

THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER AMACHE PROJECT

Volume I

April 2009



Welcome

Welcome to the first issue of the University of Denver (DU) Amache Project Newsletter! We thank you for your interest in our project and we hope that this newsletter will help keep you updated about our research, as well as news, events, and activities happening at and about Amache. Keeping the many Amache communities informed about our work is an integral component of our project. The success of the DU Amache Project so far is due to the participation, support, and interest of readers like you.

Project Background

The Granada Relocation Center, Colorado's WWII Japanese internment camp—better known as Amache—is a National Historic Landmark, the nation's highest recognition for a historic site. One reason why Amache is so significant are the many physical remains still there that bear testimony to life in the camp, including evidence of the camp layout such as roads and building foundations, internee activities such as landscaping, and objects scattered over the area or deposited in the camp trash dumps. These remains make Amache an incredibly important resource for archaeological research, a site that can be an avenue for better understanding life at Amache, and by extension the wider experience of internment.

Since 2005, Dr. Bonnie Clark, DU Associate Professor of Anthropology, has been working with the many communities associated with Amache to craft a collaborative project designed to the highest standards of archaeological research while meeting community needs and goals. The project objectives were created in collaboration with the many communities who are important stakeholders at the camp, including the Town of Granada, which owns the site; the Amache Preservation Society, who are the caretakers of the site and its associated museum; and the Japanese American community, especially former Amache internees and their families. By addressing current and future needs identified for the site and museum, the project is geared so that DU provides needed expertise while at the same time creating a forum for training students, not just in anthropology, but in the important history of Amache and internment.

Amache Field School

From June 16 through July 11, 2008 the University of Denver held a field school in historical archaeology and museum studies at Amache and the Amache Museum in Granada, CO. Unique to this field school was its focus on both archaeological field methods as well as museum collections management. Dr. Bonnie Clark led the field school with the help of Brooke Rohde, Curator of the DU Museum of Anthropology (DUMA), and Dr. Christina Kreps, director of DUMA. April Kamp-Whittaker and Dana Ogo Shew, DU graduate students who are completing thesis research at the site, served as the field assistants. The field school crew consisted of DU undergraduate students and graduate students from other universities who were joined by students from the Amache Preservation Society. We were very honored to be joined in the field by Gary and Dante Hilton-Ono, a former Amache internee and his grandson.

Archaeology at Amache

The goal of archaeological work at Amache was a greater understanding of the physical remains at the site, for both research purposes and to assist in planning future site development. Our work began with systematically walking over seven of the residential blocks at Amache searching for visible evidence on the surface of the site, including lost and broken objects (which as archaeologists we like to call “artifacts”) and evidence of internee landscaping, such as gardens and ponds. All of these remains were analyzed and mapped, while some artifacts were collected for future research and public interpretation of the site. Our research design was shaped by the thesis topics of Ms. Kamp-Whittaker and Ms. Shew who are interested in the experiences of children and women at Amache respectively. These surface surveys were supplemented by excavations aimed at better understanding the way that internees transformed the landscape through gardening. Three different types of historic gardens



Erin Saar, April Kamp-Whittaker, Greg Zuckerman, and Dana Monroe mapping a landscape feature.



Riley Widener, Erin Saar, and Dante Hilton-Ono screening for artifacts.

were excavated in a way that revealed how these gardens were planned while also collecting the actual remains of the plants these gardens once held.

The results of archaeological work done at Amache both above and below ground are still being processed, and future newsletters will report those results. However, it is already clear that Amache’s rich resources offer testimony of the strategies internees employed to make the camp a less harsh environment for themselves and their children.

APS/Museum Field Work

As part of this summer's DU field school, students spent their afternoons working at the Amache Preservation Society Museum in Granada. The goal of this element of the project was to teach the field school students and APS members basic museum principles while also organizing and documenting the museum's collections. A grant from the DU Public Good fund was used to purchase a new computer, museum database software, traveling cases, and other museum supplies for APS.

A great deal was accomplished in just a short time. Many of the objects and documents held by the museum were inventoried and entered into the computer database. Stable storage was created for fragile items and cases donated by DU were used by students to create professional looking exhibits for the museum. During the final week of the field school, an open house was held for the Granada community to share the



Open House at the Amache Museum, July 2008

results of everyone's hard work. The collaboration between APS and the University of Denver is ongoing and we look forward to future work there.

Next time you are in the area make sure to contact John Hopper to check out the results of all of this hard work!

Oral Histories

In August 2008, Dana Ogo Shew had the privilege of traveling to California to collect oral histories of 18 former Amache internees living from Orange County to Sacramento. Both men and women were interviewed, their ages ranged from 73 to 93 and their stories and memories were equally as extensive.

