

## Chapter 17

# Perseverance and Prejudice: Maintaining Community in Amache, Colorado's World War II Japanese Internment Camp

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**Abstract** The Granada Relocation Center, otherwise known as Amache, located in southeastern Colorado, was one of ten camps in which those of Japanese ancestry were interned from 1942 to 1945. The analysis of archaeological material, archival documents, and oral histories from Amache demonstrates the effects of internment on community and family structure. Regulations imposed by the War Relocation Authority had the potential to greatly disrupt family and community dynamics. Nevertheless, Japanese families developed multiple ways to mitigate these effects and ultimately create successful communities within the camp.

### Introduction

The 2008 University of Denver field school in archaeology and museum studies, directed by Bonnie Clark, incorporated research designed by the authors to collect data about the lives of children and women at Amache, site of Colorado's World War II Japanese internment camp. Survey transects over the dry landscape of the camp recovered numerous artifacts that paint a picture of a thriving 1940s family community. Fragments of Vick's Vapo Rub bottles, Ponds cold cream jars, ceramic plates, cups and bowls, marbles, and rubber shoe heels dotted the surface of the camp's residential blocks. Amongst the artifacts still visible on the surface, only the fragments of large tin cans and heavy Quartermaster dishes indicated that the residents of this community were internees living in confinement.

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Oral histories collected to broaden the data available for analysis proved an invaluable complement to the archaeology, as many memories linked community family experiences to the material remains. The combined archaeological data, archival documents, and oral histories show that when the US government removed the internees from their homes on the West Coast to the harsh and unfamiliar internment camps in the interior of the United States, they found ways to mitigate adversity and maintain family structure and traditional life styles, ultimately triumphing over the hardships and obstacles of confinement (Kamp-Whittaker 2010; Shew 2010).

## **Internment History**

The resentment and prejudice aimed at the Japanese American population in the years leading up to World War II fueled the hysteria that followed the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Though no person of Japanese ancestry was ever convicted of spying for Japan, it was widely assumed that fifth column activity in Hawaii and several West Coast states would occur (Uyeda 1987). On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 which gave the Secretary of War the right to declare military areas. The entrance, inhabitation, or exit of any person from these military areas was regulated by the Secretary of War or a Military Commander appointed to a specific area (CWRIC 1997). This order ultimately allowed for the removal of individuals of Japanese descent from the areas of the West Coast of the United States. Approximately 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, two-thirds of whom were American citizens, were removed to ten different relocation centers located in isolated parts of the country's interior.

All of the relocation centers were similarly surrounded by barbed wire with guard towers stationed around their perimeters. Each contained living barracks, bath houses, laundry rooms, schools, hospitals, mess halls, and post offices (CWRIC 1997). The internment camps were mostly located in isolated, desert areas that experienced harsh weather conditions ranging from freezing cold to scorching hot. The internees, largely used to the temperate weather of the West Coast, were unfamiliar with the extreme climates of their new homes. Not only did the internees have to deal with a new geographic environment, but they also had to adjust to a new way of life governed by regulations, restrictions, and schedules set by the camp's administrative body, the War Relocation Authority (WRA). The internees had to get used to scheduled meal times, waiting in lines, cramped living quarters, and a lack of privacy, as well as many other changes and challenges brought by the imposed living conditions.

Commonly referred to as Amache, the Granada Relocation Center was located in southeastern Colorado, only 15 miles west of the Kansas border. The camp opened in August 1942 and at its peak in 1943 it housed 7,318 internees making it the tenth largest city in Colorado at that time (CWRIC 1997). During its 3 years of operation a total of 10,331 internees lived at Amache. It officially closed on October 15, 1945

(Harvey 2004; Simmons and Simmons 1994). Although the camp was abandoned and physically dismantled shortly thereafter, the memories and effects of internment still strongly resonate in the lives of former internees, their descendants, and those who continue to work on the preservation and conservation of the site.

