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Report

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

Room 234 Atlas Building  
Salt Lake City, 1, Utah

October 8, 1943

MEMORANDUM TO: H. Rex Lee

FROM: Ottis Peterson,  
Acting Relocation Supervisor

SUBJECT: Summary No. 2 on Oregon Situation

Supplementing my original report on the Oregon situation I have recently received the following information from William Moore, Relocation Officer, who has been in Malheur County, Oregon for some weeks completing a survey of population, land ownership, etc.

POPULATION:

Total population of Malheur County as shown by the 1940 census was 19,740. This included 137 persons of Japanese ancestry, 79 males, 58 females.

In February, 1942 there were 749 Japanese residents in the County, according to the records of Joe Beeson, then a Relocation Officer and now Employment Officer at the Minidoka Relocation Center. This would indicate that approximately 600 voluntary evacuees from the Pacific Coast settled there in the early months of 1942.

Our own records, as of October 1, 1943, show 217 evacuees on indefinite leave and approximately 636 on seasonal leave.

These, with the pre-Pearl Harbor and voluntary evacuees, make a total of 1,602 persons of Japanese ancestry in the County. These are divided about 45% pre-Pearl Harbor residents and voluntary evacuees and 55% evacuees under WRA jurisdiction. The total Japanese population is about 7.1% of the total population of the County, assuming that the 1943 population is about the same as in 1940.



October 8, 1943

LAND OWNERSHIP, LEASES, AND SHARE CROPPING:

This is covered in a tabulated form in a separate report. Summarized it indicates that of the total tillable acreage in Malheur County, 153,536 acres, persons of Japanese ancestry owned 645 acres, or .42%, as of September 28, 1943. Of this 645 acres, 180 acres were purchased after December 7, 1941. The two purchasers since December 7, 1941 include Masahiro Mukai, of whom we have no record and who we believe to be a voluntary evacuee, and Thomas T. Itami. Mr. Itami is a WRA evacuee on indefinite leave from Tule Lake since March 30, 1943. Records, as they are available from Malheur County, only concern ownership of land. However, we have an excellent report as of May 18, 1943 for the Owyhee Irrigation District, compiled by Gilbert L. McMillan, then Relocation Officer at Nyssa, Oregon, in cooperation with R. E. Brooke, County Agent, from records of the AAA. The Owyhee Irrigation District includes most crop lands in Malheur County and some adjacent territory, with a total of 151,000 tillable acres. The figures include a break-down of property owned, leased, or share-cropped by persons of Japanese ancestry, and owned, leased, and share-cropped by WRA evacuees. They are self-explanatory and present an excellent picture, rebutting any accusations that evacuees have "taken over" Malheur County.

STORES, WAREHOUSES, AND BUSINESS BUILDINGS:

So far as is known no Japanese own any of the business buildings, nor do they operate any businesses except a small fish store in Ontario. There is also a Japanese dentist in Ontario.

/s/ Ottis Peterson



C O P Y

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK  
IN  
AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS  
STATE OF OREGON  
Ontario

September 30, 1943

Walter M. Pierce  
Route No. 1  
La Grande, Oregon

Dear Mr. Pierce:

It has taken some time to work out a satisfactory reply to your letter of September 14, but it seems advisable to have the facts and figures as accurate as possible. I will answer your questions in the order in which you have tabulated them but I would first like to give you the general picture.

As nearly as we can tell from county records and records in this office, the Japanese control land as follows: Owned, 734 acres, of which 182.2 acres have been purchased by Japanese evacuees. Leased, 3980 acres, 1167.1 acres being leased by Japanese evacuees. Field tenant leases 313, of which 139 acres are leased by evacuees. For good measure and to allow for voluntary evacuees, I would add another 2,000 acres making a total in all of 7,027 acres controlled by Japanese. The total crop acreage leased according to the assessor is 153,536, thus the percentage of crop land controlled by the Japanese would be  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

The total number of Japanese in the county according to the War Relocation Authority, United States Census, and Federal Reserve would be 1602. The break down on these would be as follows: Pre-War Japanese residents 137, Japanese workers with indefinite leave 217, seasonal leave 636, voluntary evacuees and others 628. This covers the Japanese population in Malheur County also the acreage controlled by them.

