

# THE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER AMACHE PROJECT

Volume IX Spring 2017

## Message From the Director

~ Dr. Bonnie J. Clark

We are once again pleased to share updates and news from the University of Denver (DU) Amache Project. The summer of 2016 found us hard at work for another season of archaeological research and museum management. More information about our field season results can be found on the pages inside. It was an honor to host many visitors on-site, at the museum, and at the research center.

Our friends on the west coast have also been busy doing good work. Inside you'll find a follow-up report on the Amache



At the Amache Community open house day, 2016. Photograph courtesy of Nancy Ukai.



Digitization Project by DU Amache alumni Dana Ogo Shew. Among our news items is that the DU Amache exhibit, *Connecting the Pieces*, will be on display this Spring in Fresno. More information is available at the [Fresno State](#) website. You can also see the online version at [DU Anthropology Museum website](#).

Many of us are disheartened by the divisiveness of the current political climate. It is especially difficult to see our country torn apart again by arguments about who does and does not belong in America. The students, staff, and faculty of the DU Amache Project are committed to learning about and from the consequences of such actions in the past. The Amache story has never been more important; Thank you for helping us tell it with integrity.

## 2016 Field School Report

~ April Kamp-Whittaker

The Amache project is pleased to report that we successfully completed our 5th season working at Amache! Just like past years, we had an amazing crew of volunteers and students. Some of our volunteers were returning for their second, third or even fourth season but others joined us for the first time. Due to generous donations we were able to have four high school interns, three from Granada and one Amache descendent.

We had one very exciting change this year – a new field house! Thanks to John Hopper, the APS, and the town of Granada, the Amache Project has a new home base and research center by the city park. Not only is this the best location for participating in Granada Bristol Days and watching fireworks on the 4th of July, but it gave us a larger storage space for museum collections, work rooms, and more living space.

All the extra space was put to good use analyzing collections from survey and excavation and cataloging several new museum collections. This summer we surveyed three new blocks, 10F, 9G, and 11F and excavated a large garden in Block 11H. As part of the survey, we were testing and developing a new digital data collection system which would allow us to enter data directly into our database. This effort was led by Codifi, a digital archaeology company, who visited to help in the development. The new system is an amazing step forward and will help make sharing our data much easier.

This past summers survey focused on blocks in the center of Amache where we surveyed two of the public blocks. Block 10F was the location of the combined baseball and football fields and was across the street from the High School. This block was also the location for many community events, like Obon. During survey we found evidence of the baseball backstop and areas where bleachers may have been located. A large number of household items were also recovered in this block, where they were left as Amache was abandoned. These objects, which included wire hangers, a lampshade, and a handmade geta, provide us with a better understanding of the objects that internees used during their daily lives at Amache.

Similarly to Block 10F, we recovered extensive evidence of the material culture at Amache in Block 9G. This area was supposed to be the location of the Amache Elementary School, but after many Coloradans protested the cost of the Amache High School this building was never completed and the block remained empty. The area appears to have been used for several purposes while Amache was occupied. Based on oral histories and archival data residents may have used the open space for gardening activities and might have constructed a small shed or other structure. Parts of the block were also used to informally dispose of household objects. These provide an amazing glimpse into family life at Amache and included glassware, cooking pots and pans, and a number of modified metal objects. One of the most interesting items found was a piece of a souvenir plate from the nearby town of Rocky Ford.

The final block to be surveyed was 11F, the residential block south of the sports fields. Residents of this block were mainly from communities north of San Francisco. Several of the types of artifacts found in Block 11F, including more wire hangers and a second geta, were similar to those found in Block 10F indicating that residents of 11F may have started throwing their trash into the sports fields. Shortly before Amache closed garbage pick-up was stopped, leaving residents to figure out how to dispose of household and messhall refuse. Leaving it in a nearby non-residential block would have been one way of keeping the area around families and households clean and free of debris. During survey we found a number of barracks gardens, one of which contained both a pond and is where we found the geta. Many of the gardens in 11F are unique because they incorporate non-local stones like basalt or quartz.

The garden in 11H was selected for test excavation because it was located on the back of a barrack and faced the road, making it a very public garden. From the surface we could see three evenly spaced trees and several upright concrete slabs. Excavations revealed that the line of trees originally extended down the length of the garden and one was transplanted from along the Arkansas River. The garden displayed both traditional Japanese and American aesthetics with both a “standing stones” element and a line of planted trees.

At the Amache Museum, students and volunteers worked to catalogue new collections and move existing ones to the new Amache Research Center. A total of 30 new

objects and archival pieces that had been donated in the past year were added to the collection. We also took a complete inventory of the collections, made sure that everything was in the computer system, took photographs, and made new storage boxes to protect the collections. Collection were then moved to their new home at the Amache Research Center where they will be better preserved in a more climate controlled environment and easier to access for research and viewing by families.

Research from the 2016 season will be used in Sabreina Slaughter’s masters thesis (see next article), and supports the research done by Rebecca Cruz for her masters on museums and communities. April Kamp-Whittaker will also be using the data as part of her PhD research at Arizona State University where she is looking at social networks and community interaction at Amache.

Ending the summer with two open house days is always a highlight. The first day started with a bang as a giant storm swept through the site forcing crew and visitors to take shelter in the reconstructed barrack. Serendipitously, this became a great chance to talk about life in the barracks and experience firsthand what they were like in a storm. Despite the inclement weather we had a strong turn out on both days of the open house with 110 visitors traveling from California, Colorado and beyond. We hope to see many more of you at our next field season in 2018 which will mark 10 years of the University of Denver Amache Project.

