

J5.50:22

22 of 25

Evacuee Property Section  
[NATIONAL ARCHIVES - Reel 33, Folder 87]

67/14  
C



WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
Colorado River Relocation Center  
Preston, Arizona

NARRATIVE REPORT  
EVACUEE PROPERTY SECTION

Prepared by  
John G. Hunter



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
A. Development and Functioning of the Evacuee Property Section at Poston.....	1
B. Closing Operation of the Section.....	5
C. Summary of Property Cases Handled.....	8
Narrative Report by R. W. Schmitt, former Evacuee Property Officer	
EXHIBIT 1. A Report on the Nichiren Temple, Los Angeles	
EXHIBIT 2. A Report by Mrs. Cecil Itano	
EXHIBIT 3. Newspaper Item taken from the Daily News, Los Angeles	
EXHIBIT 4. Special Report of Evacuee Property Officer	
EXHIBIT 5. Special Report: <u>MANY EVACUEE HAVE SUFFERED</u> <u>PROPERTY LOSS</u> by Allan Markley, Sr. Reports Officer	



A. Development and Functioning of the Evacuee Property Section at Poston.

The office of Evacuee Property at the Colorado River Relocation Center was opened on March 28, 1943, with the appointment of Mr. R. W. Schmitt as Evacuee Property Officer.

Mr. Schmitt had previously worked under the direction of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco and in the Sacramento area. In such capacity, he had to do with commercial enterprises of all sorts, of interest to evacuees. He was the responsible officer in preparing lease-agreements, contracts, <sup>and</sup> etc. He helped in arranging for storage of evacuee property when people <sup>WERE</sup> leaving hurriedly from their West Coast homes. His experience before coming to the Colorado River Relocation Center was helpful to him in taking over the office of Evacuee Property at that Center.

In this position, he was beset with every property problems imaginable; sales; leases; transfers; recovery; storage, private and in WRA Warehouses; also losses of property by fire, theft, and otherwise.

In this work Mr. Schmitt had an administrative assistant, Takeo Momita, who proved to be an invaluable aide. Momita, of Japanese ancestry, a pharmacist who operated a drug store at El Centro, California, prior to evacuation, was qualified through age, training, and experience as a property officer.

Mr. Schmitt, with Momita and an evacuee stenographer-clerk, served the interests of the nineteen thousand evacuees on their arrival at Poston. The Property Office was established at Camp I, where approximately ten-thousand evacuees were located. Camps II and III, four and eight miles distant, with populations of four and five-thousand people, had Evacuee Property Officers in branches of the Project Attorney's offices.

Throughout the incumbency of Mr. Schmitt, which was from March, 1943 until April, 1945, there was a definitely close and co-operative relationship between the office of Evacuee Property and that of the Project Attorney.

The records of the Evacuee Property Office show that Mr. Schmitt's administration was a successful one, pertaining to the interests of the Government and to the interests of the evacuees. He, with his assistant Momita, rendered valiant, conscientious, and honored service to all for whom he was responsible.

In March, Mr. Schmitt tendered his resignation, to be effective April 1 of that year, and at that time, he submitted a report covering the period of his service, which is attached hereto.

In the establishment of the Evacuee Property Office, it was the primary responsibility to aid the evacuees in all matters of property problems relating to their former homes. These forms of service were initiated through the execution of WRA Form 153, for assistance. This form was then



transmitted to the Area Evacuee Property Office, and constituted a case which was to be processed by the Area Office.

After post-exclusion action, the type of service described was largely discontinued. Furthermore, the Field Evacuee Property Office became a part of the Office of the Area Relocation Supervisor. The Center Evacuee Property Office continued to assist the people of the Center in the usual cases, but on a lesser scale, and became more active in movement of property from the Center to points of relocation.

When the Center Evacuee Property Office was founded, it operated under the direct supervision of the Project Director; however, in December of 1943, it became a section under the Administrative Management Division. Several months later it was the general policy of W. R. A. for evacuee property to become attached to the Relocation Division, but this was not done at the Colorado River Relocation Center, since Washington authority granted its continuation under the head of the Administrative Management Division.

There was maintained at all times a close relationship between the Center offices and the field offices having to do with property, and there was frequent exchange of correspondence between the Center office and the Alien Property Custodian's office, as well as with a number of other Governmental agencies whose sphere of responsibility included property interests of the evacuees.

The most destructive thing occurring at the Colorado River Relocation Center with respect to evacuee property was a fire which took place December 25, 1943. This fire occurred at evacuee property warehouses at Camp II. The loss, which was a complete one, was estimated at about \$60,000, and a report thereon is a matter of record in the War Relocation Authority Office in Washington, D. C. After my incumbency as Evacuee Property Officer in April, 1945, affidavits from individuals suffering losses were obtained. These affidavits were drawn in the form of claims, and a additional report was submitted with them to the director of W. R. A. in Washington, D. C. People who suffered these losses are naturally anxious that compensation be allowed them by the Government, and I am hoping that this may be done.

My incumbency as Evacuee Property Officer became effective April 1, 1945, during a period of accelerating relocation, which necessarily involved great movement of property and adjustment of property matters. At this time, or shortly after, the staff of our office was increased beyond that of my predecessor to three appointive positions--secretary, Junior Evacuee Property Clerk, and Assistant Evacuee Property Officer.

April, 1945, was a period of intense activity. People were going to New York, New Orleans, Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, and elsewhere. As they left the Center, and in fact, before doing so, there were myriad problems of adjustment respecting their belongings and interests on the West Coast, from which they came. These related to homes, household goods, personal



effects, farm machinery, live-stock, fishing nets, unblocking of accounts, claims against the Yokohama Specie Bank, insurance matters, serving eviction notices, storage of property, movement of property, and everything else within the category of property. May and June of 1945 doubled these types of problems, while July, August, and September tripled or quadrupled them, with October and November receding.

January, 1945, started with a shipment of twenty-eight lots of family property, and progressed to September with one-thousand and seventy-five lots, which involved an average of 1700 pounds per lot. As the program of relocation progressed, there was necessarily a corresponding movement of evacuee property. June, July, and August were a maximum strain, in consideration of help allowed, but September was a climax, reaching, in fact, almost beyond our availability or control. This period caused inquiries by teletypes and letters to the point of not only disturbance, but exasperation. Freight to the West was largely sent by Western Truck Lines, Ltd., which ordinarily gave delivery within twenty-four or forty-eight hours. During September, when 1075 shipments were made, Western Truck Lines could not offer the service required, and the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railroad facilities were called upon.

Project transportation, which was difficult and uncertain, carried freight to Parker for Santa Fe disposition, amounting to three or four car-loads per day. The receipt of these shipments at points throughout the United States was frequently delayed because of unavoidable circumstances in railroad transportation at the time. This resulted in disappointment to consignees, but was beyond the control of the Evacuee Property Office.

Freight going by Western Truck Lines reached destinations promptly, as stated, but by Santa Fe weeks were usually involved, with resultant inquiries from consignees and worrisome work in checking the individual with the freight.

Oftentimes letters were received from one member of the family and freight was consigned to another member of the family. Checking such inquiries called for what seemed to be wasteful time that the staff of the Evacuee Property Office could not spare. Teletypes galore came to our office, and we endeavored to answer them, but in most cases time itself answered, because goods were expected before transportation facilities would permit them to be received.

The Relocation Division of the Project, which rendered the finest service in most matters of human interest, could not, it seemed, understand the problem of moving evacuee property. To protect the officer issuing Bills of Lading, executed WRA Forms 156 (request for transportation) were necessary. The preparation of these forms was the responsibility of relocation advisors who were, in some cases, impractical, uncooperative, or ignorant of the processes required by the War Relocation Authority.

The Evacuee Property Office had to suffer through these matters which from



day to day, and as the program of relocation was advanced, grew more intense, troublesome, and exasperating. The Relocation Program Officer, Mr. Corlies Carter, was well qualified for his work. This may also be said respecting his assistant, Miss Dorothy Stevick. There were many on the relocation staff who were well-founded in training, interest, and effectiveness, but there were also many who did not understand, and in these cases, the Evacuee Property Office eventually took the shock. This statement is not necessarily a criticism, but rather a circumstance which naturally occurs in a program of this character.

The Evacuee Property Office has been faced with problems in which the bonded officer was responsible for the action taken but was without much control over that action. It is hoped that his errors of judgment will not necessitate a relief bill in Congress before his accounts are cleared.

