



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Records About Japanese Americans Relocated During World War II

Record Group 210

1. What information is in these records?

These records contain information about Japanese Americans forcibly removed from the states of Washington, Oregon, and California to ten relocation centers operated by the War Relocation Authority during World War II. Each record represents an individual and includes information such as the individual's name, relocation project and assembly center to which assigned, previous address, birthplace of parents, occupation of father, education, foreign residence, sex and marital status, race of individual and spouse, year of birth, age, birthplace, occupations, file number, and other data.

2. Why were these records created?

The War Relocation Authority (WRA) collected information on individuals forcibly removed on WRA Form 26 and created a punch card containing information from WRA Form 26 for each individual. The WRA used the data to support the management of individuals and the relocation centers, in general. The series also served as a locator index to the separate series of individual case files created and maintained by the WRA. After conversion of the punch cards to an electronic format by the Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley in the 1960s, in the late 1980s the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice used a copy of the data file to support distribution of reparations to those forcibly removed.

3. Where were the relocation centers located?

The relocation centers were located in the states of California (Tule Lake and Manzanar Centers), Idaho (Minidoka Center), Utah (Central Utah Center), Colorado (Granada Center), Arizona (Colorado River and Gila River Centers), Wyoming (Heart Mountain Center), and Arkansas (Rohwer and Jerome Centers).

4. What are some of the limitations of these records?

The War Relocation Authority did not create new punch cards to replace those cards found to have erroneous information about the individual so some of the records contain obvious typographical and data entry errors. In addition, new punch cards were not created when individuals transferred to other relocation centers. In general, the file does not contain records for persons born in the relocation centers or camps. However, there are some records of persons born in 1942.

5. How can I identify the records for all the members of a family?

Each record contains an “Individual Number” field which typically consists of five numbers and a letter. The members of one family usually have the five numbers in common, with the letter denoting the position of the person in the family. In addition, the file numbers for members of a family are usually in sequence. This information is located in the “File Number” field.

6. What version of the file is available on AAD?

The version on AAD consists of the original file, released in full, with all values now unmasked.

While preparing the file for AAD, staff found 23 rows/records to contain "dirty data" or blank records. Staff removed these records for the AAD version of the file. The file on AAD contains 109,377 records. Refer to Question 10 if interested in obtaining a copy of the unedited version of the file.

8. Why can't I download some of my search results?

There is a known issue with AAD that search results from a fielded search that use a code with a special character do not download properly. If a search includes a coded value with a special character, the downloaded file will only include the header row and none of the records. These special characters include the – or ! and usually when they are the first character in a coded value. For example, search results do not properly download if the search includes the code “-” for Sacramento (Walerga) in the Assembly Center field. Other examples of coded values with a special character that cause this issue include:

Field LAST PERMANENT ADDRESS STATE, code “&&” for Unknown

Field PERMANENT ADDRESS COUNTY, code “-1” for Santa Clara County

Field LANGUAGE, code “-” for English Speaking Only

As a work-around, use the free-text search box to search on the code meaning instead of using the code list. For example, instead of using the coded value for Sacramento (Walerga) for the Assembly Center field, enter “Sacramento (Walerga)” in the free-text search box as part of the search criteria. The search results should download successfully.

9. Why do some of the materials associated with these records refer to the individuals as evacuees?

Some of the materials reflect the terminology that the government used at the time. The War Relocation Authority (WRA) referred to the forced removal of Japanese Americans as an “evacuation,” the individuals removed as “evacuees,” and the places where the individuals were imprisoned as “assembly centers” and “relocation centers.” The WRA also referred to some of the records using this terminology and subsequent descriptive information may use this terminology to reflect how the government used the records at the time of creation.

10. How can I access a copy of the full file?

The raw data file, along with the associated technical documentation, may be downloaded from the National Archives Catalog at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>. You may locate the file by searching by the National Archives Identifier 1264228. Then click on the links in the file description to download the data and/or documentation.

Additional information about downloading electronic records from the Catalog is available at: <https://www.archives.gov/research/electronic-records/access-in-catalog-faqs>.

Please keep in mind that the data file consists of the raw structured data as loaded into AAD (i.e. the coded values without meanings), but without the AAD software that displays the meanings for coded values and field titles. For more details about using files containing raw structured data, you may wish to review our "Introduction to Raw Data" at: <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/electronic-records/raw-data-intro.pdf>.

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