## Amache Digitization Project ~ Dana Ogo Shew

Thanks to the Amache Digitization Project more than 350 items will be added to the Amache Museum’s digital collection! The Amache Digitization Project was funded by a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, led by Dana Ogo Shew and Adrian Praetzellis of Sonoma State University, with contributions from the Sonoma County JACL and the Enmanji Buddhist Temple. The project’s goal was to digitally record and preserve objects and items from Amache. Throughout 2016 the project hosted several digitization events during which more than 350 objects including photos, yearbooks, dance invitations, yucca root vases, portraits, shell bead necklaces, wood carvings, and more, were digitally scanned or photographed. The digital copies of these objects



Photo provided by Nicolas Grizzle

and items now make up the Amache Digitization Project Collection which will be shared with the Amache Museum, [densho.org](http://densho.org), and the Sonoma State University Library Special Collection. The Sonoma State University Library is a part of a California State University System-wide digitization project known as the CSU Japanese American Digitization Project. The project aims to improve access to CSU archival collections relating to Japanese American history by making digital collections from the 14 participating campuses available online on one site: [www.csujad.com](http://www.csujad.com). The digitized items collected by the Amache Digitization Project will eventually be accessible through this site.



Photo provided by Nicolas Grizzle

In addition to digitizing Amache items, the Amache Digitization Project also developed an exhibit using objects discovered during the project that showcased the creativity and resilience of Amache residents. The exhibit, co-curated by April Kamp-Whittaker and Dana Ogo Shew, was on display at the Sonoma State University Library Gallery from August 23 through December 22, 2016. The opening reception for the exhibit drew a crowd of more than 200 people and the exhibit was one of the most attended exhibits in the Gallery's history. Interest and support for the exhibit and project has led to a second showing of the exhibit at the Oakland Asian Cultural Center in Oakland Chinatown upcoming in June 2017.

Many thanks to those who generously shared their objects, stories, and time to this project. The project was a great success because of the involvement of many former Amacheans and their descendants, donors, volunteers, and supportive members of the community.

Please contact Dana Ogo Shew at [shew@sonoma.edu](mailto:shew@sonoma.edu) for more information about the exhibit and related events at the Oakland Asian Cultural Center.



Photo provided by Rich Adao

## The Greatest Grater ~ Sabreina Slaughter

Food is important for basic survival but is also an important part of every culture. This summer I dedicated my time to learning more about the ever-present Japanese food culture at Amache. My thesis research uses archaeology as a method for gathering data on differences that might be present between blocks occupied by internees who initially lived in rural and urban communities. During investigation of Block 9G myself and the members of the 2016 field school recorded many items, discarded as refuse, that not only contained food and drink but



Crew Surveys Block 9G

also were repurposed for food preparation.

This academic year, while investigating the importance of food culture to individuals in environments of restrictive domination, especially in European colonies, I noticed a lot of parallels between the mechanisms of colonization and World War II Japanese American relocation and internment. The similarities shared by colonies and internment camps are driven and rationalized by human fear of the other. The dynamics of colonization that are paralleled in internment include enculturation programs, native relocation programs, and demographic control. Enculturation could be something akin to the War Relocation Authority's insistence on hiring Caucasian teachers only for education at Amache, and obviously, relocation and confinement was a priority for internment. Another parallel that struck me was the control over the demographics of the population of Japanese internment camps. This was achieved by moving men of a certain age and those who did



Director Bonnie Clark teaches survey crew about ceramics

not sign allegiance to the US, to Tule Lake in California.

Keeping in mind the restrictive nature of relocation, or even colonization for that matter, I considered how important it might be to continue preparing food for one's self, family and community. This leads us to object 9G.6: the "ginger grater". The ginger grater was found in one of the refuse piles that now constitutes block 9G. It is fashioned out of the base of a large can. The object has a round hole towards one end, possibly for the attachment of a handle or to hang the object when not in use. A grid of holes has been punctured across the center of the object, possibly using a cut nail, which would have left the square holes. The tiny ridges left around the exit surface of the perforations are rough and abrasive, which could grate or shred ginger root or similar foods. If this object was indeed used in food preparation, then it is possible that residents of the two surrounding blocks cooked familiar family meals.

Being relocated and having meals prepared in the mess halls left traditional family life and food preparation in the lurch. However, oral histories and archaeology indicate that food preparation outside of the mess halls continued. Food is an important part of daily life and helps people maintain a sense of community and well-being especially in a time of stress, and even forced relocation. Studies about community foodways have been explored in colonial environments and the parallels between Japanese internment and colonization are striking. I can only imagine the value of a "home" cooked meal when hot dogs were served in the mess hall.

If you have any input on the ginger grater or food preparation at Amache please feel free to contact me at [sabreina.slaughter@du.edu](mailto:sabreina.slaughter@du.edu), and keep an eye out for a brief video about this object on the DU Anthropology museum website at the [DU museum website](#).



Object 9G.6 Potential Ginger Grater

### *Contact us:*

The DU Amache project needs you!! As we continue to move forward, we want you to be a part of our work, whether through sharing your memories or opinions, through planning future research, or through public events. If you are interested in joining us as a volunteer we would love to hear from you. Correspondence can be sent to Dr. Bonnie Clark via email at [bclark@du.edu](mailto: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> or the project Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/DUAmacheResearchProject>.

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 us at [bclark@du.edu](mailto:bclark@du.edu) or the address below with your mailing address and/or e-mail address.

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