Japanese Americans In Montana: A History Of Their Presence And Treatment Before, During, And After World War II

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JAPANESE AMERICANS IN MONTANA:
A HISTORY OF THEIR PRESENCE AND TREATMENT
BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER WORLD WAR II

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
graduation with honors to the Department of History at
Carroll College, Helena, Montana

Kevin C. McCann
March 23, 1982
This thesis for honors recognition has been approved for the Department of History.

Dr. Robert Swartout, Director

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Fr. Jeremiah Sullivan, Reader

March 23, 1982
To my father, James A. McCann,
on his 50th birthday March 6, 1982
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066

On February 19, 1942 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 9066. With full knowledge that the order would most likely be found unconstitutional, the president nevertheless signed it and thereby gave the U. S. Army the authority to initiate the evacuation and incarceration of over 112,000 Japanese Americans from the Pacific Coast states. Thus, using a myth of military necessity as justification, the federal government both sanctioned and began to carry out one of the worst incidents of disregard for the civil rights of a group of American citizens in the history of the nation.\footnote{Roger Daniels, Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972), pp. 69-70.}

Popular and widespread racial prejudice, rather than any military necessity, provided the motive for confining these Japanese Americans in concentration camps. That this racial prejudice could succeed in bringing about an injustice of this magnitude was due largely to the successful propagation of an irrational fear of Japanese military aggression against America's West Coast in the minds of many Americans. This
threat of military attack was commonly referred to as the "Yellow Peril." It was popularized as early as 1906 by newspaperman William Randolph Hearst and other West Coast leaders. This was done in an attempt to heighten racial tensions on the West Coast and throughout the nation in order to halt the acceptance of Japanese immigrants to the United States. This attempt to induce fear of the Japanese and Japanese Americans succeeded in creating support for the National Origins Act of 1924 which excluded further Japanese immigration. And it continued as racial tensions increased throughout the 1920s and 1930s until ultimately, in February 1942, the fear of the "Yellow Peril" was used to justify the evacuation and incarceration of all Japanese American residents of the Pacific Coast states.

Americans throughout the nation experienced and were influenced by racial prejudices and fears of the "Yellow Peril" very similar to those of residents of the West Coast states. Moreover, the results of this prejudice and fear were also very similar. States throughout the inland West passed racially discriminatory laws in the period from 1910-1924 very similar to laws passed in Pacific Coast states. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, states throughout the inland West reacted in a manner very similar to the Pacific Coast states. Acts of violence and injustice were committed against Japanese Americans even in states with relatively insignificant numbers of Japanese American residents. Thus a resurgence of anti-Asian sentiment swept the nation.
Montana was no exception. In many ways it was typical of the inland western states. Montanans were guilty of the same racial prejudice and fear of the "Yellow Peril" that marked residents of the West Coast states. And Montanans took actions against Japanese Americans which were in many ways like those taken in the West Coast states, if only to a lesser degree. Acts of racial discrimination, violence, and injustice were committed against Japanese Americans in Montana throughout the history of Japanese presence in the state. The questions of how, when, and why these actions took place in Montana, a state apparently quite remote and separated from the roots of the problem, will be addressed in this thesis. Particular attention will be given to the treatment of Japanese Americans in Montana during the years of World War II. In addition, this discussion would not be complete without further investigating the development of Montana's attitudes concerning Japanese Americans since the end of World War II. It is hoped that this discussion of anti-Japanese racism in Montana and the history of its development and ill effects will help to shed light on an important aspect of Montana history which has been heretofore largely ignored.
CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF JAPANESE AMERICANS TO WORLD WAR II

The first major wave of Japanese immigrants began to arrive in America immediately following the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This Act stopped all Chinese emigration to the United States. In so doing it created a void in the labor market of the West Coast by inducing a shortage of men willing to perform the difficult menial labor which had been done by the Chinese for very low wages. In Japan the Meiji Restoration had caused the Japanese economy to be transformed from a feudalistic one into the beginnings of a modern industrial economy in less than half a century. This drastic change served to arouse the hopes and ambitions of many common Japanese men, men who were not sufficiently gratified by current opportunities in Japan. Thus these young men began to look abroad for opportunities to succeed. Many of these men came to the United States to fill the void in the labor market created by Chinese exclusion. Almost immediately upon their arrival the Japanese immigrants, called Issei, showed themselves to be quite different from the Chinese in their work habits and drive for success and social status. They seemed to exhibit an equivalent to America's "protestant
work ethic" as they were determined to progress and become secure, if not wealthy, in this new land.¹

Most of the first Japanese immigrants were young adult males, unmarried and eager to supply the labor required in the rapidly expanding and developing American West. Initially, most of the Issei intended to stay in America only long enough to acquire a sufficient wealth to return to Japan with a

higher social status. This hope was not always fulfilled, though, and many of the immigrants came to accept America as their new homeland. With this acceptance the Issei became loyal only to the United States, because the Japanese concept of *giri*—"duty in spite of natural feelings"—necessitated that a person become totally loyal to a new group once duty had been transferred to that group.²

When the Issei became determined to remain in America many sent for their betrothed brides, often called "picture brides," to join them in America. Thus, unlike the Chinese who preceded them, the Issei began to establish themselves as permanent residents of the United States and settled down to raise families in America. This situation set the stage for future racial conflicts as white Americans felt threatened by the appearance of a permanent "inferior racial minority" in their midst.

Upon arrival in the United States most Issei began to work in the railroad, lumber, and fishing industries. The Japanese were diligent and industrious workers. They were willing to accept low salaries in return for the difficult and menial labor of building railroads, milling lumber, or canning fish. However, the Issei were not content to remain in the status of underpaid manual laborers. They were determined to progress upward in American society and were thus

²See especially Matthews, "White Community and 'Yellow Peril,'" p. 618.
able to sacrifice and save small amounts of their minimal salaries. After saving enough of their salaries, many Issei succeeded in establishing their own private businesses or buying their own fruit and vegetable farms. ³

This rise in the social status of many Japanese Americans occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century and coincided with increasing anti-Japanese sentiment throughout the West Coast states. Anti-Japanese sentiment increased during this period for several reasons. The first was simply the legacy of anti-Chinese sentiments from the mid-nineteenth century. In fact many of the most vocal leaders of the anti-Japanese movement were the same men who had led the movement for Chinese exclusion in the late 1800s. Secondly, anti-Japanese sentiment rose in response to the growing power of the nation of Japan in Asia and the Pacific. In 1905 Japan was victorious in the Russo-Japanese War. Thus, for the first time, an Asian nation had defeated a major Western power. White Americans felt threatened by the surprising power of the Japanese. The victory was seen as the first step of the "Yellow Peril" toward the United States. Finally, the Japanese American population itself was becoming more visible, and therefore threatening, to the racist white majority. The population of Japanese Americans continued to grow with the arrival of increasing numbers of new immigrants and "picture brides" and with the birth of

an American-born generation of Japanese Americans. The members of this generation, called Nisei, were automatically American citizens. As such they were seen as a threat by racist white Americans who feared the permanent existence of this minority in their midst.