Questions are answered as follows:

1. 137 Japanese before the war, apparently migrated here because of agricultural opportunities. No record as to families.
2. Part of the new migration was for sugar beet labor, the balance because of agricultural or farming opportunities.
3. Refer to the first part of letter.
4. Japanese coming into this county have apparently come from California, Oregon, and Washington coast areas.
5. The Japanese are not all American born and some of them have difficulty in speaking English. Of the 137 pre-war Japanese, 100 were American born. We have no record as to the balance of the people in this county.
6. This question should be referred to the "leave section" of the War Relocation



7. Authority ~~and~~ <sup>admits</sup> my understanding that proper tests were applied regarding their attitude, loyalty, etc.
7. A very small amount of War Bonds have been purchased to date and their cooperation in the war effort is the production of food. There is no question but what their production per acre exceeds in many cases that obtained by white families.
8. 837 Japanese received government permission with seasonal and indefinite leave to come to Malheur County. This was done through recruiting farm labor, either by individuals or through the sugar beet company. These Japanese have come in from Tule Lake, Minidoka, Poston, Arizona, and Ht. Mountain. A few came in 1942 from the Portland camp.
9. Land control answered in fore part of letter.
10. Crops grown include onions, potatoes, lettuce and seed crops. The Japanese have practically no livestock, consequently do not raise feed for livestock. They also grow a considerable beet acreage. It is my opinion that practically all of the Japs have produced these crops or similar crops previous to coming here.
11. Many of these Japanese came in groups, recruited for farm labor. A few drifted in and they are not under surveillance. They have the same privileges as whites and this apparently is in accord with the Constitution. There has been no trouble and people have become quite used to the Japanese in the various communities.
12. There was a definite request for labor last year and this year, and this labor is badly needed at the present time. Those who came in on indefinite leave apparently proved their loyalty to the Government before being granted indefinite leave and can therefore, move as they see fit. The 637 on seasonal leave will have to report to relocation centers by December 15.
13. There have been no meetings to my knowledge to consider the problem in the line of local or general welfare except one meeting of the Chamber of Commerce in Ontario to consider Japanese business enterprises in Ontario, and one or two small group meetings in Ontario with Japanese representatives to have an understanding as to their behavior, etc. in the county. This included a request that Japanese refrain from meetings, traveling in groups, etc. I know of no organization to consult on this question.
14. The Amalgamated Sugar Company recruited most of the farm laborers brought into the area. As far as I know there was no agent who recruited Japanese but various individuals also recruited farm help.
15. There is some reluctance regarding selling land to Japs, and of course, certain individuals who are in the majority will never sell or lease to them. There has been a general tendency of land price inflation but this cannot all be attributed to the Japanese demand as this area seems to be in the spot light for land purchase and leasing. It is quite evident that the Japanese have had some effect on it, especially in the rentals. The Japanese have located on



irrigated land.

16. Local sentiment seems to be to accept the Japanese as being here and except for occasional comments, little attention is paid to them.
17. I have been unable to find out about the Japanese registering to vote and do not know what their party alignments are. Many of them are Christians and attend local churches.
18. See fore part of letter.
19. Japanese funds were frozen at the time evacuees came into this county and credit facilities, etc. could be obtained from the local banks. A few of them have obtained credit through RACC funds and are repaying their loans one hundred per cent.
20. I am not able to answer this question but apparently the Japanese here are operating on their own funds.
21. To the best of my knowledge there are not enough Japanese in this county to worry about a Japanese Mayor or Japanese County Judge or to give any thought regarding their participation in elections. This could be a factor of the future.
22. Japanese wages are the same as white or other wages, and we have whites working with Japanese, Mexicans working with Japanese and have had no trouble. The Japanese have a tendency to request the top wages going.
23. Ontario is by no means a fifty-fifty town as far as Japanese are concerned. There are some eight or ten families in Ontario. As long as people will rent houses to the Japanese I assume that they are willing to live in town.
24. There have been 40 births in the last year.
25. To the best of my knowledge and belief, land has not been taken for infants or in the names of small children.
26. There is one Japanese store, a fish store and there is one dentist in Ontario. All other organizations have been abandoned and to the best of my knowledge they do not have only irregular religious meetings.
27. I am not in a position to make a statement regarding the citizens who have sold land to Japanese. I have my own opinion and regard it as selling a heritage in our country but this of course is a personal and private business for the land owners. Japanese have moved into white settlements and according to what I can find out are excellent neighbors.
28. I have heard of one or two cases where white families have sold because of the Japanese infiltration but when one can obtain a good price for land, this would be an excellent excuse. Some neighborhoods have been closed to Japanese tenants or owners and others have accepted them without too much comment.



9/30/43

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Very truly yours,

/s/ R. E. Brooke

County Agricultural Agent

REB:CB



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September 29, 1943

Emory R. Worth, Director for Oregon  
Attention: Gordon Shattuck, Supervisor  
Farm Placement Division

*3 copies -*

Horace L. Arment, In Charge (USES District Manager for Malheur County)  
Ontario Local Office

Special Report of Japanese American Labor in Malheur County

This report is considered necessary in explanation of a public statement attributed to Mr. Lowell Stockman in Seattle regarding the number of Japanese American evacuees in Malheur County. The observation made at that time, while no doubt accurate insofar as the observer is concerned, might, nevertheless lead to a misunderstanding on the part of the general public as to the exact number and nature of the Japanese American population in this area.

