



## AMACHE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, RECENT NEWS

AHS II – The “new” kids on the Block *By Frances Palmer*

As the newest of the many Amache groups, we join with the Denver based Friends of Amache, the Amache Preservation Society (APS), the Annual Pilgrimage group (led by the Japanese American Association of Colorado), the Denver Univ Amache Project, and the California-based Amache Historical Society (AHS), to explore and preserve the World War 2 Amache Internment Camp site.

At our first meeting in Los Angeles, on July 11, 2015, eight shown in the photo met in person, and four skyped in from Colorado. Goals were set that mirror the All-Amache Survey results, sent to 116 participants by email and US mail, and results summarized by Kirsten Leong and Carlene Tinker who designed the Survey.



*On the wall via Skype: John Haigh and Kirsten Leong, Marge and Vicki Taniwaki*

*From left: David Kuroda, Alan Onoye, Patti Frame, Carlene Tinker, Min Tonai, Mike Sueoka, Frances Palmer, Gary Ono*

## Survey results for AHS II top priorities

The top four priority choices for AHS II to act on were rated “**Extremely Important**”

1. preserve the Amache site – 49.5%
2. educate about Amache, its history and legacy – 42.9%
3. support John Hopper and the APS – 42.7%
4. preserve memories of Amache survivors – 37.3%

AHSII invites all to join us by emailing your contact information to [amachehistoricalsocietyii@gmail.com](mailto:amachehistoricalsocietyii@gmail.com)

Amache Historical Society II (AHS II)  
Newsletter Spring 2017

AHS II's mission is to:

- preserve the Amache site (Granada, CO)
- educate about Amache's history and legacy, by gathering survivors' stories
- communicate via the [amache.org](http://amache.org) website
- support John Hopper and his Granada High students, known as the Amache Preservation Society, with maintenance of the Amache site and Museum.

## OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

## Donations to help preserve Amache

**Amache Preservation Society, P.O. Box 259, Granada, CO 81041-0259**

Amache Preservation Society's new facility

In 2016, the APS obtained a former school building for use. It has multiple rooms with central heat, air, and a shower. Denver University used it for 5 weeks last summer and a large California church group used it for a week as well. APS will rent the building out to help with the cost of water, gas and electricity. The building is also used for overflow items from the Amache Museum and is a storage facility for objects needing a controlled environment. With new paint and a new roof, it is in great shape for use since there are no hotels in Granada. Contact John Hopper: [amache@usa.com](mailto:amache@usa.com) or [johnhopper@granadaschools.org](mailto:johnhopper@granadaschools.org), if you or your group want to stay at this facility while at Amache.



New building, also known as the ARC, Amache Research Center

**A call for help!** If any of you know of, or yourselves, have lived in or have historic photographs of Block 11F, in particular the Rec Building, please share them! The Rec Building project architect needs help once it's back on its foundation as currently we only have half of it. The rest needs to be reconstructed based on photographs or other personal records.

**Perhaps another call for help!** We need to raise about \$35,000 for this project (in lieu of the grants). We will do our best to apply for the funds from the Colorado State Historical Fund, however, if there are other sources you know, please call us. **Jane Daniels, Colorado Preservation Inc, 303-250-7469**

## Preserving the Amache site, Museum, and artifacts

### “Amache Preservation Society and Granada township support Amache in many ways”

The Amache Preservation Society, APS, was created by Granada High Principal John Hopper many years ago, and staffed by his current and past students. They mow the Amache grounds to keep it safe from lightning fires, drought, overgrowth, rattlesnakes and more, so visitors can see the site, memorial cemetery, kiosks, restored water and guard towers and barracks to remind us of the 1942-45 internment era. APS students are docents for the Museum, conduct Amache presentations in the US and on student exchanges in Japan, too!



Site Maintenance by APS



Kiosks by the entrance



Restored Barracks, Water & Guard Tower

Granada has about 600 residents today, and has been a good neighbor to Amache – the City Council donated its former City Hall to Amache for the Museum. The Amache site is not federal property as it is owned by the town of Granada, which has granted a long-term lease for use and access to Amache barracks area.

