
Cultivating Community

The Archaeology of Japanese American Confinement at Amache

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Many contributors to this volume explore how the archaeology of landscape is an anthropologically robust avenue for better understanding of place making. In this chapter archaeology yields compelling evidence for the depth of our human need for place even in the unlikeliest of locales: sites of confinement. Incarcerated peoples do not choose the location of their prisons, nor do they design them. Yet modifications made by inmates to their carceral landscapes are common and range from subtle, such as improvements to housing (Casella 2007), to monumental, such as creating parks (Helphand 2006). What these material traces suggest is that investment in place, which has long been of interest to archaeologists, need not be a long-term strategy.

The locales where Americans of Japanese ancestry were incarcerated during World War II provide an especially compelling opportunity for archaeologists to study these phenomena. Communities of people relocated to new environmental settings, these sites have much to contribute to the study of how and why people make places. Occupied just seventy years ago, they are also sites of living memory. As such they are locales where intangible and tangible heritage are irrevocably intertwined. This chapter interprets the results of collaborative archaeology at Amache, one of the ten Japanese American internment camps in the United States (figure 5.1). It explores not just what we have learned from the tangible remains of the camp but also the ways that our studies contribute to new communities of memory.

The data presented here come from three field seasons at Amache, in 2008, 2010, and 2012. The project is ongoing, so what is presented here is a work in progress.

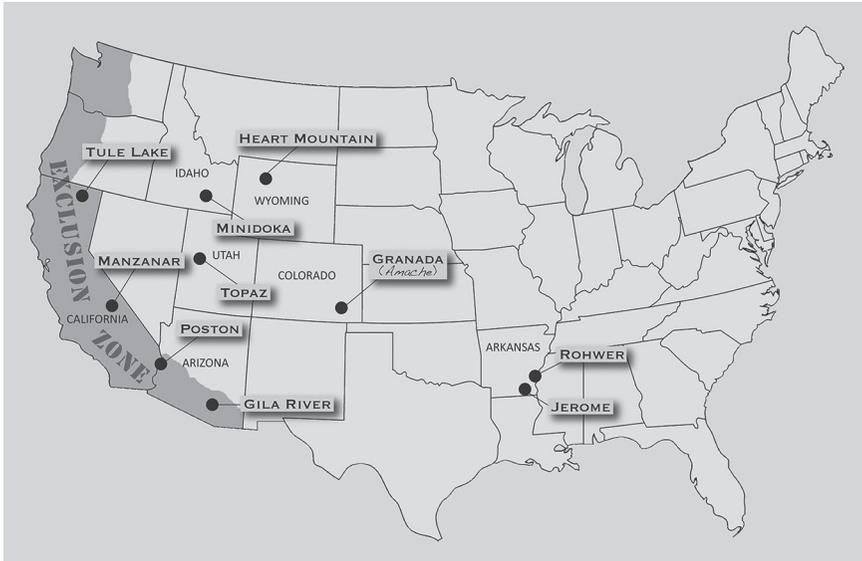


FIGURE 5.1. Map of all ten War Relocation Authority camps, as well as the zone from which Japanese Americans were removed during the war. The official name of the Colorado camp was the “Granada Relocation Center,” but it is more commonly known as Amache. Map created by Anne Amati.

Each year we have engaged in intensive pedestrian survey of the blocks where internees were housed. Like all other areas of the site, buildings were removed when the camp was dismantled in 1945. Yet survey reveals significant archaeological remains including surface artifacts, as well as evidence of internee-created landscaping (Clark et al. 2012). Excavations have primarily focused on landscaping elements, especially gardens. These excavations employ intensive garden archaeology techniques with an eye to revealing design, plant materials, and soil management (Clark 2011). Our field and lab analysis call on the expertise of an archaeobotanist, a palynologist, and a soil chemist. Together we have faced the methodological challenges of archaeological research on such a recent cultural landscape, such as the analysis of uncharred seeds (Archer 2009).

The research at Amache was always designed as collaborative, beginning with community consultations years before our first field season. Our conversations with former internees range from informal chats at community events to recorded oral histories. Each field season we have been honored to be joined by former internees who visit the site and some who even work with our crews in the field. The results of “collaborating at the trowel’s edge” (sensu Silliman 2008) greatly inform this chapter.

