a Japanese American's ability to earn a living, attend school peacefully, or function safely on the streets, also should be counted in the local category of "decision-makers."

A certain fuzziness characterized these power divisions, which seemingly shifted the debate over the first "Japanese question" even further into Nevada. For instance, except for DeWitt and a few FBI agents suddenly sent to this state, virtually all of those assigned (or self-assigned) to handle the "Japanese problem" in Nevada were Nevadans. Furthermore, each group of functionaries undoubtedly influenced the actions and attitudes of the other two groups. Local informants very likely supplied information to federal authorities; they could influence state leaders too, particularly since 1942 was an election year. Virtually the same power mix of federal, state, and local entities influenced wartime experiences elsewhere in the West. In Nevada, however, the distribution of actual authority was weighted heavily toward the local level, as revealed in the following discussions.

Nevada's Peculiar Case of Mass Internment and Forced "Evacuation"

Not surprisingly, White Pine was one of the first Nevada counties to be engulfed by "wartime hysteria." Journalist Jack Fleming recently summed up local reactions by stating that it was "as if [Fred] Toyota and [Roy] Muranaka had personally dropped the bombs that brought America into the war."¹ Fleming's version of the White Pine saga is

embellished. But his facts (which center on experiences of the Toyota family) seem sound, as does his assessment of community mood. He was right, also, in identifying Muranaka and Toyota as the first victims.

Muranaka was arrested on December 7; Toyota was taken into custody the following day. Federal agents picked up several hundred other "alien enemies" (nationals of the Axis countries) across the nation and in Hawaii during the early hours of the war. Most of these Japanese, German, and Italian aliens were arrested under blanket warrants. They commonly had ties to the government or military of their home countries; or they belonged to organizations that supported the Axis powers; or they were simply known as leaders within their ethnic communities. Most were on pre-established lists of "suspect" persons.

Toyota and Muranaka certainly fit into the category of community leaders, and by all reports the FBI landed these first blows. However, the circumstances surrounding Toyota's arrest call into question the idea that he was on a federal suspect list. Kame Toyota reported in her letters that her husband was taken into custody only after he had

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2 Fleming apparently got most of his facts about the Toyotas at a WPHS reunion, also attended by Heed Iwamoto. The latter attended for his wife, Kimiko, who had just passed away, as recounted in Heed Iwamoto, interview with the author. Salt Lake City, Utah, 9 February 1995.

3 Local arrests are noted in the *Flying Daily Times (FDT)*, 8 and 9, December 1941, and in secondary materials. Very brief descriptions of Japanese internment can be found throughout the literature on the relocation. A rare case study, which lends itself to comparison, is John J. Culley, "World War II and a Western Town: The Internment of the Japanese Railroad Workers of Clovis, New Mexico," *Western Historical Quarterly* 13 (January 1982): 43-61. However, in that case local hostility surfaced gradually and was more closely tied to larger, wartime events. For more about the internment camps see Paul F. Clark, "Those Other Camps: An Oral History Analysis of Japanese Alien Enemy Internment During World War II" (Master's thesis, California State University, Fullerton, 1980); Arthur A. Hansen, ed., *Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project Vols. I -II* (Westport, Conn.: Meckler Publishing, 1991); Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1976); Steven Fox, *The Unknown Internment: An Oral History of the Relocation of Italian Americans during World War II* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), and the upcoming books by John J. Culley and Louis Fiset.
visited Muranaka twice at the Ely jail on December 8. One letter reveals that Muranaka had sent for Toyota that day and asked him to go with "K. Ishii" to Ruth to "get a package, which K. Ishii was to take home. Fred did not know what the package contained." During the second visit, when the Toyota family had brought Muranaka a Japanese dinner, FBI agents asked Fred to sign an authorization for a property search and accompanied the family back to McGill.

The investigators collected several things from the home and office and "said it would be best if Fred went [back with them] to Ely that night." Whatever these gumshoes confiscated could not have been very incriminating: Mrs. Toyota pointed out that *everything* taken that night soon was returned—except her husband.

Meanwhile, beyond Kame's view, White Pine County was grappling with a much larger "Japanese problem." When Ruth's Japanese employees showed up at the mine the day following the Pearl Harbor attack, some of their co-workers "damned near shot them," according to one report. Hundreds of Ruth mine workers signed a petition in an open meeting that day, which demanded that all Japanese employees be dismissed from their jobs and confined under armed guard. Representatives of this labor block would show up at an emergency meeting of the county defense council that night with a copy of its demands.

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4 Kame Toyota to unidentified person requesting a rehearing, January 14, 194[3], Toyota Family Papers, *Japanese American Research Project, Collection 2010* (cited hereafter as "Toyota Papers"), Box 145; File-folder 8, Department of Special Collections, University Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles. There were three or more drafts of this letter, and the latter one in collection (wisely) does not mention the Ruth trip.

5 Ibid.


7 Copies of the petition supposedly were sent to the FBI in Salt Lake and to the governor of Nevada, see EDT, 9 December 1941, and secondary sources.
Attention focused on Ruth and defense enthusiasm ran high at the Monday-night meeting. Seventy persons were in attendance; no FBI officials were present to advise the group. Nevertheless, State Defense Council Member James A. Johnson of Ely reported the next day to Council Director Hugh Shamberger that local authorities had "straightened[ed] out the defense situation at Ruth without sticking [their] necks out too far."

A "lot of Japs," as Johnson explained it, were: "working on the track at Ruth in the pit, and as switch tenders."

The boys up there had a mass meeting last night and were just about to shut her down if the Japs stayed on the job. It created a rather difficult situation. They sent down a committee [to our meeting requesting us to do something about it. We took the matter up with the Governor by long distance and he referred us to Mr. Newman, chief of the Bureau of Investigation at Salt Lake City. Mr. Newman advised us that the Federal Bureau had advised the Utah Copper Company to take the Japs off the job temporarily until they got things settled. Mr. Gray, the attorney here for the Nevada Consolidated Copper Company, called up Mr. Larsh, the general manager at Ruth, and he agreed to take the Japs off the job starting this morning [ ; he would] keep them on the pay roll at least for the time being. When Mr. Gray reported this news to the council and the committee [from Ruth,] every body [sic] was satisfied.8

Reminding Shamberger of Johnson's little suggestion at their previous meeting--about "dropping a friendly bomb around here" to "get the public aroused to the situation"--Johnson said that notion could be disregarded. Suddenly White Pine County was sufficiently aroused.9 Writing back to Johnson, Shamberger announced that he was "very glad and happy over the way things had been handled in White Pine County."10

Like Russell Elliott in later years, James Johnson fingered Ruth workmen as the motivating force behind this first step toward mass internment. But his letter and the actual

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8 James A. Johnson to Hugh A. Shamberger, 9 December 1941, in Records of the State Council of Defense, Box 10, File 10, Nevada State Archives, Carson City, Nevada.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., Shamberger to Johnson, 12 December 1941.
minutes of the council meeting demonstrate a community consensus on "internment" as the best solution. The minutes even raise the possibility that more influential people led the assault. Chronologically by that account, "discussion concerning internment of Japanese workers," and the calls placed by Council Member A. E. Briggs, Judge H. M. Watson, Attorney Howard Gray, and Sheriff Jean E. Orrock—"to determine what steps [could] be taken to intern Japs and impound arms"—all occurred before labor delegates Dave Willis and J.H. McDaniel of Ruth had the chance to read their resolution and state their demands. Gray, NCCC's attorney, reported back to the general council that "attempts will be made to hold the Japanese together until further notice." The "FBI did not want wholesale discharge or dismissal [because it] didn't want the Japs to spread." Gray added that NCCC "had had the measure under consideration for some time."\(^{11}\)

"Demands" on the part of Ruth mine workers and "suggestions" from the FBI no doubt influenced these and subsequent actions, but NCCC officials like Gray, Larsh, and McGill General Manager Jack C. Kinnear, Sr. were prominently among the "decision-makers." The company proceeded to also remove the McGill Japanese from their jobs that Wednesday, and not, apparently, in response to any demands made by labor or the FBI.

Only thirty-two Japanese Americans were on the McGill payroll at the time. Six Japanese Americans (probably all Issei) were working overtime for the U.S. war industries build-up on Sunday, December 7. One of these had been among the original contingent of Japanese workers who arrived in 1912, and five of the six had worked for NCCC since 1934 or before. They finished out the shift; the following three days almost all Japanese employees of McGill reported for duty as usual.\(^{12}\) By Thursday, however, "hysteria" had also invaded the company town of McGill.

\(^{11}\) "Minutes of Meeting," 8 December 1941, Records of the State Council of Defense, Box 7, File 15.

\(^{12}\) McGill Payroll, 1913, 1934, 1941, East Ely Railroad Depot Museum. The first half of December's payroll, 1941, shows the McGill Japanese worked up until 11 December. S. Kohara, about whom we know little else, appears in the 1913 and 1941 payrolls.
That day the company ordered a general removal of Japanese employees, and it appointed John Merrill to keep watch over Japanese Town. According to Kame Toyota, Merrill quickly grew suspicious and hostile. Soon after the layoff, Japanese workers--aliens and American citizens alike--were herded into a large warehouse with a dirt floor and were kept thereafter under a twenty-four-hour guard. Not the initial source of concern, the McGill Issei would become the first Japanese removed from Nevada.13

Before that occurred, the company gathered up Japanese-American workers who had been dismissed from the Nevada Northern Railroad (presumably in both White Pine and Elko counties) and brought them to Ruth and McGill. These fifteen men and their family members brought the total population of the two Japanese camps to well over 100 when federal agents finally arrived in force on 15 December, one day after Nevada Consolidated had officially discharged virtually all Issei workers.14

Shedding more light on the interplay between "feds" and "locals" during this period are letters from officials of the Nevada Northern, written in response to NCCC's directives. One letter, dated 11 December, states that "Mr. W. Howard Gray and representative F.B.I. gave [the] following instructions:" 1) remove all Japanese, German and Italian aliens employed by the Northern; 2) check all personnel records for birth origin; 3) contact those born in Axis countries and ask whether they had been naturalized and give lists to Mr. Gray; 4) remove said workers immediately and advise them to "remain at home until the situation is clarified;" and, 5) get word to these men "today sure."15

13 Accounts of the McGill crackdown are provided in Kame Toyota's letters and in Iwamoto, interview with the author, 9 February 1995.

14 Kame Toyota to Messrs. Kinnear, Huffer, Larsen and Morgan, 3 August 1942, Toyota Papers, Box 145; File 8, states that the McGill Issei were arrested on the night of the 15th. Elliott, History of Nevada, 311, says NCCC "dismissed most of its Japanese employees on December 14," and payroll notations confirm this.

correspondence sent to Daniel Jackling the following day reiterated that the railroad was acting "on advice from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and our Local Counsel." But federal advisors on the scene are described consistently as FBI "representatives," not agents, officers, or officials, and all this advice to the Nevada Northern ultimately came through NCCC. It seems that company managers exclusively made the decision to bring the Nevada Northern Japanese to Ruth and McGill until "the Federal Government decides what they are going to do with them."16

Further indicative that racial biases influenced management's actions is the way in which the company handled Italian alien employees. Six Italian nationals (who had been removed from the Northern along with the Japanese) were allowed to return to work on 20 December. That directive came after a call from Gray, who had been talking with another FBI "representative," this one finally sporting a name--"Olsen."

These Italians had an advantage over the Japanese because they had applied for their first papers for naturalization. However, these men, "who [had] been here many years in the railroad's service" (just like the Japanese) also enjoyed a certain unfair advantage during the company's informal "loyalty hearings." Olsen (and Gray) felt:

that if we made inquiries among the men [the Italians] had worked with and found that such Italian aliens had made no statements in support of the Axis nations or against the United States, it would be wise to put them back to work. This would not apply to Japanese.17

The McGill Nisei also had their jobs and some freedoms restored to them in late December. First, however, they had to "prove their loyalty" through what some have interpreted as "working for the FBI." When FBI agents arrived on 15 December, Fred Toyota, Jr., Heed Iwamoto and other Nisei of McGill assisted officers in interrogating the Issei and thoroughly searching Japanese residences. "Contraband" collected or turned over

16 L. J. Beem to Daniel Jackling, 12 December 1941, NNRR Letters.
17 H. M. Peterson to L. J. Beem, 19 December 1941, NNRR Letters.
to local law enforcement amounted to very little. Certainly it fell well short of that recounted in local legend, which has it that deluxe maps, a radio transmitter, and other tools of a fifth columnist were found in the Toyota home.

The weightiest "pro-Japanese" pieces of evidence uncovered were those balls of aluminum foil noted in the preceding chapter. Lighter still, but also incriminating, were receipts for Heimushakai donations that the FBI found in most of the Japanese quarters in McGill. Kame Toyota described Heimushakai as the Japanese equivalent of the Red Cross and explained in her letters to the DOJ that there was almost 100 percent participation in the donation drive in White Pine County. As evidence that the McGill men thought they had nothing to hide, Kame offered that they could have destroyed their receipts when they were doing routine trash burning. Considering the prevailing local suspicions, however, it probably mattered very little what the FBI actually found.