### Granada City Council partners with APS and AHSII for Amache Museum's New Roof

The Amache Preservation Society (APS) Granada high school students are shown with the Amache Museum's new metal roof. The result of fast funding raising to replace the roof for winter! John Hopper reported that the Museum roof needed replacement and would cost \$4,000. Barely two weeks later, the money was raised by contributions from the Granada City Council, an anonymous Granada donor and those who responded to an AHSII email about this project. Those of us who are many states away from Granada were grateful and overwhelmed to have such support from the Granada community. The town and its residents have shown their generosity in making the roof project an instant success. AHSII

sent a thank you letter to the Granada City Council for its partnering with us.



New Roof on the Amache Museum in Granada, CO

### “Digitizing Amache”: Sonoma State U’s Dana Ogo Shew preserves 350 items!

One of the newest ways to “preserve” memories and stories of Amache is digitizing them. Sonoma State University’s Oral Historian, Dana Ogo Shew, was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, with contributions from the Sonoma County JACL and the Enmanji Buddhist Temple. People brought in yucca root vases, shell bead necklaces, portraits, wood carvings, yearbooks, photos and more. Dana created an exhibit of some of these items that ran from August to December at the college. The exhibit opened to over 200 visitors. Access to the digital collection is in the works. Contact Dana at [shew@sonoma.edu](mailto:shew@sonoma.edu) for more information.

### University of Denver Amache Project returns to Amache

University of Denver returned to Amache from June 14 - July 14, 2016 for their biennial field school. Mornings were spent doing archaeological research and the afternoons in the Amache Museum working on precious collections. See Bonnie Clarks Denver University website for more information: <https://portfolio.du.edu/amache> or the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/DUAmacheResearchProject>



## Amache Stories and Memories - Some of the 10,000 stories from Amache

### **Journey back to Amache** by Mitch Homma

It was a picture that started the Homma family's journey back to Amache. In 2004, when grandmother Mutsu Homma passed away in Seattle, we found boxes that contains memorabilia from a period in life never talked about in our family. I recognized my grandmother and great grandfather in the photo below but had only heard tidbits of reference to the "camp" days. Fortunately, there was a lot of written history to go along with my father and his siblings limited memories as elementary school kids in Amache. The adults did an amazing job shielding the kids from the harsh conditions and life in a concentration camp.

In 2008, I was able to visit Amache with my father, Hisao, and his two siblings, older sister Kumiko Homma Hasegawa and brother Kunio. Their first time back to Amache together and the memories of a "forgotten" time came flooding back. The color photo below has the Homma children with the Amache memorial designed by their grandfather, Baptist minister Masahiko Wada. I have catalogued close to 100 Amache items from the family and have sent a few artifacts back to the Amache Preservation Society in Granada, CO.

Stay tuned for future articles and memories by Amacheans, their descendants and those helping to preserve the Amache memories. Please contact AHS II members, email [amachehistoricalsocietyii@gmail.com](mailto:amachehistoricalsocietyii@gmail.com), or Mitch Homma at [mhomma@gmail.com](mailto:mhomma@gmail.com) if you would like to share your memories.



Marion Konishi in 1943 and at the Amache Pilgrimage in 2016



Amache Memorial Sept 1945



Kunio, Hisao, Kumiko

Homma siblings, 2006

### **"1943 Amache High Valedictorian Marion Konishi stuns 2016 Pilgrimage with her speech"**

Marion Konishi Takehara, 1943 Amache High School valedictorian, reread her speech at the 2016 Amache Pilgrimage, to a standing ovation. At 91, it was her first time back to Amache in over 70 years. She asked then, "What does America mean to you? And answered in 2016, what she answered in 1943 behind Amache's barbed wire, "I would answer without any hesitation and with all sincerity, America means freedom equality, security and justice.... Do my classmates believe this? Yes, with all our hearts, because in that faith, in that hope, is my future, our future, and the world's future." For Marion's complete speech, go to <http://www.amache.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Konishi-Marion-Valedictory-2-Pages.pdf> by Frances Palmer

Video: <http://www.9news.com/news/local/asian-heritage-month/valdictorian-returns-to-amache-for-first-time-/212434821>

### **Remembering Rattlesnakes** from email recollections by Minoru Tonai

**Background:** John Hopper was describing some of the maintenance work hazards around Amache and Frances Palmer asked AHS II if we had any stories about snakes.

