

Internment Camps

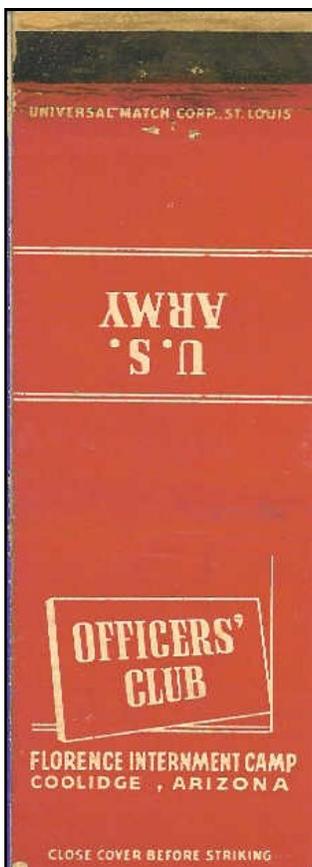
by
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The attack on Pearl Harbor mobilized U.S. opinion against the Japanese. Years of anti-Japanese sentiment suddenly erupted into hate and suspicion. All Japanese were looked upon as capable of sabotage, and the success of the attack was assumed to be the result of espionage by Japanese-Americans living in Hawaii and on the West Coast. All residents of Japanese descent in Hawaii were rounded up and interrogated. On the West Coast, a sort of hysteria began with inflammatory journalism, pressure groups, politicians, and the U.S. Army all fearing the treachery of the Fifth Column: the enemy within. This profound suspicion of Japanese-Americans quickly led to cries for their expulsion. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which called for the eviction and internment of all Japanese Americans.

The evacuation and incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans began in April 1942. Different types of facilities were created for this purpose: assembly centers, relocation centers, and internment camps. The War Relocation Authority, or WRA, was established to administer the camps. During the first phase, evacuees were transported on trains and buses under military guard to the hastily prepared assembly centers. Twelve of these were in California and one was in Oregon. The assembly centers were set up on race tracks, fairgrounds, or livestock pavilions. Detainees were housed in livestock stalls or windowless shacks that were crowded and lacked sufficient ventilation, electricity, and sanitation facilities. There was a shortage of food and medicine. From these assembly centers, some 500 deportees moved daily to permanent camps called relocation centers. These camps were located in remote, uninhabitable areas. The relocation centers in California were at Manzanar and Tule Lake.

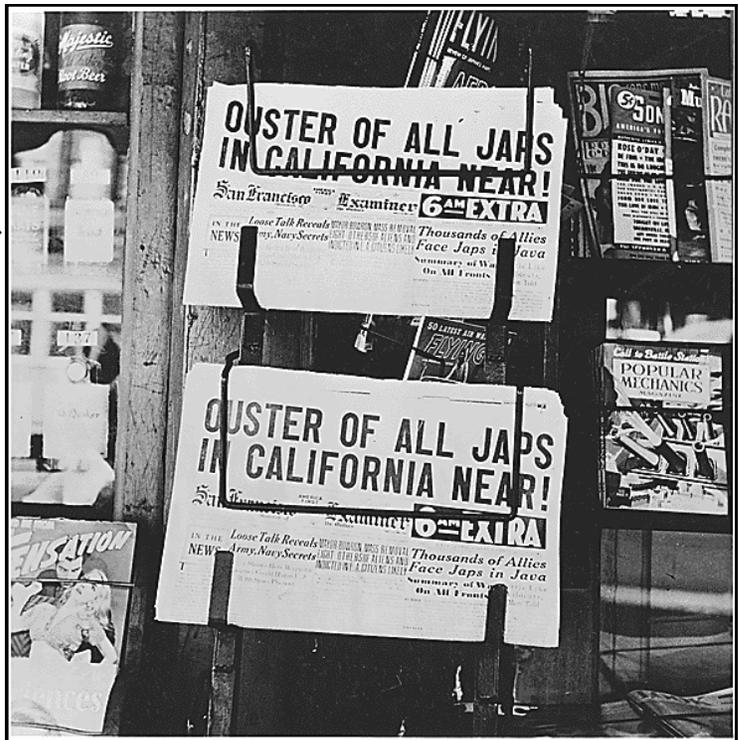
The third type of incarceration took place at internment camps. These camps came under wartime censorship and a complete listing of the number of

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camps and their locations is still not available from the Justice Department. In California, Angel Island, Sharp Park, and Tuna Canyon served as internment camps.