After a brief historic overview, it begins by exploring the variety of internee-created landscaping we find at Amache. These features reveal significant investment in remaking the cultural landscape. Close analysis of materials employed also reveal surprisingly intense networks in this involuntary community. Finally, the chapter explores the importance of this locale for survivors and their descendants, suggesting that prisonscapes remain important, if difficult, heritage sites.

AMACHE: THE PLACE AND THE PEOPLE

In 1942, in the wake of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, just over 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from the west coast of the United States. Most were imprisoned in internment camps in the country's interior. The rhetoric that justified this action sounds eerily similar to post-9/11 talk about security, terrorism, and divided loyalty. However, Japanese and other Asians in America had long been the target of ire, especially in areas where they lived in large numbers. Hindsight suggests that Japanese American internment was largely driven by racism against an already outsider group who could be visibly linked to an enemy aggressor nation (*The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* 1997).

Amache was designed by the War Relocation Authority (WRA), a civilian administration in charge of the Japanese American removal and internment. These "forced communities" followed a hybrid template of US military outposts and federal experiments in farmworker housing built primarily for migrants moving to California to escape the dust bowl (Horiuchi 2005). What the WRA called the Granada Project (named for the nearby town) encompassed over sixteen square miles, incorporating farmland and ranches to be worked by the internees (Simmons and Simmons 1993). At the center was the camp itself, a square mile surrounded by barbed wire and a series of guard towers manned by armed soldiers. The camp had an urban feel, with buildings laid out in a street grid of military precision. Some specialty community facilities were provided, such as a hospital and a purpose-built high school, but most activities took place in standard, military-issue buildings.

Most of the camp comprised blocks of barracks to house the internees. The twenty-nine such barracks blocks were almost exactly alike. Each held two rows of six barracks flanking two buildings, a mess hall and a combined laundry, a latrine, and a bathhouse. Each block also held a community building that tended to be a recreation hall, but was occasionally a church, and in a few instances it housed a campwide organization. Barrack buildings themselves were divided into six quarters, euphemistically termed "apartments," typically assigned to internee couples or families. Former internees who were children remember that it was terribly easy to get lost in this sea of regimentally laid-out, tarpaper-covered buildings.

The internees at Amache were sent there from primarily three locations: the northern coast of California, its Central Valley, and a neighborhood of southwest Los Angeles known in Japanese as the Seinan (DeWitt 1943). Despite being from different areas of the state, they were united by their occupations. A combination of racially restrictive hiring practices and experience in Japan, pushed the Issei, or first-generation immigrants, into agriculture. Before the war nearly 70 percent of Issei on the west coast had been involved in agriculture or agriculture-related businesses (Helphand 2006:158), a profile that fit those at Amache. The vast majority of internees from the Central Valley were farmers, including residents of three Japanese American farming colonies established before the passage of California laws restricting Asian ownership of land. The Seinan was an ethnically mixed neighborhood, but Japanese Americans predominated. The area held many produce stands, often affiliated with the truck farmers who lived in the neighborhood. On the eve of Pearl Harbor, over 15 percent of the Issei in the greater Los Angeles area were gardeners (Tsukashima 2000), and some of them lived in the Seinan. Other agriculture-related businesses in the area included nurseries, but it was home to other business owners and professionals. The residents from coastal California were of a more mixed professional background, but many were also involved in agriculture or maintenance gardening.

The significant horticultural skills of this population would be put to the test at Amache. Located on the High Plains of Colorado, the area is characterized by wind and little rainfall, and the on-site soil is almost entirely Aeolian-deposited sand. The region had been hard hit by the dust bowl and at the beginning of World War II was just beginning to recover. Despite the delicate nature of the soil, the WRA bulldozed the entire site prior to construction. As a result, the internees arrived in a moonscape devoid of any vegetation and characterized by nearly constant, gritty winds. Lili Sasaki recalled her arrival at Amache: "Everybody was shocked because there was nothing but sand and sandstorms and tumbleweeds. Not a thing to see" (cited in Helphand 2006:161).

