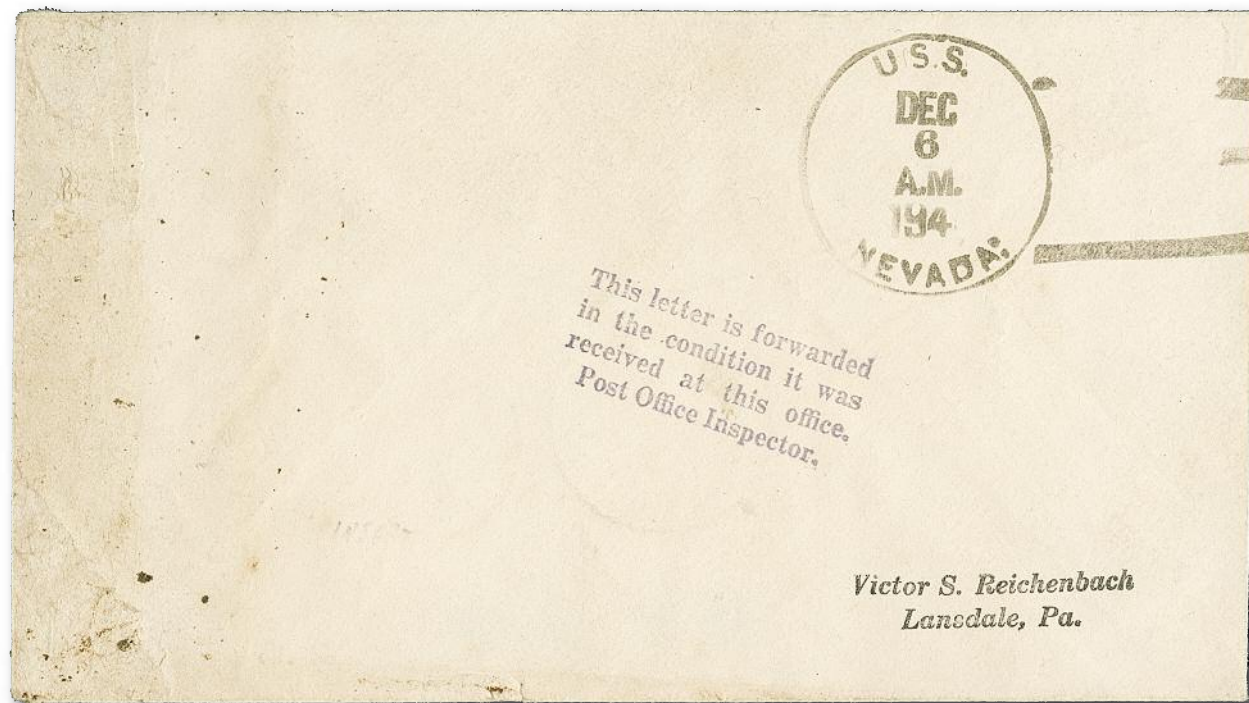


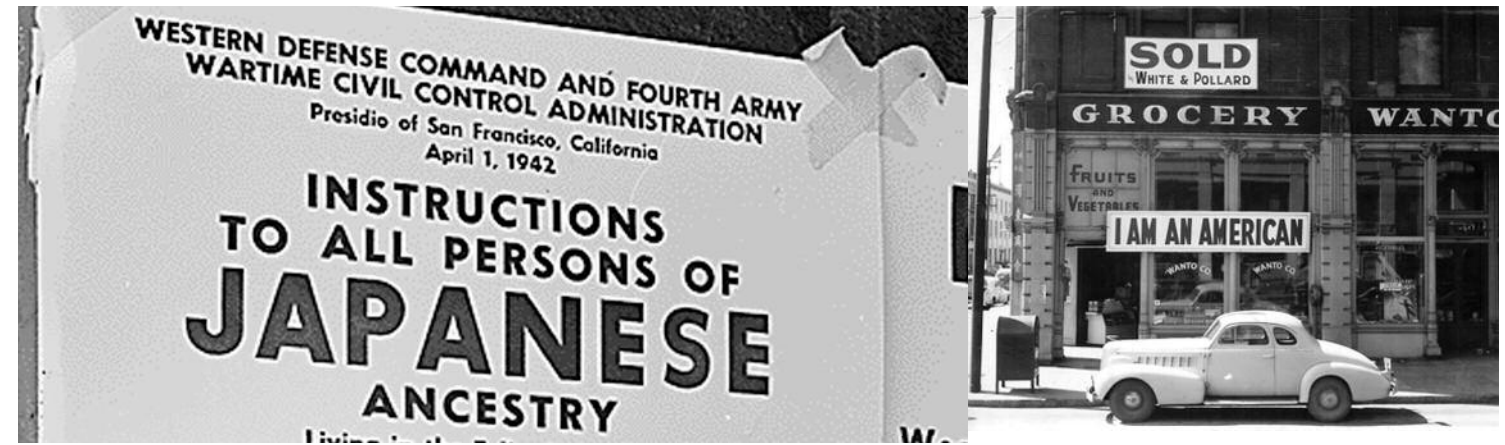
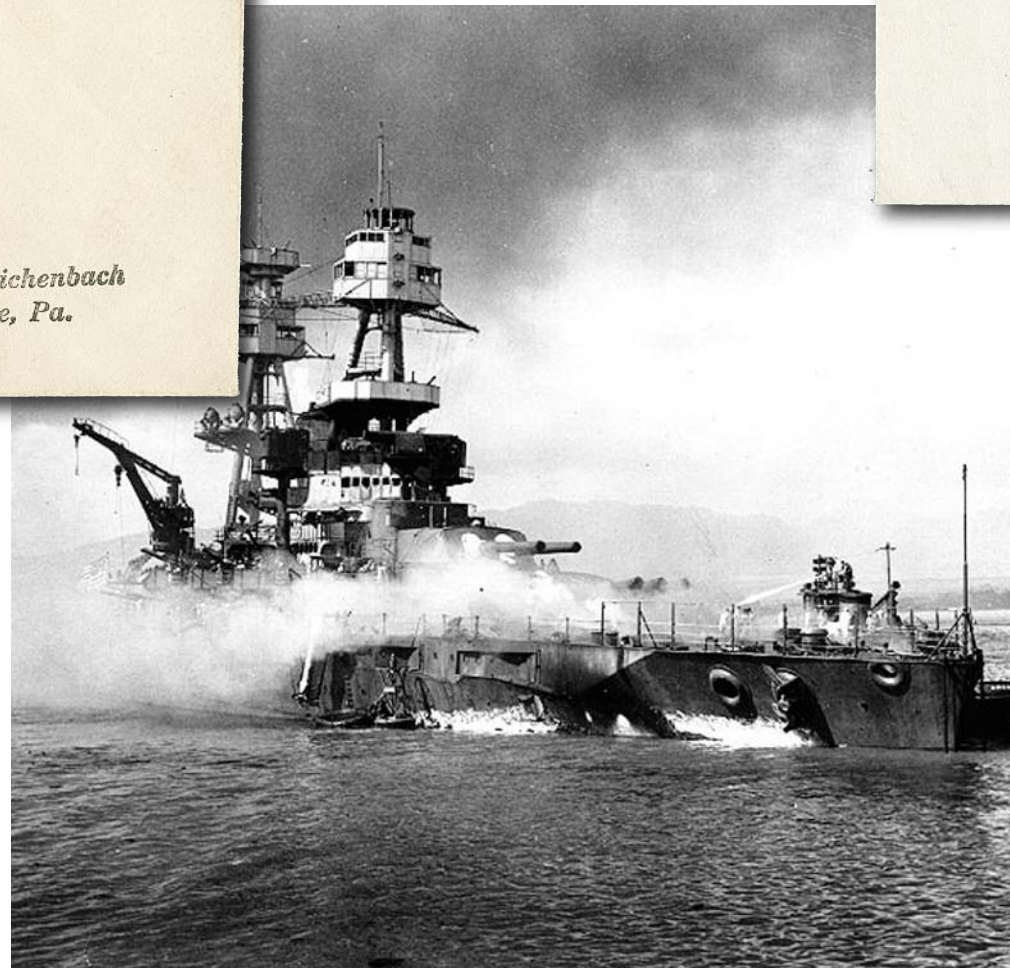
# The Japanese American World War II Experience

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, led to the immediate U.S. declaration of war on Japan. On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, authorizing military commanders to establish “Exclusion Zones” in three western states and Arizona to protect against the threat of enemy attacks on American soil. As a result, approximately 110,000 residents of Japanese descent were forced to move to camps run by the U.S. government, where they remained for most of the war—and after in many cases. This exhibit looks at the Japanese American World War II experience through examples of mail (“covers”).

## December 7, 1941—A “Day of Infamy”



The USS *Nevada* was hit by a torpedo and several dive-bomber attacks, but the captain managed to reach the channel and run the ship aground. The only mail to survive from the actual attack comes from a group of *Nevada* souvenir covers prepared for collectors and postmarked on December 6. Only three such pieces of mail are known. The blank space at upper right is where the stamp was affixed before water caused it to float off.