Thus, the social rise of the Japanese Americans to entrepreneurial status could not have occurred at a worse time. The Issei came into direct economic competition with white farmers and businessmen at a time when anti-Japanese sentiment was reaching a peak. This only exacerbated the situation and, in effect, created a tangible front for the racial conflict which appeared imminent. In California and the other West Coast states the establishment of this front was marked by the creation of a number of anti-Japanese organizations by labor unions and business groups. Most notable of these organizations were the American Federation of Labor under the leadership of Samuel Gompers and the Asiatic Exclusion League led by four prominent San Francisco labor union executives. These and other anti-Japanese societies applied strong political pressures in support of discriminatory legislation to "protect their economic interests." With the popular support that was generated by the intense anti-Japanese propaganda in the Hearst newspapers, these groups were successful in passing several anti-Japanese laws in California. The most serious of these were the

California Alien Land Acts of 1913 and 1924. These acts declared that no "aliens ineligible for citizenship" could own land in California. "Aliens ineligible for citizenship" was, of course, a diplomatic euphemism referring to the Issei. Between 1921 and 1925 thirteen other states, including Washington, Oregon, and Montana, passed similar legislation.⁵

At a national level these anti-Japanese societies, with the aid of many nativistic West Coast politicians, were instrumental in procuring the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907. According to the terms of this informal agreement, the American government would attempt to halt any discriminatory legislation pending in the states in exchange for Japan's promise to grant passports to America "'only to such of its subjects as are non-laborers or are laborers who in coming to the continent, seek to resume a formerly acquired domicile, to join a parent, wife, or children residing there, or to assume active control of an already possessed interest in a farming enterprise in this country.'"⁶ This agreement greatly decreased the number of Japanese immigrants to America,

⁵See especially Coletta, "'The Most Thankless Task': Bryan and the California Alien Land Legislation," and Olin, "European Immigrant and Oriental Alien: Acceptance and Rejection by the California Legislature of 1913;" see also Daniels, Politics of Prejudice. The Issei were considered aliens ineligible for citizenship for several reasons. The U. S. Supreme Court consistently held that because Japanese Americans were neither black nor white the U. S. Naturalization laws did not allow for their naturalization. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and other anti-Asian legislation lent further credence to the ineligibility of Japanese immigrants to become citizens.

But some Japanese immigrants continued to arrive in America, especially "picture brides" and other members of the Issei's families. Thus, the anti-Japanese societies were not satisfied with the informal Gentlemen's Agreement. They called for an official exclusion of all Japanese immigrants to America and supported the National Origins Act of 1924. This act placed quotas on the numbers of immigrants who would be allowed to enter the United States from various nations and regions of the world. With the support of West Coast racists this act was passed with the quota for "aliens ineligible for citizenship" set at virtually zero. This clause applied only to Asians and thus virtually excluded any further immigration of Japanese people to America.

Even after the anti-Japanese groups had achieved their major goals of the Alien Land Acts in California and the exclusionary provisions of the National Origins Act of 1924, anti-Japanese racism did not die. Much to the contrary, it spread and intensified. This occurred for several reasons. Throughout the 1920s Japanese Americans found ways to circumvent discriminatory laws and retain possession of land within their families. These methods included either placing the titles to land in the names of children born in America, who were thus American citizens, or by establishing family corporations to own land.\(^7\) By these methods Japanese Americans were able to continue "competing" economically with

white Americans. This situation became especially volatile during the Great Depression as many Japanese American farms and businesses prospered while many white Americans went bankrupt.  

Also, even though the National Origins Act excluded further Japanese immigration to the United States, this alone could not halt the natural growth of the Japanese American population. Thus for the next twenty years the Japanese American population became even more visible and therefore somehow more aggravating or threatening to racist white Americans.

Finally, anti-Japanese sentiment continued to spread and intensify even after the passage of the National Act because the nation of Japan continued to grow in power and became more militarily aggressive. In the 1930s Japan expanded its economic and political control in Asia, especially into Manchuria and Fukien province in China. Japan, of course, had many internal economic reasons for this imperial expansion. The nascent industrial power needed large amounts of oil and other raw materials in order to continue economic growth. Japan also needed territory in which to settle its growing population after the United States was closed to Japanese immigrants. Yet all of these justifications tended to be overlooked or ignored by the

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Americans who simply viewed Japan as a new "bully on the block" attempting to flex its recently discovered muscles. Americans saw Japan's reborn militarism as a threat to the United States' interests in the Pacific and even as a threat to the United States itself. The "Yellow Peril" seemed more real than ever before. And, in the United States this fear of the "Yellow Peril" was expressed in increasingly paranoid and vitriolic anti-Japanese propaganda and racial discrimination directed toward Japanese Americans.

The Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor was seen as the fulfillment of a prophecy. It seemed to exonerate Americans of any guilt for their previous racist actions and sentiments. Moreover, it gave most Americans the rationale they needed to accept and approve the acts of violence and injustice committed against 112,935 American citizens during World War II.
CHAPTER III

JAPANESE AMERICANS IN MONTANA BEFORE WORLD WAR II

Very soon after the first waves of Japanese immigrants arrived in the United States, the first Issei began arriving in Montana. The census of 1890 reported 6 Japanese American residents of Montana.\(^1\) By 1900 that number had increased to 2,441.\(^2\) The most important reason for this rapid influx was the opportunity for employment in Montana. Most of the Issei entered Montana seeking employment with the railroads. The Great Northern and Northern Pacific, though most of their lines had been completed by this time, hired many Japanese Americans as section hands and roundhouse mechanics. Other railroads, especially the Milwaukee Road, hired Japanese Americans to complete their lines as well as to work on section crews and in the roundhouses.\(^3\)


\(^3\)Interview with Ben Harada, Wolf Point, Montana, May 26, 1981; interview with Grant Kurokawa, Wolf Point, Montana, July 13, 1981.
Most of these Issei were young, single males. Many of these men knew no one and had no family or relatives in the United States when they arrived on the West Coast. Often they were met by Issei who had been in the United States for a few years and had become "agents" for railroads and other companies in the inland western states. These agents told the new immigrants of the job opportunities in the inland states and arranged employment for the new men and transportation to these states. This is the way many of Montana's Issei came to live in Montana. Others had previously worked on the West Coast for companies which operated inland as well. These men were simply transferred into Montana whenever necessary. In either case, for many of these Issei the only reason for living in Montana was the existence of employment opportunities.  