Though it is important to remember that internment was an unquestionably unjust denial of civil rights that detrimentally affected the lives of thousands of people of Japanese descent, it is also important to acknowledge the ability of the Japanese internees to overcome adversity. The internees' response to confinement reflects a common theme noted by Eleanor Casella in her volume on institutional confinement, "the power of the asylum to transform its occupants and the power of those inmates to cope within this arduous environment" (2007:143). At Amache the transformations to daily life were abundant, yet the internees coped and ultimately triumphed over the restrictions of the WRA through the development and maintenance of strong community and family structure.

## Family Structure

The *Issei*, or the first-generation Japanese who immigrated to America, brought with them many of the traditional values and beliefs of their homeland. These immigrants were raised in, and influenced by, a Japan that stressed a rigid family system that had been in place for centuries. The Meiji government was explicit in promoting correct roles for each member of the family. Men were the heads of households and held all authority and responsibility over the other members. Women held no political rights or power, yet were expected to contribute to society by adhering to concepts of *ryosai kenbo*, "Good Wife, Good Mother" (Nolte and Hastings 1991). Children were expected to be loyal and obedient to their parents and to support the family when they reached adulthood, as payment for the care and guidance they received while being raised (Hendry 1996). Traditional family ideals focused on the continuity of the household and deemphasized the importance of the individual (Hendry 1996). Within this family model there existed a strong sense of unity with an emphasis placed on the responsibilities of parents for their children (LaViolette 1945:20). Traditional family structure highlighted both parental authority and personal responsibility, which led to an emphasis on behavior, manners, and a cultivation of respect for parental authority and discipline.

The traditional family system that existed amongst the Japanese in America prior to World War II shared many fundamental similarities with 1940s American family ideals. The role of women in both cultures was primarily limited to the domestic sphere with responsibilities that focused on cooking, cleaning, and care of children. American family ideals, like traditional Japanese beliefs, stressed the importance of children's education, proper manners, and discipline. In American culture, adults were expected to provide the materials and environment that would foster proper child development through educational toys, the creation of playgrounds, organized sports, and educational classes and clubs. There were, however, differences between

American and Japanese family structure ideals that created tensions. The sacrifice of the individual for the good of the family unit, emphasized in Japanese family structure, was almost directly opposed to the individualism that was encouraged in American culture.

Surrounded by the sometimes conflicting ideals of 1940s American society, the traditional Japanese family structure unsurprisingly changed and the intermixing of two cultural models created a distinct Japanese American family structure. This was often characterized by a generational division between *Nisei*, the second-generation Japanese born in America and their *Issei*, first generation, parents born in Japan. The combination of these generations created a Japanese American family structure that infused American ideals adopted by the *Nisei* with aspects of traditional foodways, celebrations, and religious activities often facilitated by the existence of cohesive Japanese communities established by the *Isseis*. The rules and conditions that governed the lives of internees in confinement had the potential to disrupt the ideal Japanese American family structure, especially where it differed from the expectations of the larger American society.

## Life in Confinement

Living conditions at Amache were cramped, uncomfortable, and largely lacking in privacy. All of the blocks followed a standard layout consisting of 12 residential barracks measuring 20 by 120 ft. The barracks were each divided into six individual apartments; two apartments measured 16 by 20 ft, two measured 20 by 20 ft., and two measured 24 by 20 ft. (Simmons and Simmons 1994). Couples without children or families with only one child were given the smallest of these apartments while larger families occupied the 24 by 20 ft. end units. Each unit came only with a coal burning pot belly stove, cots, a bare light bulb hanging from the ceiling, and one electrical outlet (Harvey 2004). Not only was there no escape from hearing and being heard by neighbors, but there was also a lack of physical privacy within family apartments. Many former internees remember using curtains as a substitute for walls, separating small living and sleeping areas within the barracks. These cramped living conditions often had divisive effects on family unity. Yoshiko Uchida, in her memoir about life at Topaz, the Central Utah Relocation Center, describes the effects of living in close quarters similar to those at Amache, “For other families, however, one-room living proved more destructive. Many children drifted away from their parents, rarely bothering to spend time in their own barracks ...” (Uchida 1982:123). The barracks became a place used primarily for sleeping and families spent little time together in them (Matsumoto 1984). Activities that traditionally occurred within the home were instead often moved to more public spaces.

