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Office Services Final
Reports Brown + Herren

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WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY
GILA RIVER PROJECT
RIVERS, ARIZONA

OFFICE SERVICES SECTION
(Period January 1943 - March 1945)

FINAL REPORT

The Office Services Section, under Administrative Management, has been responsible for mail, project central files, duplicating service, messenger service, telephone, teletype, and telegraph services, and, originally, for office supplies. Because of the routine nature of the activities of this section, there is not a great deal that can be said from an historical viewpoint.

With the exception of telephone operators on the main switchboard and the head file clerk (which position has not always been filled) the office manager worked with evacuee help, most of whom were entirely untrained and lacked experience of any kind (outside of a nominal amount of high-school commercial training) to qualify them for the duties involved. We have of necessity trained our own help, such as file clerks and telephone and teletype operators; and this has included, especially after the first year, the appointed telephone operators as well.

In spite of this handicap, I think we have been unusually successful, largely due to the fact that our clerks have been young Nissei girls who were anxious to learn trades that would qualify them for work outside the center.

When the writer took over the supervision of the Office Services Section in January 1943 the over-employment policy was still in effect and consequently there were two persons assigned

to every job; however, the reduction-in-force procedure in effect in July 1943 alleviated this condition which had already begun to adjust itself, making it necessary to terminate only 7 persons in line with the new policy.

Employee morale in this section was extremely good, persons leaving almost entirely for relocation. For example, in September 1943 we had 20 clerks in mail, files, mimeograph and telephone office. Within six months, two segregated to Tule, one transferred to the Hospital for aid work, and 14 relocated for outside employment, leaving 3 remaining in the section of the original group.

I. MAIL SERVICE

All mail for the project was brought by truck from Chandler, 20 miles away, to the Rivers Post Office. After July 1943 two Japanese drivers were responsible for delivering and picking up mail at the depot in Chandler, and this service was maintained without incident. On the one or two occasions when, because of public sentiment over some war atrocity, it was necessary to restrict Japanese to the area, a Caucasian driver was substituted for the time being.

All official mail and personal mail for the staff was handled by the central mail room. Official mail was sorted, routed and indexed, where necessary, for various divisions and sections. We have found this index file to be of invaluable assistance in running down material at later dates. We also made a practice of filing the carbon copy of incoming official

communications for use in the event the original became lost or misplaced--except, of course, where it was required for information of some other section, in which case this was indicated on the index.

We also maintained a record of incoming parcel post for the benefit of the procurement, property, and finance sections, giving date received, name of sender and dispatch point, also the requisition number, if on parcel, and any other identification. A record of miscellaneous bulletins and instructions, other than handbook and manual releases, showing subject matter and where dispatched, was also kept.

Little can be said about this service in general except that mail was always promptly and efficiently handled and dispatched--received at approximately 11 a.m., it was always sorted, processed, and delivered, including the various releases, within two to three hours after it reached the mail room.

II. CENTRAL FILES

We maintained central files, as originally set up by representative from the regional office to conform with those at other projects, under subject file system with chronological cross-reference on outgoing material; also the index file on incoming letters. As mentioned previously, this index file was an extremely desirable reference record.

The writer has no comment to make with respect to this service except that it was regrettable to have dispensed with the staff file clerk which position should have been filled

by a Civil-Service appointee at all times.

Turnover was very high, principally as clerks of this section were of the type who relocated more rapidly; for example, at one time we had three trained file clerks and lost them all within a week. Two relocated and one went over to the net factory to earn money so that she could relocate. In line with policy, employees terminating for relocation reasons were promptly released even though it created a hardship such as at times when we were down to one or no file clerks.

III.TELEPHONE SERVICE

With the occupation of the new switchboard room in Butte Community on May 29, 1943, and the opening of the new telephone office in Canal, we began operation of two boards 24 hours per day, instead of one board from 6 a.m. to 12 p.m. as previously, and a check-up made in July 1943 revealed that toll and in-collect calls approximated 400 per month. The writer never had occasion to make a check after that date, but undoubtedly with the relocation peak in 1945, it was substantially over this figure.

The switchboard used until May 1943 was an obsolete manually operated model, with two trunks and about 15 inside lines, so with the opening of the Butte office we were able to give a really efficient and over-all telephone service for the first time.