GARDENS OF INGENUITY

Internees almost immediately set to changing the situation. Trees were transplanted from the Arkansas River, located three miles north of camp, or later purchased from an enterprising local nursery, which sold them to internees for fifty cents each. Thomas Shigekuni, whose family had owned a nursery, recalled that he and his brother took the lead in planting scores of trees in their block, 12G. Because of their training, they insisted the nursery also provide peat moss to better encourage the transplants in Amache's arid setting (personal communication, Shigekuni, 2011).

Evidence of their hard work remains, especially near the 12G mess hall, where a row of trees continues to thrive seventy years later.

An article in the camp newspaper, the *Granada Pioneer* (1943:5), tells a similar story of Kaneji Domato, who spearheaded the planting of trees in Block 6G. Archaeological research helps to refine our understanding of his contribution to the camp landscape. Intensive pedestrian surveying of nearly half the barracks blocks indicates that many had blockwide tree-planting schemes. Most of them appear to be fairly regimented, using even spacing and rectilinear plantings. However, Kaneji Domato appears to have arranged his trees in more natural groupings (Riggs 2013). Kaneji's father, Kanetaro Domato, ran a very successful nursery prior to the war. Kaneji had parlayed that experience, and university training in architecture, into a spot on the team that designed and built several Japanese-style gardens in the Bay Area, including the World's Fair on Treasure Island (Riggs 2013). His tree-planting scheme likely reflects his training in Japanese garden design, which tends to favor plantings that evoke nature rather than abstract geometry.

Regardless of their designs, both Mr. Shigekuni and Mr. Domato contributed significantly to improving the quality of life at Amache. Trees deterred erosion, brought green into the drab landscape, and provided shade for internees. This was particularly appreciated by the people who had to wait in line for their turn in the mess halls. If a block has only a few trees, we tend to find them shading the area adjacent to the mess hall.

Many, many others contributed to making over Amache anew. Historic photographs confirm what we see in survey; the internees at Amache did not just modify the landscape, they completely transformed it (figure 5.2). A good example is Block 9L, occupied primarily by residents from Los Angeles. As shown in this map derived from our intensive survey, only one pair, two of the twelve barracks, were not fronted with gardens obvious on the surface of the site (figure 5.3). Yet because there are trees planted in front of the other two barracks, it is likely that excavations would reveal they too had gardens. In addition to the barrack entryway gardens, Block 9L is landscaped in public spaces, including a pair of oval garden beds discovered during the original survey of Amache (Carrillo and Killam 2004). Test excavations in one of the beds provide evidence for different forms of investment in gardening.

Whoever designed the Block 9L garden features took great care in their design. Each bed is a precise oval of exactly the same size. Directly on the centerline of the bed, we recovered the remains of a Chinese Elm tree that had been planted there (figure 5.4). Off to one side we discovered a rectangular soil stain and some copper wire. It is very likely these are the result of staking the tree, giving it a fighting chance against the ravages of the local wind. Copper was rationed during the war,



FIGURE 5.2. Panorama of Amache showing common internee modifications to the landscape including tree plantings, gardens, and laundry lines. Image courtesy of the Amache Preservation Society.

so the wire we found was scavenged, or more likely stolen, from stores of camp construction materials. That is probably the same source for the cinderblock out of which the beds were made. Those who built the garden took great pains to hide the material's industrial nature; each block was carefully split into three portions and laid in a way that disguises the defining features of the block, its circular center holes. Without rather close inspection, the pieces appear to be carefully quarried basalt blocks, a material that would have been familiar to any gardener practicing in California.