## Assembly Centers

The Wartime Civil Control Administration (WCCA) was established March 11 by the Western Defense Command to carry out the evacuation of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. Sixteen so-called *Assembly Centers* were quickly organized to process and house evacuees. The first evacuations occurred near Seattle in March, and the first group to arrive at an Assembly Center reached Manzanar, California, on March 21. Santa Anita (shown at right) received its first inmates on March 27. These incarcerates were later moved to so-called *Relocation Centers*.



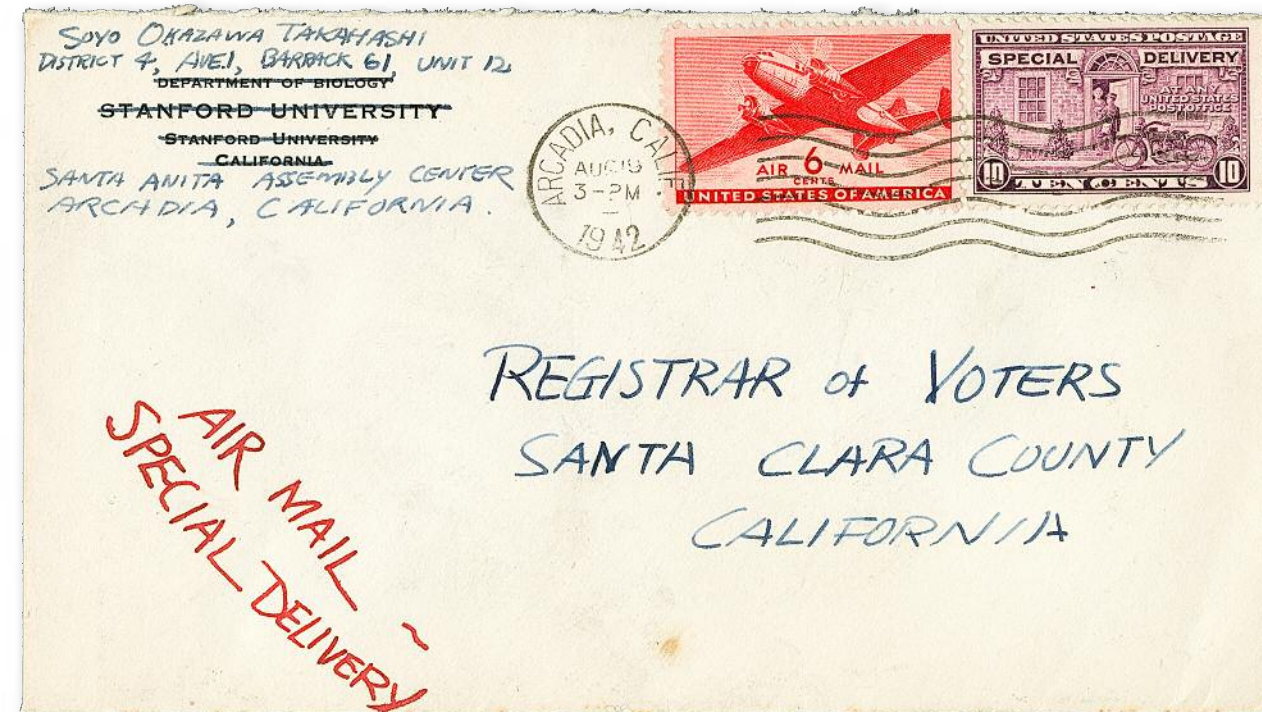
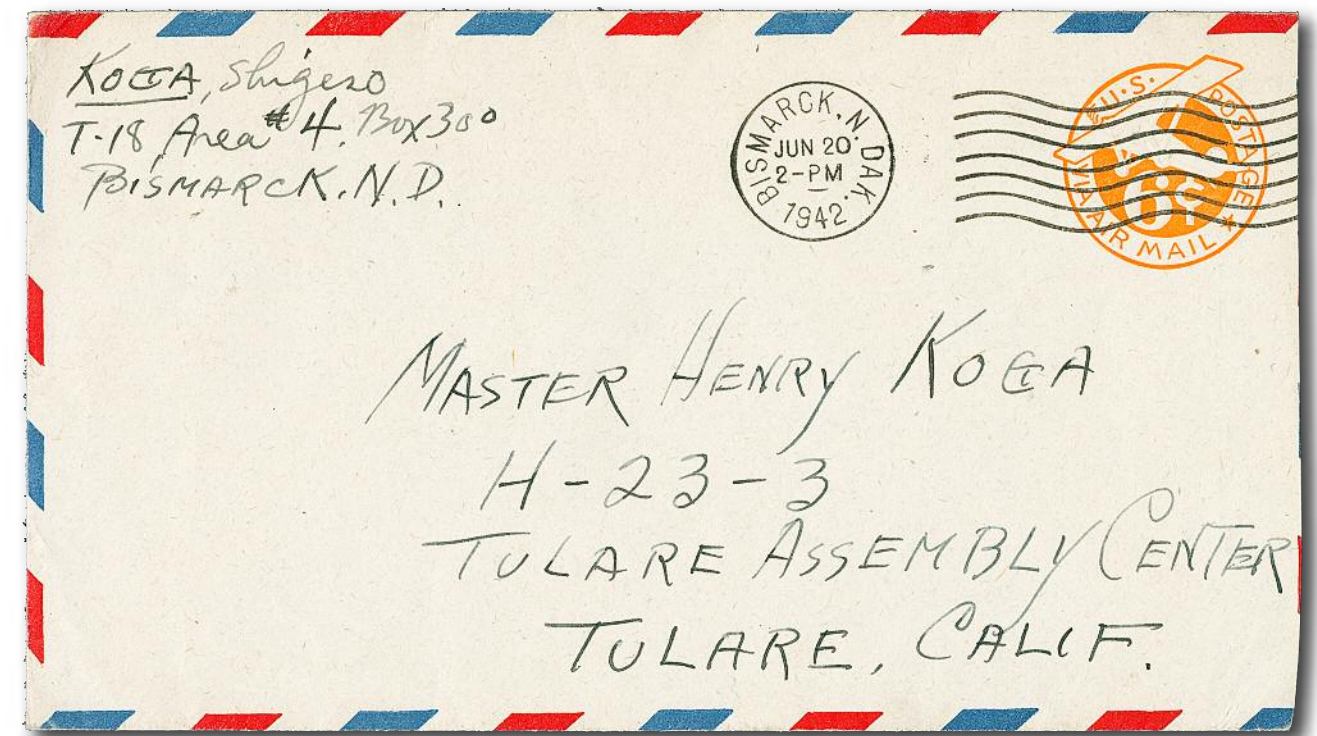
## The People