By 1909 all of the major railroad lines in Montana had been completed. As the demand for labor to build or improve rail lines diminished so did the number of Japanese Americans living in Montana. In 1910 the census reported 1,585 Japanese American residents of Montana. That number continued to decline to 1,074 in 1920, 753 in 1930, and only 508 by 1940.  

4 Ibid.

Some of those who remained in Montana continued to work for the railroads. Others became farmers or merchants, often saving enough money to begin their own businesses. The Issei who left the state generally returned to the West Coast to take advantage of the growing demand for labor in that rapidly developing area. Being young and single, most of these Issei were both willing and able to move throughout the West to where the employment opportunities were greatest.

This study, however, deals mainly with those Japanese Americans who remained in Montana through the 1940s and into the present. Most of these people continued to live in the chief railroad centers of Montana where they had congregated when they first arrived in the state. These people had come to live in these centers for several reasons. First of all, most of the Issei had been employed by the railroads so they naturally settled in railroad centers. Also, many Issei spoke

fluently only in Japanese. Because of this language barrier and other cultural barriers, the Issei naturally desired to live near people like themselves. There were significant groups of Japanese Americans in the towns of Missoula, Butte, Helena, Billings, Havre, and Miles City. By remaining within these small social clusters throughout the state, the Issei never began to "compete" economically with white residents to any great degree. For this reason, and because of their small population, low social profile, and infrequent interaction with white society, the Japanese Americans were largely overlooked and unmenaced in Montana before World War II.

However, anti-Asian sentiments were by no means unknown in Montana before World War II. Montana's first encounter with Asian Americans occurred during the gold rush of the late nineteenth century. Chinese American miners entered the state as early as 1869. They were greeted almost immediately with a hostile display of anti-Chinese racism. Despite their concerted efforts to live and work in peace in the state, the Chinese were subjected to forms of abuse which ranged "from name-calling and obstruction of their legal rights to anti-Chinese laws and even violence."^6

These vehement racist sentiments did not die as the Chinese left the state following the gold rush. But, as the Chinese American population decreased in the state, the source of antagonism was removed. Thus expressions of anti-Asian sentiment were non-existent until the beginning of the twentieth century when Japanese Americans began arriving in Montana. As the Japanese American population increased in Montana, anti-Asian sentiments were once again aroused. However, these sentiments were not nearly as vehemently nor openly displayed as they were against the Chinese. This can be explained by the fact that the Chinese in Montana "competed" economically, to some extent, with many white Montanans in mining and business. The Japanese, however, filled a labor market which was not deemed desirable for whites. And, therefore, the Japanese were not an economic "threat" to the whites.

Anti-Japanese sentiments were sufficiently apparent to cause Issei who wished to establish their own businesses to begin with a handicap. It was, first of all, difficult for Issei to get bank loans or credit with which to open a business. Then, there was also a certain amount of reluctance on the part of whites to patronize the Japanese establishments. Yet many Issei did establish businesses and were able to become successful in Montana. Two interesting examples of successful Issei businessmen were the fathers of Ben Harada and Grant Kurokawa.\(^7\)

\(^7\)Ben Harada and Grant Kurokawa are Nisei living in Wolf Point, Montana.
It is uncertain exactly where Harada's father entered the United States. However, Ben Harada believes that his father arrived at San Francisco. It is known that somehow his father found his first employment near Salt Lake City, Utah. From there he was attracted to Montana to work for a railroad. After working for this railroad for a time (probably the Great Northern), Harada's father became a recruiting agent for the railroad. In this capacity he traveled to San Francisco, Seattle, and other ports to recruit newly arrived Issei to come to Montana and work for the railroad. He soon saved enough money to be able to buy his own business, a restaurant in Havre, Montana. He continued to run this restaurant for the remainder of his life. It was in Havre that Ben and his brothers and sisters were born.8

Kurokawa's father, on the other hand, arrived at Seattle after first living in Hawaii for some time. From Seattle he began working for the Great Northern Railroad which brought him, eventually, to Cut Bank, Montana. He continued to work for the railroad until he won a cafe in Cut Bank in a poker game. Upon winning this business he returned to Japan for a short time and was married. Kurokawa's father then returned to Cut Bank with his bride and began operating his new cafe. He soon sold this cafe and bought another one in Dodson,

8Interview with Ben Harada, Wolf Point, Montana, May 26, 1981.
Montana. In Dodson, Grant Kurokawa was born. From Dodson the Kurokawas moved to Poplar, Montana and finally to Wolf Point, each time selling one cafe to purchase another. The cafe in Wolf Point was the final business owned by Kurokawa and it has remained in the family since it was purchased.9

Both of these men became successful entrepreneurs by working hard as laborers for the railroad and by recognizing and exploiting the opportunities which presented themselves. Through a combination of good luck and good sense these Issei were able to begin a social ascent in Montana. Fortunately, their social ascent did not result in increased anti-Japanese sentiments or actions directed toward them, as similar social advancements did for the Issei in the West Coast states. This was indicative of the situation for nearly all Issei in Montana. Though anti-Japanese sentiments did exist, they were generally subdued and controlled as long as the Issei were not perceived to be any sort of threat to white Americans.