As stated heretofore, July, August, and September were the heavy months of relocation; however, during this time, the Evacuee Property staff was increased to include a representative at the receiving and shipping warehouse at each of Camps I, II, and III. There were also allowed two appointive clerk-typist positions in addition to which there were twelve evacuee clerks, of which four were stenographers.

Time and space must allow for setting forth the excellent qualities and abilities of these young women. They received from the Government payroll a wage of sixteen dollars per month, plus their board and lodging, but several of them rendered service which could not have been ordinarily obtained for less than \$150 or \$200 per month.

In thinking of the program of work and responsibilities belonging to these evacuee clerks, they deserve great recognition. They, as a whole, were conscientious, industrious, and faithful, far beyond the call of duty or any reasonable expectation. Unfortunately, the plan of relocation made it necessary for them to leave at a time when their services were of greatest value.

It is believed by me to be entirely fitting and proper to mention the names of those of the appointed personnel and something of the valiant and worthwhile work done by them. These are: Fred C. Brown, Assistant Evacuee Property Officer; Hugh Young, Junior Evacuee Property Officer; Property Clerks Otha Wolcott, Oscar L. Johnson, Arthur Branham, and Charles Higgins. John Immerse, Clerk, and Helen Stratton and Hortense Herrera, clerk-typists, contributed magnificently to the success of the Evacuee Property Office's program. There also must be mentioned with emphasis the faithful, and effective service of LaVerne Gorby, Secretary to the Evacuee Property Officer.



### B. Closing Operation of the Section

During the month of June, 1945, as the program of relocation became accelerated, and with it, the business of the Evacuee Property Office, it became necessary to decentralize the shipping arrangement from the Central Warehouse at Camp I, and establish a shipping station at each of the three Camps.

Camps II and III were scheduled to close on October 1, 1945, whereas Camp I was to be closed December 1, 1945. Evacuee people at Camps II and III, and likewise at Camp I, after having lived at Poston for three years or longer, could hardly believe that they would be compelled to leave and that the camps would close on the dates as stated. This though was unfortunately shared by some of the appointed staff, all of which resulted in a final step-up of activity rather beyond available facilities to care for last arrangements, especially those regarding property which was so necessary to the people on reaching their points of relocation.

Some failed to pack their goods with care, to address their boxes and other items properly, to have their property placed in the Warehouse, and to leave complete directions respecting when or where it should be shipped. So many of the evacuee people were inexperienced at this sort of thing, and after having been cared for so completely by W. R. A., they seemed to feel that all arrangements pertaining to the transportation of themselves and their property <sup>WERE</sup> was an automatic procedure of the War Relocation Authority requiring little or no concern on their part.

Twelve estate cases have been handled by the Evacuee Property Officer. These ranged from \$1.07 to \$393.85. The Evacuee Property Officer, with the Project Attorney, Mr. Scott Rowley, is making every endeavor to close all these cases by December 31, 1945. However, some of these estates, although quite small, are rather involved and require a great deal of correspondence in order to determine heirs, to obtain definite information regarding property interests which the decedent may have had at former places of residence in the United States, and, in a few cases, his property holdings in Japan. There, too, arises the question of jurisdiction, that is, whether the county of Yuma, Arizona, in which Poston is located, or whether the county of residence of the decedent before evacuation, in California or elsewhere, is the responsible office. The Project Attorney has had considerable correspondence with appropriate legal offices of the W.R.A., relating to procedure in handling these cases.

The Project Attorney and the Evacuee Property Officer have just made a trip to Yuma, the county seat of Yuma County, and have gone into all phases of the matter with the County Attorney.

Another problem presenting itself as the final closing of the Center approaches is the disposition of funeral urns, about twenty-five in number, which were turned over to the Evacuee Property Officer by the mortician for



final disposition. We have definite direction regarding disposal of seven of these urns, but the balance will involve correspondence with relatives of the decedents, or will call for definite direction from the Office of the Director of the War Relocation Authority in Washington.

It is recognized that proper disposition of files of the Evacuee Property Office is a matter of extraordinary responsibility, which calls for great care. These files, numbering three-thousand or more, are now in process of being handled in accordance with direction given by the Washington Office. It is expected that this work will be completed before the end of December, 1945.

The statistical data covering the activities of the Evacuee Property Office from its beginning on March 28, 1943, to date, have been prepared painstakingly from the available records. The headings used are largely as suggested in WRA Form 241, although other appropriate headings are shown.

On the date of this report, November 30, 1945, which post-dates the departure of the last evacuee resident of the Center by five days, there are approximately 175 family lots of household goods and personal effects in storage in the Project Warehouse in Parker, Arizona, twenty miles from the Center. These family lots are moving out from day to day as forwarding addresses are received. Furthermore, letters are being written to the owners of all remaining properties, with advice that when such property has been held in storage for thirty days or longer, forwarding addresses must be furnished. These letters are being sent by registered mail, with return-receipt requested. It is the plan that, on the return of the signed receipt to this office, the goods will be held for the few additional days required for the property owner to inform us of the forwarding address, and if such advice is not received the property in question will be sent to the owner at the address shown on the registered letter.

In cases where the registered letters are not received by the person to whom they were addressed, the property in question will be forwarded to the W. R. A. Warehouse nearest the last-known address of the owner. Under this procedure it is expected that all evacuee property will have been shipped from the Center before the end of December, 1945.

My experience as Evacuee Property Officer during the past nine months at the Colorado River Relocation Center has been intensely interesting from start to finish. Every day presented many new, human problems, which were close to the minds and hearts of the evacuee people. The solution of these problems called for conscientious, tolerant, and understanding treatment on the part of the Evacuee Property Officer and the members of his staff. The workers in that office were privileged to feel at the close of each day that valuable and appreciated service had been rendered to people who were dependent and whose needs were great.



Our office faced problems involving all the emotions of humanity, and throughout all those complexing times and situations, it may again be said, to the credit of the evacuee people, that their respectful and hearty co-operation, their appreciation, and their gratitude for help given them were most extraordinary.

In closing this report, I wish to take the opportunity to express special appreciation to Mr. Duncan Mills, Project Director, and to Mr. Maurice Lipian, Assistant Project Director, in charge of Administrative Management Division, who, at all times, were understanding and helpful to me in administering the Office of Evacuee Property.

I wish also to express genuine appreciation to all divisions and sections having to do with the Colorado River Relocation Project, every one of which co-operated unstintedly with our office as occasion and need arose. The friendliness, helpfulness, and understanding on the part of the appointive officers of the Project organization made possible the outstanding achievement attained by every division and section in bringing to a close the Colorado River Relocation Center with a success enabling every conscientious employee who participated to feel that excellent service has been rendered for the thousands of evacuee people, and for the Government of United States.



C. Summary of Property Cases Handled

Activity Report of Evacuee Property Section for the period March 28, 1943 - November 30, 1945.

PROPERTY CASES

Type	Number
MOTOR VEHICLES - Sale and recovery.....	358
FARM MACHINERY AND SUPPLIES.....	140
H.H. GOODS AND PERSONAL PROPERTY.....	3868
MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS.....	250
RELOCATION - assistance in property matters.....	145
COLLECTIONS - miscellaneous items.....	120
U.S.D.A. War Board - contacts with.....	43
WAR DEPARTMENT REQUISITION - contacts with.....	11
ALIEN PROPERTY CUSTODIAN - contacts with.....	65
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE - reports to, on condemnations.....	8
F.B.I. - assisting, in return of personal property.....	36
INSURANCE MATTERS AND ADJUSTMENTS.....	225
CONTRABAND - recovery of.....	244
CONTRABAND - requests for return of.....	156
REAL ESTATE - sale, lease, adjustment and rental of.....	397
FORECLOSURES, ESCROW AGREEMENTS etc.....	51
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT - requesting assistance for.....	96
FIRE, VANDALISM AND LOSS OF PROPERTY.....	120
SEGREGATIONS.....	35
ESTATE - probate and assistance.....	17
LEGAL AID - participation in.....	45
STORE EQUIPMENTS AND MERCHANDISE - sale and transfer.....	35
SAFETY DEPOSIT BOXES - recovery of contents.....	20
BONDS AND SECURITIES - recovery and purchase of.....	4
BANK ACCOUNTS - unblocking of.....	28
TAXES - real and personal property ; County and State.....	34
SCHOOLS, CHURCHES, PUBLIC HALLS, - sale, lease, rental & management	42
OIL RIGHTS - land leases for.....	3
SHORTWAVE PARTS REMOVED FROM RADIO BY TECHNICIANS.....	300
MARINE EQUIPMENTS - sale, recovery and transfer of.....	10
RADIO - sale of.....	4
FREIGHT SHIPMENTS - inquires.....	350
URNS - shipments of.....	32
GOVERNMENT BILLS OF LADING - requiring special attention.....	154
HOTELS AND APARTMENTS - sales requested.....	3
MILITARY PERMITS - for re-entry to California.....	34
DEBT ADJUSTMENTS.....	5
VOUCHER REFUNDS.....	1
FISHING NETS - request for sale of.....	1
ESTATE CASES, small.....	12
<u>TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES</u>	<u>7490</u>