**Issei:** people born in Japan who moved to the U.S. and settled here

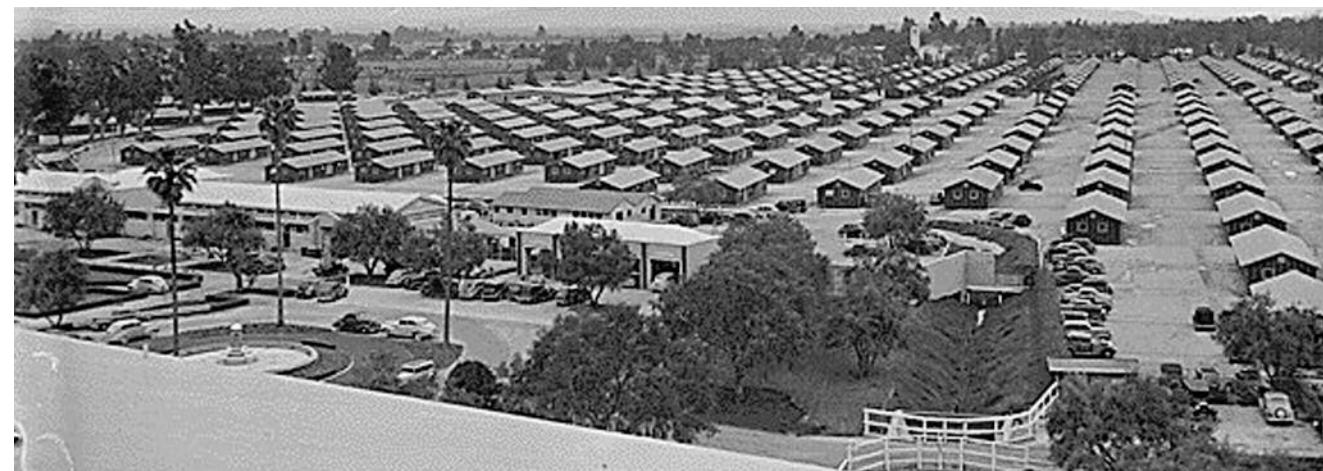
**Nisei:** children born to the Issei, they were automatically U.S. citizens

**Sansei:** the children born to the Nisei

**Kibei:** People of Japanese ancestry born in the U.S. but returned to Japan to get their education, then came back to the U.S.