Despite what appears on the surface to be a very Westernized design, whoever created the 9L garden was still informed by Japanese landscape principles. One of the most influential of these is *shakkei*, a literal translation of which is “borrowed scenery.” This can be accomplished at multiple scales but is most clear when garden design accommodates distant views, such as natural woods (Itoh 1973). It was employed at other camp gardens, too. For example, some of the gardens at the California internment camp Manzanar are sited to draw the eye to particular mountain peaks (Helphand 2006:184). On the High Plains, the location of Amache affords fewer such opportunities. Still, the site is on a terrace above the Arkansas River, and in a few locations one sees the trees that line the riverbank. To the northeast also lies the small town of Granada, a view you can see from 9L because the

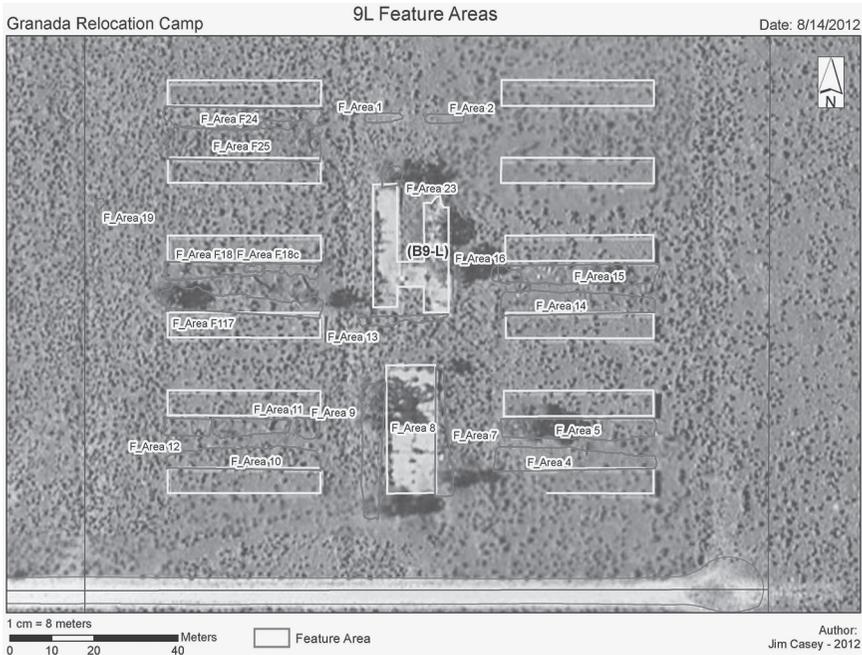


FIGURE 5.3. Block 9L at Amache with building foundations and landscaping features (labeled with feature number) discovered during survey, 2012. Map by Jim Casey.

block juts out east from all the other barracks blocks. Although not as majestic as the Sierra, the borrowed scenery at this Amache garden would have been reassuringly civilian. The importance of places that provided respite from the internment camp landscape is hard to overstate. Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston recalled that in the Manzanar gardens, facing away from the barracks, you could “for a while not be a prisoner at all” (Houston and Houston 1973:72).

The plant remains recovered from the 9L oval bed are likewise intriguing. We recovered high numbers of seed of the *Portulaca*, or purslane. This strongly suggests that a *Portulaca*, a weedy plant found around the world, may have been “deliberately grown as a ground cover for the garden feature, being a drought-tolerant, attractive choice for such a purpose . . . *Portulaca* does not seem to have tremendous significance in Japanese gardening traditions, but as abundantly evidenced elsewhere, Amache internees were adept at substituting or being inventive with local materials, including plant materials” (Archer 2009:5).

Research in two of the school-area entryway gardens indicates that place making through gardening was not confined to the Issei of the camp. A number of historic



FIGURE 5.4. Oval garden in Block 9L after test excavations, 2008. Remains of the tree planted in the center of the bed visible at the top of the image. Photograph by author.

records document the landscaping of the barracks block that was used as the elementary school. Like the rest of the camp, it had been denuded of all vegetation during construction. As the principal of the Amache school wrote in an education journal, “Passage from room to room, to library, office, or lavatory, could be attained only by stepping out in the periodic fury of dust and sand” (Dumas and Walther 1944:40).