By late December, the McGill prisoners were at last in the hands of federal investigators and were assigned the official title "detainees," subject to possible internment. After a brief stay in the county jail in Ely, twenty-six McGill Japanese were shipped to Salt Lake City by federal authorities on 22 December. Suichi Baba, a 53-year-old former resident of McGill with family in Japan, became the region's first suicide victim the following day. Forty more Japanese aliens were brought from Ruth to Ely by a "specially

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18 Accounts of working with the FBI were given in my interview and conversations with Iwamoto. Turned over by Fred Jr. to McGill Deputy Sheriff Bryan Robison were: four cameras, four table radio sets, three shotguns, and one (Fred Sr.'s) pistol, see copy of letter, Fred T. Toyota to Leslie S. Kofoed (United States Marshall, Reno), 25 March 1946, Toyota Papers, Box 146; File 2. (To that point, none of these items had been returned.)

19 Among others, Linnell described the legends, but he at least did not think there was any truth to them—see Norman Linnell, interview with the author, McGill, Nevada, 19 October 1993.

20 Trash burning, part of regular housekeeping, occurred on December 11. In her letter to company officials, she speculated that the fire and a personality conflict that erupted between Merrill and one of the workers may have led to the confinement phase.
chartered bus" on the night of 30 December. Every bed in that over-taxed facility was put to use until federal agents moved these prisoners to Salt Lake a few days later. Soon thereafter, the McGill and Ruth men were dispatched to internment camps at Fort Missoula, Montana, and Fort Lincoln (near Bismarck), North Dakota, where they would await the arrival of Nevada's Alien Enemy Hearing Board.21

Federal documents, if relevant ones still exist, might shed more light on this strange case of mass internment.22 Clearly, however, local forces drove the process, and those forces stretched beyond the labor sphere. Ironically a labor organizer for the Mine Mill and Smeltermens Union, George Haskell, was the only person who came to the defense of Japanese workers. True enough, this "organic intellectual's" efforts to curb interracial hostility in the labor sphere failed. Haskell's union superiors even criticized him for not being "sufficiently tactful in approaching the subject." Allan McNeil, Assistant to the Mine-Mill President, thought Haskell needed first to build up in White Pine "an educational program which will teach our members the meaning of international solidarity on a union basis."23 Nevertheless, his efforts were admirable and isolated.

George Haskell's correspondence mentions nothing about opinions or policies of the FBI, but it adds more insights about NCCC policy. By the time Mine-Mill President

21 Baba tied a piece of shirt around his neck and smothered himself with a pillow in the Salt Lake County Jail—see "McGill Jap Kills Self in S. L. Jail," EDT, 23 December 1941. Also see "40 Jap Aliens to Be Removed . . ." in the "Happy New Year" edition of EDT, 31 December 1941, and EDT, 3 January 1942. The Humboldt Star (Winnemucca, Nevada), 5 January 1942, reported that the Nevada prisoners had been sent to "concentration camps" in Montana and North Dakota.

22 The author has filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the FBI. However, their preliminary search has only revealed documents on Toyota and Muranaka, and those files are not expected to be retrieved until 1996-97.

23 See Allan D. McNeil to George Haskell, 23 December 1941, in the Letters of George Haskell, Western Federation of Miners/ International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Archives, Box 35, Folder 6, University of Colorado, Denver, copies of which were provided to the author by David Anderson. Haskell's original letter to McNeil could not be found.
Reid Robinson took an interest in the plight of Japanese workers, Haskell had to report back that the Japanese were already gone and the issue had been settled. General Manager Kinnear had personally informed him that "in the future there will not be any Japanese workers employed at either McGill or Ruth . . . ."  

Management and local labor remained in agreement on this point even after unionization. In a move out of character for this interracial union, the nascent Mine-Mill local of McGill (no doubt reflecting sentiments in Ruth too) reiterated its opposition to allowing any form of Japanese labor back into the area in 1943. The pervasive racism and segregation that characterized the company towns explain a great deal about the strange alliance Haskell had witnessed between workers and managers. In sum, however, the company and collusive local law enforcement contributed significantly more to the internment process than unorganized labor.  

The "Japanese problems" of the company towns were not completely "solved" by mass internment. Nevada Consolidated still employed special watchmen to keep an eye on scores of Japanese Americans remaining in Ruth and McGill. No longer under FBI

24 Ibid., Reid Robinson to George Haskell, 6 January 1942 ("On behalf of the minority groups branch"), and George Haskell to Reid Robinson, 13 January 1942. Indications are that NCCC kept the policy in force after the war too. Elsa Culbert and her husband were told by the company comptroller after the war, "we don't like those Japs [her friends from Ely] hanging around in McGill." The Culberts responded "the hell you don't," but, thereafter, visits with their Japanese friends were confined to their home—Elsa Culbert, interview with the author, McGill, Nevada, 19 October 1993.

25 Playing off a controversy over using relocation-camp labor in Nevada, the Steptoe Mill and Smeltermen's Union informed Governor Carville that they were, "fully in cooperation with [his] views concerning the importation of Alien Japanese labor into this state. We refuse to work with the Japanese if they are brought into this area"—see the letter from Recording Secretary Oran H. Whitlock to E. P. Carville, the Carville Papers, Box 23; File 23, Nevada State Archives, Carson City.

26 Nevada Consolidated's alliance with labor on this issue fit well into a pattern David Anderson has identified as the company's persistent efforts to "protect its hegemony" over Ruth and McGill. That hegemony was threatened in early 1942 by expectations of greater government control in industry (because of the war) and by organizing drives from both CIO and AFL unions. Clearly, the dimensions of class struggle and racism in the company towns were far more complex than Elliott recognized.
scritiny, and never a concern of military authorities, the residual group remained a source
of concern locally. Sheriff Orrock, aided by his legal extensions in Ruth and McGill,
imposed sweeping travel restrictions and curfews on the residual group.27

From early on, the Ruth and McGill populations were viewed as an economic
liability as well. Kame reported that most Japanese were at first hopeful that the
government would release the McGill and Ruth detainees when their cases were heard.
When that did not happen, some within Japanese Town (mainly Nevada Northern people)
began to complain and speak of demanding unemployment compensation.28 This unrest
may have provoked the company into moving the Nevada Northern group to Copper Flat.
An NCCC memorandum in the files of Governor Carville, which the Governor had marked
"Save Subversive Activities," lists forty-one "Japs" housed in Ruth on February 10,
1942.29 Containing a breakdown of expenses for "rent," coal and electricity, and salaries
for "special watchmen," this document appears to be a request for expense compensation
from the state.

Whether state relief came is unknown, and other mysteries also surround the fate of
the Ruth group. At least one family "evacuated" the hostile mining town in late February.
Detainee Yeitaro (Jim) Kawaguchi became one of the more fortunate aliens who survived
the internment hearings; he returned to Ruth for his wife and son and moved them to

27 Kame's letters reveal curfew and travel restrictions for both generations in McGill,
restrictions which preceded those instituted when Nevada became a Military Area.

28 Kame Toyota to Messrs. Kinnear,..., 3 August 1942, Toyota Papers, Box 145;
File 8. Perhaps reflecting her own frustration and desperation, Kame Toyota reserved
some harsh criticism for the actions of specific Japanese people of the region, which, she
believed, may have contributed to events. It is possible, as she suggests, that the FBI or
local authorities found some desperate Japanese informers in the district.

29 "Nevada Consolidated ... Mines Division Memorandum" from Ruth, an incomplete
document in Carville Papers, Box 23, File-folder 23. The exact breakdown listed: 12
single and 2 married men of the Nevada Northern, 3 Nevada Consolidated Japanese
workers who were not removed or had returned, 9 women, 10 children, and 5 "Japs
(American Born-working [sic])," for a total of 41 "Japs". It is unclear whether this total
included McGill residents.
We can only speculate, but it seems that most Japanese residents of Ruth departed for friendlier territory in Utah and California during this period.

In May, however, a final forced "evacuation" from Ruth apparently came, and this time the FBI was conspicuously absent in vague reports of the "removal." This final blow may have been too much for Nevada Northern employee Yaichiro Homma. The sixty-six-year-old man, employed by the railroad since 1918—a foreman on the line since 1924—hanged himself on the day before his scheduled removal from Ruth. Isakuk Kiyonoga, a former Ruth track man, hanged himself in a sheep wagon near Brigham City, Utah about a month later. Except for a few Japanese Americans who struggled on in McGill, the company towns had been cleansed of their "Japanese problems" by mid 1942.

**Other Reactions to Local "Japanese Questions"**

The internment and "evacuation" of Japanese from Ruth and McGill adds a peculiar chapter to the history of Japanese American wartime experiences. Less dramatic, but equally interesting, are the attitudes and decision-dynamics that affected Japanese Americans living elsewhere in Nevada. The Nevada Consolidated Copper Company is naturally missing from the mix of causal factors elsewhere; otherwise, the list of key decision-making entities was the same in all counties. To an even greater degree, the federal government played a minor and responsive role in these other locations. As in White Pine, key decisions and general policy were largely shaped at the local level and intimately connected to prior historical developments.

Japanese Nevadans did profit, however, from some sound early advice from both the state and federal levels. Three days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Governor Carville

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30 This family's "evacuation" from Ruth is described as such in appeals for monetary redress, which members of the Kawaguchi have submitted to the Office of Redress Administration (copies in author's possession).

31 For accounts of these suicides see *EDT*, 8 May 1942 and 3 June 1942, and the letters of Kame Toyota. Statistics on Homma's service record are in NNRR Letters.
called on his fellow Nevadans to "keep calm and approach this emergency sensibly." The Governor's statement echoed the advice of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Department of Justice. Miles N. Pike, the early U.S. Attorney for wartime Nevada, responded even more quickly than the Governor. Two days after Pearl Harbor he announced that complaints and cases involving Japanese aliens were a federal matter and warned that no arrests should be made by state or local officials.

One week later Pike issued a lengthy statement to guide Nevada's residents, patterned after the words of Attorney General Francis Biddle.

"The United States is at War," Pike wrote, and:

every American will share in the task of defending our country. It is essential at times such as this that we keep out heads, keep our tempers—above all, that we keep in mind what we are defending .... There are living in the United States today aliens who make up 3 1/2 percent of our total population. The aliens for the most part are here legally and are loyal to this country's institutions.... Four out of five of them have family ties in this country—in most cases, American-born children. [Many] have taken steps to become American citizens... [though some] of our aliens are ineligible for citizenship... for technical reasons. The great majority of our alien population will continue to be loyal to our democratic principles if we... permit them to be. As a matter of justice and out of duty to our country and our institutions we must, therefore, foster their loyalty and give it our encouragement....

Pike stated that the federal government was aware of the dangers posed by disloyal persons, but he quickly added that it had "control of the activities" of these individuals. He warned that the government would protect loyal aliens from discrimination or abuse, and he cautioned that persecution of non-citizens might hurt the war effort by turning loyal "aliens in America against America." Although the Japanese were not named herein, emphasis on the rights and loyalty of aliens "ineligible for citizenship" clearly referred to Japanese.

32 Fallon Standard (hereafter cited as FS), 10 December 1941.
33 Nevada State Journal, 9 December 1941.
34 NSJ, 19 December 1941. Also see the Carson City Chronicle (hereafter, CCC), 16 December 1941 and FS, 21 January 1942.
These admonitions from Pike and Carville undoubtedly had an impact, where they were read. But the message was not properly relayed in all communities. The Ely newspaper elected to tailor Pike's message to apply only to Germans and Italians, while the paper in Goldfield, Nevada, almost missed it altogether. Goldfield, another mining town located between Reno and Las Vegas, exhibited near-instant hysteria not unlike the type witnessed in Ruth. While the effects on Japanese Nevadans were nil, a matter reported by the Goldfield News in mid-December illustrates that calming words from the state and federal level could produce only limited results if local forces were predisposed toward fear and hostility.

The Goldfield News reported the incident in question under the headline: "Goldfield Repels Japanese Invasion." As recounted in the article, Sheriff William D. Howard had received word about 7 p.m. on December 14 that a carload of "Japs" was approaching Goldfield from Death Valley Junction, California. "Howard immediately formed a posse all equipped with high powered rifles" and established an interception post on the summit one mile south of town. He selected this site so that "the lives of citizens would not be endangered in the event there was gunfire." Luck was on the side of these unidentified travelers, not the December posse. The "invaders" never turned up, and the Goldfield brigade abandoned its post around midnight.

The next evening more than 150 residents of tiny Esmeralda County attended a meeting of the local defense council. Amos H. Dow, a participant in the stakeout the night before and managing editor of the Goldfield News, was Chairman of the local council. He and other members expressed great satisfaction at the huge turnout and the general success of the meeting. Among others, District Attorney Peter Breen spoke on the importance of

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36 GN, 19 December 1941.
"ferreting out subversive elements and maintaining a vigilance against saboteurs," as reported by Dow's newspaper.37

Defense council records indicate that by December 11 Goldfield was already unduly excited. In addressing this meeting of the executive committee, "Mr. Dow stated that we must all keep our eyes and ears open for subversive activities . . . ." He called attention to the local railroad shops as "a possible military objective," while others expressed concern about protecting the local water supply from contamination. "Senator DeVotie observed that as Goldfield is between Boulder Dam and the Hawthorn Ammunition depot, there might be people in the hills or desert to direct bombers to these places."38

Ferreting out Japanese subversives in Goldfield was an impossibility: no Japanese had lived in Esmeralda County since 1930 or before. Since its founding around 1904, Japanese and other Asians had not been welcome in Goldfield.39 Nevertheless, the case of Goldfield is worth mentioning. It demonstrates the importance of local circumstance. Furthermore, it illustrates that the intensity of local responses to the "Japanese question" was not based primarily on population counts.