The structure of daily life in Amache also drastically changed the spaces in which domestic activities took place. Many activities that were conventionally performed within the privacy of the household such as laundry, bathing, and dining were now moved into the public arena at camp. Meals were served in block mess halls and the



**Fig. 17.1** The creation of family tables was one way in which internees resisted disruption to family structures caused by internment (Courtesy of the McClelland Collection held by the Amache Museum, Granada, Colorado)

forced communal dining is often cited as a major factor in the war time breakdown of Japanese family unity. In the mess halls, diners were free to choose their own seats and many young adults, teenagers, and older children began using mealtime as yet another avenue of socialization and chose to sit with their friends and peers rather than their families (Fig. 17.1). The divergence of seating arrangements in the mess hall from those traditionally expected within the family exacerbated the growing tensions within families that life in confinement had initiated.

In traditional Japanese culture mealtime is spent with family; the dynamics of the traditional meal reinforced the image of parents as providers. Fathers were supposed to supply the food, while mothers were typically responsible for the preparation of food. Jere Takahashi argues that in camp, the WRA became the “provider” and it was evident to children that their meals were not earned or prepared by their parents (1997). Meals also provided a time for adults to debrief their children, learning about their daily activities and providing disciplinary action and adult monitoring of these activities. Without the “family table” children were not exposed to the reinforcement of parental authority, leading to a lack of discipline and respect while the bonds within peer groups were strengthened at the expense of family ties (Kitagawa 1967; Tong 2004:90). The increased influence of peer groups amongst the youth in Amache also exacerbated the existing divide between generations.

Familial roles were further affected by the absence of many men from the camp. A number of prominent community leaders or businessmen with ties to Japan were initially arrested after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and many were not reunited with their families until after the war. Men at Amache also often left the camp for extended periods of time on work leave, primarily on agricultural projects in the

surrounding area. Additionally, many young men from Amache volunteered for military service overseas. The decreased number of male figures in camp intensified the lack of authority within the family because men were traditionally the family's main disciplinarians. The absence of the primary authority figure, combined with the relative safety provided by the controlled environment of camp, allowed children an increased level of freedom and altered children's perceptions of their parents' roles.

### *Mitigating Confinement*

At Amache, the internees found ways in which to combat some of the divisive effects of their living situation. Some blocks reacted to communal dining by establishing assigned seating arrangements, forcing families to sit together helping to reestablish the family table (Matsumoto 1984; Takeshita 2008). These blocks attempted to limit the detrimental effects of a forced public mealtime by proactively controlling one aspect of the situation.

Another way in which internees attempted to regain control of parental authority was through cooking in the barracks. The mess hall food, often unpleasant or unfamiliar, and the adverse experiences most internees had with mess hall dining, served as strong motivations for some women to remedy the situation. By finding ways to prepare more familiar foods women mitigated one of the most drastic changes that their families had to deal with and recreated an environment that more closely resembled home. In oral histories and memoirs about Amache and other internment camps, countless internees remember their mothers cooking in the barracks. Internees would often either save food from mess hall meals or sneak food out of the kitchens to bring back to their barracks. Former Amache internee Bob Uragami explains that the whole idea was to "take stuff home and make it better" (Uragami 2008). These scraps and leftovers from the mess hall were often improved by turning them into traditional Japanese dishes or comfort foods which helped supplement meals provided by the mess halls. Internees often cooked on their barracks' standard issued pot belly stoves or used illicit hot plates, which seemed to have been as common in barrack apartments as the stoves (Uragami 2008). A 1943 article in *The Granada Pioneer* asks internees to return mess hall dishes and silverware in order to help remedy the mess hall utensil shortage, clearly illustrating how widespread the practice of preparing meals in the barracks had become (The Granada Pioneer 1942).