The children of Amache were no doubt either aware of or recruited into the camp landscaping projects of the older generations. Those who landscaped with their families were likely among the children who approached the school administrators with the suggestion that the school also be thus transformed. In fact fifty children submitted landscaping plans for the school (Dumas and Walther 1944). The 2008 intensive survey in the school block suggests a similarity in the size, placement, and boundary hardscaping of the individual beds (Clark 2008). The edges of almost all the beds were delineated by limestone likely quarried from an out-cropping within the boundaries of the camp. We excavated units in a pair of beds that flanked a doorway of one of the barracks used as a classroom. These two beds were approximately the same size and both bounded by limestone. However, excavation revealed that the children who designed and built them put into place quite

different plans. One of these beds was landscaped with consistently sized gravel that almost certainly came from the banks of the Arkansas River. The adjacent bed had no gravel at all. From one bed we recovered ornamental morning glory seeds (*Ipomoea*) but none from the other. Morning glory is not only a traditionally valued ornamental, but its quickly growing vines would have effectively hidden the military architecture of the camp.

The excavations at the elementary school demonstrate that some Japanese American children had already learned a good deal about transforming the land and were applying that knowledge to the arid setting of the camp in very different ways. They were growing into their own aesthetic understandings of what is appropriate in an entryway garden, a type of landscape that has long precedent in Japan (Helphand 2006).

A final example of commitment to making Amache a better place comes from our studies of the site's soil chemistry. From the onset of our research, we have investigated if and how the internees were amending the nutritionally poor soil of the site. Studies in 2008 suggested higher carbon content in the soil samples from gardens, which could indicate soil amendment. However, the results were not definitive due to the ubiquity of clinker and coal, which was burned throughout the camp. Broadening the nutrient analysis in the 2010 research design allowed for a more fine-grained approach. What we found was that nutrient content was both higher and more spatially concentrated in samples taken from garden features (Marín-Spiotta and Eggleston 2011). Microartifacts recovered from garden contexts—crushed eggshell, fish scales and bones, and even fragments of iron slag—provide evidence of the variety of soil amendments camp gardeners employed. Given the short period of occupation and the “overly drained” (Natural Resources Conservation Service n.d.) nature of the sediments on site, the presence of such a definitive chemical signature seventy years later is an amazing legacy of internee care for the soil.

Collectively the evidence from the gardens suggests significant effort and care expended on what was essentially a prison. The internees had no say in where they lived and plenty of reasons to suspect they would be uprooted again at any time. Their investment of time, energy, and precious monetary resources would seem at the least ironic, if not downright counterintuitive. Such a position, however, is only tenable without a cultural knowledge of the Nikkei (people of Japanese descent) in the United States. Many fit Lawson Inada's description of his farmer uncle: “He lived with the land, on the land, and was *of* the land” (Inada 1997:32, emphasis original). Poet Sankyaku Seki, himself an American immigrant from Japan, links gardening to “Nikkei consciousness” (Seki 2007:38). A site visitor whose parents were confined at Amache interpreted the plethora of gardens there succinctly: “We're Japanese. We grow things. It's what we do.”

The anthropology of place provides another avenue to understanding this data. Among the displaced, claiming territory, even if briefly, provides a psychological sense of belonging. This urge has been revealed through the archaeology of the homeless, who use a variety of place-making techniques from caching to graffiti (Zimmerman and Welch 2011). In Hong Kong, Filipino domestic laborers take over a small part of the city on their one day off. Little Manila is primarily a temporary sense-scape, marked by the smells and sounds of their home country (Law 2005). As Law's work suggests, such efforts at claiming territory are even more effective when, as in gardens, multiple senses are engaged. By making Amache look, smell, perhaps even sound more like home, its gardeners reaffirmed their sense of self, while normalizing the surroundings for their entire community. In that way they performed a service perhaps even more satisfying and valuable than keeping the dust down.

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

Close examination of the gardens also reveals networks and innovative strategies that brought the whole Granada project—the barracks blocks, the service areas, and the associated farms and ranches—together. Although shortages and rationing were experienced widely during wartime, access to materials was even more limited for internees. Many internee families not only had lost their source of income, but their assets had also been seized. These were the families hardest hit economically, and many of them chose to take jobs in camp to support their families. All in camp had been restricted to what they could carry when they left first for the temporary assembly centers and then the more permanent internment camps. It was, to put it very bluntly, a materials-poor environment. As evidenced in the gardens of 9L, the setting gave rise to a thriving underground network of recycled or repurposed items and purloined materials.