Shortly after the Goldfield blockade, Nevada saw the formation of its Alien Enemy Hearing Board (AEHB). Ostensibly a federal body appointed by Attorney General Francis Biddle, four prominent Nevadans sat on the Board. The Board included an attorney and

37 See Ibid., "Goldfield Ready for Emergency" In fairness, Breen also warned against mass hysteria which could result in persecution of innocent persons, reminding listeners that that week marked the 150th Anniversary of the Bill of Rights.

38 See the report, "Meeting of Esmeralda County Defense Council," December 11, 1941, Records of the State Council of Defense, Box 7, in the notebook called "Minutes of County Councils of Defense Meetings" (hereafter MCCDM Notebook), Nevada State Archives, Carson City, Nevada.

former U.S. Attorney for Nevada, George Springmeyer, a reverend, Brewster Adams, and a philosophy professor, Reuben Thompson—all of Reno, and also Claude H. Smith, co-publisher and managing editor of the Fallon Standard newspaper. The board was formed to hear charges against potentially dangerous individuals, not to deal with questions about evacuating any area or group.

With the exception of the White Pine cases, the EAHB held its hearings in Reno.

U.S. Attorney Pike presented "facts," to the board (gathered mainly by the FBI) and forwarded the board's recommendations for unconditional release, parole, or internment to Biddle and the Enemy Alien Control division of the DOJ. Aliens could not have a lawyer at the informal hearings, but they were allowed to respond to charges made against them.40

This research has uncovered no records of the proceedings of the Nevada AEHB. By one account, however, not every member of the Board shared Pike's philosophy of innocent until proven guilty. George Springmeyer did, according to his daughter Sally Springmeyer Zanjani, but Reverend Adams was "anxious to dispatch the Japanese to concentration camps . . . ."41 In any case, it seems that no aliens were interned as a result of the hearings held in Reno. Sally Zanjani indicates that her father felt sympathy for Japanese Nevadans brought before the board and fought to protect the principles of the Constitution.

On the surface, Zanjani's report seems to conflict with an eye-witness account of the internment hearings for the McGill and Ruth Japanese. Most of those were held in Montana in February and were attended by interpreter Herbert V. Nicholson. In a widely quoted account, Nicholson stated in retrospect that the "whole business was a farce."


41 Zanjani, *The Unspiked Rail*. 

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adding that the Nevada "judges' were all busy men and wanted to get home." Most of
the Nevada detainees were interned, which does not reflect favorably on the Board either.

For the purpose of analyzing the mind-set of the board members, however, some of
Nicholson's other observations are worth noting as well. Nicholson thought the
"Department of Justice man in charge of the [Nevada] hearings" (probably Miles Pike)
"was a very fine gentleman and [he] got to really like him." The board members also "were
all very nice gentlemen" who were "the most sympathetic people before they got through
with these poor old fellows" from Ruth and McGill.

Nicholson even stated that the Nevada authorities, seemingly sickened by the farce
themselves, finally asked his opinion on what to do with the White Pine detainees. At his
suggestion, they reportedly let Nicholson offer the men a choice of staying in Montana,
returning "to the mine," or going "to one of the relocation centers." According to
Nicholson, the detainees responded that they wanted to stay in the Montana camp because,
"they never had such good food and such nice quarters in their lives."

Relocation camps were not in existence when these hearings were held. Returning
to work at the Nevada Consolidated properties was not a legitimate option. These and
other inconsistencies call some of Nicholson's memories of specifics into question, but not

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42 Nicholson originally made these statements in his interview with Betty E. Mitson entitled
"A Friend of the American Way" and printed in Arthur A. Hansen and Betty E. Mitson,
Voices Long Silent: An Oral Inquiry into the Japanese American Evacuation (Fullerton:
California State University Oral History Program, 1974). They have found their way into
Paul F. Clark, "Those Other Camps," and Michi Weglyn, Years of Infamy: The Untold

43 Hansen and Mitson, Voices Long Silent, 120-121. Nicholson remembered only three
Nevada Board members (Adams was apparently absent) and confused their names: "There
was Dr. Johnson who had been a Baptist minister and was a professor of philosophy at the
University of Nevada. Then there was a man named Smith who was head of the Falcon
[sic] newspaper in Carson City. And the other man was a lawyer. I've forgotten his
name."

44 Hansen and Mitson, Voices Long Silent, 124.
necessarily his overall impressions of the "sympathetic" Nevada board, which returned to Nevada to conduct other hearings.

Whatever the opinions of the AEHB, other Nevada authorities soon began to send negative messages to the people of the state. The shift is evident in a speech by Governor Carville, delivered on the day after Christmas 1941, in which he proclaimed an "unlimited state of emergency" in Nevada. The Governor pointed no finger at the Japanese specifically. He again urged "calm and mature judgment" and cautioned residents against giving reports about neighbors based on "malice, hatred or spite." Nevertheless, the principal point of his address was to remind residents (possibly distracted by the holiday season) of the need for constant vigilance against sabotage! Carville's calm and mature judgment would deteriorate further in the weeks to come.

State Council of Defense Director Hugh Shamberger was another state official who sent mixed and increasingly negative signals to Nevadans. Shamberger and the defense councils were charged primarily with organizing civilian defense: blackouts, fire and emergency response, and, ironically, "evacuation readiness" in case the West Coast was invaded (Goldfield announced that it was well prepared to accept [white] California evacuees). Nonetheless, many Nevadans viewed Shamberger as the de facto military commander and intelligence man for Nevada too.

Shamberger, probably of "alien-enemy extraction" himself, may have found these aspects of his job increasingly difficult. To his credit, he made "the proper handling of aliens" a main theme of programs delivered to local councils, as he toured the state early in the war. He successfully lobbied the 1943 Nevada legislature for the re-creation of the

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45 CCC. 26 December 1941.

46 As gathered from letters to and from Hugh Shamberger and minutes and reports of local/county council meetings in Records of the State Council of Defense, especially Boxes 6, 7 and 10.
Nevada State Police to professionalize some of his local volunteers. Furthermore, he left to
the Nevada State Archives numerous boxes of records—apparently intact—which aid our
purposes tremendously. That much stated on his behalf, Shamberger was hardly
sympathetic toward the Japanese during the war.

Further handicapping Japanese residents was the resignation of Miles Pike, who
gave up his U.S. Attorney's post to serve in the U.S. Army Infantry in early 1942.
Carville recommended Thomas Craven to replace Pike. Some indication of Craven's
sentiments can be gleaned from a four-page letter he and Carville drafted in October 1942
and planned to send to DeWitt. The letter (apparently never sent) requested DeWitt to issue
a proclamation "That all persons of Japanese ancestry be excluded from the State of
Nevada." The letter also asked for greater control over German and Italian enemy aliens.
Indicating that the two statesmen had learned the language of Japanese exclusion, however,
it further stated that these increased controls might be adjusted in special [non-Japanese]
cases. Craven's cover letter to Carville happily reported that he had recently issued
numerous executive search warrants on Japanese Nevadans. "In one case the [FBI] found
and seized a Japanese book" about military aviation, which Craven apparently took as
confirmation of their deepest fears.

As the first "Japanese question" was being seriously debated, however, local
factors dominated. In these debates, even Carville and Shamberger played relatively minor
roles. These points can be illustrated further by a quick investigation of community

47 For biographical information on Pike, including his 1942 resignation from the position
of U.S. Attorney, see Reno Evening Gazette, 27 May 1969—copy provided by Phillip Earl.
Craven had replaced Pike by late March—see NSJ, 28 March 1942.

48 See the letter to J. L. DeWitt, 7 October 1942, and attached letter from Thomas Craven
to Gov. E. P. Carville, 12 October 1942, Carville Papers, Box 18, File 20. Scrolled
across the bottom of the cover letter was the message: "Attached never sent. File for future
Reference."
attitudes and outcomes in various regions of the state, beginning with the northwest portion.

**TABLE 1**

**JAPANESE POPULATION IN NEVADA, JUNE 7, 1942***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE AND COUNTIES</th>
<th>Japanese Population June 7, 1942 (estimate)</th>
<th>Japanese Population April 1, 1940 (U.S. Census)</th>
<th>Net Movement April 1, 1940-June 7, 1942 (estimate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churchill</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elko</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humboldt</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lander</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nye</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ormsby</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pershing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washoe</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Pine</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>-23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Wartime Civil Control Administration Bulletin #12.49

As shown in Table 1, the combined Japanese-American population of Churchill, Washoe, and Ormsby counties stood at approximately 100 when the war started. Washoe, more specifically Reno, contained the bulk, but nowhere was there a large concentration of Nikkei. Compared against the general populations, the Japanese of Reno-Sparks and the Japanese of Fallon probably represented comparable percentages, and they form the basis for comparing some stark differences in this region.

Masa Kito's history of the Japanese in Churchill County contains very little about wartime experiences, but the picture it paints is a positive one. Drawing primarily on the 1956-recollections of her father, Masa wrote that "a group of prominent townspeople came

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49 This table was compiled from figures in, Western Defense Command and Fourth Army, *Bulletin: United States Wartime Civil Control Administration* (a bound collection which includes Bulletins 1-12).
to our defense and persuaded federal authorities that the Japanese of this area were loyal to
their adopted country." People of the county "showed their respect" for the Japanese and
helped them "during one of the most troubled times of our history." Masa and her father
probably were the first Nevadans to identify prominent townspeople as crucially important
allies.

Haru Kito, about ten years old when the war started, remembered that prominent
residents actually held a town meeting to specifically discuss the local "Japanese question."
As she recalled in a recent conversation, this gathering included the local judge, law-
enforcement officials, influential farmers and business people—even the local postmaster.
All reportedly decided that the Japanese of Fallon presented no threat to the community.
The group (possibly executives of the local defense council) agreed to defend Japanese
residents against any problems that might arise.

The local press offers further insights about public mood and the opinions of one
key local official. Three days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Fallon Standard noted
"some, but slight, evidence of hysteria" in Fallon. The editorial, probably penned by
Claude Smith (soon-to-be-member of Nevada's AEHB) told residents not to become
"unduly" exited about Japanese families living in the area. It suggested that "the people of
Japan want peace, that [its military leaders had] thrown the Pacific into conflict." Smith (it
is assumed) asked people to consider whether "Oriental homemakers," who had come to
American to "rear their families and prosper," would want to go back to live under "the
yoke of the Japanese war lords . . . ." He expressed grief that these people "may endure

50 Masa Kito, "The Japanese in Churchill County, 1956," p. 27, MS #399, Byrd Sawyer
Collection, Nevada Historical Society, Reno.

51 Haru Kito Koto, telephone interview with the author, 6 February 1994. The author
could locate no defense council documents related to these proceedings.
cruel humiliation from neighbors they once held as friends," or, worse yet, from irresponsible journalists. Smith warned the latter that they were "being watched."

In mid-December the Fallon Standard reported that the FBI was properly handling the local alien situation. It cautioned residents against malicious rumors and warned that great harm could be done by "ill considered individual action." When orders came from Washington that month that "alien-enemy" families had to relinquish firearms and other contraband (short-wave radios, cameras, even large flashlights), the paper reported that local Japanese families had responded in short order. Finally, in January the paper laid to rest a persistent rumor by stating unequivocally that federal officials had arrested no enemy aliens in Churchill County.

County Sheriff Ralph J. Vannoy was another authority who apparently aided local Japanese families during that trying winter. The Kito family remembers that the sheriff expressed apologies and reluctance when he arrived at their farm with FBI agents to collect contraband and conduct a mandatory property search. Japanese residents were not treated harshly by local law enforcement or repeatedly harassed by the FBI. Vannoy probably used his influence to curtail activities of federal investigators, and, as commander of the community defense corps, the sheriff also monitored and helped to prevent overzealous reactions by residents.

In the climate of suspicion that characterized the emergency, even neighbors and common citizens posed a potential threat. After all, anyone could raise accusations. Fortunately, however, most neighbors responded with respect and kindness toward the local Japanese. The Miller, Bass, Gomes, and Kent families emerged as staunch allies.

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52 FS, 10 December 1941. A similar editorial, which focused on J. H. Ikari and his family of seven American-born children, can be found in Pioche Record, 18 December 1941. This writer also showed sympathy for all Japanese who "are facing the almost impossible problem of proving their loyalty."

53 FS, 17, 31 December 1941; 21 January 1942.

54 Mary Kito Arita, telephone interview with the author, 22 January 1994.
and local educators, like "Mr. Telecky, Miss Brown, Mrs. Meister and Mrs. McGee," helped ease the pressures on Japanese students in the classroom.55

The greatest single ally of the Fallon Japanese appears to have been produce retailer and shipper Ira L. Kent. Certainly the most influential local business leader in town, Kent was also Chairman of the local defense council and appointed heads of the various divisions.56 He was on a first-name basis with Hugh Shamberger, as gathered from his letters to the State Director. Members of the Kito and Ito families have pointed to Ira Kent as the key individual who took a stand on their behalf during the crisis.57

Some anti-Japanese voices were heard in Fallon as well. But the fears, suspicions, and complaints of this minority were drowned out by the voices of more influential supporters. The overall results are clear. Support from the community, based on long-standing personal ties, Japanese contributions, and years of impeccable conduct, resulted in no arrests or extreme hardships for the Fallon Japanese.