The archaeological evidence from Amache also shows that cooking in the barracks was very common, with many glass and ceramic artifacts that are strongly associated with domestic activities recovered (Fig. 17.2). Cooking and food related activities were the most visible activities recorded by our surface surveys. Statistically, the materials recorded during survey of the nonresidential elementary school differ significantly from those noted in the residential blocks. A chi squared test compared artifact counts from the residential blocks and the elementary school to counts that would be expected if the distribution of artifacts at Amache were



**Fig. 17.2** Amache tableware artifacts recovered during the 2008 University of Denver field school. 1 Stoneware jug, 2 Japanese porcelain bowl, 3 milk glass cup, 4 Japanese porcelain bowl, 5 Japanese porcelain flatware, 6 possible green pressed glass plate, 7 Asian porcelain cup/bowl, 8 Japanese porcelain serving bowl, 9 unidentified porcelain bowl, 10 unidentified earthenware hollowware, 11 Asian stoneware bowl/cup, 12 Asian stoneware cup/bowl, 13 unidentified earthenware, 14 unidentified earthenware, 15 Japanese porcelain bowl, 16 Japanese stoneware teapot/hollowware (Courtesy of author)

random. The chi squared value of 16.76 with a  $p$  value of 0.005 is highly significant and indicates that the artifact distributions in the residential blocks and the elementary school are different from the expected counts for a random distribution of artifacts. This results from the absence of ceramics and lower than expected counts of glass artifacts in the elementary school block. If the communal services established by the WRA had eliminated domestic activities including cooking and eating in the barracks, artifact counts similar to those in the nonresidential elementary school block should have been widespread. Instead, artifacts related to food production and other domestic activities are found throughout the residential blocks, of which 41 % were ceramic table wares including plates, bowls, cups, and saucers.

The ceramic artifacts at Amache reveal a great deal of information about the multidimensional meanings associated with cooking in the barracks. Several of the food-related artifacts were hotelware ceramics and were probably government-issued dishware for the mess halls. These military issue ceramics provided by the WRA for use in the mess halls, in conjunction with the communal structure of camp life, further institutionalized the internment experience. As Stephanie Skiles asserts in her

study of culinary practices at Amache, the plain, mass produced mess hall dishware was a reflection of the government's perception of the Japanese internees; "they were all the same and did not deserve the comforts of home" (Skiles 2008:69).

In contrast to the communal mess hall dishes, the Japanese and Asian ceramics found at Amache can easily be associated with expressions of cultural identity (see also Chap. 16). The Japanese ceramics that the internees brought with them reveal several additional motivations that drove women to cook within their barracks. Japanese ceramics evoked familiarity and even stability in the midst of upheaval and change, and they also helped perpetuate traditional ideals and practices: "Japanese ceramics played a key role in making over, in the image of home, the dismal environment of the camp" (Skiles and Clark 2010:189). Parents, especially mothers, were driven to replicate familiar surroundings in order to create a sense of normalcy for their children and shield them from this "dismal environment." The traditional foods served in the Japanese ceramics were also a comforting reminder of the familiar. Cooking Japanese foods and serving them on Japanese ceramics kept tradition alive and even helped solidify bonds and establish unity. It encouraged resistance and helped the internees reassert their cultural identities (Skiles 2008).

The incorporation of American consumer identities can also be found at Amache, as demonstrated by the bright and colorful Fiesta Ware bowls and decorated ironstone plates recovered at the site. The durability, low cost, and ready availability of Fiesta Ware and ironstone made these specific types of dishware a natural choice for many of the internees at Amache, both before and during internment. The presence of Fiesta Ware and ironstone is not only additional evidence of cooking within the barracks but it is also illuminates the internees' prudent consumer choices. This economical mindset was typical of both the *Issei* and wartime America and emphasized the importance of frugality as a way to support the American war effort. These ceramics represent the inclusion of American cultural objects and ideals in Japanese households through the consumption of American material culture.