For nearly forty years Japanese Americans lived in Montana without being perceived as a threat. However, as racial tensions mounted on the West Coast in the late 1930s, anti-Japanese sentiment also increased in Montana. The "propaganda machine," as Ben Harada called the journalism of the West Coast newspapers, succeeded in creating a near-hysteria atmosphere in Montana as well as in the Pacific Coast states.10

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9 Interview with Grant Kurokawa, Wolf Point, Montana, July 13, 1981.
10 Harada interview.
Montanans became suspicious of the Issei in their midst. Like residents of the West Coast states, Montanans began to view Japanese Americans as a foreboding first wave of the "Yellow Peril" in the state. The racial situation grew volatile and Montanans impatiently awaited an excuse to vent their reborn racial hostilities.
CHAPTER IV
MONTANA'S TREATMENT OF JAPANESE AMERICANS DURING WORLD WAR II

On December 7, 1941 the Japanese Imperial Navy supplied Montanans with an excuse to vent their racial hostilities. Immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor the people of Montana joined the rest of the nation in a surge of patriotic support for the war effort and in a fit of outrage at the audacity of the Japanese. As the nation was banding together the people of Montana seemed to identify with the emotional situation in the West Coast states. Montanans adopted a West Coast mentality: fear of attack by the Japanese forces; and distrust, hatred, and mistreatment of Japanese Americans.

In the days immediately following Pearl Harbor this fear and animosity erupted in several incidents of violence and injustice throughout the state directed toward Japanese Americans. On the night of December 7, near Superior, five Japanese members of a Northern Pacific section crew, including the crew foreman, were threatened with lynching by fellow crew members. The Missoula County sheriff took them into protective custody at the Missoula County jail and then took
them to their homes in Livingston two days later. On the morning of December 8, workers at the Milwaukee Road shop and yard in Miles City refused to begin work until six Japanese employees had been forced to return to their homes. That night Billings police arrested a Japanese employee of the Northern Pacific Railway while he was attempting to board a train to return home to Livingston. The man was arrested because a federal order had been issued which prohibited all Japanese from riding trains.

These events must be attributed to more than just initial rage, for similar events continued to occur months later. On March 1, 1942 members of the federated shops and crafts adopted a resolution at a mass meeting in Whitefish which called for the dismissal of Japanese workers employed by the Great Northern Railway. They also passed another resolution calling for the circulation of a petition to prevent Japanese Americans from holding any jobs in the Whitefish area. On April 8, 1942 a Japanese American was arrested in Butte while enroute from California to Chinook, Montana to find work. He was arrested and detained because he did not have

1 *Helena Independent*, December 9, 1941; *Missoulian*, December 10, 1941.

2 *Miles City Star*, December 9, 1941.

3 *Billings Gazette*, December 9, 1941.

4 *Helena Independent*, March 2, 1942.
authorization to be traveling to Chinook. And, on the night of April 12, 1942 rocks were thrown through the front and rear windows of a cafe in Hamilton run by a Japanese man and usually frequented by Japanese Americans. No one was hurt but the attack caused considerable damage to the establishment. Japanese businesses were also the recipients of other more intangible damages. Ben Harada recalled that following the attack on Pearl Harbor his father's restaurant suffered a serious decline in business as the result of an unofficial yet popular boycott of Japanese American businesses. Also, the Japanese American owner of a restaurant in Plentywood, Montana was actually run out of town by his long-time friends and business associates following the Japanese attack. Furthermore, a cook employed by Grant Kurokawa in Wolf Point was deported by the federal government after it was discovered that he had served previously in the Japanese military. These incidents illustrate the real threat to Japanese Americans which existed in Montana at that time and further demonstrate the persistent and growing nature of anti-Japanese sentiment in the state during World War II.

5 Helena Independent, April 9, 1942.
6 Missoulian, April 14, 1942.
7 Harada interview.
8 Kurokawa interview. The Plentywood man was identified as Harry Koyki, a friend of Grant Kurokawa.
The existence of this threat to the well-being of Japanese Montanans was also indicated in other more indirect ways. On the night of December 8, 1941 the U. S. attorney for the State of Montana issued a warning that only the FBI had the jurisdiction to arrest and investigate the actions of Japanese aliens.\(^9\) The next day in accordance with this advisory the sheriff of Hill County issued a statement to law enforcement officers and citizens of the county concerning the correct procedures to be observed in reporting suspicious conversations between, or activities by, Japanese residents of the area.\(^10\) He was, in effect, warning the people of Hill County to be on the lookout for any espionage, sabotage, or other acts of treachery committed by Japanese Montanans. Then, on December 10, Governor Sam C. Ford issued a carefully worded statement in which he reiterated the necessity of reporting suspicious activities to the FBI. He then went further to warn Montanans against taking any vigilante or mob action against suspicious Japanese residents, saying, "This is no time for hasty, ill-considered action or hysteria of any sort."\(^11\) And again, on December 16, the agent in charge of the FBI in Montana warned against

\(^9\) Billings Gazette, December 9, 1941.

\(^10\) Havre Daily News, December 9, 1941.

\(^11\) Billings Gazette, December 11, 1941; see also Havre Daily News, December 12, 1941.
"vigilante action or persecution of loyal aliens," declaring, "It is the duty of law enforcement officers to curb that type of gossip, that type of hysteria in your local communities in which one good citizen might harm another." These statements indicate that law enforcement officials and state leaders realized the existence of potential racial violence in the state. These statements were thus published as deterrents to such actions.

There were also a few other very interesting indicators of the existence of racial hostilities in Montana. On December 11, the Havre posts of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, representative of two of the most patriotic groups in the state, issued a joint request to the people of Hill County which asked them not to engage in vigilante activities and to "keep a cool head." Also, throughout the week of December 7 to December 14, Korean residents of the state, including Wilson Hong, the president of the Butte Korean Club, issued declarations of loyalty and requests that they not be confused with their ancestral Japanese enemies. Moreover, on December 11, Hong announced that Koreans would wear badges on their clothes and place

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12 Missoulian, December 7, 1941.
14 Montana Standard (Butte), December 9, 1941; see also Missoulian, December 14, 1941.
stickers on their vehicles which would bear the words "I am a Korean" in order to distinguish themselves from Japanese Americans in an attempt to ward off hostile actions meant for Japanese Montanans.\textsuperscript{15} These examples vividly illustrate the height to which anti-Japanese sentiment had grown in the state, as well as the fears which Japanese Americans living in Montana may have felt.

While racially discriminatory attitudes and acts of racial violence were harsh when directed at Japanese residents of Montana, some of the most vehement anti-Japanese sentiments were expressed when Montanans were faced with the prospect of receiving Japanese Americans who were evacuated from the West Coast. This first occurred early in April 1942 as thousands of Japanese American students previously enrolled in West Coast universities were forced to look inland for schools where they might continue their education.