The roughly sixty Japanese Americans living in and around Reno probably enjoyed considerably less support. They were not subjected to the caliber of abuse seen in White Pine, but they confronted more problems than typical by Nevada standards. Several Japanese residents of Reno were taken in for questioning, and eventually the local sheriff arrested one man, Akisumi Fujii, and detained him for approximately three months. Fujii, an avid sportsman, was arrested on January 31 for possessing firearms. The charges against Fuji were later dropped, possibly because non-Japanese residents who knew the Reno gardener lobbied officials for dismissal of his case.58

55 Conversations between Kito and Ito family members and the author.

56 FS, 10 December 1941.

57 Conversations between Kito and Ito family members and the author.

58 See "Japanese Asking Release From Jail," NSJ, 27 March 1942; the Nevada Historical Society (text by Phillip Earl), WWII in Nevada: The Homefront (Reno: Nevada Historical (Continued on next page)
Despite the positive outcomes of this case, there are signs that anti-Japanese sentiments of old quickly resurfaced in Reno. Chinese-American residents of Reno, for instance, sought and obtained identification cards from the Chinese consul in San Francisco to prove they were not Japanese, a typical practice where hostility was intense. Reno and Sparks were the sites of some of the worst anti-Japanese-evacuee hysteria, recounted in the next chapter. While more analysis is needed, Washoe probably cannot be counted as one of Nevada's more tolerant counties during either phase of the crisis.

Restraint was the rule, however, throughout north-central Nevada, particularly in the towns of Elko, Lovelock, and Winnemucca. Approximately sixty Japanese Americans, thirty native-born and thirty foreign-born, lived in Elko County at the outbreak of the war, making this the second or third largest concentration in the state. Nonetheless, at a December 8 gathering of the Elko defense council discussions about "Japanese people and other persons with foreign names" did not come until very late in the meeting. Finally, someone pointed out to the twenty-five people in attendance that "hostility toward such persons had become quite evident since the war started, and that this attitude might prove very detrimental if continued." The members of the council and other civic leaders in attendance agreed to monitor and "meet this problem as it arises . . . ."

The Matsui family has confirmed that local forces worked to prevent the outbreak of hysteria in the town of Elko. "The people in Elko were good to the Japanese families,"

Society, 1992), 14, and Noriko Kunitomi, interview with Buddy Fujii, Reno, Nevada, 2 November 1992, University of Nevada, Reno, Oral History Program. The report of residents lobbying officials for dismissal of the case is from Judy Ishibashi, who said that Fujii once described to her these actions and great public outcry over his arrest—see Judy Ishibashi, interview with the author, Las Vegas, Nevada, 4 October 1992.

59 Earl, _WWII in Nevada_, 17.


they have stated, and the town "rallied to the defense of Japanese neighbors who were abused." Abuse mainly came as a result of federal decrees. Specifically, Japanese railroad employees lost their jobs in February 1942 as the result of one federal order. Both Issei and Nisei workers were affected by this decree, and some probably left the Elko area. Later, when DeWitt made Nevada a military area, a large part of Elko (a railroad hub) became a "prohibited zone." Japanese residents then had to deal with increased military control and a curfew. Nonetheless, Japanese Americans apparently faced very little local abuse in this community.

In Lovelock, news of the attack on Pearl Harbor came as a terrible shock to the Takenaka family. Ted's father in particular "just couldn't believe it." Nevertheless, Ted Takenaka, who was seventeen at the time, never gave any thought to the possibility of his family being relocated during the crisis. Nor does he recall any serious local pressure. One person asked his father if he would pick up their laundry under cover of darkness, and business may have dropped off briefly, but things soon returned to normal.

In accordance with government policy, the Takenaka family turned in short-wave radio parts from their set and elected to smash a large flashlight, rather than relinquish it as contraband. Interestingly, they had some firearms that were not turned over


63 Dismissed railroad workers were directed to report to federal employment offices in Salt Lake City, Reno, or San Francisco according to a report in the Elko Independent (El) 19 February 1942. That article estimated that thirteen men, some with families, were affected in northern Nevada. Table 1, shows a coincidental decline of thirteen Japanese residents in Elko County by June 1942, but Nevada Northern employees and families probably account for part of the drop.

64 Silver Street, where the Matsui family lived, was one boundary of the prohibited zone. For information about the local curfew see below and Ishibashi, interview with the author, 4 October 1992.

("... nothing was said about it" and the matter was "quieted down"). The FBI came and gave their house a quick walk-through; that about ended federal meddling in Lovelock.66

Frank and Haru ("Snow") Kihara are a Nisei couple who had grown up in Ely and were operating a laundry in Winnemucca at the outbreak of the war. They recently shared similar recollections of wartime moods and reactions in their north-central Nevada town. Snow and Frank stated that the people of Winnemucca also treated them with respect. "There were a lot of good people who befriended us," Snow reported, "especially A.V. Tallman." Tallman was a local rancher and state senator from Winnemucca, and in 1942 he was the Republican candidate opposing Carville in the gubernatorial race. According to Snow, Tallman told the Nisei couple: "if anybody does anything to you, you just come to me."67

During the crisis the newspapers of this region published few signs of local "Japanese problems" either. Newspapers here acted responsibly as much in what they chose not to print as in what they did print. While these newspapers hardly dictated public opinion, they can again tell us something about it.

The Elko Independent and the Lovelock Review-Miner exhibited more restraint than any other newspapers in the state. In part this might have been because neither paper received stories coming off the United Press news wire, which turned anti-Japanese very early on. While the war effort received considerable front-page attention, state and local news remained the top priority in these two home-town papers. Still, an opportunity existed to capitalize on sensational "news" about the threat of sabotage and the reality of control measures being imposed on Japanese Americans. These papers chose not to capitalize on it.

66 Ibid.

67 Humboldt Sun, 28 February 1992, provided by Sue Fawn Chung.
The arrests and removal of Japanese workers in White Pine County went unreported in neighboring Elko County. Conversely, both the Elko Independent and the Lovelock Review-Miner carried Pike's plea for fair treatment of aliens. Neither paper described any problems with local alien registration or the turning in of contraband. When Japanese Americans were dismissed from the railroads, both papers showed some compassion toward those who were affected. The Independent tried to determine how many Japanese were hurt by the order in the surrounding area, and it noted that "several of the families affected [were] well known in Elko." The Lovelock Review-Miner showed similar distaste over the order, noting: "One section foreman who had held his job for 35 years was among the victims" (emphasis added). Visual images were important as well. Pictures of dangerous or suspicious-looking Japanese did not adorn the pages of these newspapers. Indeed, in one issue the Independent instead carried a heart-warming picture of a Japanese girl putting a flower behind the ear of a Filipino soldier of the Hawaiian territorial guard. The picture and the caption conveyed a message of unity against a common enemy. Finally, and significantly, these newspapers consistently used "Japanese," as opposed to "Japs," in reference to Japanese Americans well into 1942. It appears the Review-Miner refrained from printing "Japs" in association with Japanese Americans until May 1942, which may be unprecedented in the Far West.

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68 For related articles see LRM, 5 February 1942; EI, 1 January 1942. The Winnemucca paper also carried Pike's statement and reported compliance with regulations—see, HS, 1, 5, 6, 16 January; 2, 6, 10 February 1942.

69 EI, 19 February 1942; LRM, 26 February 1942.

70 EI, 22 January 1942.

71 The author's search of the Independent found that "Jap" and unsympathetic material about the Japanese did not start showing up until March—see, EI, 5, 12, 19 March 1942, and it did not find "Jap" in the Lovelock paper until 7 May 1942.
The Humboldt Star in Winnemucca, a larger newspaper that did receive material from the United Press (UP), was not so free from anti-Japanese propaganda. "Japs" showed up here (primarily in article headlines) from the time it printed a UP story out of Ely on the initial actions there, throughout the crisis period. The Star kept readers fully abreast of actions taken against the Japanese on the West Coast, especially as the evacuation issue heated up in March 1942. This paper was hardly sympathetic to the plight of the coastal Japanese; however, the tone of its articles was not particularly condemnatory either. It did not editorialize on the issue of the Japanese, and, very importantly, articles that addressed the "Japanese problem" included no references to local Japanese residents. So much cannot be said for the other major newspapers of the state.

Why was there such atypical professionalism from journalists in north-central Nevada? Part of the answer might have to do with small-town realities: Ted Takenaka reported that he and his siblings had classmates and friends whose parents operated the Lovelock Review-Miner. A simpler explanation might be that newspapers—at least in theory—are in the business of printing the truth. The truth of the matter was that there were no "problems" to report involving Japanese residents of this region. Of course, similar circumstances in other towns often sparked very different newspaper responses.

As detailed in my first article, Japanese Americans of Las Vegas and Overton also enjoyed incredible support during the crisis, support rooted in local history. The impeccable reputation and extended contributions of the Japanese in southern Nevada paid off in remarkable ways. Jimmy Yamashita, a Nisei of Overton, was Student Body President of his high school at the start of the war. He survived a recall vote demanded by

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72 For some examples see: "Jap Populace In Ely Area Under Close Scrutiny," HS, 9 December 1941; "Japs In Jail," HS, 5 January 1942; "Japs Settling In Humboldt Are Opposed," HS, 7 April 1942; and, "Ruth Jap Takes Own Life In Utah," HS, 3 June 1942.

a few misguided parents. Clark County Sheriff Eugene Ward, who had previously been a successful produce retailer, staunchly defended the Japanese farm families of the area. One Las Vegas Issei was interned (the only Nevada internee we know of who was not from White Pine County). But that action came only after this individual had publicly aired his sympathy for Japan through letters to the local newspaper. Additional research has not dramatically altered my prior conclusion that Japanese Americans suffered relatively little in southern Nevada through January and February 1942, except at the hands of the local press.74

Nonetheless, other scholars have noted that Las Vegas was undergoing dramatic transformations just before the war started. These background developments very likely affected local experiences, attitudes, and image-makers too. At a personal level, interracial trust, respect, and cooperation were deteriorating rapidly by 1941. Las Vegas was growing and changing from a railroad and agricultural town into a tourism and industrial hub. Some leaders of the new tourism industry began to advocate Jim Crow policies against blacks, something new to the region, to satisfy the segregationist mentality of tourists from California and the South. The region was courting a greater federal presence and joining the political mainstream of the state.75

Furthermore, Clark County had become the most significant defense area in Nevada by the outbreak of the war. It boasted Boulder Dam since the thirties, and by mid 1941 an Army Air Corps gunnery school and a magnesium processing plant, Basic Magnesium, were under construction near Las Vegas. Pressure groups, undetected by my previous study, stood poised to have an impact on wartime events.

74 Russell, "A Fortunate Few."

The most significant fact to emerge from additional study is startling new information about a local plot to evacuate Japanese Americans from southern Nevada. Records of the Clark County Defense Council (CCDC) make no mention of any "Japanese problems" in the region until March 10, 1942. That evening, however, executives of the CCDC heard Executive Secretary I. R. Crandall state that the Chamber of Commerce had appealed to the council for help in having the area declared a "military area for evacuation of all aliens." Crandall then read a letter he had recently sent to Shamberger, which asked:

> Will you kindly contact Lieut. General John L. Dewitt... , asking that this portion of Nevada be included in the military zone recently designated by him which will enforce an order for the evacuation of all Japanese aliens, American citizens of Japanese descent, German aliens and Italian aliens in that order.\(^76\)

Three days later, Crandall announced the plan to a general meeting of the defense council, adding that Shamberger "felt certain immediate action would be taken." He also read Shamberger's response, which stated that Crandall's letter had been passed on to the Governor because "such a request through Governor Carville would have more weight... ." Shamberger's letter included nothing about imminent action, but it did state that he "quite approve[d] of this measure."\(^77\)

The way in which exclusion plans were introduced to the CCDC indicates that the plot may have been hatched by a small group. Al Cahlan, the managing editor of the anti-Japanese *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, was a shadowy figure on the CCDC Executive Committee and may have been involved.\(^78\) Moreover, this atypical Nevada plea for

\(^76\) See Minutes of Executive Council Meeting, 10 March 1942, *Records of the State Council of Defense*, Box 7, MCCDM Notebook, and Cradall to Shamberger, Box 10, "Clark County" File.

\(^77\) Minutes of (General) Meeting, 13 March 1942, *Records of the State Council of Defense*, Box 7, MCCDM Notebook, and Shamberger to Cradall, 9 March 1942, Box 10, "Clark County" File.

\(^78\) For Cahlan's press campaign see Russell, "A Fortunate Few." Though rarely present at council meetings, Cahlan was a member of the executive board of the CCDC. He was (Continued on next page)
exclusion was directly tied to the more successful evacuation being plotted on the West Coast. It was part of the other "Japanese question." addressed in the following chapter.

Although it hardly constituted a major campaign, the CCDC's call for Japanese removal cannot be dismissed as a minor aberration. Defense council records show no sign of opposition to the evacuation plan, regardless of who launched it. Anti-Japanese sentiment had certainly penetrated the minds of some powerful locals by that point, creating one essential precondition for an evacuation decision. Nonetheless, the plot probably came too late in the drama and was too politely delivered to cause an expansion of the evacuation zones into southern Nevada. Here again, positive circumstances and local history had insulate Japanese Nevadans from potentially devastating results.