World War II era mail order catalogs can also assist in exploring the social meanings behind the material objects associated with the site. The internees at Amache had few options when it came to procuring goods. Though the internee-run cooperative store sold a range of items from toiletries to vegetable seeds, internees also turned to mail order catalogs from companies such as Sears, Roebuck and Company, Montgomery Ward, and Spiegel's to procure items from outside of camp. The mail order catalogs served as a link to the rest of American society and allowed internees to participate in broader American consumer practices. Internees today still remember the important role that mail order catalogs played at Amache and even remember their preferred catalog brand. Mail order catalogs allowed internees to purchase familiar brands and goods that would not otherwise have been available, helping the internees to maintain certain aspects of their pre-internment lifestyles. The information provided by mail order catalogs, including item prices, descriptions, pictures, and associated marketing allow for a socioeconomic as well as a cultural examination of the internees' consumer choices.

The examination of toys and other children's items purchased through mail order catalogs is one way to analyze the consumer choices of the internees. Adults in

Amache viewed the toys they provided for their children as indicators of cultural status and a means of fulfilling societal perceptions of a normal childhood. The material culture used by children would have been important to adults since, in the 1940s, toys were seen as directly affecting the development of children. "Play may seem frivolous to grownups, but to a child it is very serious business, and it should be. The materials which a child uses in play—his toys—should be carefully and thoughtfully chosen to help in this important business. It is by play that the child experiments to learn his own abilities and to develop them" (Anonymous 1937:61). The toys offered in mail order catalogues give a clear perspective on what was considered proper for different genders and ages, and the types of toys which were most popular. The toys recovered from Amache reflect the consumer decisions of both adults and children and further demonstrate the inclusion of mainstream American society into life at Amache.

A majority of toys for girls in the 1944 Sears and Roebuck Christmas Catalogue relate to household activities, signifying the importance of such toys for training young girls in societal norms through their play activities. In contrast, the toys which are targeted at young boys are either vehicles like trains and trucks, relate heavily to World War II, or would be considered educational toys designed to teach skill sets. The remaining non-gendered toys fall into educational or other categories and include a range of art supplies and toys like wagons. The toys recovered from Amache match those available in toy catalogues at the time and demonstrate that adults were utilizing these catalogues to purchase toys.

The material culture of children recorded during the Amache field school reveals insights into parental views on common societal norms regarding appropriate behaviors, gendered ideas, and the importance of toys even during economic hardship. While the largest category of toys recovered from Amache was marbles, both gendered and military toys were also common categories. The two most common toys from Amache were Depression glass tea sets made by the Akro Agate Company and glass candy containers molded into the shape of various military vehicles. These toys, like a majority of the toys recovered from Amache, were relatively inexpensive and sold in sets. Most families in Amache had a limited income and many had had their assets seized by the government. While jobs were available in the camps they paid a greatly reduced wage of 12, 16, or \$19 a month (CWRIC 1997). Nonessential items like toys were a luxury. The presence of a number of toys which were definitely purchased during the occupation of Amache indicates the perceived importance of toys. Adults clearly felt that toys were an essential part of childhood and children's activities. They worked to provide access to playthings for their children in Amache through the purchase of inexpensive toys and sometimes through community organizations which distributed toys during holidays. The presence of familiar and popular playthings helped children adapt to the environment of camp and allowed them to engage in the same types of social and play activities they participated in prior to internment (Fig. 17.3).

The spaces in which children's play activities occurred were also similar to those prior to internment in Amache. With approximately 7,000 people confined to 1 sq mile, the residential section of Amache resembled a city. Urban children traditionally



**Fig. 17.3** A group of young boys playing marbles in the sand at Amache (Courtesy of the McClelland Collection held by the Amache Museum, Granada, Colorado)

play in streets, on sidewalks, in playgrounds, and in yards where they can be monitored, and in vacant spaces where they can escape adult supervision (Chudacoff 2007). The locations of children's play areas around Amache are revealed by the distribution of the most common archaeologically recovered toy—marbles. These are small, easily lost, of low monetary value, and those who played marbles would have possessed a large number of them. For these reasons they should frequently be recovered close to where they were used and lost. Marbles were recovered most commonly in low traffic areas, especially along the edges of blocks and in or around landscape features. The location of marbles indicates that children were playing in both supervised and unsupervised spaces. They played in adult designated areas where they could be monitored such as areas around the home and places like the Boy Scouts headquarters and elementary school. They also played in areas at the edges of blocks where they had more freedom and were less observed. The location of marbles in Amache reveals that internee children were playing in locations similar to those of their prewar urban settings.

