The Tule Lake Relocation Center

By US Bureau of Reclamation

The Tule Lake Relocation Center, seen here in 1947, is located 35 miles southeast of Klamath Falls, Oregon, near Newell and Tulelake, California. It opened on May 27, 1942 and eventually interned 18,000 Japanese Americans during World War II. After the center closed in March 1946 and the internees had dispersed throughout the nation, the War Relocation Authority returned the land to the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). The BOR sold small parcels of the site to private investors and to the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans), and sold many of the center’s buildings and structures to returning war veterans. The veterans removed the buildings or dismantled them for scrap material.

In August 1975, the Relocation Center was registered as a California State historic landmark. A large monument was constructed in 1979 along California State Highway 139 to commemorate the site. The Harvey Yoshizuka Sand House, built by CalTrans on the Relocation Center site, honors the young evacuee who became an engineer for the transportation department. The BOR has the authority to manage and maintain the remaining land on the site, but lacks funding and staff to restore the center or develop an interpretation program.

Nearly 50 years after the interned Japanese Americans were allowed to leave the Tule Lake Relocation Center, the U.S. Government acknowledged “the fundamental injustice of the evacuation, relocation, and internment of citizens…of Japanese ancestry during World War II.” The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 mandated Congress to pay each interned Japanese-American $20,000 in reparations. The compensation was delivered with a letter from President Bill Clinton who acknowledged the “wrongs of the past” and apologized for the nation’s treatment of Japanese Americans during the war.


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