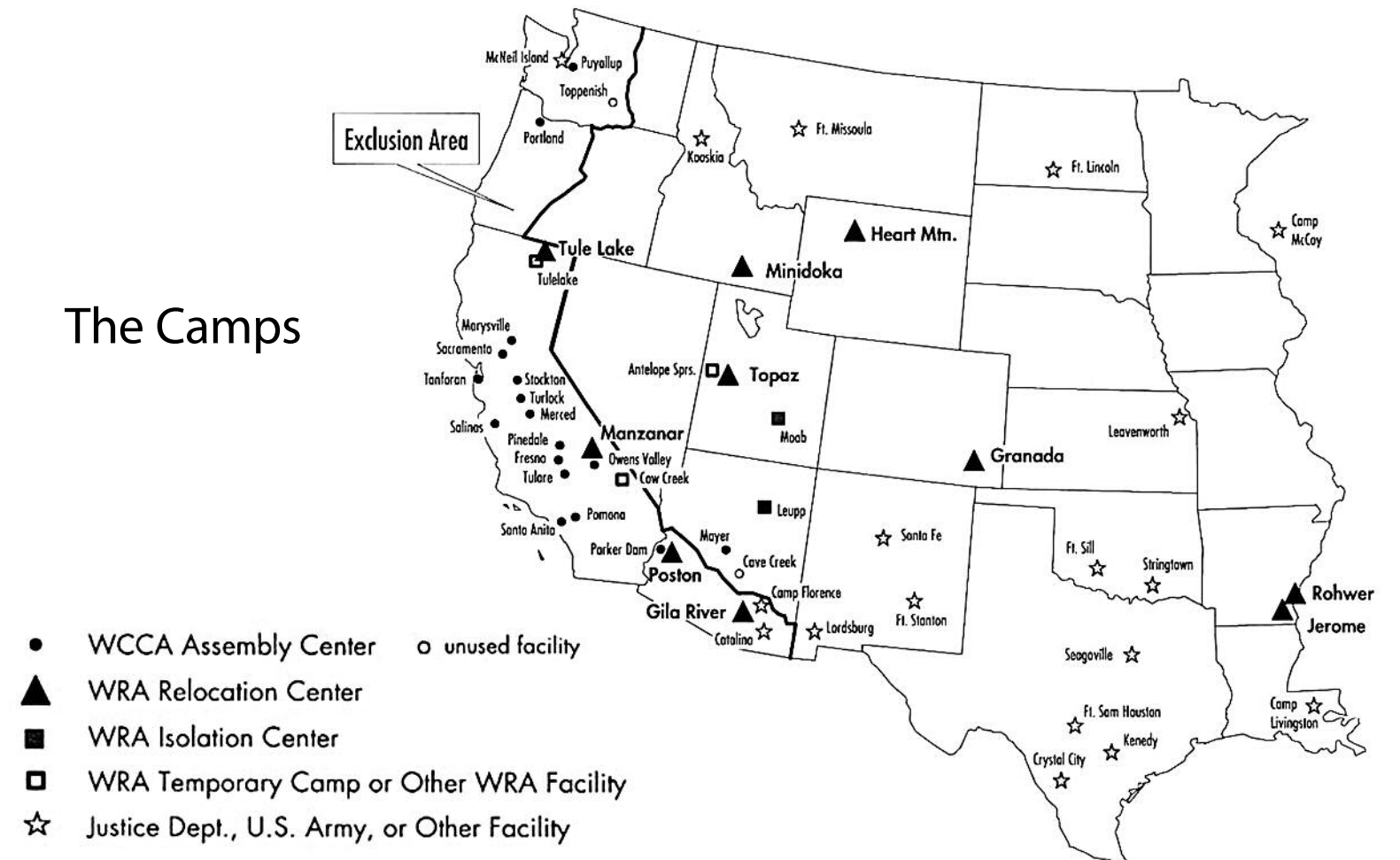


This map shows the locations of different types of camps, as named by the government: Assembly Centers (WCCA), Relocation Centers (War Relocation Authority), and Internment Camps (Department of Justice and U.S. Army).