When studying landscapes, it is important to consider how space is organized by the community (Jackson 1997:309). Using marbles as an indicator of children's movement and space use reveals that the camp was viewed by both adults and children as a city landscape and that it was being utilized accordingly. It is evident that children were using the edges of blocks as play areas when they were allowed to wander, and using landscape features such as gardens when they were expected to remain closer to their barracks. The edges of the barracks were considered less structured areas than either the gardens or playgrounds, and children used them in the same way as vacant lots were used in cities. Internee views of children's play

areas and activities within Amache reflect both their lives prior to internment and the norms of American society. The relative safety of the camp and its cramped living conditions also created a situation which encouraged children to use play spaces, such as gardens and playgrounds, which were located outside the home. This is reflected in the extensive development of social activities within Amache.

## Community at Amache

Internees could choose to join a wide variety of different organizations and groups at Amache. These organizations strengthened community solidarity and helped foster a sense of normalcy. The events and activities that internees organized at Amache were often continuations of activities in which they had participated before internment. Many internees came to Amache from Japanese communities which valued and emphasized social organization and involvement. At Amache, the internees put great effort into recreating these social groups, and thereby were able to reestablish and reinvent aspects of their identity (Hayashi 1983). Social organizations also facilitated the development of new social networks and were designed to unify internees from different parts of California (Tong 2004).

The groups and organizations that internees could join at Amache helped bond them to others with similar beliefs and interests. Involvement in religious organizations, political groups, clubs, youth groups, and sports teams created particular communities or groups, each with its own goals and purposes. Despite the individual goals of each organization, the desire for normalcy is an underlying impetus common to many of the groups that existed in camp. Activities, groups, and classes were also seen as important in the rearing of children. Parents were told that children needed structured play and guided activities for their proper development. Enrolment in organizations and classes was seen as providing educational activities which would foster an environment where children could acquire necessary social and life skills. The *Nisei* largely found this social guidance in groups that promoted American ideals and beliefs. *Issei* and older *Nisei* parents established branches of national youth organizations such as the Girl and Boy Scouts, the YMCA, the YWCA, and the Red Cross (Fig. 17.4).

Youth groups not only helped parents fulfill their child rearing obligations, they also connected internees to the world beyond confinement, as many national organizations distributed newsletters which internees could obtain. Being a Boy Scout at Amache was expressing a normal, American identity, even a patriotic one. This can be seen in the activities organized by young teenagers as well. Throughout the camp, young girls and teenagers belonged to official social groups whose membership was often determined by the cities or areas where they had lived before Amache, the blocks they lived in at the camp, and their age. The activities that these groups organized often reflected the membership's struggle for normalcy and identification with mainstream American ideals. Teenage *Niseis* kept up with the nation's top ten songs by listening to "Hit Parade" on the radio on Saturdays and then ordering records



**Fig. 17.4** The Boy Scouts were one of the most popular organizations in Amache and had special duties including raising the flag daily and honoring soldiers leaving Amache (Courtesy of the McClelland Collection held by the Amache Museum, Granada, Colorado)

from mail order catalogs (Tanaka 2008). They held dances featuring popular songs played on record players or by one of Amache's teenage bands, attempting to create social environments similar to those of teenagers across the country. Even within the confines of internment, *Nisei* teenagers were thus able to continue aspects of their earlier lives. Many oral history accounts and archival materials such as membership cards, dance invitations, church programs, theater programs, and carnival souvenirs that have been preserved in former internee scrapbooks paint a picture of active, busy young Americans.