Yes, there were many rattlesnakes in Amache, but most were in the sage brushes. When we arrived in Amache, it was getting cool, so there were not many rattlesnakes around the barracks. Don't forget, the land where the camp was built was scraped clean of vegetation, so it would be easy to build the barracks and buildings. However, in the first spring (1943), when the weather started warming up, apparently, a rattlesnake had laid eggs in our Ladies Latrine, so they hatched. 9L was the only block that stuck-out and surrounded by

sage brush on three sides. It scared the ladies, so some men went into the Ladies Latrine and killed the snakes and made sure there were no others. We never had that problem again.

In 9L, there was a young Kibei man, who found that rattlesnake venom was needed by hospitals, so he caught rattlesnakes, with a stick, to milk them of their venom to sell. In addition, he would use their skins to sell as coverings for hat and belt bands. He also sold the snake flesh for sukiyaki, and said it was an aphrodisiac. Don't know if it was effective, but I guess he was able to sell some. When he caught several snakes in the hot summer, he would ask us teenagers to use a long stick to keep them in the sun, until they fainted from the heat (they are cold-blooded, so their blood would "boil", if exposed to high heat). Amache reached 110 degrees every summer, when we were there. Then, he could milk them of their venom, safely, because he did not have the potential of being bitten. Previously, he had been bitten three times, but other than a very swollen hand, he got to the hospital quick enough that it only swelled with a purple color. His name was Kashumi Nakashima.

Many young people, teenagers and above, would go hunting for rattlesnakes for fun and skin them for their skin. You just need to not confront them from the front, because they would strike. If you approached them from the rear, they would run away. My 57-year-old father, who was deaf, would hunt and capture them, until my mother barred him from keep it in a cage in front of our room. So, he gave them to Mr. Nakashima. My father enjoyed hunting for them in the sagebrush. Don't forget, by 1944, the MP's did not care, if we propped open the barbed-wire fences with sticks and walked into the sage brush. Some Issei men, like my father, liked to collect desert plants to place in front of their room, and some male teenagers, like myself, liked the freedom of getting outside of the barbed-wire fence. We did wear high-top boots. We even did it in the winter, so we could play in the snow. The rattlesnakes were hibernating, then. By the end of camp, the MP's did not man the Guard Towers. They knew that we were not a threat to anyone and if we met them, they were not unfriendly or were even friendly. They were probably bored to death with their duty.

**UPCOMING EVENTS** - See <http://www.amache.org/current-activity-news/>

### **2017 Amache Pilgrimage: May 20, Saturday:**

To reserve a \$30 seat on the bus that leaves from two sites in Denver, around 6:30 a.m. and return about 12 hours later, call Hiroko Hong of Amache Club, at (303) 979-4127 or Frank Miyazawa (303) 237-8641. Checks should be made payable to the Amache Club and mailed to 9114 West Progress Avenue, Littleton, CO 80123.

The bus arrives at the Amache Cemetery about 11:30 for a memorial service and incense offering; followed by a pot luck lunch hosted by the Amache Preservation Society at Granada High School, and a short program before reboarding the bus by 2 p.m. The bus does not go into the Amache barracks area.

### **Oakland, California, June 15- August 11, 2017: Creativity Unconfined, II Exhibit:**

Dana Shew, Oral Historian at Sonoma State University, created this second showing of the original "Creativity Unconfined" Exhibit that was at Sonoma State from August to December 2016. The exhibit showcases the creativity and resilience of Amache and other incarceration site residents. Visit the Oakland Asian Cultural Center in Oakland's Chinatown.

### **Denver, April 19, 2017: SEED: The Rice King and His Kin.**

This 90-minute documentary about Amache-internee Keisaburo Koda, Issei immigrant who was the California Rice King before he lost it all when evacuated. Sponsored by the Japanese American Association of Colorado, doors open at 6:30 for a 7 p.m. showing at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, Phipps Theater, 2001 Colorado Blvd. This a free event, but please RSVP to [marynish@comcast.net](mailto:marynish@comcast.net) or (303) 433-1638. See [seedfilm.life](http://seedfilm.life) for history of the movie and a video clip. To schedule a showing in your area, you may email the producer at [masababa@gmail.com](mailto:masababa@gmail.com)

**Future Newsletters : Learn about all the Colorado & California based Amache organizations; updates on Amache 11F Rec building restoration; working with National Park Service**