CASES REFERRED TO LOS ANGELES AREA.....	88
CASES REFERRED TO SAN FRANCISCO AREA .....	75
CASES REFERRED TO SEATTLE AREA .....	2
TOTAL .....	165
TOTAL NUMBER OF DAILY INTERVIEWS .....	140,040
TOTAL NUMBER OF GROUP MEETINGS ATTENDED .....	114
TOTAL NUMBER NEWS ITEMS PREPARED .....	18
FUNDS COLLECTED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES .....	\$324,407.18

WAREHOUSE ACTIVITIES

	<u>Number of Shipments</u>	<u>Weight</u>
FAMILY LOTS RECEIVED AT PROJECT	3400	1,700,000
FREIGHT SHIPMENTS TO RELOCATION POINTS	3987	7,069,734
FREIGHT SHIPPED TO OTHER PROJECTS	13	
CONTRABAND SHIPMENTS RECEIVED AT	15	



WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
Colorado River Relocation Center  
Poston, Arizona

NARRATIVE REPORT  
EVACUEE PROPERTY SECTION

Prepared by  
R. W. Schmitt



Those months of war in Europe and Asia; those months of predictions that American would remain neutral; those radical assertions by many men of prominence as to what was to come; all were culminated in the disaster of Pearl Harbor. Those things had their effect on the minds of all people in America.

Along the Pacific Coast there was potential danger and among the population could be counted almost 150,000 residents of Japanese blood. These people were colonized in groups and had habitually lived within their own sphere. They had not assimilated freely with other residents. After the disaster of Pearl Harbor, sentiment ran strongly against all people of Japanese ancestry. The Army recognized this and promptly decided to evacuate all people of Japanese ancestry. This decision was made in haste, but the potential danger of invasion was imminent.

The Presidential Proclamation was issued and machinery for the evacuation of a large group was put in effect within a few hours. Evacuee owned property was immediately recognized as a major problem. The United States Treasury designated that the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco immediately set up offices at key points on the Pacific coast and within the centers of colonies of Japanese populations to handle this problem.

The newspapers on the Pacific coast allowed people to comment in their columns and the attitude of these letters created a false impression in the minds of many people. Some of the articles were extreme and made some very radical suggestions as to what would be done with all Japanese. This resulted in many people, other than Japanese, believing that the Japanese would never return and that it would be criminal to pay any money to Japanese people; some believed all their property would be confiscated.

Investigations were commonplace and the filing of forms was required. Many Japanese were interned by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. All their bank accounts were "blocked" but later many were released from this provision. The reaction of the Japanese to all these procedures was very evident. Many were reluctant to trust anyone, even a Government agency. This made any effort to assist them very difficult.

The writer was immediately appointed to act in the Sacramento Area, covering five counties. Many of the people from this area were later sent to Poston. Evacuee property problems were immediately presented. The problems were found to cover a very wide scope of activities; commercial enterprises of all sorts, wherein consideration had to be given to the best possible means of preserving



their assets; lease agreements of all kinds were involved; farm properties presented a very complicated problem due to the existence of the Anti Alien Land Laws in the Pacific coast states; curfew regulations multiplied the problems manifold and all those to be evacuated had the problem of household goods and personal property.

The Federal Reserve set up a warehousing system and offered free storage of these items. Only a small portion of the evacuees would accept this offer of free storage and free transportation of their property. Here again, the lack of confidence was very plainly noticed. Results were that all sorts of substitute storage arrangements were made by the evacuees on their own initiative. The same confused minds resulted in the evacuees making leases, contracts, and granting "power of attorney" without council of the offices set up for the purpose of assisting them. Storage pools were formed where property was stored in school houses owned by the Japanese, in churches, boarding houses and even in farm buildings. Custodians were appointed without counsel or advice from the Evacuee Property Officers appointed by the Federal Reserve Bank.

Attempts to correct this condition were made by holding mass meetings with influential Japanese groups and the activities of the Government agencies were publicized by every known means. In an effort to advise the evacuees of the intent of the Government to assist them to prevent loss of their assets, some confidence was regained and cooperation with leaders of some groups was accomplished. When the movement of the evacuees to assembly centers and projects started, the magnitude of the problems of this mass evacuation became more evident to the evacuees. Assembly camp and project camp life was very different and considerable hardship was encountered. The restrictions necessarily created no favorable reaction. Contacts with their property were gradually lost. Many of the promises made by former friends, left behind in care of their property, remained unfulfilled. As time went on, and the spring season was followed by summer and the harvesting of their crops, the promises of the caretakers and custodians were slower in being fulfilled. By the first of March 1943, many of these custodians had failed to respond to the many requests of the evacuees for payments in full or on account.

At Poston, the Office of the Project Attorney, Mr. Ted Haas, was fortunate in having the able assistance of three evacuee attorneys. Mr. Haas at about this time had been confined to a West Coast Hospital for many weeks. The War Relocation Authority assumed complete control and a transfer was made of the activities of the Federal Reserve Bank and the Farm Security Administration along with those of the other contributing agencies about October 1, 1942. The WRA had set up the Evacuee Property Section with its main office at



At Poston, an office was assigned with an evacuee assistant - a Mr. Takeo Momita, who had been engaged in the warehousing department and had considerable knowledge of past events at Poston with regard to evacuees' household goods and the storage thereof. Mr. Momita was well qualified to act as an assistant and had exceptionally wide acquaintance among the Japanese people here at Poston. He had owned a drug store in El Centro in the Imperial Valley just prior to evacuation and had lived also in the Sacramento and San Diego areas.

Just prior to this time, the fire in San Diego Buddhist Temple had occurred and this temple was the storage place for the property of a large group of former San Diego residents who had located mostly at Poston. Mr. Momita had already obtained much of the information necessary to the WRA in order that insurance adjustments and removal of the property left could be accomplished. About this time the WRA had extended its policy with regard to the handling of evacuee owned property and the use of Form WRA 83 was cancelled for the more liberal terms granted on WRA 156. All of the people involved in this fire had completed the WRA 83 and it was now necessary to have the WRA 156's substituted and signed.

The evacuees coming from stated areas had been grouped in blocks and quads at Poston. This aided in the possibility of mass meetings in the mess halls in given areas where problems of direct interest to these particular people could be discussed.

The writer, with the assistance of Mr. Momita made a study of our problem ahead and an analysis of what these problems might be in each of the centers of the evacuated area. We then called mass meetings in their mess halls in the evening. I had attempted to have a new and first hand report of any events or news for these people from their former home. We were successful in gaining their interest and restoring some of their confidence in WRA, proof of this being that the evacuees began submitting their problems of their own volition and it became less difficult to get all of the details in connection with their problems. Until now, the lack of sufficient background and detail had handicapped this office and the area office in getting the best results. These meetings were continued for several weeks until we had covered the entire project. Later, meetings were called on special occasions, when problems of interest were brought to our attention.

On or about January 25, 1943, the Washington Office, in cooperation with other Government agencies, had requested that a survey be made of "idle farm machinery" and other essential equipment needed to assist in essential War Production. Form WRA 157 was prepared and sent to the Project. These forms were designed to get an inventory



of this equipment, locate the owner and designate if it could be sold immediately to be used in the needed War Food program.

The block managers had been requested to distribute these forms and return them when completed. At the time of my arrival on the Project only a dozen or so of these forms had been completed. Realizing the necessity of such a survey and the need for this equipment, I put forth intensive effort in accomplishing this survey. This was a really important problem and back of it all was the importance of future public relations and the moulding of public sentiment. On the horizon of future events was the threat of legislation to enable Government and state agencies to requisition this machinery and force the sale thereof. Later such legislation was passed.