The reason for the installation of a separate board in Canal camp was never quite clear to the writer, but it was un-

fortunate that instead they did not install a two-position board in Butte. One operator could easily have handled both camps after close of business and the overload during business hours should have been handled by two operators on the main board. This would have eliminated the problem of manning the Canal board which was a major one in that Japanese parents were reluctant to permit their daughters to work on the "swing" and "graveyard" shifts in view of the fact that they were alone in the building after hours.

Incidentally, with respect to staffing this unit, instead of 3 operators and a chief operator, believe it should be 4 operators, and supervision and additional relief, when necessary, furnished by the assistant to section head; unless, of course, it is possible to provide for and maintain a force of 4 operators and a chief. Chief operators over such a small force are an undesirable addition as they usually permit their supervisory instincts to overshadow their usefulness as an employee.

IV. TELEGRAPH AND TELETYPE SERVICE

This office was connected by teletype to the O.E.M. office in Phoenix and had regularly established hours for clearing with them. In addition, we received business and personal wires over the telephone from the Western Union Co. in Casa Grande. As stated in the first part of this report, it was necessary for the writer to instruct typists in the use of this machine, and in periods of personnel shortages to operate the machine herself. This is another argument for filling the

assistant position, especially in view of the fact that it was necessary for a staff member (appointed) to be available at all times for sending and receiving confidential wires.

Personal wire business: For approximately a year after the inception of the center, personal wire service was maintained by the section. This business became increasingly heavy (outgoing personal wires numbered between four and five hundred per month and incoming approximated this figure or ran above), and we finally prevailed upon the Community Enterprises to take over this function; but it was still necessary for us to furnish the service after business hours.

V. DUPLICATING SERVICE

Mimeographing was done for all project divisions and sections; also, for the Military Police and the camouflage net project under the War Department. Number of sheets run averaged 200,000 per month.

VI. MESSENGER SERVICE

Messenger service was always a difficult service to maintain. At this project it was a necessary function as many offices, such as Education, Hospital, camouflage net, and so forth, were located a considerable distance from the main building. Naturally this type of work appealed to school boys and we always had plenty of help during the summer, but as soon as school opened we had only part-time workers. We solved this problem to some extent by having the offices chiefly concerned call once or twice a day

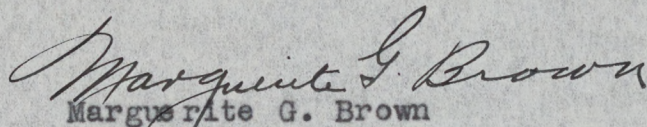
for mail and messages; and by telephoning urgent messages, confirming them later. At the time the writer took charge there were 12 messengers--regular, night, and part-time. This was in line with over-employment practice then in effect. We found that we had much better cooperation from the boys and less confusion when we were able to reduce the number to just those actually required.

VII. OFFICE SUPPLIES

Up until January 1944, when all warehousing was taken over by Property Control, office supplies were warehoused by and dispensed from this section.

Closing program: The writer transferred to the Statistics Section in March 1945 and therefore has no knowledge of the closing operations of the section.

Respectfully submitted,


Marguerite G. Brown
Statistician (former
Office Manager)

OFFICE SERVICES

By Irene Sklar

When the writer became Office Manager, March 1945, there was a staff of nineteen evacuees and eight appointed personnel. Office Services consisted of the following units: Mails and Files, Teletype, Telephone and Mimeograph.

The MAIL ROOM was operated by the following employees: the Office Manager and five evacuees. The five evacuees were delegated to handle the various types of work necessary to carry on the operation of the mail room under the supervision of the Office Manager. There was one typist who handled all teletypes and did the general office typing. Two mail clerks sorted and briefed and routed the incoming official mail, distributed personal mail and prepared the outgoing mail. Two of the evacuees acted as messengers, delivered and collected the mail from the various offices on the project at regular intervals.

Another member of the appointed personnel was added to the staff in May 1945 because of the anticipated loss of evacuees due to relocation. The mail room continued to operate without difficulty until the two messengers and one clerk relocated at the same time. The messenger service was discontinued and the division heads cooperated by sending their own personal messengers for pick-ups and deliveries. The work of the clerk who relocated was absorbed by other members of the staff.

The largest count of Penalty Indicial mail dispatched from the Center was sent during the first quarter of the fiscal year of 1946, the count being 896. This does not include special delivery, air-mail and registered mail, which was very heavy at that time. The approximate number of teletypes received and sent from May 1943, when the teletype machine was installed, to October 15th--official closing of the Center was; received 12,825, sent 22,093.