For students evacuated from the University of Washington, the University of Montana was one logical school at which to relocate. And, when first asked about admitting some of these evacuated students, Dr. Ernest O. Melby, president of the University of Montana (then called Montana State University), stated that he was strongly in favor of accepting a limited number of them.\textsuperscript{16} However, he did not realize the

\textsuperscript{15}Montana Standard (Butte), December 11, 1941; see also Havre Daily News, December 12, 1941.

\textsuperscript{16}Missoulian, April 12, 1942.
vehemence of the public's opposition to such a move nor the magnitude of the popular outcry his statement would cause.

This outcry was expressed primarily by means of letters written to Governor Ford requesting that he take action to stop the importation of evacuated Japanese students. In one letter Howard Toole, a prominent Missoula attorney, suggested that most people were "hysterical at the prospect" that Japanese students might take the place of fine Montana boys who were forced to leave school by the draft. In an attempt to justify this feeling he said, "It is pretty generally felt that the American educated Japanese have been largely responsible for the strategical advantage the Japs have had over us in the war...." Then, in an impressive, hand-written postscript Toole declared, "In fact there is just plain hell-to-pay in this town about Dr. Melby's statement." 17

Another letter to the governor contained a resolution passed by the Anaconda Commercial Club. This resolution declared that the club was opposed to the admission of any "Japanese refugee students" to any of Montana's colleges. The primary basis for this resolution was that "the Montana state institutions are supported entirely by the taxpayers of the State

17 Howard Toole to Governor Sam C. Ford, April 13, 1942, Governor Sam C. Ford Administration Papers, Montana Governors' Papers 1893-1962, Manuscript Collection 35, Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena, Montana (hereafter cited as Ford Papers), box 107, folder 4.
of Montana and not by any Japanese interest."  

Similar sentiments were expressed in a resolution sent to Governor Ford from a convention of Montana's American Legion. The document stated, "Whereas: Many Americans are denied the continuation of their education due to service with our armed forces it is felt that this loss of opportunity should not be to the profit of the enemy." And the resolution further declared that to allow the Japanese "the privilege of attending our institutions" would jeopardize their safety due to their close intermingling with "American students" and the possibility of parents who lost sons "at the treacherous hand of Nippon" resorting to "individual retaliation."  

Such "genuine" concern for the welfare of these students was also expressed in a letter to Governor Ford from the Missoula chapter of the Disabled American Veterans, which opposed the admission of any evacuated Japanese American students to Montana's schools. Ford's own attitude was summed up in his reply to Howard Toole. In it he said that the student controversy "is a federal problem and should not be loaded onto the state."  

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18 Resolution of Anaconda Commercial Club, April 12, 1942, Ford Papers, box 107, folder 4.  
19 Resolution of American Legion, not dated, Ford Papers, box 107, folder 4.  
20 Disabled American Veterans of Missoula to Governor Sam C. Ford, April 25, 1942, Ford Papers, box 107, folder 4.  
21 Governor Sam C. Ford to Howard Toole, April 16, 1942, Ford Papers, box 107, folder 4.
In solving this so-called undeserved state problem the State Board of Education avoided making any difficult or unpopular decision by passing the buck. At their meeting in July of 1942, the board, at the suggestion of Dr. Melby, decided to leave any decision regarding admission of Japanese evacuees up to the officials at the various schools. And so, in the fall of 1942, with the final decision in the hands of Dr. Melby and the other officials at the University, no Japanese students evacuated from West Coast schools were admitted to the University of Montana. There was no public reason given for this decision. However, the strongly anti-Japanese racial sentiments of the people of Montana, and the power of that public opinion, certainly influenced the decisions of the state institutions.

While this controversy was raging a similar one began over the same basic problem, the importation of evacuated Japanese Americans. It developed when the possibility of employing Japanese workers was suggested as a solution to Montana's critical shortage of labor. This labor shortage resulted from two primary causes. First, the federal government had diverted much WPA (Work Project Administration) 

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22 Helena Independent, July 14, 1942.

23 Philip T. Bain (Registrar Univ. of Montana) to Kevin C. McCann, October 10, 1980 and October 15, 1980.
labor, which had previously been widely used throughout the state in agriculture and industry, to the West Coast war industries. And, secondly, the state's resident male population had dropped sharply due to the draft and enlistments into the military.

Despite this serious labor shortage, the people of Montana had consistently considered the prospect of bringing in Japanese workers unacceptable as a solution. On February 25, 1942 a letter to the editor by one "Lochsa Bill" appeared in the Missoulian. "Bill" called for the use of Japanese labor to complete construction of Montana's highways. This was a very unpopular point of view to take as the author's use of a pseudonym and the responses published in reaction to his letter indicated. On February 27 a response from a Thompson Falls woman opposed to the use of Japanese labor set forth the popular reasons for keeping the Japanese out of the state. These reasons included the possibility of "those treacherous Japs" sabotaging Montana's forests, grain fields, vital industries, and even Montana's supply of wild game. On February 28 the editors of the Missoulian more eloquently reiterated the problem and restated the reasons which the public had expressed in opposition to allowing

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24 Missoulian, February 25, 1942.
25 Missoulian, February 27, 1942.
evacuated citizens into the state. The most important of these was fear of sabotage by Japanese Americans. While this was an actual fear, the motivation for this fear was primarily racist. Montanans made the same mistake as other Americans who "did not distinguish between the Japanese in Japan and Americans of Japanese ancestry."27

The use of Japanese labor in any occupation was strongly opposed statewide. Farmers especially opposed the importation of Japanese agricultural workers for fear that the Japanese Americans would attempt to buy land and take up residency in the state. Governor Sam Ford affirmed this position in response to an inquiry about Montana's willingness to receive evacuated citizens from John H. Tolan, the chairman of the House Committee Investigating National Defense Migration. In a telegram to Tolan, Ford said, "From information received, opinion here opposed to importation of enemy aliens into Montana to be used as agricultural workers." It is interesting to note that all of the governors of the inland western states took the same position for their respective states except Governor Ralph L. Carr of Colorado.28

26 Missoulian, February 28, 1942.


28 Helena Independent, March 2, 1942.
However, in the early spring of 1942, the sugar beet producers in Montana received great pressures from the U. S. government and through public opinion to increase their production in order that they might contribute to the war effort. The farmers were enthusiastic that they could increase their planted acreage as much as 25 percent. But, in order to accomplish this, they needed assurance that sufficient labor would be available in the fall to harvest the beets. Thus by March of 1942 there occurred an unprecedented "about face," as the sugar beet producers of Montana almost unanimously called for the recruiting of Japanese evacuees willing to leave the relocation camps to work in Montana's beet fields. This was in no way a change of heart over the issue of racial prejudice. Rather, the beet producers saw an opportunity to plant a record crop and to exploit what they viewed as a ready and willing labor pool to help them earn record profits. These true sentiments became quite obvious in a telegram sent to Senator Burton K. Wheeler by the North Montana Beet Growers Association on May 6, 1942:

> We have exhausted every means available to us to get sugar beet field labor. . . . Financial ruin faces the beet growers in our area.