The Japanese farmers were very reluctant to acknowledge ownership of machinery held in storage or left with a caretaker. They had no knowledge as to when they could return to their farms and no one was able to make any definite statements, but they had already learned they were free to relocate to the east. Many anticipated their early return to California and many were admittedly bewildered and confused and would not give the information needed. After many meetings of groups on this subject with open discussion regarding the patriotic necessity of the survey, and after showing reports of the activities of the War Board in their survey, which was conducted on the coast, we were able to obtain a pretty reasonable survey. Almost all of the reports, however, showed that the owners did not care to sell their equipment at any price. Later, many cases developed wherein the War Board wished to requisition these lots of machinery. This officer analyzed each case thoroughly and, in several cases, was able to encourage relocation which was the means of retaining the machinery and at the same time put the machinery to active use in food production.

In some cases, purchasers would requisition the few scarce and hard to buy items from a lot of farm machinery, leaving a part unsold that would be very difficult to sell later on and expensive to store. I was successful in getting bids on these cases for the entire lot, thus reducing the evacuees' financial loss considerably. I am of the opinion that this problem, which had grown to major importance in our food production program, was handled in the most advantageous manner possible by all concerned. Much credit is due the area officers, Mr. Victor Furth, Mr. Harry Oakley and Mr. Russell Robinson for their close and diplomatic cooperation with the other agencies involved.

On the few lots of farm machinery and trucks sold under requisition, the evacuee owners did not make too much protest or express too



much dissatisfaction. The next important problems presented were those of farm contracts. Many of the evacuees had crops grown but not harvested at the time of their evacuation. All sorts of management agreements were made - some share basis, many on outright sale basis with deferred payments to be made from the proceeds of the sale of the crops. It seemed to us that a very large proportion of these deals went sour. All sorts of reports of crop failures and losses were presented in lieu of the promised payments. Investigation of all of these cases to verify these reports seemed impossible because of the number of such cases reported. The area offices gave us all the cooperation we could expect from their limited manpower. From the Imperial Valley, we have a large number of evacuees and their interests there covered a large area. This valley is located about equal distance from either the Los Angeles Office, or Poston. Upon learning from the Los Angeles Office that their officers did not have the time to visit this area and with the evacuees appealing for assistance, the Director authorized the writer to make several trips to that area. The results of these visits were very satisfactory; many property settlements were effected, and it was gratifying to the evacuees to know that the WRA was trying to help them with their problems. Public sentiment in this area has always been notoriously antagonistic toward the Japanese. I am sure that my trips to the valley were very helpful to many people in getting a better understanding of this problem. No case handled by me created any unfavorable incident and I am sure that we enlisted the aid of many prominent citizens there for future public relations. The complete and peaceful settlement of the Kamia problems, involving the large buildings on Broadway in El Centro was just about completed at the time of evacuation. Builders liens and attachments had been made by some dozen or more firms for unpaid parts of the contract totalling in all over \$36,000. The contractor, M. Hayano was responsible for the owner whose accounts had all been blocked by the Federal Reserve Bank. The owner was represented by Mr. Harry Horton, one of the leading attorneys of Southern California. Mr. Hayano, a resident of Los Angeles, had been caught under the curfew ruling and had to remain in Fresno until evacuation. After analysing this case and some correspondence, it developed that personal contact must be made on many of these items and claims in order to properly verify or adjust the difference. After making three trips to El Centro, I was able to clarify the entire problem and accomplish a complete settlement of all claims to the entire satisfaction of the score or more claimants. This was accomplished also with the approval of the Federal Reserve Bank and funds were accordingly released for settlement.

At the time of the aforementioned trips to Imperial Valley, I was able each time to handle some thirty to forty case problems existing



with residents of this project.

Mr. H. Horton and his co-partner, Mr. Hickox, were handling the legal work of several Japanese clients who were now residents of Poston. Mr. Horton and his assistants have had several occasions to visit Poston on their legal and business affairs connected with the resident evacuees, as have also several other business men from the valley. I feel that the occasion for these visits was well utilized to promote better public relations in that area. Along with the property management problems in Imperial Valley was the request for storage and transportation of personal property. The main office of transportation had planned to take over the job of storing evacuee owned personal property in government storage and the shipping of needed property to relocation addresses or to projects. We had been advised by the San Francisco Office to encourage the evacuees to request this service to prevent further vandalism and pilfering which had now become very prevalent.

Due to the large percentage of residents at this project from Imperial and San Diego County, we, of course, had a large number of requests from residents of these areas. It proved to be similar to our request for property officer assistance in these areas - that the distance was so great that the Los Angeles area office was unable to supply the required equipment and assistance needed. This shortage of equipment and manpower was reflected in failure of parts of WRA to assist a very large group of our residents both in the Imperial Valley and San Diego areas. Our explanations and attempted excuses to the evacuees for failure in this respect was very trying on our office staff.

The fire loss in the Brawley Methodist Church added to the previous fire at San Diego Buddhist Church, the failure to remove and segregate the remaining articles, and the failure to promptly adjust insurance claims after several months had elapsed, caused much anxiety among the evacuees. Then, after a long delay, the attempt of the WRA to salvage the losses, along with the reports of many more cases of pilfering and vandalism accomplished nothing toward gaining the confidence of the evacuees.

At last, many months later, the transportation department did clean up the pending requests for transportation from this area, but not until many more cases of vandalism and pilfering had reduced enormously the amount of property requested to be moved. In many places of storage everything had been stolen or looted, leaving nothing to salvage.

It was still several months later before service was rendered in the



San Diego area.

However, at the project, the office of the evacuee property officer was becoming more popular with the evacuees. We had been able to render considerable service and were obtaining very good results in the management and settlement of most of their property matters. The evacuees were now more nearly reconciled to a prolonged evacuation period. More and more of them decided to sell and otherwise dispose of their property. The skyrocketing price being offered for automobiles was the basis for decision to sell many automobiles. A ceiling price had, however, been placed on trucks and tractors.

Our daily interviews were increasing rapidly and were, at an average of over 300 monthly, all handled by the Evacuee Property Officer and one assistant, Mr. Momita.

In January of 1944, a conference of Evacuee Property Officers and Project Attorneys was called and held in San Francisco. The Project Attorney, Mr. Haas, at this time announced his resignation and accompanied the Evacuee Property Officer to the conference. At the conference we were to meet our new Project Attorney, Mr. Scott Rowley. Mr. Rowley arrived at Poston some two weeks later.

The conference was the first opportunity for most of us to discuss our work and its problems with anyone directly interested in this type of work. My opinion of the results of the conference was quoted as being excellent and most important as we could get acquainted with others with whom we had important working connections. The informal meetings after the conference were the most important.

At the conference it was pointed out that the objectives of the work of the Evacuee Property Section were:

1. To render services to the evacuees in the management and conservation of their property interests.
2. To protect the interests of the government of the United States.
3. To maintain and promote good public relations.

Many discussions on these subjects were very interesting and instructive. Relocation was discussed and it was pointed out that the successful handling of property problems would remove any obstacles to relocation. It was the expression of the chair that such conferences should also include Relocation Officers.

It was interesting to learn, at the conference, of the information



that the field men had been able to obtain pertaining to some of the cases we had presented. Many times it was not considered advisable to put this sort of information in the correspondence on the case, but invariably it would have a direct bearing on the outcome of the case. It did emphasize the importance of a very thorough analysis of each case from the project before submitting to the area offices. Needless to say, some of these developments caused some embarrassment to the Evacuee Property Officer submitting the case. However, most of the stories of action on investigation of these various problems were very educational and usually suggested procedure on future problems.

Upon the arrival of Mr. Scott Rowley, the new Project Attorney, at Poston, an immediate attempt was made to more closely correlate the work of the two offices. Arrangements were made, whereby we joined forces in the branch offices at Camps II and III, instructing members of the legal staff on the handling of evacuee property problems or referring them to the Evacuee Property Officer at Camp I. This system worked out very well and allowed us closer contact with all the people of Poston.

The Project Attorney and Evacuee Property made their files available to each other and worked jointly on many problems. This procedure was investigated by Mr. Edgar Bernhardt, Solicitor, and his comments on the procedure were very favorable.

Previous to this coordinated working, we had found that the evacuees would attempt to have both offices work on the same problem and the evacuee would not advise either office of this fact. As pointed out in the beginning, many of these cases were, to say the least, of a very irregular nature. The minds of the evacuees were not always open to sound reasoning; therefore, a satisfactory settlement or compromise was difficult to accomplish. I would like to point out here that the exaggerated sympathy passed out by some of the appointed staff here at the project and their assurance that the WRA would be responsible for them, made reasonable compromises and settlements almost impossible at times. Most of these cases are of the type where the evacuee rented his house or turned it over to a friend, reserving one or more locked rooms in which to store his excess property. This practice has proved disastrous in most cases. Curiosity, or the presence of rodents such as mice, moths, etc., has resulted in the room being opened or forced open. In many of these cases arrangements were made at the time of evacuation, with no thought or consideration of what war time conditions would later bring forth. Many of the original custodians were drafted or required to move to war work areas, and in many cases did not take the trouble to notify the evacuee.