On December 17, 1944, President Roosevelt announced the revocation of Executive Order 9066, thus assuring the return of the evacuees to the West Coast. On December 18, 1944, the WRA made public its policy to terminate all centers under its control and to empty them within six months. Relocation, especially to the West Coast, was difficult. The Japanese American Evacuation Claims Act of 1948 and its modification in 1951 resulted in less than 10% paid on the property losses of 26,568 claims. A bill signed by the President on August 10, 1988, provided for restitution and apology for the Nisei still living.

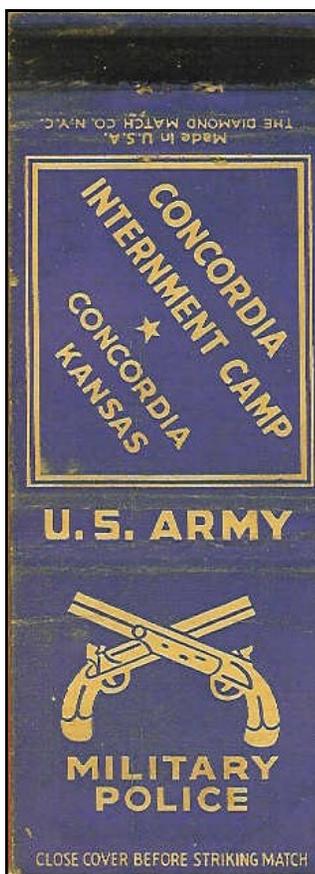


San Francisco Examiner, February 1942

Some 70 years after the close of World War II, America's wartime policy of relocation and internment is still very controversial, one side arguing that it was totally uncalled for and merely the result of rampant racial prejudices, while the other side argues that such precautions were more than reasonable given the attack on Pearl Harbor and the heavy concentration of Japanese-Americans on the West Coast. In 1997, for example, an Internment exhibition at New York's Ellis Island sparked an emotional debate over the title, "America's Concentration Camps..." Fortunately for me, it's not within the scope of this article to examine which side, if either, is correct.

The phillicentric interest in this topic centers on the covers issued from these camps. There *are* covers from various internment camps around the country during World War II. As with P.O.W. camp covers, these internment covers are clearly marked "Internment Camp." But, there are *no* relocation camp covers—or, there don't appear to be. I've checked with a number of major Military collectors, as well as going through my own Military covers, and none of us have been able to find any relocation camp covers. Do they exist? Probably not. Why would that be the case? There were certainly smokers at all the camps. One can only guess. Perhaps the the staffs of these camps weren't large enough to justify such individually designated matchbooks; perhaps the camps were looked upon as such temporary facilities that orders for such matchbooks didn't seem warranted; perhaps it was simply thought as inappropriate to 'advertise' such facilities.

The ten relocation camps: Tule Lake (CA), Manzanar (CA), Poston (AZ), Gila River (AZ), Minidoka (ID), Heart Mountain (WY), Topaz (UT), Rohwer (AR), Jerome (AR), and Amache (CO).



The Army internment camps: Angel Island, (CA)/Fort McDowell, Camp Blanding (FL), Camp Forrest, Camp Livingston (LA), Camp Lordsburg (NM), Camp McCoy (WI), Florence (AZ), Fort Bliss, Fort Howard, Fort Lewis, Fort Meade (MD), Fort Richardson, Fort Sam Houston (TX), Fort Sill (OK), Griffith Park (CA), Honolulu (HI), Sand Island (HI), Stringtown (OK) [*These camps often held German and Italian detainees in addition to Japanese-Americans*] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_American_internment]

It should be noted that there may have been either some overlapping of the terms “POW” and “Internment” or dual POW-Internment use in some locations. The Concordia Internment Camp, for example, obviously has “Internment” in its name, but all of the sources I’ve found indicate that it actually housed German POWs.

For collectors interested in Military, especially, the POW and Internment covers offer a fascinating, albeit difficult, aspect of any Military collection.

- Known Army Internment Camp covers:**
- 1 Alva Internment Camp Exchange
 - 2 Concordia Internment Camp
 - 1 Florence Internment Camp
 - 1 Hearne Internment Camp
 - 1 Hereford Internment Camp Exchange
 - 1 Huntsville Internment Camp
 - 2 McLean Internment Camp

Internment camps and further institutions of the War Relocation Authority in the western United States.

