



Amache Historical Society II (AHS II) Newsletter Summer 2020

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 website
- support John Hopper and his Granada High students, known as the Amache Preservation Society, with maintenance of the Amache site and Museum.

AHS II: UPDATE ON NPS SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY ON AMACHE

A series of meetings scheduled on the West Coast in March by representatives of the National Park Service (NPS) who were studying the designation of Amache as a management site was canceled due to Covid-19. Online virtual meetings, however, are now scheduled for July 16, 25, and August 1, and will be coordinated with the Japanese American Memorial Pilgrimages. Also, the deadline for submitting materials has been extended to September 15. Newsletter readers are encouraged to provide comments for the NPS study to the address below. Particularly important in assessing the value of letters, personal testimonies, photos, documents, etc. that you submit are the following:

- Evaluating Amache's national significance in terms of its history and its value as a landmark to visitors.
- Determining Amache's suitability and feasibility as a unit to be administered by the NPS.
- Explaining why the NPS would be a better administrator for Amache than other government entities, private organizations and nonprofits (which may be identified and consulted in this process).
- Addressing the issue of funding, as present sources of monies are due to expire and emergency fund raising to aid John Hopper in his untiring effort is occasional.

Address:

National Park Service, Denver Service Center
12795 West Alameda Parkway
PO Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225-0287

Online Comments submittal:

<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=415&projectID=92521&documentID=101306>

Do You Have Information About the Amache Silkscreen Shop?

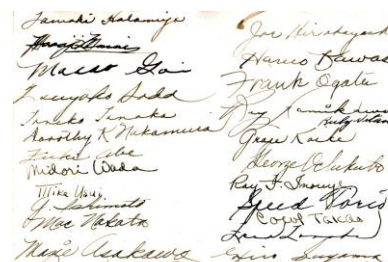
I am an art historian seeking to document the history of the silkscreen shop at Amache. I am looking for information regarding the men and women who worked in the shop, as well as any objects (either from government orders or camp projects) produced by the shop. These might include posters, school programs, dance cards, diplomas, and social invitations. My project includes trying to reconstruct the logistics of the shop (the source of the materials, financial reimbursement, etc.) as well as the artistic practices and the ways in which the artists worked both in a collective and as individuals. Please contact me with any information regarding biographical information of family members or objects in your possession.

Melissa Geisler Trafton,
Visiting Assistant Professor of Art History
College of the Holy Cross
mgtrafton@gmail.com

Contact Mitch Homma
for full size photos



Amache silkscreen workers



JANM Virtual Talk on Artifacts Produced by Internees

The Japanese American National Museum (JANM) hosted a virtual talk on "Contested Histories: Arts and Artifacts from the Allen Hendershott Eaton Collection" on YouTube on May 23.

Eaton's notable book *Beauty Behind Barbed Wire: The Arts of the Japanese in Our War Relocation Camps* (1952) discusses the arts and craft objects created by Japanese Americans incarcerated during the war. While doing research for the book and an exhibition that was never mounted, the author amassed a significant collection of artifacts. After years of lying forgotten in storage, the collection was inherited by a family friend who hired the

Rago Auction House and attempted to sell the collection in April 2015. Rago, which is located in New Jersey, specializes in the auction of fine arts, jewelry, pottery, glassware, etc. An outcry from Japanese American community leaders and activists prevented the sale of the artifacts, which have since been transferred to JANM.

Several works from the Eaton collection have become part of 50 Objects, a JANM project, that is an investigation into the names and biographies of internees who created artwork while imprisoned in the camps. Funded by a grant from the Department of Interior, the NPS, and the Japanese American Confinement Sites Program, the project is an effort to connect the biographies of individual artists to their artwork. Mrs. Nancy Ukai Russell, who is active in the project, has singled out a wood carving of a nightingale on the branch of a plum blossom tree. Research led to the discovery of six more like it in California, Colorado and Oregon.