The number of cases of this sort were reported by the scores. This office attempted to have the transportation department salvage what it could on these cases as soon as we were advised of the condition.

Reports on the results of vandalism and pilfering of evacuee owned property will very likely be made by all departments of the Evacuee Property Section. I can only add that, in my opinion, the blame can largely be placed on the vicious attacks on the Japanese people by the newspapers and some prominent state and county officials. As one outstanding example, I refer to the town of Westmoreland in Imperial Valley where the local paper printed a lengthy article as to the statements of the mayor of the town, wherein he had bitterly criticized all Japanese and stated that they were not entitled to protection of their property. Soon after, a former Japanese home only a few blocks from the Police Station was slowly looted and destroyed. The Chief of Police admitted to me that he was aware of what was going on, but that there was nothing he could do about it. Such articles as a piano, washing machine and refrigerator were removed during daylight hours. Through the persistent efforts of the Evacuee Property Officer, Elmer Cordes, the piano was finally recovered and taken to WRA storage.

The case of the Nicheren Temple in Los Angeles was one of the many similar cases, however, inasmuch as I was fortunate enough to have considerable personal contact in this case and was with the people as their escort, assisting them in identifying their property and preparing it for removal to storage, I was able to know these fine people and to know more than ever how they could feel under such circumstances. The complete story can best be told from the three attached exhibits - the report to files by the Evacuee Property Officer and the report by Mrs. Cecil Itano of Granada Relocation Center.

Copies of these reports were distributed through the reports officer at the time.

An outstanding event in all projects was the segregation program and the leave clearance hearing on which most of us had to serve. This was a serious problem. Actions and suggestions would have long lasting effect on many people. Human beings, already bewildered and confused, were attempting to make decisions that would affect their entire future. The final movement of some fourteen hundred people from Poston to Tule Lake under way, the Evacuee Property Officer too, was called on to do his part.

To aid the confused and bewildered to make their move in as comfortable and orderly manner as possible, the Evacuee Property



Section engaged three counselors and advisors, capable of fully explaining and assisting the segregates in planning what to ship, what to carry as baggage and how to prepare same. The counselors made calls at each of the segregates barracks well in advance of the time of departure. The results were successful and gratifying. No criticism of the operations have come to the attention of this office and several evacuees' families have expressed their thanks for our assistance.

More and more attention is now being given relocation. The evacuees are regaining some of their sense of security. Seasonal workers returning give assurance. More property problems are presented. It becomes more evident that property problems are an important part of the consideration of relocation. Counsel and advice on these matters are requested from both the Evacuee Property Officer and the Project Attorney. Many cases are reported, but information available shows that there is not much that can be done about these cases. Many cases must be referred to an outside attorney, who must be engaged at the expense of the evacuee. Many of the evacuees hesitate to press their cases with legal action, sometimes because of the expense involved and sometimes because the evacuees believe it would cause bad public relations in their former home communities.

With the announcement of the Post-Exclusion order came an avalanche of work in the planning and setting up of facilities to handle the task of moving, within the period of one year, about 3,000 families, still represented at the project by at least some members of the family, and practically all of their household goods to be moved. The procedure of allowing the evacuees to pack their own property, as followed in the past was considered inefficient and not satisfactory when a greater movement of property as represented was involved.

This, then, called for a program of controlled operations and a plan was suggested to the Project Director. After considerable study and debate the plan was somewhat revised and finally approved. Estimates had to be prepared, warehouse routine worked out and the coordination of other sections and departments obtained.

This, along with an increased number of interviews with evacuees resulting from the issuance of the Post-Exclusion Order, proved to be more than my physical condition could safely endure. Considering my well-being and future health most important, I decided to resign and to take a much needed rest period to recuperate my health.

With these remarks, the writer closes his report on the activities of the Evacuee Property problems at Poston. The work has been very interesting and I feel that I have contributed greatly to the War effort and to the good interests of the United States of America.



EXHIBITS



Theft and destruction of evacuee property at Nichiren Temple, Los Angeles resulted from misplaced confidence and poorly planned storage of personal property. This is a narrative report of information this property officer has obtained, and the action taken.

At the time of evacuation about one hundred Japanese families stored their household goods and the personal property they were not able to take to assembly centers in this church. Management of the church property apparently was the responsibility of Sanji Hazemoto, who is now located at Heart Mountain project. This information first became known to the Evacuee Supervisors at Los Angeles sometime the later part of July 1943.

On July 23, 1943, we received a copy of a letter and teletype from Mr. Elmer H. Cordes, Los Angeles office, which notified Mr. Ray Johnston, Project Director at Heart Mountain, that conditions at the Nichiren Church in Los Angeles were bad and that probably one hundred families had their personal property stored within the church. The church and the residence had been left in the care of a Maye White under the authority of Sanji Hazemoto. Upon Mr. Corde's investigation with the Police, Maye White was found to be a woman of a very questionable character. Her associates were negroes, and on occasions they were known to have removed furniture and personal property from the church in trucks. The negroes also had police records - one McKensie having been taken in custody at least six times.

We immediately notified Mr. Cordes that the Pastor of the church, Rev. J. Ishihara, was a resident of this project, also that about twenty-five of the families involved were residents of this project. Multiple communication between projects resulted in a request to have a party of evacuees visit the church to identify and repack the property to be moved to WRA storage.

About August first, Mr. Dillon Myer and Mr. Cozzens visited Los Angeles and their attention was called to this church by Mr. Cordes and Mr. Sloan, Evacuee Property Supervisors, and an inspection was made.

About August fifth, S. Hazemoto signed a revocation of the Agreement with Maye White at the suggestion of Mr. Cordes, who made several attempts to serve this notice, both by personal service and by registered mail. The registered mail was returned. The house on the church property at 2804 E. Third Street, Los Angeles, had been vacated, and water and power service discontinued.

During this interval the police had found the church property had



been broken into and some young boys were found in the building. I am of the opinion that these boys were turned over to the juvenile authorities.

Correspondence between the interested parties at the various projects as to the person best qualified to go to California, and with the assistance of the Chief of the Evacuee Property Division in San Francisco, we were enabled to obtain permits for Rev. J. Ishihara and Rev. C. Kurahashi, both aliens from this project who were most familiar with the storage of property there, and Mrs. Cecil Itano, a citizen from Granada Relocation Project who had been a diligent worker in the church since the founding of the church fourteen years ago.

Due to the segregation program this trip was not possible until October 10th, at which time arrangements were made with the WRA transportation division to assist in the removal of all the property to the WRA warehouse.

On October 10th I escorted the evacuees to Los Angeles by private auto, and as soon as we arrived at Los Angeles we entered the church. The pictures we had previously seen should have prepared us for the scene we were to observe, but I can hardly say they did. The first few minutes inside the church convinced us that damage would be very great and our job would be a very difficult and a trying one. Every package, box, trunk, and piece of this property had been pilfered with very few exceptions - dresser drawers were emptied, and drawer contents scattered in every direction. The boxes and trunks were generally empty or nearly so with evidence of the contents thrown hither and yon. The aisles were piled high with broken picture frames, inner tills of trunks, clothing, glass and chinaware - many broken or damaged. In fact, one could see most any article that might be found in any home scattered or under foot, probably soiled, broken, or torn. To any home loving person this sight was pitiful, and the evacuees were noticeably grief stricken.

We then proceeded to the hotel where we had arranged appropriate reservations to comply with our military orders granting the visit to the "restricted area".

Early Monday morning, we were again at the church ready for the enormous task ahead. Very shortly, newspaper correspondents from all the papers called at the church for a story and pictures which made front page in two of the daily papers and important spots in the other papers - all papers carried pictures.

During the entire week the work progressed to finish only at the



time of dead line on our permit. A hurried job was done of gathering up those things that might be of value to the owner, and identifying, if possible, the owner. When impossible to identify the owner, the property was packed with the intent to send it to Poston for further effort at identification, and if it is found necessary some will be sent to other projects for identification.

It was noticeable that such items as typewriters, hand luggage, and good portable sewing machines, etc., were missing, some tell-tale part being left behind from which we were able to make this determination. Noteworthy also was the fact that the property marked in the name of "S. Hazemoto" was unmolested.