In the first place, there were 635 Japanese Americans in the Snake River Valley before Pearl Harbor. One hundred and thirty-seven of these lived in Malheur County and were permanently located here. There are now approximately 636 evacuees with seasonal work permits from the War Relocation Authority plus 217 with indefinite leave status. Self-evacuees and others will probably account for 634 more which makes a total of approximately 1,600 Japanese Americans in this county. In a county population of 19,767 this is approximately 8% of the total. Bear in mind that this 8% includes the 636 seasonal agricultural workers who are scheduled to leave at the harvest end.

Of these seasonal workers it can be definitely stated that the local farmers would not have been able to plant crops nor harvest them unless this help had been available. No one, not even the most intolerant, can refute this statement nor minimize the importance of this labor in producing these very necessary crops.

The statement has also been made that the Japanese Americans are buying up all available land and forcing white farmers out of the area. The county tax records show that out of the 153,536 tillable acres of land in producing these very necessary crops.

The statement has also been made that the Japanese Americans are buying up all available land and forcing white farmers out of the area. The county tax records show that out of the 153,536 tillable acres of land in Malheur County, only 5,027 acres are owned and controlled by Americans of Japanese ancestry. Crop sharing and field agreements not on record probably will bring this up to 7,000 acres. This includes all the land purchased and negotiated for before and after hostilities started and makes a total of 4.5% of the tillable acreage in the county. Of this 7,000 acres only 645 are actually owned by Japanese Americans which leaves



only one-half of 1% owned outright and purchased over a period of years since Malheur County was first organized.

Of the accusation that the Japanese Americans are so numerous that they overcrowd the restaurants and retail stores in Ontario, we have this to ask. Since when has this become an exclusive Japanese trait? Restaurants, cafes and stores are crowded everywhere. Ontario stores and eating places are always crowded during harvest time. In this area we are proud of our records of production -- production that was possible only by the utilization of this evacuee labor. We not only firmly believe, we know that the curtailment or removal of this labor would greatly hinder all out production of crops. There is not an over-supply of labor -- there is an actual shortage.

This office asks only for tolerance and common sense in regard to this situation. If a distorted or onesided picture were presented or if intolerance became so great as to become crystallized in hostile words and deeds so that the War Relocation Authority would cut off or remove this labor supply, the all out war effort would be greatly hindered.

Horace L. Arment  
In Charge

HLA:JW

cc - Guy W. Lang



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WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
234 Atlas Building  
Salt Lake City 1, Utah

October 9, 1943

LAND OWNERSHIP, LEASE AND SHARECROPPING

Malheur County

	Acres	Per Cent
Total Tillable Acreage . . . . .	153,536	
Owned by persons of Japanese ancestry as of September 28, 1943 . . . . .	645	.42
Bought by persons of Japanese ancestry after December 7, 1941 . . . . .	180	.12

Summary of Land Purchase in Malheur County, Oregon as reported  
by E. P. Hendricks, County Assessor, Vale, Oregon

An 80 acre section purchased by Tsuryo Wade and an 80 acre section  
by Akiko Wada, sister, in the early 1930's.

An 80 acre section by Mamoru Matsumura in the early 1930's  
(The WRA has record of an evacuee, Mamoru Matsumura from  
Ht. Mt., on seasonal leave, with John Timmerman, Nyssa,  
Oregon, but this is evidently a duplication of names;  
inasmuch as the landowner has a different address and  
the land was purchased in the early 1930's)

An 80 acre section was purchased by Thomas Watanabe in the  
early 1930's. Mr. Watanabe had been a resident of Malheur  
County since 1912.

25 acres purchased by Howard T. Fugii in 1937. Mr. Fugii is a  
native of Malheur County and is about 30 years old.

An 80 acre section purchased on January 2, 1943 by Masahiro Mukai.  
We have no record of Mr. Mukai as a WRA evacuee and it is believed  
that he is a voluntary evacuee from the Pacific Coast.

An 80 acre section and 20 acres purchased by Thomas T. Itami,  
June 28, 1943. Mr. Itami is a WRA Evacuee on indefinite leave  
from Tule Lake since March 30, 1943.



# LAND OWNERSHIP, LEASE AND SHARECROPPING

## Malheur County

Page 2

### Owyhee Irrigation District

This district includes most Malheur county croplands and some adjacent.

(following compilation made May 18, 1943 by Gilbert L. McMillan, then relocation officer at Nyssa, Oregon., in cooperation with R. E. Brooke, County Agent, from records of the A. A. A.)