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29 Helena Independent, March 14, 1942; see also Missoulian, March 14, 1942. Note and compare the final passages regarding ownership of land by Japanese. It should also be noted that the Issei were technically aliens because they were not allowed to become naturalized citizens of the U. S. Most all of these people were, however, entirely loyal and allegiant to the United States.
We request you state our case to the President in effort to have company of U. S. soldiers designated to Montana beet areas for guard and patrol duty for Japanese evacuees also assurance these people will be moved from Montana at end of war in accordance with Governor's request. . . . Quick action necessary if crop is to be saved.30

The one great error these beet growers made was their assumption that large numbers of the Japanese evacuees would be willing to leave their relocation centers to work in Montana. In actuality the recruiters had a difficult time convincing evacuees to leave their relocation centers. By August 13, 1942 there were only approximately 300 Japanese workers in the state and plans for 2,000 more to arrive for the harvest.31

It soon became apparent that Japanese evacuees were not going to supply all the labor required to harvest the crop that was planted in the early summer of 1942. The opinion of one Glasgow area beet grower indicated the gravity of the economic situation when he said in a letter to Governor Ford that he would not even attempt to harvest his crop unless he received a sufficient work crew to aid him in his labor. He went on to explain that his problem began when he planted a large crop based on the assumption

30 WIRE, North Montana Beet Growers Association to Senator Burton K. Wheeler, May 6, 1942, quoted in Weglyn, Years of Infamy, p. 98.

31 Montana Standard (Butte), August 13, 1942.
that by harvest time there would have been an unlimited labor force available for his use. That labor was to have been supplied by Japanese evacuees from relocation centers.\footnote[32]{Glasgow Courier, September 17, 1942; see also Helena Independent, October 3, 1942; Helena Independent, October 9, 1942.}

When the Japanese did not volunteer in as large a number as had been expected, the beet producers were forced to look elsewhere for a labor supply. In most areas beet producers called on residents in their vicinities to volunteer to harvest the beets. Schools and some businesses were closed in those areas in order to allow townspeople and students to help save the crop.\footnote[33]{Sidney Herald, October 8, 1942; see also Helena Independent, October 1, 1942; Helena Independent, October 9, 1942; Helena Independent, October 10, 1942.} Producers also called on Governor Ford to allow the state colleges to recess in order that male students might volunteer their labor. This plan was carried out, but the labor shortage remained critical throughout the state.\footnote[34]{W. M. Cobleigh to Governor Sam C. Ford, October 21, 1942 and November 5, 1942; and TELEGRAM, Elmer Sorenson (President of Sidney Chamber of Commerce) to Governor Sam C. Ford, October 28, 1942; and WIRE, Governor Sam C. Ford to Elmer Sorenson, October 29, 1942, Ford Papers, box 112, folder 1.} At one point Governor Ford called on the Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, to supply soldiers and furloughs for Montanans in the army to aid in the harvest. This request, however, was refused by Secretary Stimson as a matter of policy. Governor Ford then went so far as to
request the same directly from the President. But he was rewarded with the same negative response. Finally, in a last desperate attempt to obtain Japanese labor, Senator James Murray even requested the establishment of a relocation center in Montana to pull potential Japanese laborers into the state. This maneuver, of course, also failed. But it clearly indicates the dire situation in which Montana's beet producers found themselves, a situation which could force them to compromise their previous stand against allowing any Japanese laborers into the state.

Before the ground had frozen in the fall of 1942, all of Montana's beet crop had been harvested. This was accomplished partially through the extensive use of local volunteer labor, but especially through the efforts of those Japanese Americans who eventually did arrive on furlough from their relocation centers. Many Montanans, in an ironic turn of events, credited these Japanese Americans with saving the beet crop and thus the beet producers from financial ruin.

This credit, however, was the extent of the gratitude these people received. While they were working in the state

35 Henry L. Stimson to Governor Sam C. Ford, October 9, 1942, Ford Papers, box 122, folder 8; see also Helena Independent, October 7, 1942.

36 Senator James Murray to M. H. McIntyre, September 24, 1942, quoted in Weglyn, Years of Infamy, p. 98.

37 Weglyn, Years of Infamy, p. 98.
many of the Japanese evacuees were treated harshly and were forced to live under poor conditions. This is not to say that the farmers who hired the evacuees treated them in an inhumane manner. Most often the farmers were in such desperate need of laborers that they treated them very well. But other townspeople in beet-growing areas often made life difficult for the Japanese Americans. On trips to town for groceries or entertainment the Japanese Americans were often greeted with insults and hostility.\textsuperscript{38} One director of the War Relocation Authority who had come to Montana to examine the treatment of Japanese workers did congratulate Blaine, Phillips, and Valley Counties on their overall good treatment of the workers in that area. However, in a significant incriminating comment, he went on to say that the treatment of these Japanese Americans in some counties "will not help the beet farmers of those areas" to obtain the use of Japanese labor for future harvests.\textsuperscript{39}

Yet the idea that the Japanese evacuees would even be willing to assist in a harvest again was quite presumptuous. The Japanese evacuees never again volunteered on a wide scale to assist in agricultural labor. One reason for this was the poor treatment that many evacuees received while

\textsuperscript{38}Harada interview; see also \textit{Montana Standard} (Butte), August 9, 1981.

\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Glasgow Courier}, October 22, 1942.
they were outside the camps. Among those Japanese Americans from the relocation camp in Manzanar, California working in the western states, only two or three percent said they would ever return to the fields. Ten percent of the people who left the camps to work swore upon their return that they would never again leave. Moreover, the majority said that the public was not willing to accept them as citizens of the United States.\(^40\) Secondly, early in 1943, a plan for permanent resettlement of Japanese citizens was begun. Thus many of the young evacuees who may have been willing to work began moving out of the camps and back into society, thereby becoming unavailable for exploitation as a labor pool.