Kindness and enthusiasm were shared traits between them all. They welcomed her into their homes and lives and continue to inspire her research today. The experiences and memories they shared have given a voice and a life to the archaeological objects found in the field. They have introduced unexpected new insights and perspectives that have broadened the potentials of the archaeology done at the site.

The oral history component of research at Amache has become not only a treasured experience



June Kishi, Sherman Kishi, Grace Kimoto, Janet Tashima and Mitsuko Morimoto. Interviewed in Livingston, CA.

but a pivotal factor in revealing new ideas and more inclusive interpretations. The participation of former internees is truly appreciated and something that we hope will endure throughout this project.

“Amache Night” by Gary T. Ono

I call this photograph from my Issei grandmother’s album, “Amache Night.” This is the only night scene of a War Relocation Authority prison camp I’ve ever seen. I believe it evokes haunting memories in the minds of former internees. Having been a child internee, my memories are carefree, not anxiety laden.

Sixty-plus-years later, an opportunity to revisit this camp was offered by DU Professor, Dr. Bonnie Clark, who organized an archaeological survey of this very site named Amache. When asked, my 16-year-old grandson, Dante Hilton-Ono and I volunteered.

We learned archaeological field techniques and were treated as members of their hard-working team. Admittedly, it was tough to be ready “at the crack of dawn” every morning for two weeks and work in the Colorado dirt, but Dr. Clark and her crew were inspiring. They were cheerful, patient and excellent professional role models.

In addition to enjoying the “archaeological dig” and camaraderie, Dante and I shared a personal unique experience. Before sunset, on July 4, 2008, we pitched a tent within the crumbling foundation that marked Barrack 6, Block 10E, precisely where my family and I had lived over sixty-years-ago. Permission was given for us to “camp” there, while the DU crew returned for a weekend program in Denver. Dante helped me create a contemporary photograph along the line of “Amache Night.” We experimented with Dante shining a flashlight inside the tent and then outside the tent, while I kept the camera shutter open. After many takes, we agreed on a picture we liked. Not quite as haunting as “Amache Night,” but definitely provocative.

To do this on the night of America’s annual Independence Day filled us with a strong sense of irony. We talked about what it must have felt like to be imprisoned while the rest of America celebrated freedom. Perhaps they, as we, imagined seeing and hearing far-off firework celebrations in the towns beyond the barbed wire fence and guard towers



“Amache Night”, from Owai Okamura’s photograph album



Dante Hilton-Ono and Gary Ono. July 4, 2008



Created by Dante Hilton-Ono and Gary Ono. July 4, 2008

that surrounded them - - - that was their Amache night. Sixty years later it became ours as well.

JANM Conference

Last year the Japanese American National Museum's 2008 conference celebrated the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 by focusing on the Japanese American experience of internment and its relevant ties to issues of civil rights and social justice. The conference was held in Denver from July 3-6. As a part of the conference, attendees had the opportunity to attend an offsite field trip to Amache.

Tours were held on July 3 and July 6 during which time over 400 people visited the site of Amache. The one day visits included lunch at the Granada High School prepared and served by Granada residents, a display in the high school gymnasium of many items from the Amache Museum, a presentation by the Amache Preservation Society high school students, tours of the archaeological research of the DU field school, and a Buddhist ceremony held at the cemetery.

Many of the visitors were former internees at Amache or other internment camps and their families. For many former Amache internees this was the first time they had returned to the camp since they had left over 60 years ago. Being able to see artifacts from Amache as well as returning to their old residential blocks and barracks proved a very poignant experience. The students of the DU Field School were equally moved by being able to witness and facilitate this reconnection to the past. The visits helped make the archaeological work done in the field much more personal, relevant, and exciting.

The tours were a great success thanks to the hard work of many groups including the APS, the City of Granada, the Japan-America Society of Southern Colorado, Mile-Hi JAACL, DU, and JANM.



Objects from the Amache Museum on display in the Granada High School gymnasium.



Adrian Meyers leading a tour of one of the residential blocks studied during the field school.



The Amache Preservation Society, the Japan-America Society of Southern Colorado, and the DU field school.

Day of Remembrance

The Day of Remembrance, first created in Seattle in 1978, acknowledges the February 19, 1942 signing of Executive Order 9066 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt which set into motion the unconstitutional incarceration of approximately 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry. During this day we remember the injustice suffered by the Japanese American community in order to prevent similar injustices from happening to any group of people today or in the future. It is a time to honor the experiences of the Issei and Nisei that endured an unwarranted internment and it also serves as a time to promote education, encourage activism, and support the continued fight against civil rights violations.