Chairman of the State Democratic Committee (see GN, 29 May 1942), thus he had close ties to Carville; he grew up in Reno, where anti-Japanese sentiment was widespread; and he may have been a member of the local Chamber of Commerce.
CHAPTER FOUR

NEVADA'S RESPONSES TO THE REGIONAL "JAPANESE QUESTION"

The belated attempt to have "enemy aliens" removed from Clark County might be viewed as a climax in the first round of debates over the "Japanese question" in wartime Nevada. It is probably better viewed, however, as an opening volley in the second round, when Nevadans joined other inland states in opposing the free migration of Japanese Americans from the West Coast to the interior. Indeed, the covert plan to rid Clark County of its Japanese was first broached to the local defense council in direct response to news of "a movement on to bring in Japanese [evacuees] to help harvest crops in the Moapa Valley." Naturally, if Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt made southern Nevada into exclusion territory, this would forestall any importation. The Clark County Defense Council agreed to shelve the question of whether to oppose the proposed influx until DeWitt reached his decision.

Ironically, southern Nevada would become the only region of the state to witness a sizable influx of Japanese laborers during the war. But this would not occur until after forced evacuation and the concentration camps became a reality—until after the second "Japanese question" had run its destructive course. The new crisis was a regional one that changed common Nevada images of the Japanese and involved Nevadans in the process.

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1 Emphasis added, see Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, March 10, 1942, and Minutes of Council Meeting, March 13, 1942, in Records of the State Council of Defense, Box 7, "Minutes of County Councils of Defense Meetings" (MCCDM) Notebook, Nevada State Archives, Carson City, Nevada.
that created the relocation camps. As Roger Daniels once phrased it, hostility directed at evacuees by the people and governments of the interior western states created "a relocation program that was even more repressive than those in charge had originally intended it to be." Nevada responses fit squarely into the regional pattern. Nonetheless, images and experiences of Japanese Americans continued to be influenced by subtle variations in local Nevada circumstances, even during this phase of "questioning."

The emergence of the second "Japanese problem" in Nevada can actually be traced back to the months of January and February. In mid January (somewhat later than in California) propaganda about "fifth columnists" operating on the West Coast began to infiltrate Nevada's major newspapers. By early February, residents of Las Vegas, Reno, and Ely were reading near-daily reports of "raids" on Japanese homes, farms and businesses in California. The "G-men" were busy netting "large stores of contraband" and other incriminating evidence, while exposing Japanese language schools, churches, and political associations as fronts for subversive activity. Meanwhile, the Nevada public read damaging assessments of Japanese-American loyalty offered by respected figures like Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, Commander DeWitt, and others. These papers presented the "California Japs" as a different breed altogether.

While the DOJ and the military had arranged the evacuation of some Japanese Americans as early as January 1942, the concept of broad "exclusion" developed gradually. Mass evacuation became a likely possibility only when DeWitt was empowered with the authority to exclude "any and all persons" from designated military areas by Executive

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3 Anti-Japanese news stories are numerous and easy to spot by scanning Nevada newspapers from late January through March 1942, especially the ones in Ely, Reno, and Las Vegas. Although it is flawed by relying too much on newspapers to draw broad conclusions, Gary P. BeDunnah, "The Oriental Dilemma: Anti-Japanese Attitudes in Nevada, December 1941-June 1942, 1965," TM [copy], written for a history course at Nevada Southern University and found in the Wilbur Shepperson Papers, Nevada Historical Society, Reno, thoroughly covers the changing mood of the Nevada press.
Order 9066. DeWitt and his myriad advisors wasted little time in exercising those powers. With little regard for constitutional rights or fair play, DeWitt issued a number of proclamations in February and March which were designed to force Japanese Americans, aliens and citizens alike, from the West Coast.

The vast majority of the coastal Japanese did not move because they felt they had no place to go. Within weeks, the military would end the dilemma through forced removal from Military Area No. 1. But about 8,000 Japanese Americans relocated "voluntarily." Roughly half of those sought safe haven in eastern California (Military Area No. 2), and eventually they were sent to the camps as well. Many of the other half passed over into Nevada, looking for a place to settle here or heading for points east.

Governor Edward Carville, probably reflecting the mood of most of his Nevada constituents, quickly came out against voluntary evacuation. He wrote to the congressional committee that was debating a bill for taking Japanese Americans into custody and stated that it was unwise to let enemy aliens "roam at large" in inland states. "Concentration camps" would be the most feasible solution to the problem, in Carville's opinion. Letters from both the governor and his state attorney general argued that the bill being debated was constitutional and badly needed as a protective measure. The letters urged early passage of Senate Bill 2293.

Newspapers throughout the state supported the governor, but the most vocal opposition to voluntary relocation came from the northwest region. An editorial in the Sparks Tribune, reprinted in the Carson City Chronicle, heartily endorsed the governor's stand. It found "no reason that this state or the nation should be generous with these aliens." And, as for the American-born "Japs," the editorial chastised "sentimentalists"

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4 For more on the periods of "voluntary" and forced evacuation, see the studies cited in my introduction, particularly the works by Roger Daniels and Morton Grodzins.

5 Copies of these letters are in the Carville Papers, Nevada State Archives, and references to them are made in the report that accompanied S.B. 2293.
inclined to believe that they were more loyal. If these "yellow so-called citizens" are loyal, it asked, why have they not once led officials to hiding places of weapons and other contraband? "No, the governor is right," proffered the Tribune. The Japanese "must be interned and not permitted any association with the people of this free land."6

The Nevada State Journal called the removal of Japanese aliens from areas vulnerable to sabotage one of the most important tasks facing the government, adding: "it must be done at once, not six months from now." But the Reno paper made it clear that "Nevada certainly does not want any Japanese aliens to settle in this state ...." Illustrating that all concerns were not based strictly on public safety considerations, it mentioned that interior states did not want Japanese placed on farms or in employment where "over the course of time, they might acquire a foothold."7

The message and tone of these editorials was strikingly similar to ones that had appeared in 1905 and the early 1920s. Conversely, ambivalence and far less rancor was evident in editorials that appeared in the Fallon Standard. One such article asked rhetorically: "Why Pick On Nevada." The author (Claude Smith in all likelihood) stated that California farm operators, who wanted cheap help and benefited from the "highly-skilled and hardworking" Japanese, were responsible for the "Orientals" being in this country. Why then should Nevada become the "dumping ground" for these "undesirables?" He believed that many were loyal to America, but he thought by then that the difficulties in sorting "the sheep from the goats" were too great. "A common solution heard on street corners," he wrote, was "to move them all on west--out into the salty waters of the Pacific." Smith was obviously appalled by such suggestions. He concluded that Nevada should agree to receive some of these "unfortunate people"--under armed guard, 

6 "The Governor is Right," Sparks Tribune, 3 March 1942; Carson City Chronicle (CCC), 6 March 1942.

but he added that California, Oregon, and Washington should not insist that they be entirely removed from those states.8

In another lengthy editorial, printed a week later, the Standard reiterated its stand against a mandated influx of "California Japs." Nonetheless, this article chastised "hysterical Reno people," and persons in Fallon "guided more by their emotions than by intelligence," who would not have any evacuees placed in guarded camps within Nevada.

Smith's newspaper offered that the people of Owens Valley, California, where the Manzanar Relocation Center was being constructed, were taking a more "sensible attitude toward this problem." They recognized the benefits that a carefully guarded force of Japanese labor could bring to local agriculture. While pointing out some difficulties with implementing such plans in Fallon, the article offered that construction of camps locally might provide new impetus to the long-held dream of a local sugar beet industry. Vacated Civil Conservation Corps facilities near Fallon should at least receive consideration as possible "internment" camps.9

Smith was not the only Fallon resident to express opinions about the new "Japanese question." The local American Legion post also showed interest in putting guarded Japanese "labor battalions" to work on local agriculture projects, so long as they did not compete with local workers and were removed after the war. This resolution, however, had a darker main objective. Drafted by Clyde Gummow, and unanimously approved by Fallon post members, the resolution's first aim was to strip the children of "Asiatic Mongolians" of their U. S. citizenship. It argued that every effort should be made to pass


9 "California Japs," FS, 11 March 1942. Chairman Ira L. Kent of the Churchill defense council also showed interest in finding suitable local sites to house "enemy aliens and their families." His motives apparently were more altruistic—see Kent to Carville, 6 February 1942, Records of the State Council of Defense, Box 10; File marked "Churchill County."
the necessary legislation through Congress.  

As new images proliferated, some newspapers found evidence that fifth columnists had already penetrated Nevada's borders. The people of Fallon were greeted on February 4 with a report that two "Japs," a man and a woman, had been spotted taking pictures of Lahonton Dam. In March, the Las Vegas Review-Journal covered an investigation into reports (naturally false) that Boy Scouts had been attacked by "little brown men" while on an outing near Boulder Dam.

Another interesting news/feature story with an accompanying picture appeared in the Nevada State Journal. The photo showed a college boy kneeling beside a headstone in the local cemetery. The caption read: "1st Jap Interred in Reno." Written upon the headstone were the words: "William Takehashi, died October 8, 1907, age 61 years. He was the first Japanese to land in the U.S.A. 1867." The college student reportedly came upon the grave by accident. After some brief history on Takehashi, the article concluded, "Being the first Japanese to land in the United States was undoubtedly an honor, but those who land here in 1942 may not fare so well (emphasis added)." Here, perhaps, was also an underlying message for other Japanese Americans who might also have been considering a move toward Reno.

The situation deteriorated further after Nevada was declared Military Area Number 5 by DeWitt's Public Proclamation Number 2. Except for downtown sections of Reno and Elko, the newly created "prohibited zones" in Nevada were confined to areas directly around railway bridges, military installations, airports, radio stations, dams, and power

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10 FS, 25 March 1942; 1 April 1942.

11 For the Fallon example, see "FBI Investigates Jap Picture Taking [at Lahonton Dam], FS, 4 February 1942, while the Boy Scout case, eventually exposed as a hoax, is addressed in my article, "A Fortunate Few."

12 NSJ, 6 March 1942.
and industrial plants. Nevertheless, the new order imposed curfews and travel restrictions on enemy aliens and "all persons of Japanese blood" living in, or passing through, Nevada. This latest order almost certainly worked to increase tensions and suspicions concerning West Coast evacuees.

By this time, fierce anti-Japanese sentiment had surfaced on the streets of Reno. Many businesses of the town refused gas, food, lodging and other services to evacuees, forcing some people to return to California. Several dozen mothers with small children had to camp at the railroad station in Reno because local hotels would not accommodate them. Because of instances like these, the War Relocation Authority called Reno "the weakest link" in its relocation effort.!

The northwestern counties experienced most of the new hysteria, but by no means was it confined to that region. The White Pine Council of Defense sent a secret resolution to Carville and Shamberger expressing its unanimous support for the Governor's stand. Evacuees passing through Ely suffered ostracism and harassment not unlike the type seen in Reno. Tensions continued to mount in southern Nevada. Nonetheless, the major roads and highways leading from California into northwestern Nevada were among the most dangerous for Japanese travelers.

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13 See NSJ, 28 March 1942, and Ely Daily Times (EDT), 17 March 1942, which outlines prohibited ("military") zones in Reno and quotes DeWitt as "emphasizing there will be no exemptions from the law, 'and this is final.'" The first alien convicted of violating the curfew in Reno was Masata Umeda, an evacuee from California, who was sentenced to one year in jail—see Humboldt Star (HS), 22 April 1942.


15 See Harry M. Watson to Hugh Shamberger, 25 March 1942; Shamberger to Watson, 27 March 1942, and similar letters between Shamberger and A. E. Briggs, *Records of the State Council of Defense*, Box 10; File marked "White Pine." Harsh treatment of evacuees in Ely is also addressed in Sam Hase, interview with the author, 18 October 1993. Southern Nevada apparently was not a major evacuation route, but some increased agitation was evident there around this time as well.
Several March incidents added fuel to protests in the northwest region and spurred Governor Carville into stern preventative action. One case involved a car accident in Minden, near Carson City, where a vehicle carrying four Los Angeles Japanese crashed into three gas pumps at a service station. No details were provided on how the accident happened, but all four Japanese Americans were arrested. One had reportedly sustained injuries in the crash and was taken to the Reno hospital. According to newspaper reports, he said that they had come to look at farm land for sale in Mason Valley (Lyon County) and planned to bring their families there.\(^{16}\) About the same time, eight Japanese were greeted by hostile citizens in Yerrington (also in Lyon) and were forced to return to California.\(^{17}\) In a phone conversation with DeWitt, Sheriff Matt Penrose of Lyon County reportedly told the general that farmers in his area had held a meeting and declared that they wanted no Japanese there, despite local labor shortages.\(^{18}\)

Concurrently, Governor Carville called DeWitt's headquarters in San Francisco demanding an emergency meeting with the general. He told headquarters that Nevada would not tolerate any migration of Japanese farmers from California. Carville also issued a statement to the United Press (which was carried by California newspapers) stating that Japanese evacuees coming into Nevada would go into "concentration camps," and that he was going to San Francisco to speak with DeWitt and "get this Japanese problem settled."

Once again the *Nevada State Journal* endorsed the governor's stand, reiterating that "the problem . . . goes beyond the immediate [military] necessity . . . ." Nevada wanted

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\(^{16}\) For details on Minden accident and reactions see, *EDT*, 23 March 1942; *HS*, 24 March 1942; and, *NSJ*, 24, 28, 29 March 1942. The highway makes a sharp turn where the accident occurred.