The care and consideration given each lot of property by the visiting evacuees deserves commendation. We were very fortunate indeed to have the care and assistance of Mrs. Itano whose womanly touch proved very valuable. It would have been a mistake to have omitted her from the party.

The evacuees had ample opportunity to see the WRA transportation department in operation and have expressed high praise and satisfaction with the worker of this department. After the job had been completed late Saturday night, we took the evacuees to the WRA warehouse on Santee St., and we heard them express amazement and satisfaction with the way their property had been cared for and handled. It was possible for them to see why we are not able to give them all the prompt service they had previously expected. The evacuees were also able to see the changed conditions now existing in a "world at war", and compare this with what existed when they left California.

The evacuees have an offer from a neighbor to rent the house which they now have under consideration. The Evacuee Property Supervisor at Los Angeles will also try to rent the church for the duration.

At a meeting of the Poston members of October 19th, it was decided that before any definite steps were taken along these lines the members in other projects be allowed to voice their opinions. While the Rev. Ishihara has full Power of Attorney signed by S. Hazemoto, he is reluctant to act until he has the unanimous approval of the members. We are now awaiting further developments on these matters.

Submitted by,

R. W. Schmitt  
Evacuee Property Officer  
Colorado River Relocation  
Center  
November 1, 1943



POST SCRIPT:

Through the efforts of Mr. L. F. Sloan and Mr. Elmer H. Cordes, Property Officers at Los Angeles, the residence is now rented to Mr. Ande, a property owner next door, with an agreement to act as caretaker for the church property. All personal property of the evacuees has been removed to the WRA warehouse or sent to the evacuees.

With the cooperation of the Los Angeles Property Office, this Property Officer has requested the District Attorney of Los Angeles to attempt to get sufficient evidence to prosecute the people guilty of this atrocious case of theft and vandalism. There are some hopes at this time that this case may be brought to trial.



Newspaper item taken from the Daily News, Los Angeles, Oct. 12, 1943

JAPS RETURN HERE, FIND STUFF JUNK

Homcoming for the first three Japanese to reenter the city since the mass evacuation of their people to relocation centers was a brief and unhappy occasion yesterday. Authorized by a special army permit, they spent the day at Nichiren Buddhist Temple, 2800 East Third St., sorting out and salvaging the belongings of 100 Japanese families that were reduced to junk recently by vandals.

They found the interior of the temple in riotous disorder. What the vandals could not recognize as worthy of stealing they mutilated. Neatly stacked piles of household effects were pushed over and thrown wildly about. Mattresses and upholstered furniture were slashed with knives. Exquisite, fragile ornaments were smashed or crushed under feet. Under the direction of the war relocation administration, the property was moved from the temple to a government warehouse at 836 Santee St. It will remain there under guard for the duration of the war. The three Japanese designated by the army to assist in the salvage work were Rev. Jitei Ishihara, pastor of the temple; Rev. Chikye Kurahashi and Mrs. Cecil Itano. Mrs. Itano is a second generation Japanese; the two priests are aliens. Mrs. Itano is living at the Granada Relocation Center at Amache, Colorado, and the priests are quartered at the Colorado River, Arizona Center.

Rudolph W. Schmitt, WRA evacuee property officer at Colorado River, and R. A. Walling, evacuee transportation supervisor for Southern California, were in charge of the moving.

"The WRA went to considerable trouble to get army permission for these three people to do this work," Schmitt explained, "only someone acquainted with the property would be able to make any sense out of this mess. We have some pretty bad cases of vandalism of Japanese property, but this is the worst and the most stupid I have ever seen." Evidence of Schmitt's confidence in the three salvagers was frequently evinced during the sorting out process. One or another would utter an exclamation and hold up some ruined object that all three recognized. Mrs. Itano exclaimed with relief when she found her radio had not been seriously damaged.

She is not too pleased with life at the relocation center. "After you have owned property and lived in your own home it is hard to get used to being herded together with 8000 other persons," she said. "The food is monotonous. About all we can look forward to is fish. We get meat about twice a month and then it is so disguised in stews that we can't tell what kind of meat it is. However, there is enough food and I suppose it is healthy." The Japanese in her camp have a



farm project, she said. In addition, there are plenty of jobs administering the duties and providing for the rest of the evacuees.

Schmitt pointed out that Japanese of the type returned here for the salvage operations are not internees. "They have been thoroughly investigated and their loyalty to the United States is not questioned," he said. "They are permitted to travel anywhere except on the coast. "Their property is respected by the government just as much as any other citizen's. The problem they present is simply that of relocating them in other places where they can start life over again."



STATEMENT BY MRS. CECIL ITANO WHO ACCOMPANIED R. W. SCHMITT TO  
LOS ANGELES TO IDENTIFY GOODS IN NICHIREN TEMPLE

Leaving Granada, Colorado on October 6, 1943, was like a dream, for after waiting months of much indecision - pro and con on the advisability in entering the restricted area of California - to be actually entrained to my destination - Poston, Arizona, seemed incredible. Heretofore, all my hopes were always blasted to nothingness - to have obtained my permission and my wish materialize was beyond my wildest dreams. Although I had only a short time for my preparation for the trip - I did not think that time was of any consequence to quibble about.

On October 8, 1943, I reached my destination at 10:30 p.m. at Parker, Arizona. On October 10, 1943, the Rev. Jitei Ishihara, Rev. Chikyo Kurahashi, Mr. R. W. Schmitt, Evacuee Property Officer, our official escort, and myself drove away in the morning toward my beloved California that is so dear to my heart. As we neared Los Angeles, many familiar land marks brought faint nostalgia of former happier occasions. After registering at the Hotel Rosslyn around 6:00 p.m. and while glancing around I had a sad home coming for I realized that the Los Angeles that I knew of yore was no more. This to me was indeed a severe realization.

On October 11, 1943, we went out to view the Nichiren Church. The catastrophe before my eyes was hopeless mass of deliberate destruction. Everything was a conglomeration of unrecoverable damaged things. Nothing was untouched, sewing machines were ruined, furniture broken, mirrors, smashed to smithereens, broken glass from breakable articles, household goods scattered helter skelter, trunks broken beyond repair, albums, pictures precious only to the respective owners thrown to the four winds. Standing among this debris of disreverent damage - my heart was full of unwept tears and compassion for the people who trustingly stored their valuables and treasured household belongings. These things were all carefully packed and separated and divided into two categories - namely - the things that were to be used in the near future, the necessities of life, were packed with infinite care and deliberation; the other things that we thought were excess baggage were either sold at a pitiful sum or were given away to dear friends with a little pang of regret - for we do get attached to our personal effects and belongings, characteristic of any human being. While surveying the irremediable damage, I noticed that things of intrinsic worth were what the plunderers were searching for and anything that could be converted into immediate cash were taken and residue was abandoned regardless of value and preciousness. Electric irons, sewing machines, refrigerators, washing machines, radios, Persian rugs, typewriters, were system-



atically filched - not one box went by uncashed. Could this unwarrantable plundering be averted if such vicious propaganda libelously slandering us - American citizens of Japanese descent - who have complied with every Government phantasy - forsaking our homes - giving up established business - farm lands which would be cultivated and producing food for the Army and civilians at this time of manpower shortage - to be depicted as a despicable and undesirable human race and other unfounded accusations necessary? After all, California did gain much from our taxes, donations, our contributions to the community, our dogmatic loyalty to the state, why this ostracism? Through days and nights of endless separating, dividing, segregating merchandise to the rightful owners - my only thought was - how was I to face these unhappy people again and report their losses that money could never buy again. Things that we did gather up carefully were not so much of monetary value but for sentimental reasons dear to the owners' heart only - the other things were things needed to carry on in the future the necessities of life. How can I prevent the people from becoming too bitter? Will this unscrupulousness be accepted? Can I justify this pilfering? Will they be satisfied with only remnants of their belongings? Vandalism is indeed heart rending. In my heart I keep repeating, dear God why did this happen and please show me how not to become too resentful. Sometimes I thought that I would never come out alive from this nightmarish infamy. Could this unlawful pillage of heartbreaking destruction have been prevented if such propaganda had not been publicized throughout this country giving the plunderers the assurance that we would never return to California even to protect our rights and belongings? Will such injustice be justified in such land of democracy and fairness? Indeed this is a bitter cup of gall to swallow. But this quotation comes vividly back to my mind from Shakespeare - "The quality of mercy is not strained - it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven. It is twice blessed - it blesses him that gives as well as him who takes -". My only hope that such pilfering will be stopped before malice gnaws too deeply in our hearts beyond restitution.