	Acres	Per Cent
Total tillable acreage . . . . .	151,000	
Operated by persons of Japanese ancestry . . . . .	5,027.1	3
Owned . . . . .	734	.4
Leased . . . . .	3,980.1	2
Field or sharecrop . . . . .	313	.2
Operated by WRA evacuees . . . . .	1,488.3	.9
Owned . . . . .	182.2	.1
Leased . . . . .	1,167.1	.7
Field Tenants . . . . .	139	.09

(Figures on land operated by WRA evacuees included in total amount of 5027.1 acres operated by persons of Japanese ancestry.)



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# LAND OWNERSHIP, LEASE AND SHARECROPPING

## Malheur County

Page 2

### Owyhee Irrigation District

This district includes most Malheur county croplands and some adjacent.

(following compilation made May 18, 1943 by Gilbert L. McMillan, then relocation officer at Nyssa, Oregon., in cooperation with R. E. Brooke, County Agent, from records of the A.A.A.)

	Acres	Per Cent
Total tillable acreage . . . . .	151,000	
Operated by persons of Japanese ancestry . . . . .	5,027.1	3
Owned . . . . .	734	.4
Leased . . . . .	3,980.1	2
Field or sharecrop . . . . .	313	.2
Operated by WRA evacuees . . . . .	1,488.3	.9
Owned . . . . .	182.2	.1
Leased . . . . .	1,167.1	.7
Field Tenants . . . . .	139	.09

(Figures on land operated by WRA evacuees included in total amount of 5027.1 acres operated by persons of Japanese ancestry.)



September 29, 1943

Emory R. Worth, Director for Oregon  
Attention: Gordon Shattuck, Supervisor  
Farm Placement Division

Horace L. Arment, In Charge (USES District Manager for Malheur County)  
Ontario Local Office

Special Report of Japanese American Labor in Malheur County

This report is considered necessary in explanation of a public statement attributed to Mr. Lowell Stockman in Seattle regarding the number of Japanese American evacuees in Malheur County. The observation made at that time, while no doubt accurate insofar as the observer is concerned, might, nevertheless lead to a misunderstanding on the part of the general public as to the exact number and nature of the Japanese American population in this area.

In the first place, there were 635 Japanese Americans in the Snake River Valley before Pearl Harbor. One hundred and thirty-seven of these lived in Malheur County and were permanently located here. There are now approximately 636 evacuees with seasonal work permits from the War Relocation Authority plus 217 with indefinite leave status. Self-evacuees and others will probably account for 634 more which makes a total of approximately 1,600 Japanese Americans in this county. In a county population of 19,767 this is approximately 8% of the total. Bear in mind that this 8% includes the 636 seasonal agricultural workers who are scheduled to leave at the harvest end.

Of these seasonal workers it can be definitely stated that the local farmers would not have been able to plant crops nor harvest them unless this help had been available. No one, not even the most intolerant, can refute this statement nor minimize the importance of this labor in producing these very necessary crops.

The statement has also been made that the Japanese Americans are buying up all available land and forcing white farmers out of the area. The county tax records show that out of the 153,536 tillable acres of land in Malheur County, only 5,027 acres are owned and controlled by Americans of Japanese ancestry. Crop sharing and field agreements not on record probably will bring this up to 7,000 acres. This includes all the land purchased and negotiated for before and after hostilities started and makes a total of 4.5% of the tillable acreage in the county. Of this 7,000 acres only 645 are actually owned by Japanese Americans which leaves



only one-half of 1% owned outright and purchased over a period of years since Malheur County was first organized.

Of the accusation that the Japanese Americans are so numerous that they overcrowd the restaurants and retail stores in Ontario, we have this to ask. Since when has this become an exclusive Japanese trait? Restaurants, cafes and stores are crowded everywhere. Ontario stores and eating places are always crowded during harvest time. In this area we are proud of our records of production--production that was possible only by the utilization of this evacuee labor. We not only firmly believe, we know that the curtailment or removal of this labor would greatly hinder all out production of crops. There is not an over-supply of labor -- there is an actual shortage.

This office asks only for tolerance and common sense in regard to this situation. If a distorted or onesided picture were presented or if intolerance became so great as to become crystallized in hostile words and deeds so that the War Relocation Authority would cut off or remove this labor supply, the all out war effort would be greatly hindered.

Horace L. Arment  
In Charge

HLA:JW

cc - Guy W. Lang



WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
234 Atlas Building  
Salt Lake City 1, Utah

October 9, 1943

LAND OWNERSHIP, LEASE AND SHARECROPPING

Malheur County

	Acres	Per Cent
Total Tillable Acreage . . . . .	153,536	
Owned by persons of Japanese ancestry as of September 28, 1943 . . . . .	645	.42
Bought by persons of Japanese ancestry after December 7, 1941 . . . . .	180	.12

Summary of Land Purchase in Malheur County, Oregon as reported  
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