\(^{17}\) See War Relocation Authority, "Report on Meeting, April 7, Salt Lake City, with Governors, Attorneys General, and other State and Federal Officials of 10 Western States" (April 8, 1942), p. 12, WRA Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

\(^{18}\) *EDT*, 24 March 1942.
no cheap labor of the Japanese variety "pulling down its standard of living" and
depreciating land values. 19

Perhaps Governor Carville kept his appointment with the general in San Francisco
on March 27. If so, it was unnecessary, for the previous day DeWitt decided to freeze
voluntary evacuation. 20 On the day of the scheduled meeting, DeWitt issued Public
Proclamation No. 4, which froze voluntary evacuation effective March 29. Thereafter, the
army would forcibly remove all Japanese Americans in California to makeshift assembly
centers, then to interior relocation camps. Carville and his vocal constituents in
northwestern Nevada were not the only ones calling for a halt to voluntary evacuation.
Protests from eastern California and other inland states were very intense as well. In all
likelihood, however, Nevada's hostile response to voluntary evacuation figured heavily
into the decision to end the effort.

The combined political and public thrust to prevent voluntary migration into Nevada
were effective. Only a handful of Japanese managed to escape California to settle in
Nevada, and most of those seem to have had close family ties here. 21 A few without
family in Nevada did come in; most of them settled around Winnemucca.

A major controversy arose in Winnemucca when former resident Dr. Harry C.
Warren (by then practicing in Palo Alto, California) allowed a family of six Japanese
Americans to relocate to his Bottle Creek ranch near town. Many residents apparently
feared that Warren was about to establish his own Japanese farm colony and that these six
newcomers posed a sabotage threat to nearby mercury mines. The local American Legion

19 See "Alien Curfew Ordered; Carville Protests Jap Influx," and "Keep The Japs Out,"
NSJ, 24 March 1942.

20 As mentioned in HS, 26 March 1942.

21 Accounts of some family members moving from California during this period can be
found in Takenaka, interview with the author, 23 October 1992, and Russell, "A Fortunate
Few."
post also took the lead in addressing this "problem." It drew up a resolution to have the Japanese newcomers removed and to prevent any other unguarded Japanese settlements in the area. Meanwhile, in a lengthy letter to the editor, printed in the Humboldt Star, Warren attempted to assuage concerns about his intentions and about the character of the family at his ranch property.\textsuperscript{22}

Ten more Japanese may have come to Humboldt County during the evacuation period (see Table 1, Chapter 3). But Japanese figures by counties actually indicate a slight population decrease in Nevada by June 1942. For all neighboring inland states, there was a significant increase. All surrounding states contained internment or relocation camps by then; still, Nevada cannot be counted as a major destination for the "voluntary evacuees."\textsuperscript{23}

By April, in any case, voluntary Japanese evacuation from the coastal states had come to a virtual halt. The newly-formed War Relocation Authority (WRA), a civilian agency which was to oversee the evacuation, began searching for new solutions. It called a meeting with governors and other officials of ten western states, including Nevada. The WRA's objectives were to: discuss the problems associated with mass evacuation and relocation; outline the federal government's program for handling the situation; gather viewpoints and suggestions; and seek the cooperation of officials from the states involved.\textsuperscript{24} The WRA hoped to establish farm colonies and employ the Japanese in other industries to assist the war effort.

Attitudes at the conference in Salt Lake City virtually mirrored the hostility captured by the interior press. A confidential report of the meeting noted "complete and bitter

\textsuperscript{22} See HS, 2,3,7 April 1942. No name was given for the family, which included an Issei couple and four children ranging in age from twelve to twenty. Warren wrote that the father had been engaged in Palo Alto agriculture for twenty years.

\textsuperscript{23} Most "voluntary evacuees" moved to the states of Colorado and Utah, which contained the largest pre-war populations of Japanese Americans in the interior.

\textsuperscript{24} WRA, "Meeting with Western Governors," pp. 1-2.
animosity" toward the idea of establishing Japanese communities in inland states; refusal to recognize that Japanese-American citizens had any rights in the matter; a definite suspicion that California was taking advantage of the situation to use interior states as a "dumping ground for an old problem"; and a demand that the government should guarantee to remove all Japanese evacuees from their states at the end of the war.

Each governor had a chance to speak. Overwhelmingly, they opposed any plan to let the Japanese buy land to establish farm colonies or other unguarded settlements in their states. Perhaps the most steadfast opponent of voluntary movement was Governor Nels Smith of Wyoming, who said the people of his state disliked all "Orientals." He had already told a Japanese delegation of potential land buyers that there would be "Japs hanging from every pine tree" if he allowed these people in. Somewhat less emphatically, Governor Carville repeated many of the same points brought up by the other governors. He felt that the states could handle the problem of incarcerating Japanese if given federal funds to hire guards.25

The conference did not work to improve the Governor's opinions, and Carville maintained a crusade against any type of relocation into Nevada throughout most of the war. Soon after the meeting, he stated that Nevada was not anxious to have the Japanese move in and that they would be accepted only if strict provisions were followed and the federal government picked up the expense. By that time he had also proposed a "double-check" program for cataloguing movements and identifying aliens that might enter as part of the relocation. The program included police inspections of all premises where they might locate and inspection of all enemy aliens (meaning, apparently, more investigations of Japanese residents) to determine if their activities were "helpful to the enemy or injurious to residents of Nevada."26


26 Goldfield News (GN), 17 April 1942.
Carville’s personal papers at the Nevada State Archives contain several letters that provide insights as to why Carville so vehemently opposed Japanese resettlement in Nevada. Those letters, which were mainly responses to farmers who had written to request Japanese workers, indicate that the governor was partly concerned about the Japanese as a wartime security threat. His greatest concern, however, was that these faceless Japanese would gain a "foothold in [the] good valleys of this state, which should be retained for the benefit of our [white] citizens." He added that he had seen this happen in Southern California, where "they drove the white people out because it was impossible for the latter to compete with them ...." He feared that "... it would not be long before they could be running counties of small population politically, economically and otherwise." Carville shared with at least one constituent "reliable" information that California had no intention of allowing the Japanese to return after the war.\footnote{Most of this material is in the Carville Papers, Box 23, Files 22 and 23.}

Local reactions varied over the possibility of building a Nevada relocation camp. Curiously, the newspaper in Goldfield seemed to favor the idea. It reprinted an editorial from a paper in a neighboring California county which noted the "astounding" economic benefits anticipated where Manzanar was being constructed.\footnote{\textit{GN}, 1 May 1942.} In previously tolerant Lovelock, meanwhile, a group of fifty persons (mostly farmers and their wives) signed a petition stating their disapproval of the "entry, infiltration or colonization of Japanese persons in [their] county for any purpose whatsoever." On the other side of this region, however, Elko ranchers faced with a labor shortage reportedly favored the ideal of bringing Japanese labor in to help harvest hay. One rancher is said to have demanded: "Send us Japs or monkeys—anything to get the hay cut."\footnote{See \textit{GN}, 3 April 1942; \textit{Lovelock Review-Miner (LRM)}, 16 April 1942; 7 May 1942, the last of which contains quote from Elko rancher. It is odd, in the midst of all the controversy, to run across an ad for the "Up-to-Date Laundry" or a feature article (Continued on next page)
Some land holdings in Nevada eventually were proposed as relocation center sites to the WRA. H. J. Small, an agricultural engineer, did an extensive study of potential locations for camps in northern Nevada, which he submitted for WRA consideration. The WRA was interested mainly in government land with water rights, good soil conditions, nearby power, access to railroad sidings, and isolation from existing settlements. Small recommended several sites (mostly private land) as having excellent potential, while one Kenneth Hutton of California attempted to interest the WRA in two ranch properties he owned in Lyon and Douglas counties.30

Although the relocation camps were built in desolate locations (and Nevada contained some of the most desolate federal land around) no camps were constructed in Nevada. Small's report was submitted in the Fall of 1942 (relatively late), and potential Nevada sites may not have offered the right combination of attributes. Nevertheless, the phobia expressed by Governor Carville and northwestern Nevada (in particular) quite likely directed the WRA search away from the deserts of Nevada.

The desert dwellers of southern Nevada emerged as sole benefactors of Japanese camp labor, after an intense campaign to secure temporary work crews. Edwin Marshall, President of the Muddy Valley Irrigation Company in Overton, proposed a public works project to involve Japanese labor in improving flood control and water supply systems in the Moapa Valley. The WRA gave "serious consideration" to this project, but it never matured.31 Marshall and his Overton associates did succeed, however, in securing Japanese farm laborers and in turning the Clark County Defense Council around on this

30 As gathered from a collection of letters on Nevada and WRA proposals found at the Federal Archives and Record Center, San Bruno, California. The exact cite for these records, copies of which were passed on to me by Sue Fawn Chung, is not known.

31 Ibid.
issue. Moapa Valley's leaders demonstrated a crucial need for Japanese labor to help plant and harvest the 1942 tomato crop. Once again, Carville opposed the plan, but after intense lobbying he eventually helped secure the necessary workers from the WRA.32

Most of the Japanese farm laborers who came to Overton stayed only about three months. Their presence caused some agitation in this otherwise tolerant Southern-Nevada community, but ultimately the town gave much of the credit for the $100,000 harvest to the laborers. The Moapa Valley planned to have them return the following spring.33 Others would come in, but the eighty-three workers imported in 1942 constituted the closest thing to an "invasion" of Nevada by evacuees during the war.

In any case, Governor Carville used the continued presence of a few Japanese workers in Overton to renew his campaign against any further influx of these "suspect persons." Through the press, in the state legislature, and on a sweep through several major towns in 1943, the governor reiterated his vigorous opposition to any use of Japanese labor. He also compiled and publicized quotes drawn from some fellow Nevadans to prove that his opinions were widespread.

One rancher writing to Carville had called the "Japs . . . the most treacherous race in the world." A merchant had chimed in that Japanese Americans are "just what their name implies, Japanese first and American second." A Nevada businessman expressed his belief that "the garbage collector will find a few dead ones when they [sic] come around to collect" if the Japanese were allowed into his town. Carville added his own theory that a single disloyal Japanese, traveling by car across Nevada, might set fire to vast stretches of timber and range land in a single night. This newspaper article quoted Carville as stating:


33 Russell, "A Fortunate Few."
"I am in most vigorous and hearty accord with Lieut. Gen. John L. DeWitt's statement that 'a Jap is still a Jap.'"34

As it was inclined to do, the Las Vegas Review-Journal backed the Governor's latest campaign. Al Cahlan's Journal "oppos[ed] the Japanese influx for two reasons: 1.—Danger to the war effort in this area, [and] 2.—Danger of their becoming permanent residents." The paper wanted the problem taken to the legislature to insure that Nevada would not be "stuck with the Japs" that had managed to slip in. Forgetting several decades of notable contributions, Cahlan's newspaper concluded: "We don't want the yellow Aryans in these parts. We've seen too much of them already."35

34 Carson City Daily Appeal, 8 June 1943; Ely Daily Times, 5 February 1943; and "Carville Papers," Box 23, Files 22 and 23 for actual letters from which these quotes were drawn.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONQUERING NEGATIVE IMAGES IN A "FREE STATE"

This study promised to address images and experiences of the Japanese in wartime Nevada, and so far discussions have mainly been about conflicting and evolving images. By now it should be clear that images and experiences were closely related. Particularly during the critical early stages of the war, Japanese Americans of Nevada were active agents. Before and during the fact, they had helped to shape the positive images that dominated in most communities and led to favorable "decisions." Nonetheless, Euro-American characters have dominated discussions thus far. This final chapter backtracks to reveal a bit more about the war's impact on Japanese Americans in this part of the interior West. Turning then to the post-evacuation period, it also describes how Japanese Nevadans struggled to reform negative images in the wake of debates over the second "Japanese question."

Numbering only in the thousands, Japanese Americans of the "free" interior West have rarely had much of their wartime experiences told. The combined literature concentrates on the tens of thousands who spent the war behind barbed wire and neglects the rest.¹ The story of the relocation and the American concentration camps hold crucially important lessons for all Americans. But the struggles waged against prejudice and discrimination outside the camps deserve considerably more attention than they have received.

¹ Roger Daniels, Prisoners Without Trial (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), as a representative example, provides little more than one paragraph about those who "remained at liberty" in the interior—see p. 53.
There are some problems, to be sure, with using Nevada examples as a guide to
general experiences of the Japanese in inland states. Throughout most of the war, the
Nevada Nikkei enjoyed certain advantages vis-a-vis all Japanese Americans around them.
Nevada hosted no Japanese prisoners in internment or relocation camps. As a result, the
several controversies that grew up around the administration of the camps influenced
Nevada sentiments only slightly. There were very few real military targets or large
restricted areas in Nevada. There were no Japanese-American institutions to be targeted or
defended and no large, segregated Japanese communities left in the state after the White
Pine calamity. Nonetheless, Japanese Nevadans confronted both common and peculiar
troubles, and the brief chronology introduced below probably has some relevance to the
study of the larger region.

The company towns aside, difficulties began for Nevada's ethnic Japanese in
January 1942, when FBI operatives visited virtually every Japanese-American home in
search of contraband and "disloyals." In the more tolerant communities, like Las Vegas
and Fallon, local sheriffs generally accompanied the FBI on these one-time visits and acted
as sympathetic mediators. Conversely, some Japanese families in Reno and Ely were
subjected to repeated, sneak-visits by federal agents and the local police.3

Losses incurred as a result of contraband sweeps also varied. The greatest loss for
the Kito and Ito families of Fallon was their Japanese language texts, which the local
sheriff suggested that they burn. They turned in their family radio, but it was soon

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2 In states like Wyoming, charges that the government was "coddling the Japs" in the
camps surfaced at times, while some state legislatures passed alien land laws during the
war to insure that the camp population would not resettle permanently in those states—see,
for instance, Douglas W. Nelson, Heart Mountain: The History of an American
Concentration Camp (Madison: Department of History, University of Wisconsin, 1976).