Adults also constructed community identities at Amache through participation in many clubs and groups of their own. The Women's Federation was created in order to "be the mouthpiece of women in camp and make demands and dissatisfactions known to the administration. It is an organization that attempts to better camp conditions and present points men councilmen think superfluous" (Women's Federation 1942). The women in the Federation identified themselves as valuable, effective members of Amache society. Women at Amache also actively promoted American patriotism, and those with sons serving in the war organized a branch of the Blue Star Mothers at camp. As part of the war effort they sponsored raffles and drives to sell war bonds and hosted luncheons for visiting servicemen. Men at Amache were less involved in organized groups than women but were instead very involved in camp government and served as block managers and law enforcement officers.

Religious organizations also provided foundations around which communities were developed. Both Buddhist and Catholic churches had multiple locations



**Fig. 17.5** Community events, like this *Obon* festival dance, became a way for internees to socialize while expressing their cultural identity (Courtesy of the McClelland Collection held by the Amache Museum, Granada, Colorado)

throughout the camp. These religious organizations were active and influential groups within Amache providing families with both spiritual and social support. Many internees came from communities in which the church was an influential center of social activity and community unity. Involvement in the Christian church was another outlet in which young people could socialize with each other. Church membership sometimes even provided the opportunity to attend church camps outside Amache, and interact with people beyond the camp (Kimoto 2008; Morimoto 2008). Youth organizations associated with churches such as the Young Buddhist Association (YBA) were involved in a variety of activities within the camp such as the *obon* and *mochitsuki* festivals, and these activities served as an avenue through which the *Issei* could instill traditional beliefs and teach cultural practices to the *Nisei*. The young members of the YBA balanced an identity associated with a traditionally Japanese religion with an American identity. Participation in events like the summer carnival which featured sports such as softball alongside sumo wrestling illustrates this straddling of cultures. The establishment of multiple churches at Amache illustrates the internees' determination to not let the constraints of confinement stop them from maintaining their cultural identity and familiar community structure (Fig. 17.5).

The internees were also faced with aspects of camp life that did not fit into the familiar community structure of prewar life; their ability to adapt to these changes contributed to the creation of a successful, unified community. In the camp many

internees, especially women, found themselves with more leisure time than they had ever experienced before. The communal structure of internment life relieved women of many domestic responsibilities such as cooking, freeing up much of their time. Also for the first time many women did not have to work outside of the home in order to help support their families financially. While most members of the *Issei* and *Nisei* generations had been small business owners or worked in agriculture before the war, in Amache the available jobs were limited and most basic needs were met by the WRA. With free time to explore other aspects of their individuality many internees discovered talents and passions that had previously been unrealized. An article in an October 1942 issue of *The Granada Pioneer* lists 23 adult classes in the camp, including cooking, sewing shop, knitting and crocheting, fine needlework and embroidery, clothing line and design, piano, shorthand, and bookkeeping (*The Granada Pioneer* 1942). The diverse classes offered within the camp let women discover capabilities beyond the domestic sphere which allowed for exploration and self-redefinition. Men also developed skills and discovered unknown talents in classes such as wood carving, art, beginning English, Spanish, and algebra. Classes offered at the camp allowed both men and women to counteract the authority of the WRA by demonstrating the validity of their own skills and knowledge. Adult internees played an important role in establishing a successful community within the confines of internment by staying active and engaged in self-improvement and creative activities.

## Conclusions

The archaeological, documentary, and oral history data from Amache give testimony to the success of internees in reconstructing a working community within the confines of the camp. The data from Amache shows some of the ways in which internees strove for normalcy and familiarity. Through the efforts of internees, Amache became a functional society sheltering internees from the worst of the potential negative effects of internment. The documentary record and oral histories reveal internees at Amache who were active, contributing members of a thriving society. This exploration of family life within Amache highlights the indispensable value of multidisciplinary approaches for developing a well-rounded understanding of daily life. The archaeological record documents some of the casual activities of children and women that are less visible from historical sources. Historical archaeology has the advantage of using written records and oral histories alongside the material evidence. Those researching Japanese American internment are especially fortunate to still have a living population who can share first-hand information and emotions about life in internment, and this has certainly been the case at Amache. Oral histories are more than just a way to confirm theories about the past developed from material objects and documents. They are the emotional and personal components of research that help remind us that the archaeologists' theories and results are actually the stories of the people that lived them.

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