One of the entryway gardens we excavated in 2010 provides evidence for a number of the projectwide networks that supported such features. This garden, which is directly in front of the barrack occupied in 1945 by Saiichiro and Bun Hirota, was amended throughout with the judicious use of crumbled eggshell. A former internee who visited us that summer recalled that eggshell, tea leaves, and coffee grounds were all highly prized soil amendments. As she told me, not everyone had access to them: you had to know people who worked in the mess halls. Another source for the eggshell could have been the chicken-raising facilities at the project ranch. Workers with access to chickens would have had access to eggshell as well. We also strongly suspect that ranch workers had access to an even more valued soil amendment: manure.

The Hirota entryway garden also employed broken water pipes. These were ingeniously placed upright and sunk into the ground for use as planters. Because they were certainly broken before the gardeners got them, they likely reflect connection to someone who had access to the camp's trash. Internees employed in the sanitation division made regular rounds of the camp and dumped the trash in an area beyond the guarded boundary fence.

Finally, like almost all of the gardens we have excavated at the camp, the Hirota garden yielded a variety of wire of varying gauges. A seemingly pedestrian material, wire appears to have been very valuable in camp. It exhibits a wide range of uses in gardens, from homemade fencing, to hangers for ornaments, to tree supports. Made of metals required for the war effort, wire was rationed during the war. It was not available through popular mail-order catalogs such as Sears-Roebuck, which oral histories indicate was an important source for items in camp. There was a hardware store in Granada, the town just over one mile away from Amache. However, whatever supply of wire it might have had in stock would have been quickly exhausted by the internee population, which was about ten times that of the town. Once that wire was gone, there would have been no replacing it. Much more likely is that the wire in this garden was among the many items internees "liberated" from the WRA stockpiles.

Whereas the materials of gardens are evidence of projectwide networks, the design of key gardens reveal the image that internees were presenting at the community level. This is perhaps most obvious in the garden that internees built in block 6H. One of the first occupied blocks, the recreation building there served as the office for elected representatives from each barracks block. The block managers' office was also known as Amache City Hall. The public space adjacent to it held one of the most elaborate gardens in camp. The centerpiece of the garden was a small hill and pond garden featuring a kidney-shaped pond with a bridge and islands of plantings adjacent to a hardscaped hill. With its roots in the strolling gardens of the Edo period, hill and pond features are quite typical elements of Japanese-style gardens in the United States. Harmonious, beautiful, and also almost stereotypically "Japanese," this garden was a place where Amache residents presented themselves both to each other and to outsiders. This image making is documented in a wide variety of photographs taken there of community leaders and visiting dignitaries. This garden, which was excavated by a group of local high school students prior to any formal archaeology at the camp, remains to this day a powerful part of the visual iconography of Amache. Not surprisingly, this garden is also an important place for former internees and their relatives. It is among the ten stops on the current iPod tour of the camp. By constructing this locale with such care, Amache's gardeners created a graceful symbol of their community, one that continues to serve that purpose today.

RECLAIMING MEMORY AT AMACHE

The archaeology of Amache has been significantly energized by collaboration with former internees and their families. Our knowledge has been “thickened” by memory and personal photographs. Syntheses such as those elaborated above paint a much more vibrant picture than any specific line of evidence alone could do. This would seem impetus enough to do engaged research there. But the significance of archaeology at Amache, as at other sites with a shadowed history, goes much deeper. An ongoing, place-based research project provides multiple opportunities for community members to reclaim a connection to a difficult past (see also Saitta 2007). In the case of sites of Japanese confinement, what former members confront is a legacy of silence. The choice by most Issei not to discuss their experience has been interpreted as a coping mechanism (Nagata 1993). Yet what this narrative disjuncture caused was an entire community whose shared experience was treated like a family secret (Yee 1995). Silence about internment is not so much a tear in the family narrative as it is a black hole, a force that bends the fields of memory while itself remaining invisible. Yet the site remains, a physical manifestation of this experience.

Promoting our field school to the community of former internees, as well as Japanese American organizations, has been a priority for each one of our three field seasons. We invite people to come visit us throughout our four weeks in the field and especially at our open house day. These popular events allow local residents and tourists a chance to see firsthand the results of our month of research. We make special arrangements for former Amache internees and their families, preparing by researching something of their family history in camp. They are interested in our research as a whole, participating in our field lab and museum activities excitedly. Yet beyond that experience all open house visitors have, almost all the Amacheans want to visit the exact location where they or their families lived in camp.