For a video on this subject, see "Contested Histories Talk: Episode 3 - Nancy Ukai" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6oKmQh5Fw4>

For further information on 50 Objects, go to <https://50objects.org/>



Above: Woodcarving of a nightingale on a plum tree branch by Isamu Fujita at Amache. Part of Eaton Auction lot number 1245.

Rec Hall Restoration by Jane Daniels

After consulting the Colorado State Historical Fund, the NPS, and Colorado Preservation Inc. (CPI) regarding construction, A&M Renovations began work on the 11-F recreation building on March 31. With safety protocols and a small crew in a remote location, the project team felt that it was feasible to adhere to the original schedule despite the Covid-19 crisis.



A problematic issue has been the lack of drainage on the north side of the building. Since it was moved back to its foundation in 2018, dirt has accumulated, and the base of the siding has deteriorated. A decision was made to install a drainage system with a retaining wall to reduce dirt build-up. While there is no evidence of a retaining wall having originally been built at that location--a site already surveyed by Dr. Bonnie Clark 's Denver University field school--the project team believes the solution will minimize future maintenance for John Hopper and the APS.

As an interesting historical postscript, it should be noted that Carlene Tinker, AHS member and Denver University Amache Field School volunteer, attended kindergarten in the rec hall building being renovated. Any readers interested in the drainage system design should email Jane Daniels at jvrosecky@gmail.com. She will send you a copy of the plan when architect Barbara Darden and A&M Renovations have prepared it for review.

Why Was Asian Americans on PBS Problematic? by Sumiko Higashi

As part of recognizing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in May, PBS aired a five-part series produced by WETA Washington, DC and the Center for Asian American Media, in association with several production companies. Renée Tajima-Pena served as series producer and S. Leo Chiang, Geeta Candbhir and Grace Lee were episode producers. Daniel Dae Kim and Tamlyn Tomita provided voiceover narration.

Several participating organizations and individuals may account for the successful completion of an ambitious series, but also results in clichéd history that is linear and mostly progressive. Such a history is constructed by the selection of details in relation to a larger context--a common and understandable strategy--but one that can be problematic. A focus limited to Anna May Wong, Sessue Hayakawa, and Bruce Lee as Asian actors in Hollywood films, for example, feels sketchy and incomplete and raises unanswered questions.

The overarching theme of the series is represented by the arduous journey of various Asian American immigrant groups that ends in their becoming part of the American mosaic. The problem, however, is that the series does not even begin with a definition of the term "Asian American" (coined by the late Yuji Ichioka at UCLA), nor does it differentiate among various groups with respect to cultural, socioeconomic, and political differences. Put another way, what do Sikhs, Vietnamese, and Filipinos have in common besides becoming targets of white racism? Why might their being grouped together be problematic? What differentiated LA Koreans and African Americans even before their violent confrontation in riots triggered by the Rodney King verdict? (The involvement of a Hmong officer in George Floyd's death raises the issue of Asian-American and African-American relations again.) And, most important, how does color intersect with other social constructs such as class and gender, and why, as the basis of the series, is it most differentiating?

Departing from a strategy of inserting Asian American contributions into a chronological narrative, the second part, "A Question of Loyalty," proves more compelling. As an episode focusing largely on incarceration, it relates the fascinating story of the George Uno family held at Amache, Colorado, and in Crystal City, Texas. George's disillusioned eldest son Buddy had earlier moved to Japan to become a journalist, an opportunity denied him in the U.S. While he covered Japanese aggression in Manchuria and the Philippines, two of his younger brothers, including one serving as General Douglas MacArthur's translator, were active in American intelligence, and a third served in the decorated 442nd regiment. The Uno brothers fighting on the American side of the divide were patriotic and considered Buddy a traitor. Yet their younger sister Kay avoided political labels and sadly recalled childhood memories of a decamped brother whom she still loved. Due to Buddy's suspicious activities, his father George was detained by the FBI after Pearl Harbor and imprisoned in Crystal City until 1947. During the ensuing years his son Edison, who had remained with him until his delayed release, and his daughter Amy fought tirelessly in what became known as the redress movement. Unfortunately, neither lived to see the fruition of their efforts when President Ronald Reagan signed a Congressional bill in 1984.