3 Some of these contrasts are revealed in my articles on Clark, Churchill, and White Pine
counties. For Reno see the interviews by Noriko Kunitomi at the University of Nevada,
Reno, Oral History Program, particularly Noriko Kunitomi, interview with Buddy Fujii,
Reno, Nevada, 2 November 1992, which states that the "FBI came . . . and looked
through the house every week [in early 1942]."
returned with the short-wave portion removed. Relinquishing rifles and shotguns was particularly difficult, as many of these Nevada pioneers had grown accustomed to hunting and using firearms on their farms and ranches. Japanese witnesses have not spoken or written much about losses. But many prized weapons (not to mention countless short-wave radio parts, flashlights, maps, books and other "contraband") apparently disappeared over the course of the war while in the possession of local authorities.

In February came the federal order releasing Japanese Americans from the major western railroads, another terrible if isolated blow. Relatively few Japanese families and single laborers depended on railroad jobs in Nevada by that time. Still, the effects of this order were devastating for those who did. Yasburo Ikegami, a Japanese alien who had been employed in the Caliente railroad shops for twenty years, shot and killed himself shortly after he was dismissed. Another Issei couple was expelled from the railroad town of Gerlock as a result of the order. Friends helped them obtain a small trailer and move it to a mud flat outside of town. With no heat or other utilities, the couple faced an uncertain future until their son, Roy Nishiguchi, who was in the service, secured a pass, returned to Nevada, and moved his parents to Reno.

March and early April brought difficulties and uncertainties tied to the West Coast evacuation crisis, particularly in Reno. Some Reno problems have been recorded in interviews conducted by a Japanese exchange student, Noriko Kunitomi, including isolated instances of harassment. DeWitt's declaration of a "prohibited zone" in downtown Reno must have caused some serious hardships too. Certainly, the Japanese Americans of Washoe County would not have wanted to be mistaken for a California evacuee during this

4 See "Caliente Alien Jap Suicides," Pioche Record, 12 March 1942.

5 See Noriko Kunitomi, interview with Roy Nishiguchi, Reno Nevada, 13 November 1992. Someone (possibly Phillip Earl) informed me once that this family's trials formed the loose basis for the post-war film classic "Bad Day at Flatrock," starring Spencer Tracy. Note the desert and the ubiquitous slot machine.
period of bitter hostility.\textsuperscript{6} White Pine probably still ranked as the most suspicious and hostile county at this phase, but Washoe was a close second.

With news of the impending evacuation in late March, the safety of loved ones living in the evacuation zone became a primary concern of many Nevada Issei. Parents urged their Nisei children who were working, attending college, or building lives in California to retreat to Nevada. Like many of those offered the opportunity to move "voluntarily," most former Nevadans waited until the last moments to decide.

For two siblings of the Matsui family, no real choice existed. Yeiki Matsui was completing an important semester at the University of Southern California, and his sister, Akiko, was engaged to a dental-school graduate, Joe Yuzuru Abe. Akiko had become very attached to Joe's family. DeWitt's evacuation freeze trapped these two former Nevadans, and they were sent to the Santa Anita Assembly Center, then to the relocation camp at Amache, Colorado. Camp administrators allowed Yeiki to return to Elko within six months. But because Akiko was by then married to Joe Abe, a Japanese national, those two could not leave Amache for Elko until 1944.\textsuperscript{7} Other former Nevadans faced similar trials, but most Nisei with ties to Nevada apparently slipped out of the evacuation noose. They reunited with their families to face other challenges still ahead.

\textsuperscript{6} Again, see Sally Springmeyer Zanjani, \textit{The Unspiked Rail: Memories of a Nevada Rebel} (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1981), 349-50. Conversely, Reno was a popular destination for Italian nationals who were also excluded from some coastal areas during the early months of the war--see Stephen Fox, \textit{The Unknown Internment: An Oral History of the Relocation of Italian Americans} (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), and it appears there was no objection to their influx. Both Italian and German nationals fared much better than the Japanese in this region and throughout the state, according to: Nevada Historical Society, \textit{WWII in Nevada: The Homefront} (Reno: Nevada Historical Society, 1992), 16-17, and Russell Elliott, \textit{History of Nevada} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), 312.

\textsuperscript{7} Akiko Abe gave birth to one child in Amache. Pregnant with her second child, Judy, Akiko was adamant that this one would not be born in the camps and insisted that their application for resettlement to Elko be processed quickly. See, Judy Ishibashi, interview with the author, Las Vegas, Nevada, 4 October 1992, and Midori Ishibashi, "The Japanese American Relocation Camps, 1990," pp. 11-16, TMs [copy], in author's possession.
On the very day that the evacuation freeze was announced, March 27, Japanese of Nevada and the other interior military areas also faced new restrictions, which scholars have generally overlooked. Lt. Gen. John DeWitt's latest order specified that enemy aliens and "all persons of Japanese ancestry" living within Military Area Nos. 2 through 6 now had to be "within their place of residence between the hours of 8:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M. . . . the hours of curfew." Proclamation No. 3 further directed these groups to be at either their place of employment or their homes, or traveling between those places, or within a distance of not more than five miles from their homes, at all other times, unless in possession of a travel permit. It further announced that anyone found in violation of these orders would be subject to criminal penalties. The order designated the FBI as the enforcement agency, but it requested that "civil police within the states affected by this Proclamation assist [the FBI] by reporting to it the names and addresses of all persons believed to have violated these regulations."

DeWitt's proclamations drew distinctions (however vague at times) between the broad military areas and the plentiful but isolated "prohibited zones" designated within the interior states. The army ostensibly exercised direct control over the prohibited zones, where curfews and other regulations were to be strictly enforced. "Civil police," however, exercised considerably more power than the military throughout most of Nevada. White Pine County again stands as an example of how these orders were bent by the attitudes and will of local authorities, sometimes creating uncommon hardships for Japanese Americans.

Proclamation No. 3 and the new map of the Western Defense Command located no prohibited zones within White Pine, much to the surprise of the Ely Daily Times and the local defense council. Nevertheless, the White Pine County Sheriff, Jean E. Orrock, aided by his legal extensions in Ruth and McGill, strictly enforced curfews and travel restrictions

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on the Japanese. Home delivery was an important part of the laundry trade; Japanese
laundries of Ely had to quit providing this service until late in the war, when one hired a
Euro-American employee to make its deliveries. The sheriff of White Pine would let no
Japanese travel between the towns of Ruth, McGill, and Ely—Nisei school children
included—until they obtained travel permits.9

Since few ranches on the Nevada frontier were within five miles of all vital
services, it is fortunate that most counties did not enforce the new orders strictly. The
Tomiyasu family of southern Nevada has reported that travel restrictions were not imposed
locally, nor was the curfew for Nisei residents. Members of the Ishimoto and Yamashita
families have stated that the only firm rule in Overton was that these two families "could not
gather together after dark."10

In downtown Elko, a legitimate prohibited zone, the Matsui family reportedly faced
extreme anxiety only once a week, as they attended motion pictures at the local movie
house. The movies generally ended around 8:00 P.M., and when the house lights came on
the war collection plate would be circulated. Suyewo and Ejiro had to decide whether to
rush home to demonstrate they were "good Americans" or wait for the plate to reach them
to do so.11 Ted Takenaka of Lovelock, on the other hand, could not recall any curfew or
local travel restrictions. The Kito and Ito families have similar memories of mild controls
in their area.

9 For a lack of "prohibited zones" in White Pine County, response from the local defense
council, and Sheriff Orrock imposing firm curfew and travel restrictions on all Japanese
Americans of White Pine see Ely Daily Times (EDT), 17 March 1942, 1; 9 May 1942;
Kame Toyota’s letters, and my interviews of Nisei residents of Ely.

10 Russell, "A Fortunate Few," and Arden Ishimoto, interview with the author, Overton,
Nevada, 3 October 1995, which discusses the no-nighttime gathering rule. Arden is a
Euro-American who fell in love with Nisei farmer George Ishimoto in the late 1940s.
Learning they could not wed under Nevada law, Arden left Overton for a time. The couple
met again and married in the early 1960s.

11 Judy Ishibashi, interview with the author, 4 October 1992.
By mid-1942, race relations across Nevada had settled into patterns that preceded the crisis, even though negative images maintained a strong hold on some individuals. Traditional tolerance benefited some communities, and old and new traditions of intolerance came back to haunt others. Jun Kito of Fallon, for example, encountered few if any travel problems or controversies as he played quarterback for the Churchill County High School Football Team. He led the team to three state-championship matches during the war and received the Most Popular Athlete Award for 1943-44. In April 1942, even as the evacuation crisis raged, Chizuko Takenaka secured the necessary permits and community backing that allowed her to compete in a national bookkeeping contest, and bring the first-place award back to Lovelock.

Ben Yokomizo of Ely, in contrast, met with roadblocks as he rose to local fame. Nonetheless, his impact on White-Pine sentiments was dramatic. Ben was the star shortstop on Ely's American Legion junior baseball team in 1942 and maintained an amazing .600 batting average. When military authorities in California would not let Ben travel to the regional championships that summer, the Ely newspaper editor and other influential people suddenly had to question the good sense in exclusion policies. Ultimately, they blamed unjust restrictions against this "good American" for the team's resounding defeat.

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12 Award letter from Superintendent Walter D. Johnson, Churchill County High School [copy], in author's possession.


14 For Ben Yokomizo's amazing exploits see EDT, 14, 17, 20 August 1942. The author is indebted to Phillip Earl of the Nevada Historical Society, Reno for sharing these citations. Although Sam Hase and Nobuo Nakashima said that throughout the war there were some "red-necks" who would "call you a Jap," they confirm that attitudes in Ely improved by mid-1942, as told in Hase, interview with the author, Ely, Nevada, 18 October 1993; Nakashima, interview with the author, East Ely, Nevada, 21 October 1993.
The battles waged against prejudice on the sports fields and in the classrooms of Nevada were often more difficult than these few examples reveal. For instance, when Kimiko Toyota of McGill returned to class at White Pine High School following the Pearl Harbor attack, her fellow students taunted her with newspaper headlines that announced the arrest of her father. George Enomoto of Las Vegas eventually won wartime sports honors too. But he also remembers how his junior-high-school football coach frequently tapped into racial hate in practices by setting George up as a target for other players. One of his teachers, after learning that two of his sons had been killed by the Japanese in the Pacific, would frequently launch into classroom tirades about the "Japs," which only aggravated George's situation. This self-described quiet, peace-loving youngster quickly learn how to fistfight in 1942.\(^\text{15}\) Such battles were probably not uncommon.

Despite these mixed accounts, the Nisei of Nevada challenged stereotypes and prejudice in countless ways. The older males launched a direct assault by volunteering enthusiastically for military service. Several Nevada sons were already in the armed services as the war began; at least two of them were quickly adopted into the special Nisei intelligence units that operated in the Pacific Theater. Probably encouraged by their parents, many other Nisei of the state quickly volunteered and registered. Several were found to be physically unfit for service ("flat feet" and poor eyesight were two common reasons for disqualification). Like all Japanese Americans, they were classified as "enemy aliens" ineligible for military service between mid-1942 and late-1943. Thereafter, most again attempted to join up. While sons were doing their part for the war effort, Nisei

\(^{15}\) Report on W. P. High is from Jack Fleming, *Copper Times: An Animated Chronicle of White Pine County, Nevada* (Seattle: Jack Fleming's Publications, 1987). Enomoto's difficulties were relayed in unrecorded discussions with the author, 1995. Similar problems at a Reno school are mentioned in Noriko Kunitomi, interview with Buddy Fujii, Reno, Nevada, 2 November 1992. Fred Toyota, Jr. was involved in at least one bloody brawl at the McGill Club, as described in my interviews with White Pine residents.
Daughters made up for personnel shortages in the family businesses and waged their own campaign against negative stereotypes. 16

Given the opportunity, Issei Nevadans did more than their share for the war effort too. Regrettably, their chances to contribute were sometimes restricted severely. Two Japanese farms in White Pine, one outside McGill and one on the outskirts of Ely, had to cease operations. The Tomiyasu family of Las Vegas lost some of their land in 1942, apparently through an "eminent domain" acquisition by the county. 17 Despite these setbacks, Japanese farmers of the state forged ahead.

The wartime contributions of Japanese farmers were extremely important. They changed attitudes and helped to prevent food shortages in a state where agricultural production is low even in the best of times. The Tomiyasu family of Las Vegas, reunited because three siblings had been forced home from California colleges, set one notable example. Just before the war, Bill Tomiyasu had begun to convert to landscape horticulture because California produce was by then filling most of the local demand. During the war, however, the family reverted to truck farming and also ranked as a leading producer of turkeys and hogs in Clark County. 18


17 "Charley" Hosono was forced to sell his small ranch outside McGill and move to Ely, according to Hase, interview with the author, 18 October 1993, and it seems that the Ishii truck garden also had to stop operating during the war. Nanyu Tomiyasu recently mentioned in passing that the county took some of their land in 1942, a matter that needs to be investigated further.