Assembly Center at Santa Anita, California

## The Camps



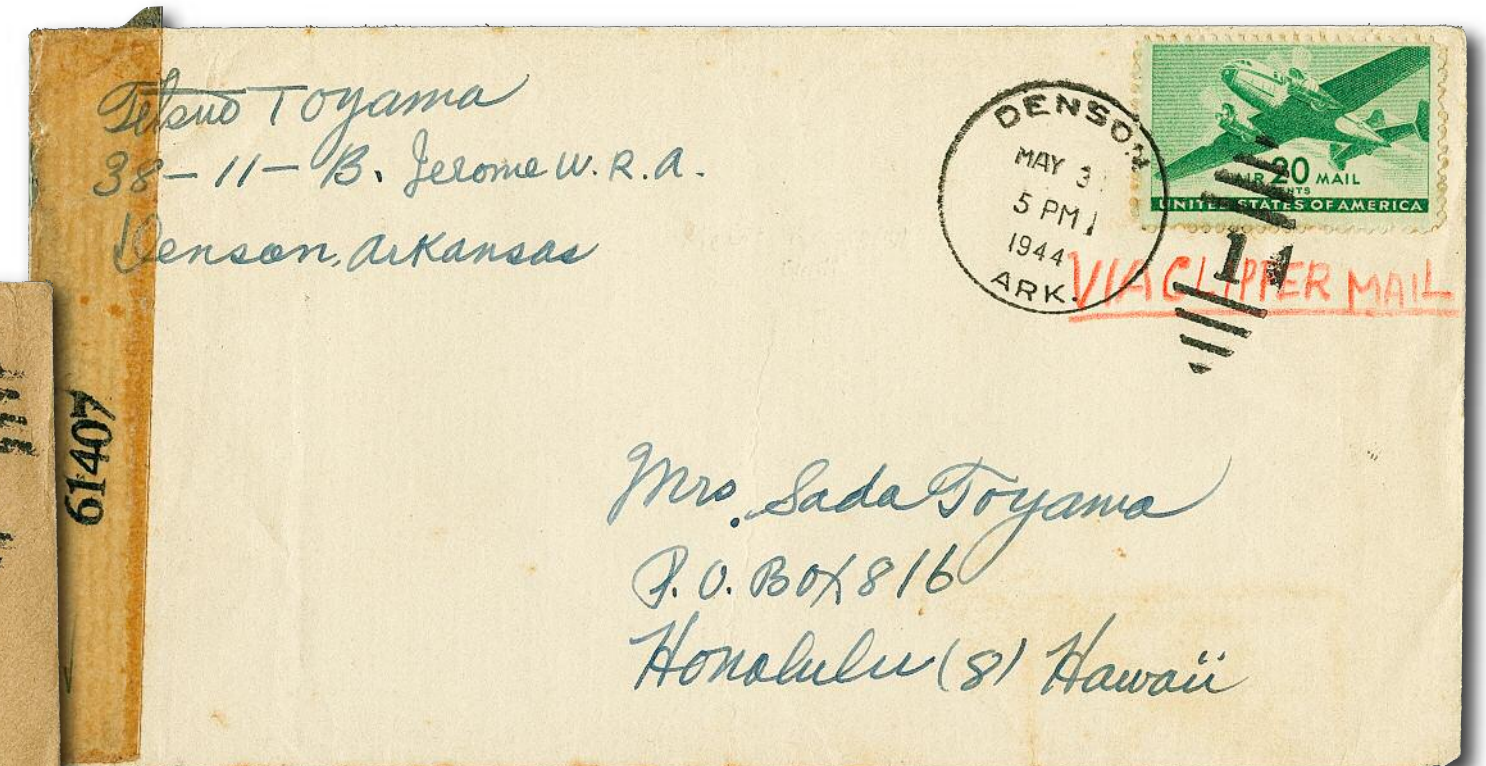
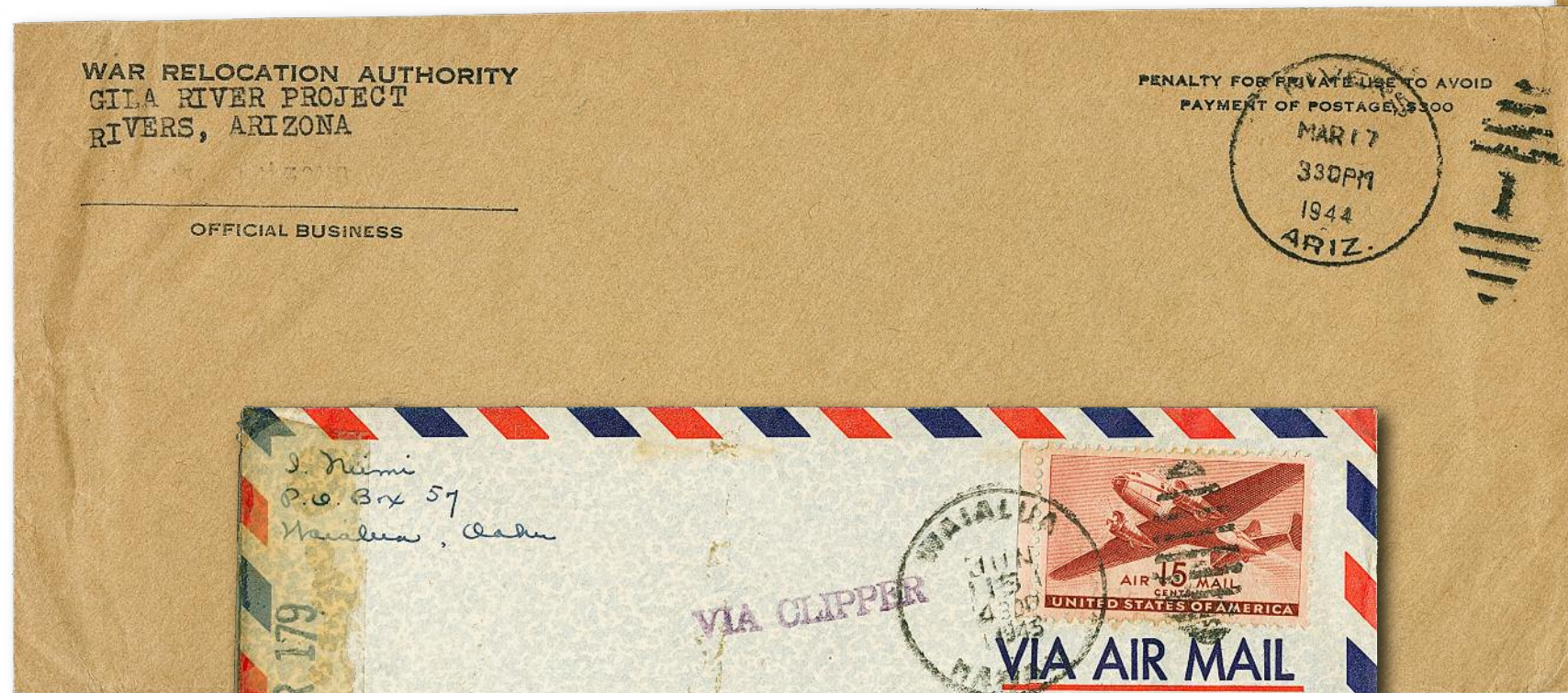