Many of the ten internment camps have had significant impact to the blocks that housed internee barracks. For example at Heart Mountain in Wyoming, only the administrative area still maintains physical integrity. The barracks blocks are now agricultural fields. Manzanar retains high integrity, but it had only concrete piers for barrack foundations. This makes the exact location of any family barrack both more difficult to ascertain and hard to visualize. At Amache, the barracks had continuous concrete foundations, which are still present and visible on the site surface in most blocks. The three doorways had lowered thresholds, so it is easy to bring people to the exact doorway of their barrack then to direct them right or left to the living unit itself.

This is an invariably powerful moment. Those who were older during their incarceration often walk me or their family members through the room—indicating who slept where, perhaps noting the location of their few homemade furnishings. Others tell stories of events that happened in that room or of family and friends in



FIGURE 5.5. Excavation crew chief and former internee volunteer talk at the site of her family's barrack. Photograph by Wayne Armstrong. Courtesy of the University of Denver.

the nearby barracks (figure 5.5). One man, who was born at Amache and had never before returned, retold one of the few stories about camp his mother shared with him. With his extended family to witness, he spoke of how he had crawled too near the single heat source in each barrack, the potbelly stove. He then lifted his pant leg to show us all the scar that still marked where he had been burned. The scars of internment are many; this one is literal.

This moment of return is typically captured photographically. Indeed, one former internee began our conversation by saying, "I know exactly where I want you to take my picture." She handed me a family photograph from camp of her and her parents at the building next to their barrack, the mess hall where her father had worked. A mess hall garden visible in the photograph was still demarcated on the site surface by a ring of limestone on the ground. We posed her in front of the garden, just as she had been in the original photograph. In these moments, the touristic snapshot that documents presence takes on deeper import. The photograph proves the place is real, the whispered history happened.

Ethnographic studies of disrupted communities help us understand why people seek to physically experience, share, and document such places. Sharing even painful memories in the place where they happened helps individuals establish a sense of continuity with their past, while also reclaiming a part of their identity to which the ties may have frayed. In Medellín, Columbia, many people impacted by drug

violence were displaced from their childhood homes. When they retell those stories they often physically reenact the event, much like at Amache, showing how place is an embodied memory (Riaño-Alcalá 2002:286). Indeed, these moments have the flavor of what psychologists call reminiscence therapy. Patients who are encouraged to reflect on past events can better understand and reconcile whom they have become with their life history (Scogin et al. 2005).

One of my first experiences taking someone back to a barrack was a man born after his parents left camp. Like so many of their generation, his parents never spoke of their experience at Amache. I led him to the barrack, making sure that while he stood at the doorway, I walked over to where the wall had been, letting him feel just how small the twenty-by-twenty-foot room they lived in was. I also toured him around other buildings in the block. We discussed the lack of privacy in the shared bathrooms, the trees planted to shade people waiting in line at the mess hall. I pointed out a few of the objects still visible on the site surface. As we completed our tour, he thanked me and said, “I know my parents so much better now.” By returning to the camp, the descendants of internees displace the empty memories of internment with something tangible, a physical experience of the place. This echoes Barbara Bender’s experience of heritage sites, “where the ancestral past is renewed through the activity of the living” (Bender 2002:5108).

DIGGING FOR THEIR ROOTS

The effect of an embodied experience of a past place is perhaps most salient to better understanding the experience of former Amache internees who don’t just visit our field school but participate as crew. When this project was first conceived, it really hadn’t occurred to me that the population of former internees would be interested in joining the crew. If you want to get a lively conversation going among former internees of any internment camp, ask them about environmental conditions. Amacheans speak passionately about the hot, dry summers and the punishing, sandy wind that characterize the High Plains’ setting of the site. As one survivor told me, “Every time the wind blows I think about camp.” Add in that not a one of them is younger than seventy, and it is easy to see why spending significant time at Amache would seem unappealing. And yet, that is exactly what has happened. During a research trip prior to our first field season, I met Gary Ono, a former Amache internee and retired professional photographer and volunteer at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) in Los Angeles. We were introduced during my visit to the museum. After I told Mr. Ono about our upcoming fieldwork plans, he asked if he could join us as the site photographer. My answer was an enthusiastic “yes,” as it was when he later asked if he could bring along his grandson.