18 Russell, "A Fortunate Few."
For the Japanese farmers of Churchill County, it was "business as usual" during the war. Interestingly, however, Nevada's Senator Patrick McCarran became a frequent visitor to the Kito-Ito farm and took a keen interest in Japanese farm operations across the state. Although McCarran's impact on the larger and smaller "decisions" must be better investigated, he was sympathetic to Japanese interests by war's end. He liked to bring Churchill-County cantaloupes to friends in Congress to prove that Nevada was not all "desert and barren wasteland." In 1945 he helped Bill Tomiyasu obtain the necessary permit to purchase a new tractor.¹⁹

The laundry trade was another area where the Issei could continue to cultivate the trust and respect of their neighbors. The Matsui, Takenaka, Ikari, Sano, and Fukui laundries continued operations without major interruption. The Matsui laundry in Elko even saw an upswing in business as it filled government contracts to dry-clean military uniforms. This family had an important side-line occupation as well. Ejiro and Suyewo Matsui provided free room and board to Nisei servicemen, as they passed through that part of Nevada on trips to visit relatives in the relocation camps in Wyoming and Utah.²⁰

Kame Toyota of McGill led the most challenging campaign to overcome prejudice and discrimination. Her long letters to McGill managers and justice department officials document her heroic struggles. The letters sent by Kame Toyota and her children in defense of "Fred S. Toyota and the McGill boys" effected one desired result: Fred was paroled in January 1944 after his case was reviewed. The other McGill internees,

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²⁰ Takenaka, interview with the author, 23 October 1992; Ishibashi, interview with the author, 4 October 1992. Ishibashi adds that Suyewo Matsui, not trusting the banks, kept business proceeds (much of which was in Nevada silver dollars) stashed under equipment in the laundry. Her children were embarrassed to find that by war's end they had so many silver dollars it would have required "a wheelbarrow" to deposit it all at once, so they had their mother deposit them a few bags at a time.
however, did not have their cases reviewed, and local policy regarding Japanese resettlement in McGill never changed.

At the time of Fred's release, Kame Toyota was informed by the local sheriff's office that it "would be best" if Fred did not return to McGill. Expressing an atypical resignation, Kame Toyota wrote to Nevada's U.S. Attorney that her family would move quietly to Salt Lake City. "There is a lot I would like to tell you," she teased.

"but since I am Japanese, I shall not tell you or make any trouble[,] I am very thankful I am living in this great country--America. At his special rehearing, Fred was praised very much by the board. Because he is being released and the children are doing well, I am very thankful. I am sorry I have troubled you so often . . . ." 21

Other good Japanese neighbors may have disappeared from Nevada during the war, but a modest number also flowed in. Whenever possible, the Nevada Nikkei assisted in the effort to resettle the camp populations. In 1943, for instance, the Sano family of Fallon placed an ad offering employment at their laundry in a Japanese language newspaper in Salt Lake City. Frank Kusunoki, a former resident of Carson City who had been evacuated from California to the Poston Relocation Center in Arizona, got word of the job offer through a friend. He and his wife, Bernice, applied for a work release from the camp and came to live with the Sano family in Fallon.

This resettlement case had a strange but explainable twist. Within two years, Ira Kent hired Frank as a produce man at the Kent market. Frank, Bernice, and another relative released from the camps then moved in with the Kents and lived with them until sometime after the war. They have reported that they experienced no problems over resettling in Fallon and that they quickly grew close to the townspeople. 22

21 Letter from Kame Toyota to Craven, 26 January 1944, Toyota Papers, Box 145, File 8. The Toyota family continued to receive letters from other internees, which often expressed their intentions of returning to Japan after the war. A few joined up with the Toyotas in Salt Lake after the war, as explained in Heed Iwamoto, interview with the author, 9 February 1995.

In 1944 the Tomiyasus helped an old friend gain release from Poston. He worked for the family until the war ended. About the same time, in nearby Moapa, a family relocated from the relocation camp in Utah and started a farm without major objection from other residents. Another family came to farm in the Winnemucca area, then moved to Lovelock after the war.  

Oscar Fujii, a decorated Nisei veteran on his way back home to California, stopped over in Reno in early 1945. He "fell in love with Reno" and did not cherish the thought of returning to hostile California, where his family's vacant house had been consumed by a fire of mysterious origin. He settled in Reno, as did Wilson Makabe, another highly decorated Nisei serviceman.  

Here again, in terms of actual numbers Nevada was not an area of major post-war resettlement. Nevertheless, a tolerant attitude seemingly dominated again in most Nevada communities by war's end. Furthermore, popular misconceptions about the differences between the Nevada Japanese and the "California Japs" had largely disappeared by the mid-forties.  

The federal government contributed somewhat to the change in Nevada attitudes. In 1944 it issued Public Proclamation Number 21, which rescinded the mass exclusion order and implored Americans to assist in peaceful resettlement of the Japanese.  

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24 See Oscar Fujii, interview with Nancy Copfer, November 1988, and Wilson Makabe, interview with Nancy Copfer, November 1988, both of which are in "The Papers of Elmer Rusco," Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno.  

25 Issued in December 1944, this order and accompanying cover letter carefully spelled out the contributions of Nisei soldiers, the employability and resources of the camp population, and the government's assurance that they were loyal and peaceful. Carville got a copy as did most American Legion posts, banks, newspapers, radio stations and federal offices. Each county sheriff in Nevada received fifty copies for distribution as well—see Papers of Edward Carville, Box 23, File 23, Nevada State Archives, Carson City.
this latest proclamation only aided the Nevada Nikkei in their already successful battle to conquer negative images in a "free state."
CONCLUSION:

NEVADANS AT THE MARGINS AND IN THE MAINSTREAM

In recent years scholars have revealed the fallacy of characterizing Chinese and Japanese immigrants as "outsiders" and "victims" in the emerging West. These groups were viewed as "the other," exploited, and persecuted to the point of exclusion. Nevertheless, they registered major accomplishments and reaped rewards. Their skill, ingenuity, and labor drove the development of key extractive industries, like placer-gold mining, railroad construction, truck farming, sugar production, and canning. The American dream, constricted as it was for Asians, was vibrantly alive at "the margins" of society. Moreover, Asians and other minorities changed the "mainstream," forcing it to deepen the meaning of American democracy and to deliver on the promise of racial inclusion. "From this vantage," in the words of Gary Y. Okihiro, "we can see the margins as mainstream." ¹

World War II was a time when Japanese-American victims abounded and mainstream exclusionist sentiments reached a climax. It has been very difficult for scholars to escape the "victim" motif when discussing Japanese Americans and the war years. Still, great lessons for mainstream America have emerged from the study of how Japanese Americans were victimized and how they protested these transgressions of justice during

and after the war. Indeed, few chapters in our history better illuminate the weaknesses and strengths the American system than the story of Japanese American relocation and redress.

In a sense, this study of Nevada has investigated the margins within Japanese American history in the belief that important lessons may be learned there as well. The Nevada story is subordinate to the larger dramas of World War II. Nonetheless, the images and experiences of Japanese Americans that emerged and evolved beyond the West Coast and the barbed-wire parameters of the camps demand closer scrutiny. They can shed additional light on experiences of the ethnic mainstream, on the attitudes and actions of the larger American mainstream, and, most importantly, on the historic margins and mainstreams of interior states like Nevada.

The roughly 470 Japanese Americans who lived in Nevada at the outbreak of the war were a fairly inconspicuous group. Except for White Pine County, no Nevada county boasted more that sixty Nikkei residents. Still, it seems poignantly necessary that scholars move past the numbers-and-lines game when analyzing outcomes for the interior West. All Japanese Nevadans faced common and peculiar problems during the early weeks of the war; they stood upon some of the shakiest ground as the Western Defense Command expanded; they confronted more direct, daily exposure to lingering prejudice than most Japanese Americans after the evacuation.

The Nevada story can draw from studies that have identified the three, broad causal agents involved in internment and exclusion cases—racism, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership. In Nevada, however, local factors had a more profound impact on attitudes and outcomes than was the case on the West Coast. The "Japanese problem" of World War II was debated intensely across Nevada. But through both phases of it—especially during the first phase—local variables influenced "decisions" on the "Japanese questions" in important ways. At the interior fringe of the Far West, beyond the eventual exclusion zones, cumulative history and local circumstances had profound effects on the interplay between wartime images and experiences.
White Pine County and its peculiar cases of mass internment and forced "evacuation" illustrate this point most clearly. Events in the copper camps of Ruth and McGill stand well outside the typical flow of wartime events. American racism, wartime hysteria, and faulty federal leadership certainly were involved. But the social ills of the company towns intensified these broad causes and introduced local tone and characters. Hostility surfaced instantly in racially segregated Ruth and rather quickly throughout the county. Pressured by some in the labor sphere, "advised" by the FBI, assisted by county law enforcement, the Nevada Consolidated Copper Corporation nonetheless charted the wartime fate of Japanese Americans in the two company towns. The FBI and Nevada's Alien Enemy Hearing Board simply validated local "Jap" internment proceedings. Nevada Consolidated then "evacuated" or expelled remaining Japanese Americans from Ruth and McGill without direct aid from any federal or state entity. The direct protests waged by Kame Toyota and her children, the recovery of reason in Ely, and the lingering patriotism of local Japanese families are about all of the Americans dream that can be salvaged from this sordid tale.

If we remove White Pine from the Nevada story, however, a very different picture emerges. In this one, racism and hysteria were quite slow to develop. Only one Japanese outside White Pine was interned (that person being a man openly sympathetic to Japan), thus Japanese Nevadans were indeed "a fortunate few."2 The recorded recollections of the Nevada Nikkei paint a picture of strong and persistent community support during the crisis, which is rarely encountered in any other sources. Exclusion lines eventually etched on military maps contributed to different attitudes and outcomes, but so did different social

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2 For more about this Japanese sympathizer and Las Vegas chicken rancher, see my previous study of southern Nevada. I have seen no thoroughly reliable figures on how many Japanese were interned from which western cities, but Lillian Baker, *The Japanning of America: Redress and Reparations Demands by Japanese Americans* (Medford, OR: Webb Research Group, 1991), vii, lists 7 from Butte, Mt., 9 from Dallas, TX, 16 from Phoenix, AZ, and hundreds from West Coast cities for comparison to the one I found in Las Vegas.
realities at the interior margins of the Far West and Nikkei culture. Those realities seemingly included less restrictive laws and social mores, greater interracial association and cooperation, small-town bonds, and a legacy of frontier democracy.

During the second phase of the crisis, regrettably, popular attitudes and Nevada politics changed markedly. Indoctrinated by a month or more of intense anti-Japanese propaganda, many Nevadans came to see Japanese Americans as a military and social menace to be blocked from entering the Silver State. Most thought "concentration camps" were the best solution to California's "Japanese problem" this time around. The exclusionist forces were concentrated mainly in the northwest corner of the state, where "California problems" had always loomed large.

Rabid nativists and racists found a strong and vocal advocate for their cause in Governor Edward P. Carville. The latter fostered the growth of military, economic, and racial fears. He then took Nevada's fight directly to Lt. Gen. John L. DeWitt's headquarters, adding to the "hysteria" that nested there. Local variable continued to affect the degree of animosity that surfaced across Nevada in early 1942. Nevertheless, Nevadans under faulty leadership helped drive federal decision-makers like DeWitt from a policy of exclusion to one of mass incarceration.

On the margin, however, Japanese Americans escaped most of the new hostility, and they were able to reform negative stereotypes relatively quickly after the evacuation crisis passed. Life invariably went on and local variables modified the string of federal orders that were imposed on Japanese Nevadans. As with the "Salvage" within the concentration camps, the war years ironically brought many Japanese and non-Japanese within Nevada to an even greater degree of interaction, particularly by war's end.

The Nevadans at the margin fought prejudice and stereotypes in many ways. Mainly, they did so by being model "enemy-aliens" and second-generation Americans. They did so by continuing the processes of acculturation and assimilation begun before the war and by redoubling their community contributions. Conversely, they also fought
against racial injustice with fists, letters, legal petitions, and other forms of nonviolent protest when necessary.

It is difficult to gauge, of course, how much influence these struggles had on mainstream conception of equality, in Nevada or elsewhere. It probably deserves mentioning that one of the most important "Japanese-friendly" laws passed by Congress in the immediate post war years, the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, was co-authored by a Nevadan with close ties to the Nikkei of his state.3 Naturally, however, the mainstream and margins of Nevada stand to gain the most from this investigation.

The data conveyed helps explain why many people in McGill, Ruth, and Goldfield, Nevada have had such difficulty in freeing themselves from the "Jap" epithet and other negative stereotypes of Asians. It helps us understand why Reno's Japanese American community formed a strong and politically active Japanese American Citizens League chapter in the post-war years. By exploring the failed, 1942 effort to exclude Japanese Americans from Clark County, we can better appreciate how Yonema (Bill) Tomiyasu Elementary School, the first grammar school in the Continental United States named in honor of a Japanese American, came to be in Las Vegas. Nevada students, there and elsewhere, can learn through local examples how fragile liberty and justice becomes when exposed to racism and war. This small chapter likewise call to the mainstreams, as Nevadans, westerners, and Americans prepare to enter the next century of race relations.

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3 A clause in this otherwise conservative Act at last granted Japanese immigrants the right to become naturalized citizens. Conversely, it established only a small quota for new Japanese immigration. McCarran's connection to the citizenship provision needs to be investigated further. But in its support for Japanese Americans, and in its apparent aim of limiting new influxes, the provision reflected some traditional Nevada sentiments.
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Nevada's Peculiar Case of Mass Internment
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