This year the University of Denver and the Mile-Hi Chapter of the JACL hosted a Day of Remembrance event on the DU campus. Hosted by Mark Shimoda, the program began with a warm welcome by DU Chancellor Dr. Robert Coombe. Local high school student, Ryan Ogi, and former internee, Margaret Taniwaki, then shared their personal reflections about internment and its influences on them. An overview of archaeological research being done at Amache was given by Dr. Bonnie Clark and her graduate students April Kamp-Whittaker and Dana Ogo Shew.

The program also included other interactive activities such as a photo exhibit created by Aya Medrud, a display of artifacts found during last summer's field school with DU undergraduates acting as docents, and origami folding taught by Mike Shibata. Delicious homemade sushi, cookies, and tea were provided by the Simpson United Methodist Church.

Thanks to the efforts of the many groups that worked together on this event, the 2009



Guests take closer looks at archaeological objects found during the field school as DU undergrads act as docents.



Ryan Ogi shares personal reflections about internment.



Guests learn the art of origami, Japanese paper folding.

Day of Remembrance was a wonderful success that almost 200 people attended in order to reflect, share, learn, and commit to educating future generations about internment.

Amache in the News

During the four weeks of the field school, plenty of attention was given to the project by the media. Stories ran in a multitude of local and national venues. The publicity was a great way to educate the public about the story of Amache as well as internment in general. Stories were carried by the Lamar Ledger, the Colorado Springs Gazette, Rafu Shimpo, the Pacific Citizen, the Mile-Hi JACL newsletter, the Discover Nikkei website, the ABC affiliate in Denver, and Colorado Public Radio. A video made by DU about the field school was the highlighted video for one month on the Archaeology Channel website. More recently, Dr. Bonnie Clark was quoted in an Associated Press article about the Day of Remembrance. Links to these publications, websites, and programs can be found on the Amache Project website: <https://du.edu.portfolio/amache>.

Upcoming Events

Amache Reunion

The Amache Historic Society will host an Amache reunion in Las Vegas from May 3-May 6, 2009 at the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino. The goals of the reunion committee are to create an informal gathering, "with emphasis on socializing with good friends." For information on the event please contact Minoru Tonai at 818-591-1269 or at tonaim@pacbell.net.

Student Museum Exhibit

Through the Eyes of a Child: Japanese American Internment, is a student exhibit that will be on display at the DU Museum of Anthropology from May 14-June 5, 2009. Curated by April Kamp-Whittaker, this exhibit will be a visual representation of her master's thesis research on Amache. A combination of historical research and archaeological information will be used to discuss the experiences of children at Amache. Issues such as daily life, the role of gardens, and children's

Recent Events

This past July, DU graduate student, Jennifer Otto, curated an exhibit at the University of Denver Museum of Anthropology about the successful collaboration that goes into maintaining and preserving Amache. An exhibit open house in honor of Japanese American alumni of DU was held on July 3, 2008 and was attended by many JANM conference attendees. Ms. Otto is currently conducting interviews and finishing research about this subject as she completes her master's thesis.

Dr. Clark has also remained busy with Amache related events giving talks about the site's archaeology at The DU Alumni Symposium, The Denver Chapter of the Colorado Archaeology Association, the Denver Chapter of the Archaeological Institute of America, and the "Saving Places" conference of Colorado Preservation Inc.

play will all be discussed, as will the overarching topics of internment and historical archaeology.

SAA Poster Sessions

The Society for American Archaeology will hold it's annual conference in Atlanta this year from April 22-26. April Kamp-Whittaker and Dana Ogo Shew will be presenting posters at the conference discussing their field work at Amache. April's poster will focus on how archaeological field methods can be used to examine children's experiences at Amache and Dana's poster will highlight her experience collecting the oral histories of former Amache internees.

JACL Award

Congrats to Dr. Bonnie Clark, who was one of this year's recipients of the Mile-Hi JACL Pacesetter Award given to individuals who promote the positive attributes of Japanese-Americans via their occupation, contributions, or actions.

Contact us:

The DU Amache project needs you!! As we move forward, we want you to be a part of our work, whether through sharing your history or opinion, through planning future research, or through public events. Please let us know if you have questions, comments, or concerns about any of the topics addressed in this newsletter. Inquiries can be sent to Bonnie Clark via email at bclark@du.edu or at the mailing address below.

For more about the Amache Project please visit the project website at <https://portfolio.du.edu/amache>

The DU Amache project will continue to update the community through newsletters and other correspondence. For additional copies of the newsletter or to join our mailing list please contact Dana at dshew@du.edu with your mailing address and /or e-mail address.

University of Denver
Department of Anthropology
Sturm Hall, Room 146
2000 E. Asbury Ave.
Denver, CO 80208

 UNIVERSITY OF
DENVER
Department of Anthropology
Sturm Hall, Room 146
2000 E. Asbury Ave.
Denver, CO 80208