The Uno family episode raises another significant issue marring the series: it construes history so broadly that it omits important details and elides controversy. Although it commemorates the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, it omits the fact that U.S. armed forces fought in segregated units and that a racist and inept officer of the Go-for-Broke regiment was responsible for a very high casualty rate. (See my review of For Honor, Not Glory in the Spring 2018 newsletter.). Such details could have been easily included in voiceover narration had a writer been more alert to historical facts. Still, as an educational tool telecast at a time when Asian Americans have become the target of increasing discrimination and hate crimes, the PBS series will certainly have its uses.

National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) Supports Amache by Tracy Coppola

NPCA, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C, with regional offices in states such as California and Colorado, has strongly supported APS in its efforts. The organization recently noted, “Every national park site has a story to tell us. Some are difficult to hear. But perhaps those are the ones we need to hear most.” Parks have the power to represent a full and inclusive history of America and teach us to reflect, persevere, and, if possible, heal.



As an advocacy group, NPCA’s mission is to protect and enhance NPS sites for present and future generations. The organization lobbies Congress to pass bills like the Amache Study Act, fights destructive proposals regarding the use of lands bordering national parks, and works with partners to make parks more inclusive and equitable spaces.

While the Special Resource Study is being conducted, NPCA’s Colorado office educates members about Amache and urges them to contact the NPS to express support for a national park site designation. The organization argues that national parks are not only an important part of Colorado’s economy but also represent an opportunity to share a more complete story of America’s past. NPCA lobbies the state’s Congressional delegation, communicates with Governor Jared Polis, and community partners. And it is also working with JANM regarding a possible future internship that would focus on the untold stories of Amache children.

An ally of the Mile-High chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), NPCA shared an information table on the Day of Remembrance, observed each year on the date Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, that was held in Denver on February 19. During that week, the organization co-sponsored the premiere of a documentary, “A Thousand Paper Cranes: How Denver’s Japanese American Community Emerged from Internment,” produced by the Human Rights & Community Partnerships Department in Denver’s Office of Storytelling. The film featured many voices of Amache internees. An NPCA interview with Mitch Homma, titled “Amache: An American Story That Must be Told,” as well as an opinion column by NPCA and Bob Fuchigami are available on www.npca.org/amache. The NPCA is always looking for meaningful ways to engage with Amache survivors and descendants. Please do not hesitate to contact their Colorado program manager Tracy Coppola at tcoppola@npca.org to discuss useful ideas.

Tadaima! A Community Virtual Pilgrimage Will Be Held June 13 - August 16, 2020

The annual pilgrimage to Amache and other sites of Japanese American incarceration has been canceled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since these outings have become significant, the Japanese American Memorial Pilgrimages is organizing a virtual tour on June 13-August 16, 2020. For more information, visit the JAMP website or register via their online form to receive updates. <https://www.jampilgrimages.com/>

University of Denver Amache Field School Community Open House on July 9&10 - CANCELED

To contact DU, email bclark@du.edu or call 303.871.2875

Pilgrimages, which were canceled, bring in much needed funding. Please mail your donations to APS,
PO Box 259, Granada, CO 81041-0259

Volunteer Staff:

Writer and Rewrite Editor: Sumiko Higashi

Design and Layout: Mitch Homma
Distribution: Kirsten Leong, Frances Palmer

Contributors:

Tracy Coppola, Jane Daniels, Sumiko Higashi, Mitch Homma, Melissa Geisler Trafton

Photos:
Amache Preservation Society Namura Collection,
NARA, 50 Objects Project