The reason why these events occurred in Montana can be summed up by the statement that ultimately Montana adopted a type of West Coast mentality after Pearl Harbor. The people of the state acquired the same fears and prejudices as the people of the West Coast states and were motivated by these racist sentiments to sanction and carry out acts of injustice similar to those committed on the West Coast. To Montanans, World War II was being fought primarily against the Japanese. Rarely would occurrences in Europe be as widely publicized as those in the Pacific. And, according to the newspapers of the period, when Montana boys went into the military they went to "fight the Japs," not to wage war with Japan and rarely to fight in Europe. On the home

\(^{40}\) Weglyn, *Years of Infamy*, p. 100.
front, in Montana as on the West Coast, Japanese Americans were just as much an enemy as were the Japanese in Japan.

But why did Montanans adopt this West Coast mentality? One cause may have been Montana's hyper-patriotism. This hyper-patriotism was indicated by the high percentage of Montana's men who fought in World War II and also by the fact that Montana was a national leader in the sale of war bonds. It caused an overzealous hatred of Japan, a hatred closely resembling that of the West Coast states. Secondly, Montana was more closely tied to the West Coast economically and commercially than to the East or even the Midwest. And, finally, Montanans realized that their state was a likely place for the West Coast states to "export" many of the Japanese Americans and what Montanans viewed as the necessarily concomitant racial problems. Thus, Montanans adopted racially prejudiced attitudes as defenses to protect their state from such an invasion.

Montana was not as obvious nor as vocal in its opposition to Japanese Americans as some of its neighboring inland western states. This may have been because Montana was not directly "threatened" with the establishment of a relocation center within its borders, as well as because of the lack of a large resident Japanese American population. However, Montana was as guilty as the rest of the nation in its failure to differentiate between Japanese Americans and the Japanese in Japan. This failure, in turn, provided Montanans
with the rationale needed to justify punishment of these Americans for the actions of the Japanese government simply because of their race.
CHAPTER V
JAPANESE AMERICANS IN MONTANA AND THE NATION SINCE WORLD WAR II

After the Japanese American beet harvesters left in the fall of 1942, the most vocal and noticeable expressions of anti-Japanese sentiments once again became subdued and controlled. For the remainder of World War II there were almost no incidents of violence or injustice committed against Japanese Americans in Montana. Japanese Montanans did, however, continue to experience insults and perceive latent hostility from white Montanans. But, as tensions eased, most Japanese Montanans were able to return their lives and businesses to a sense of order and normality.

In 1945, as World War II seemed near conclusion and as victory over Japan seemed certain, a resurgence of anti-Japanese sentiment developed. Some of the most vitriolic anti-Japanese statements of the war appeared in Montana's newspapers. In the days following the use of nuclear weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Montanans joined the rest of the nation in exuberant victory cries and derogatory anti-Japanese declarations. On August 11, 1945 the Missoulian ran a front page headline which stated "Most of World Goes Into Celebration As Nips Yell Quits."¹ On that same day an editorial statement

¹Missoulian, August 11, 1945.
appeared in the Missoulian which said "Japan will wake up some of these mornings to find itself about the size of California, with ten times California's population. And no place to go, for everybody probably will bar the Japs from now on."\(^2\) And, interestingly, just below this editorial appeared a short obituary announcing "Hiram Johnson dies, leaving a record of consistency to the last."\(^3\) Hiram Johnson was, of course, the senator from California who was a leader in the drive for Japanese exclusion and alien land legislation.

On August 13, 1945 another vehemently anti-Japanese editorial was published in the Missoulian. It was entitled "Must Be Positive" and stated the following:

Right now we should not start feeling sorry for the beaten Japs, for the futile Japs, for the cruel little Japs, for the treacherous little Japs. They must receive stern justice.
There may be "good" Japs and "good" Germans, but they have not been conspicuous in recent years.
Both nations must prove their reform before being admitted to the ranks of decent peoples. And this proof must be positive.\(^4\)

For days and even weeks following the Japanese surrender on August 14, 1945, vitriolic statements continued to be

\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Missoulian, August 13, 1945.
published in Montana's newspapers. Most of these statements were no better than racial slurs and insults to the Japanese people. For example, on August 18, 1945, this remark appeared as an editorial in the Missoulian: "It takes the Japs a long time to say 'Uncle' in an official way. Maybe they don't know how to pronounce it." Other editorials continued to characterize the Japanese as indecent people requiring lessons from Westerners concerning "proper conduct" in world affairs. This sentiment was clearly stated in the following editorial:

They will see pictures of the surrender, thus will be eyewitnesses of their nation's full humiliation. There will be no way left for "saving face."

The surrender will be in Japan. That is where it should be. The Japs need an object lesson beyond even those provided by the atomic bombs dropped upon them. This lesson may start them on the road to decency. Comments similar to these continued to be published in newspapers throughout Montana up to and beyond September 2, 1945, when the Japanese officially surrendered to the allied powers. However, it is important to recognize that after approximately the spring of 1943, anti-Japanese remarks in newspapers were much more specifically directed toward the nation of Japan than they had been before the spring of 1943. Following that spring Montanans made a new distinction between

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5 Missoulian, August 18, 1945.
6 Missoulian, August 22, 1945.
Japanese Americans and the Japanese in Japan. Anti-Japanese sentiments still existed. There was an obvious racial motivation behind such vehement anti-Japanese remarks. But these remarks were no longer directed toward Japanese Americans, and Japanese Americans were no longer equated with the enemy.

Following World War II Japanese American residents of Montana assumed a "normal" existence. Anti-Japanese sentiments directed toward Japanese Americans were nearly non-existent in Montana. Japanese Montanans were no longer ostracized and Japanese businesses in Montana once again were prosperous. The situation for Japanese American residents of the West Coast states similarly ameliorated. However, this process was much slower because of the extreme height of tensions which had existed in those states.7

Thus, World War II can be recognized as a watershed period in the history of the treatment of Japanese Americans in Montana and throughout the nation. A drastic improvement in the treatment of Japanese Americans occurred for several reasons. First, and very importantly, the United States government in 1944 began to recognize the injustice it had sanctioned against Japanese Americans. In Korematsu v.