My faith in humanity has been somewhat restored by the unwavering understanding of my Project Director, Mr. J. Lindley of the Granada Relocation Center, Mr. Wade Head, Project Director of the Colorado River Relocation Center, and to Mr. R. W. Schmitt who has put me back on my feet on the solid earth again with a much better perspective and has endeared himself to all of us for his tremendous capacity of humanness and understanding of our tormented minds.

Submitted by Mrs. Cecil Itano  
October 20, 1943



Colorado River Relocation Project  
Poston, Arizona

SPECIAL REPORT OF EVACUEE PROPERTY OFFICER

(A Complete Report to October 1, 1943)

ORGANIZATION

R. W. Schmitt was appointed as Evacuee Property Officer on March 16, 1943. During the evacuation period from March, 1942 to September, 1942, Mr. Schmitt had served at Sacramento, California under the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. Arriving at Poston on March 29, 1943, Mr. Schmitt immediately was allotted an office and a staff. Coordinating assistants were also established at Camp II and Camp III.

COOPERATION of the Block Managers.

About the only records or files existent was a letter from the Washington Office requesting the evacuees to submit to W.R.A. an inventory of Farm Machinery on form WRA-157. Up until this time very few forms had been filled out, and the evacuees seemed very much confused and unwilling to fill out and submit these forms. Meetings were arranged for and held, first with the Block Managers, and later with groups of evacuees within the blocks. Many of these meetings were arranged for at the Mess Halls, etc., during the evening hours. General discussion was invited and the newspaper publicity existing at that time used as exhibits. Favorable results were obtained, and at the same time the function of the Evacuee Property Officer was publicized. Evacuees from various locations in California actually requested meetings to be arranged to cover their own block or quad. Questions were asked freely in both languages, regarding all operations of the Evacuee Property Division.

COOPERATION from the Project Director and his Staff.

Full and complete cooperation was offered from the Project Director and his staff enabling the Property Officer to enlarge his staff and office space as needed; also enabling the Evacuee Property Officer to make personal visits to areas in California where many serious property problems were involved. The value of being able to give the evacuees first hand information of the con-



dition of their property should not be underestimated, particularly under circumstances now existing. For a more detailed report on some of these problems, see Exhibit 5, "A Special Report" by Sr. Reports Officer, Allan Markley, dated August 14, 1943. Also see Exhibit 1, a report on the Nichiren Temple, Los Angeles, including Exhibit 2, a report by Mrs. Cecil Itano, one of the evacuees. Exhibit 3, newspaper clipping.

OPERATIONS -- March 30 to October 1, 1943.

One thousand and forty-seven interviews on problems requiring special attention.

Seven hundred and three WRA-155 and WRA-156 forms made requesting movement of property.

\$53,844.63 collected for evacuees.

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED in getting a true picture of the problems.

The types of problems are very much divided:

- a. Many evacuees having several problems, sometimes existing in several localities.
- b. The fact that the evacuee still sees his home town in a pre-war condition.
- c. The difficulty of ascertaining the true owners of property.
- d. Many cases reported by a person not the actual owner.
- e. The lack of records, documents, and correct information.
- f. Many important records left behind in trunks, safe deposit boxes, etc., and with one time acquaintances.

This makes final decision and disposition of the case very uncertain.

OPERATIONS divided and briefed.

Number of interviews and conferences on the following subjects:

228 interviews on MOTOR VEHICLES  
Sale of, storage, or transfer of.

142 interviews on FARM MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT  
Sale of, storage, or transfer of.



- 79 interviews on FARM MANAGEMENT  
Investigation of, sale, or rental of.
- 105 interviews on BUSINESS PROPERTY MANAGEMENT  
Investigation of, sale, or rental of.
- 17 interviews on RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT  
Investigation of, sale, or rental of.
- 71 interviews on COMMERCIAL STOCKS AND EQUIPMENT  
Investigation of, sale, or rental of.
- 73 interviews on MISCELLANEOUS COLLECTIONS, ADJUSTMENTS  
Investigation of, or contacts requested.
- 18 interviews on INSURANCE  
Renewals of, adjustments, etc.
- 65 CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, AND OTHER COMMUNITY STORAGE  
PROBLEMS  
Requests involving meetings and coordinated action to cover property stored in community storage.
- 11 interviews on SAFE DEPOSIT BOXES  
Cases requiring entry into.
- 295 interviews on STORAGE AND TRANSFER OF EVACUEES' PERSONAL PROPERTY  
Problem cases requiring special attention.
- 112 interviews on RELOCATION OF EVACUEES  
Problem cases directly connected with.
- 27 U.S.D.A. WAR BOARD  
Problem cases requiring contact with.

#### RELOCATION

As this Project has a large farmer population, the relocation problem comes very close to the work of this office. Many contacts were necessary with the U.S.D.A. War Board. We have successfully relocated many farm families, and arranged to allow them to keep and move their equipment. An AMBITIOUS FARM FAMILY equipped with a complete farm machinery and truck can be an immediate help to the NATION'S FOOD PROBLEM, as well as help solve the RELOCATION PROBLEM. RELOCATION PROSPECTS TO all evacuees look much brighter when property problems back home have been properly adjusted and are in good care.



SEGREGATION AND REPATRIATION - Another touchy problem.

To break up families and groups living or doing business together.

To assist in the mutual division of property, sometimes one for segregation and even repatriation, and the other with the thought of relocation.

SEGREGATION OPERATIONS AND COOPERATION

In preparation for segregation, the Evacuee Property Officer delegated a picked evacuee personnel to call at each barrack on each head of families to be segregated. He explained in detail the moving of the segregants, going into detail on "Hand Luggage", "Checkable Baggage", and "Freight". Also he explained in detail the contemplated time schedule for movement of the segregates. Later 485 WRA-156 forms were prepared. The result was as near perfection as could have been obtained, and the entire operation ran well ahead of schedule with no confusion or misunderstanding. Here again cooperation from the Transportation Department and the Construction Engineers Department was excellent.

TRANSPORTATION OF EVACUEE PROPERTY

The "Back Log" of requests for the movement and storage of evacuee property on hand at the Transportation Office has been very disappointing, and very difficult to explain to the evacuees. Many cases of vandalism, pilfering, and fire damage have been reported after the evacuee had long before requested the removal of his property. Needless to say, explanations are difficult in these cases. We hope for a rapid acceleration in the work of transportation from now on.

COORDINATION with other WRA OFFICERS

As many of our evacuees come from Southern California, most of our cases are submitted to the Los Angeles Office. Coordination and cooperation with this office has been excellent with the entire staff. The same whole hearted cooperation has been given by the San Francisco Office. Due to the larger area they have to cover and the scattering of cases, much slower progress is noted.

RESULTS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

A steady and constant increase in the number of cases presented each month with no indication of a decrease in sight in the near future.



Prospects of the future are that we will have all the work our increased staff can handle efficiently.

A substantial recovery of funds and property for evacuees.

A continuance of correspondence from evacuees on relocation, although it is suggested that the evacuees correspond with the office nearest his problem.



COLORADO RIVER WAR RELOCATION PROJECT  
 Poston, Arizona  
 August 14, 1943

SPECIAL REPORT:

Many Evacuees Have Suffered Property Loss

Pathetic stories and real tragedy are written in the case histories of some of the people who have been moved from California to this desert land along the Colorado River, called Poston.

They came resenting their being sent here, as a measure of war necessity, but they came to make the desert blossom and they have readjusted their lives to the conditions around them. That is to say, most of them have. There are exceptions where resentment has bred hatreds which even fair treatment has not erased.

It is in the property officer's records that one will find some of the most pathetic stories. Often the savings of a lifetime have been erased by conditions over which these people have had very little control.

Many times personal property was left in the custody of people in whom the evacuee had faith, and later was to learn that it was next to impossible to recover their possessions. Numerous cases of theft and vandalism have been reported from the places where treasured possessions were stored. The WRA had had to arrange to move great quantities of personal property and household effects to Government storage, to protect their interests.

At this center now the Evacuee Property Officer has just arranged so that two evacuees may enter the restricted zone under special permit, in an effort to identify personal belongings of some 300 families. Their goods were stored in two Japanese church buildings. Both were broken into and valuables stolen, trunks opened, boxes smashed, papers strewn about and some of the goods ruthlessly destroyed. Some cases have been reported where unknown persons breaking into storehouses have played Hallowe'en pranks by changing labels on trunks and boxes, so that if they are ultimately shipped they will go to the wrong persons.