The last evacuee employee left the mail room the latter part of September and the entire office was handled by the Office Manager and her one appointed personnel assistant. Beside handling the work in the mail room, the Office Manager was also responsible for supervising the work in the other units of the department and for coordinating the work of that department with other Center departments.

Due to mass relocation, mail and teletype services were particularly heavy in October, causing considerable backlog. Two staff members were then detailed from other departments to assist with the mail and file disposal.

In March 1945, the FILE ROOM staff consisted of one appointed personnel file clerk supervisor and three evacuee file clerks. All three evacuees relocated the second week in August and only one appointed personnel clerk remained to handle the work. One other member was added to the staff. The file work diminished so that two people could do the work instead of four. One file clerk handled all the filing from the middle of October until the office closure.

BUTTE AND CANAL TELEPHONE OFFICES were operated by four CAF-2 operators, five evacuee operators and one CAF-3 supervisor.

CANAL Office had a full staff of five evacuee operators who terminated during the month of May and June. They were replaced by temporary appointed personnel. After October 15 when Canal Camp was officially closed the Fire Department took charge of fire protection and emergency calls.

BUTTE office continued to operate under the same appointed personnel of four operators. In addition to their regular duties the night operators received and sent personal telegrams for the appointed personnel and evacuees. The money for said telegrams was turned over daily to the Cooperative Enterprise, which organization was bonded for sending messages. All wires outgoing and incoming were typed by the operator and turned over to the Officer of the Day for immediate delivery. Following the closure of the Cooperative Enterprise and relocation of all evacuees the operators were able only to receive prepaid messages because there was no one bonded person to send personal wires. This problem was met in the following manner. The finance officer agreed to send messages together with sufficient cash by operator of the mail truck to the nearest town. This eliminated the need for setting up books and collecting funds. This was handled entirely on personal basis for the convenience of the personnel.

Beginning October 1945 there was no night telephone messenger service. However, in case of emergency the Officer of the Day delivered long distance emergency messages. Otherwise if an individual was expecting a call it was necessary to wait at the telephone office for the call to be completed.

THE MIMEOGRAPH DEPARTMENT was operated by an all evacuee staff until August 1945 under the direct supervision of the Office Manager. After relocation the mimeograph work decreased and then only one staff member was needed to handle that work. A member of the appointed personnel was added to the staff to take charge of the mimeograph department under the supervision of the Office Manager.

In accordance with instructions incorporated in Manual Instruction Office Service Section 20.8, the Office Manager prepared for the disposal of files when a member of the Washington staff visited Gila Center in April 1945. About one hundred three boxes were packed during her visit and another fifty boxes were packed at a later date. Unfortunately, this work could not be carried on consistently since the work in this department as well as in other departments became too heavy due to the relocation of evacuees.

Office Services resumed disposal of files the second week in November following the arrival of a new member of the staff who was detailed to this office to help with the work. All of the files stored were sent from the warehouse to a vacant office in the Administration Building where they would be conveniently located to all concerned.

File disposal was slow in the beginning because several of the Section Heads found it necessary to retain parts of their files as reference in the procedure of office closure. They also objected to the disposal of files of other departments when their files might tie up with their own. These difficulties were gradually overcome, and following the visit of the flying squadron from Washington, they became reconciled to the fact that those records indicated in the manual for destruction were to be destroyed.

The Office Manager, together with the staff member detailed to her and another who was later appointed to the department for this specific purpose, proceeded to dispose of files which had been stored in the warehouse. This disposal was done only with the permission of the various section heads. These forms indicated as needed by the various section heads were returned to them for consolidation with their files for proper disposition as indicated in the manual. Other forms which had been stored in the warehouse and which were indicated to be sent to Washington were packed and labeled by Office Services for shipment.

Much of the work, not the direct responsibility of Office Services, was done by this department to hasten the proper disposition of files.

The various sections frequently called upon the Office Services for assistance in making decisions in record disposal. Office Services also assumed the entire responsibility for preparing all material to be sent to Berkley.

Following disposal of the material stored in the warehouse, the Office Manager, together with her two assistants, proceeded to dispose of the Office Service Central files. All material designated by manual and upon advice of the Head of Office Services, WRA, Washington was destroyed and the remaining files designated for Washington were prepared for shipment in the file cabinets.

Respectfully submitted,

Irene R. Herren
Irene R. Herren
Officer Manager