7 Interview with Ben Harada, May 26, 1981; interview with Grant Kurokawa, July 13, 1981; interview with Mari Kurokawa, Wolf Point, Montana, July 13, 1981.
United States the United States Supreme Court held that although Japanese relocation was discrimination based on a suspect classification (that classification, of course, being race), it was not unconstitutional. It was not unconstitutional because in this rare case the government had been able to prove that it had a compelling interest in the establishment of the classification. That compelling interest was military necessity in the unique and urgent situation of the outbreak of World War II with Japan. However, Justice Murphy handed down a significant and strongly worded dissent to this opinion. In it he said that

"the exclusion, either temporarily or permanently, of all persons with Japanese blood in their veins has /no/ reasonable relation" to the "removal of the dangers." He explained: "/That/ relation is lacking because the exclusion order necessarily must rely for its reasonableness upon the assumption that all persons of Japanese ancestry may have a dangerous tendency to commit sabotage and espionage." He found it "difficult to believe that reason, logic or experience could be marshalled in support of such an assumption." He argued that the "forced exclusion was the result in good measure of /an/ erroneous assumption of racial guilt rather than bona fide military necessity." The justification for exclusion rested "mainly upon questionable racial and sociological grounds" not charged or proved--"an accumulation of much of the misinformation, half-truths and insinuations that for years have been directed against Japanese Americans by people with racial and economic prejudices--the same people who have been among the foremost advocates of the evacuation. A military judgment based upon such racial and sociological

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considerations is not entitled to the great weight ordinarily given the judgments based upon strictly military considerations." He accordingly dissented from "this legalization of racism."\(^9\)

This dissent, although it was not legally binding, did have great influence upon the other justices. On the same day that *Korematsu* was handed down, the Court also handed down its decision in *Ex Parte Endo*. In this case, as in *Korematsu*, the Court did not pass on the constitutionality of the relocation and incarceration of Japanese Americans. The Court, however, did hold that "continued detention under the relocation program" was "invalid for lack of statutory authority."\(^10\) Thus with the *Endo* decision the United States government was forced to end its discriminatory relocation program and recognize the civil rights of Japanese Americans.

As the government was forced to recognize its mistaken actions, Americans were also forced to reassess their anti-Japanese sentiments. Americans began to note that no Japanese Americans had been convicted of any sabotage or espionage either before, during, or after relocation. Montanans realized that Japanese American residents of the state were no threat. Montanans also recognized the great help that Japanese Americans had provided during the harvest of 1942. Moreover, Americans were forced to recognize just how remote was the possibility of a Japanese invasion of America's West Coast.

\(^9\)Ibid., pp. 747-748.

\(^{10}\)Ibid., p. 746, n. 2.
Another reason that conditions improved rapidly for Japanese Americans following World War II was the decisive and often heroic contribution that Japanese American soldiers made to America's war effort in Europe. Though, sadly, Americans failed during the war to appreciate the contribution these men made, following the war in Europe the 442nd Regiment was recognized as the most highly decorated regiment in the European theater. The 442nd was, of course, the segregated regiment composed only of Japanese American soldiers. The accomplishments and sacrifices of this regiment were truly heroic. As these soldiers returned home, the American people were compelled to acknowledge this fact. Many of the Nisei living in Montana during World War II, including both Ben Harada and Grant Kurokawa, served in the 442nd. It was clear that most of the Nisei who entered the army and joined the 442nd did so in an attempt to prove their allegiance to the United States.\(^{11}\)

Conditions for Japanese Americans may have improved for another rather indirect reason following World War II. Following the defeat of the Japanese, the United States and the other allies occupied Japan and began a massive reorganization of the Japanese political, economic, and social system. This process was controlled by General Douglas MacArthur as Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. The process consisted

\(^{11}\)Harada interview; Grant Kurokawa interview; see also Hosokawa, Nisei, pp. 393-422.
of two major operations: de-militarization and democratization. The goal of this process was to create a new Japan which would be a model of democracy and eventually become a bastion of anti-communism and a base for western powers in the Pacific and Asia. As this program progressed and succeeded, Americans began to see this newly reformed nation as America's precocious child. Americans prided themselves on being the creators of this nascent democracy and genuinely, though somewhat patronizingly, grew to respect this new Japan. As this change of heart occurred, a similar acceptance was afforded Japanese Americans. The Japanese were no longer to be feared because they were simply "American proteges" acquiring new knowledge and skills from the dominant white Americans.

Although the actual process by which racial tensions ameliorated was not clearly defined or categorized, the above mentioned reasons do help explain how the process developed. In Montana tensions decreased very rapidly. And the reasons stated above contributed to this process. Both Ben Harada and the Kurokawas agreed that very soon after the war their lives returned to normal. Their business once again picked up and the community displayed no hostility toward them.\(^\text{13}\)


\(^{13}\) Interviews with Ben Harada, Grant Kurokawa, and Mari Kurokawa.
In the past thirty-five years expressions of anti-Japanese sentiment have been extremely rare in Montana and throughout the nation. Yet these statements once held so vehemently do linger and are exhibited on occasion. On the whole, only tasteless jokes and insulting remarks remain as legacies of these hostile attitudes. But, occasionally, events can trigger outbursts of latent anti-Japanese sentiments.

Recently, the issue of the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II has returned to national attention. The issue was revived as Japanese Americans began requesting hearings to investigate whether relocated Japanese Americans are entitled to reparations from the federal government to defray the losses these Americans suffered as a result of their incarceration. The resurrection of this issue was greeted sympathetically, for the most part, by Americans who are ashamed of the actions of the United States government during World War II. However, this resurrection also triggered a resurgence of latent anti-Japanese sentiments in some people. For example, on August 10, 1981 a letter to the editor was published in the Independent Record which contained the following remarks:

I no doubt believe there were Japanese loyal to America among the internees, but it would have been hard to separate them. This was two generations ago, many still had a fanatical loyalty to the land of their honorable ancestors. Therefore, all the Japanese had to go to camps. An American general of a previous war said, "War is hell."
No, we do not owe the Japanese internees any reparations, and many had received rent from their establishments while they were away. . . .

In reality, Japan owes us reparations, for men and materials. I am sending a copy of this to President Reagan, and reiterating that we do not owe the Japanese internees or other enemy internees reparations.14

The final two paragraphs of this letter vividly illustrate a failure to distinguish between the Japanese, and Americans of Japanese ancestry. This kind of thinking may be rare today, but at one time it was not. Montanans, and all Americans, must be eternally mindful of the injustices once committed because of this failure. The history of Japanese Americans in Montana is not an insignificant one. And, although it has been heretofore largely ignored, this history is nevertheless enlightening and should not be quickly forgotten or dismissed.

14Independent Record (Helena), August 10, 1981.
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