Mr. Ono has written a number of online articles for JANM about his family history and about Amache, and several specifically about his experience with the field school. One article documents a moment of discovery when he first arrived. During a tour of a block far from that where his family had lived, I pointed out several signatures in a concrete block. The bottom one was partially eroded away, but Mr. Ono excitedly identified it as his father's. It was a moment when we both, to quote Mr. Ono, "were just awe-struck" (Ono 2009:n.p.). Later Mr. Ono and his grandson pitched a tent on the family barracks and spent the night over the Fourth of July. They chose that night for its significance in their own and the nation's history. Of that night, Ono wrote, "We imagined what it must have felt like to be imprisoned while the rest of America celebrated their independence and freedom" (Ono 2008:n.p.). This vivid evocation echoes Keith Basso's (1996) experience with Apache elders who used spatial clues and place-names to stand in the footsteps of the ancestors.

In 2010 we were joined by two more former internees. Both of them had been toddlers during World War II. Their personal memories of camp are very limited and focused on particular experiences. Like their older counterparts, some of those memories have to do with environmental conditions. Those same conditions combined with the spatial layout of the camp can bring back previously forgotten memories, which come on quite suddenly. One of those volunteers wrote about the experience of returning to her barrack after a seventy-year absence. "Just standing there, for several minutes, I could then remember where the cots were, where the stove was, the single light bulb, the blanket that separated my parents' cot from mine" (personal communication, Tinker, 2015). On returning with former residents of an Irish community abandoned in the 1960s, archaeologists have noted a similar flood of seemingly forgotten memories (Kujit 2013). Cognitive scientists call this "long-term reinstatement," theorizing that reconnecting to the context where memories were encoded allows the revival of memories that would be otherwise inaccessible (Smith 1988). For an individual who grew up in a place their parents never discussed, these reclamations are significant and empowering.

CONCLUSION: PLACE REVEALED AND REMEMBERED

Despair comes easy in a prison. They are places more commonly associated with destruction rather than creation. Once abandoned they can become negative heritage, "a repository of negative memory in the collective imaginary" (Meskell 2002:558). Yet the physical remains at Amache tell a different story, one where hope was literally planted into the soil—hope for a seed to sprout, a tree to shade, a flower to bloom. Gardens were a gift from the internees to themselves and to their community. They were also, it turns out, a gift to the future. The gardens of Amache

are repositories of generational knowledge. In them a philosophical stance toward nature is made manifest through horticultural skill. They reveal a hybrid aesthetic with deep roots in the homeland but informed by the front yards of America. Materials employed in the gardens evidence internee networks and ingenuity. In these gardens an uprooted people reclaimed a connection to the land.

That reclamation continues today, as former internees and their families return to Amache. At the site they walk with the ancestors, sometimes armed like detectives with a few clues—a family photograph, a story told in passing. If it's a windy day (which it usually is), they literally get a taste of the place. A drink of cold water will wash the grit out of their mouths, but its texture lingers, informs. At our garden excavations, they see how internees combatted that dust, not with curses but with beauty. Here they learn a different story as read through the land and have one more reason to be proud of their ancestors' legacy. As one of my volunteers wrote in his personal field journal, "By being at the site, I have gained a greater respect for my parents' determination to make the best of a bad situation: to endure with perseverance and dignity, and to thrive."

By combining intensive landscape archaeology with engagement, work at Amache is enabling the site to come alive. We reveal a past community and the strategies of the individuals within it. By working and talking together, we are also creating a new community centered around both the tangible and intangible heritage of this site. Despite our varied backgrounds, we all share an embodied experience of this place that for so long was in the shadows. We also share a commitment to preserving this critical locale. Not just because it is a significant historic resource, which it is, but because we owe it to those who so carefully remade it.

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