The story of one family from a small community in Imperial County -- that is, their former home was in that community -- is typical and is repeated time and again in the case records of the Evacuee Property Office. A daughter of the family was working as a stenographer for \$16 a month for the administration of the WRA here at Poston. She had been transferred to the office of R. W. Schmitt, evacuee property officer.

One day the girl asked Mr. Schmitt this question:

"Why do people back home give our piano to the USO?"

"Well, I'm sure that you don't mind if they use the piano to entertain the boys, do you?", her employer replied.

"No," the girl said, "but I can't understand how they got it out of the house without letting us know."

Then the Evacuee Property Officer began to suspect the truth. Someone living in the community where this family had resided before evacuation had written that their piano was being used at the USO. Later when Mr. Schmitt made one of his trips to California to try and untangle some of the property affairs of the people of Poston, he included a stop at this small town on his schedule.

His first call was at the police station in the town where he inquired about the piano. He was told that it had not been turned over to the USO. Finally after some questioning the chief of police, who claimed that the vandalism had been committed before he took office, accompanied him to the house where the family had lived -- only two short blocks from the police station.

It was a modest little home and when the family left they put padlocks on the doors. All of these locks had been removed and everything in the house had been taken away or badly damaged. There was a large oak bureau in one of the rooms, the top drawer of which had a lock. This drawer had been used by the head of the family as a place to store important papers, records, letters, insurance policies, and the few things which would make it possible for him to gather up the reins of his past life and resume his former position in the community after the war is over. This drawer had been pried open and the oak front was split. The papers had been removed and were scattered hither and yon over the room. Those things which may have been of real value were doubtless missing.

A new stove which had been the pride and joy of the mother of the house had been smashed. Most of the articles of furniture had been carted away.



"Well, they certainly cleaned this place out," declared the police officer as he strode across the room. "When I was here the last time there was a good washing machine in the corner of the kitchen. Now even that's gone."

The total cash value of the goods stolen was probably not great, but to this evacuee family it was the accumulation of worldly goods of a lifetime. It was those things with which they lived and which had been endeared to them by their very use.

The saddest commentary on the whole situation not only in this small California town but in others where similar cases have been investigated by the Evacuee Property Officer from Poston, is that local authorities apparently do very little to restrain the vandals. The attitude has been, in too many cases, that if it belonged to an evacuee family, no one cared what happened to it. One police official in a southern California town is reported to have openly stated that he was not intending to protect property left by the evacuees.

Vandalism, serious as it has been, is not the only hardship which has caused these people material loss. Many of them were forced by the evacuation to leave tangled business affairs behind them. Often they gave a power of attorney to persons who neglected to carry out the trust.

The case of a contractor who was just finishing up a large building job in the city of El Centro, California, at the time of the evacuation, gives some idea of the difficulties encountered. All of these cases were different, but alike only in respect to their very complex nature. WRA officials are attempting to clear up some of these problems and to recover values in cases where this is possible. Luckily, in this particular case, a final settlement is apparently to be reached now, so that some \$3,500 will be paid over to the contractor and all liens satisfied.

The contract was for the erection of a block of stores and in some cases tenants had ordered extras. When the Japanese man who had the construction contract was forced to leave by the evacuation, he arranged for completion of the work. But the party for whom the work was being done was an alien and his name was placed on the list of blocked nationals. No final payment could be made on the contract. Immediately suppliers and others began putting liens on the building. Disputes arose over bills. Affairs were in a hopeless mess and forced sale of the property was impending. Federal authorities finally stepped in and arranged for a bank to take over the property and pay off the liens. At long last a settlement with the evacuee contractor had been tentatively agreed upon.



Lately several fire insurance companies holding policies on property owned by evacuees have refused to renew these policies, basing their refusal not on discrimination against the evacuees, but that the character of the risk was changed by the absentee ownership. When the Evacuee Property Officer at Poston recently inquired if policies on property in southern California owned by evacuees, could be placed with a company in Arizona, the offer of the business was promptly and emphatically refused. Some eastern insurance companies, however, have been willing to write policies in several of these cases.

There are many cases coming up constantly where evacuees had arranged to loan farm machinery and other personal property, and are now unable to recover it. There are cases where lessees have failed to pay the rent, cases where crops in the ground had been assigned by the evacuee owner and now he had been unable to get a settlement or even answers to his letters. There are cases where property has been foreclosed and equities washed away, or where tax payments have been neglected, when evacuees anticipated that they would be paid from rentals due.

The matter of farm machinery owned by evacuees has been a difficult one. In the first place, many of the farm people wanted, at the time of evacuation, to retain possession of those machines for future use. They made all sorts of arrangements; storing the goods in neighbor's sheds, or in some cases letting them stand in the open; loaning them to some friend or renting them for the period they would be away -- expecting to return to California -- and making verbal agreements in many cases. Sometimes a hastily drawn contract would be entered into which called for certain payments of deferred notes to implement dealers or banks. Sometimes, too, they attempted to hide their ownership of the farm machinery, or to transfer title merely for the purpose of saving their property with an "understanding" that they would be able to recover it when they returned to their former homes.

When the critical shortage of farm machinery developed in California as a result of the restricted manufacture, there was a clamor from over the state for confiscation of all Japanese owned farm implements. The WRA undertook an inventory at all relocation centers. At first the evacuees at Poston were unwilling to reveal the ownership of the implements, apparently fearing that the Government would confiscate it. Some of them knew of the Army's requisition of a number of automobiles owned by the evacuees.

It took a series of meetings in the various blocks at all three units of the Poston center to convince any number of the owners



of farm machinery that the WRA inventory was for their protection against threatened confiscation rather than for the purpose of it. The California newspapers which come to Poston were widely read and the articles demanding seizure of idle farm machinery "owned by the Japs", at first served only to incense the people. Later these same stories had the effect of making them willing to reveal ownership in the hope of protection.

After the California law was passed providing for the requisitioning of idle farm machinery and in effect was made to apply over the United States by the Federal authorities, there seems to have been no great resentment. Again the evacuees here at Poston accepted the outcome, although some of them who had made arrangements for use of their machinery by neighboring farmers or ranchers, hope yet to retain it.

It is interesting to note that in one particular case which has been handled by the Evacuee Property Officer here, the Japanese owner who has now relocated in Colorado, may yet be able to ship his farm machinery to that state for his own use. He had arranged to farm land in Colorado and went to the County Farm agent there, on the suggestion of the Evacuee Property Officer, and secured a letter to the County War Board in California certifying that he needed the machinery for food protection.

This story has been widely circulated in Poston and other farmers here hope to be as fortunate. One evacuee who has a brother who had relocated in Colorado wanted to arrange an assignment and issue a bill of sale for his farm machinery so that his brother might have it shipped. The Property Officer here at Poston, however, refused to approve any such subterfuge and the assignment of title has not been made.

There have been a number of instances, especially in San Diego and Orange Counties, where the war boards have moved to certify for sale to other farmers, machinery owned by Poston residents. In some cases the "red tags" would be placed only on tractors and trucks, while the evacuee farmer may have a miscellaneous collection of other farm implements all of which would be necessary to the operation of his business prior to evacuation. To take out only the tractor and truck would so cripple the farm operating equipment as a whole so that should the evacuee return to farming on relocation he would not have sufficient implements to rescue food production. It has been pointed out in many of these cases by the Evacuee Property Officer, that the whole lot of machinery should be purchased or none of it. This has usually led to some agreement whereby the offer



made and approved by the county war board would be increased to include the harrows, cultivators, plows etc., or a sufficiently higher price would be offered to compensate partially at least for the broken lot sale.

Evacuees have complained in some cases, that the approved prices offered through the war boards have been lower than they would be able to negotiate at private sale. In the matter of the sale of privately owned automobiles, especially those of fairly late models, the evacuees have had better financial returns. Late model automobiles have been bringing prices considerably higher than the original price when new. There is no Office of Price Administration ceiling on used automobiles. This factor has worked to the advantage of the evacuee owners of cars.

All evacuee employees of the Evacuee Property Office are required to sign a pledge that they will keep all property information entirely confidential. All records are kept in locked files.

It is not uncommon to have entirely new cases come to the attention of the office although the aid rendered through this office has been available for nearly four months. Some of the residents have several different cases, on which they need assistance. The problems presented cover every phase of human activity and some even concern the caring for the remains of deceased persons.

Prepared by: Allan Markley  
Sr. Reports Officer