## Relocation Centers



Gila River, Arizona, Relocation Center

Ten WRA Relocation Centers were scattered across California, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado and Arkansas. The weather in these remote locations was harsh. Camps were constructed with barracks, a school, medical facilities and a supply store. The nearest post office (for example, Jerome) served as a “parent” to the branch post office (for example, Denson), which handled camp mail.



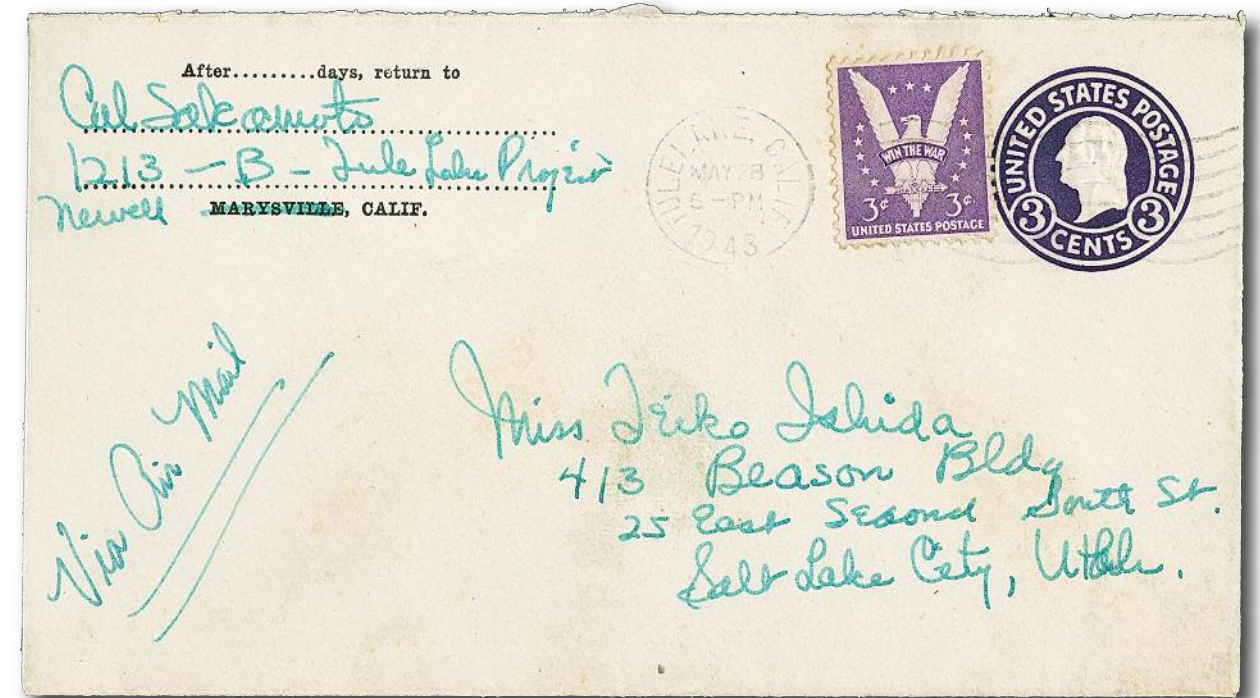
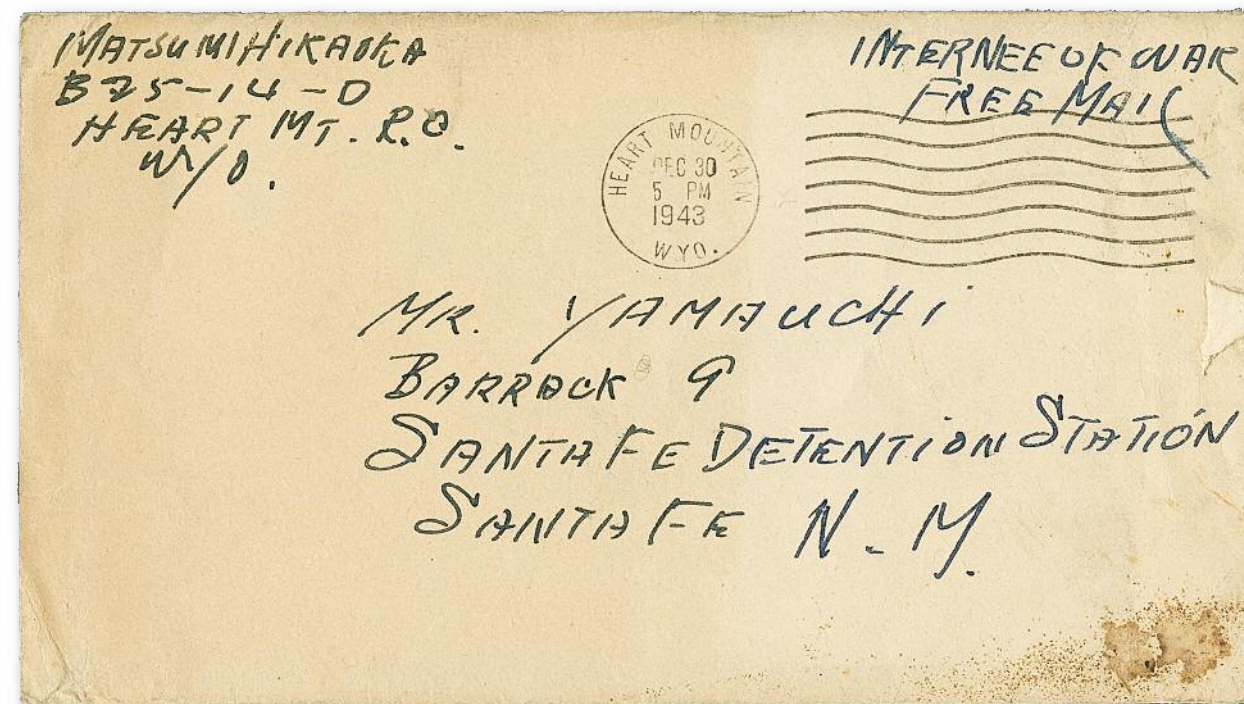
The sudden incarceration of thousands of people presented a challenge to postal officials responsible for handling mail to and from the camps. Captives worked in branch post offices set up at larger camps to assist in handling mail and running the postal system. Addresses were required to have the block and barrack numbers and apartment letter.

People incarcerated in Relocation Centers were not considered prisoners. Therefore, they had no right to send mail free of postage, as provided by the Geneva Convention, and censorship of their mail was forbidden. People classified as *Internees* or “enemy aliens” were held as actual prisoners. Their letters were subject to censorship. Regular postage on Internee mail was free, but airmail postage had to be prepaid.





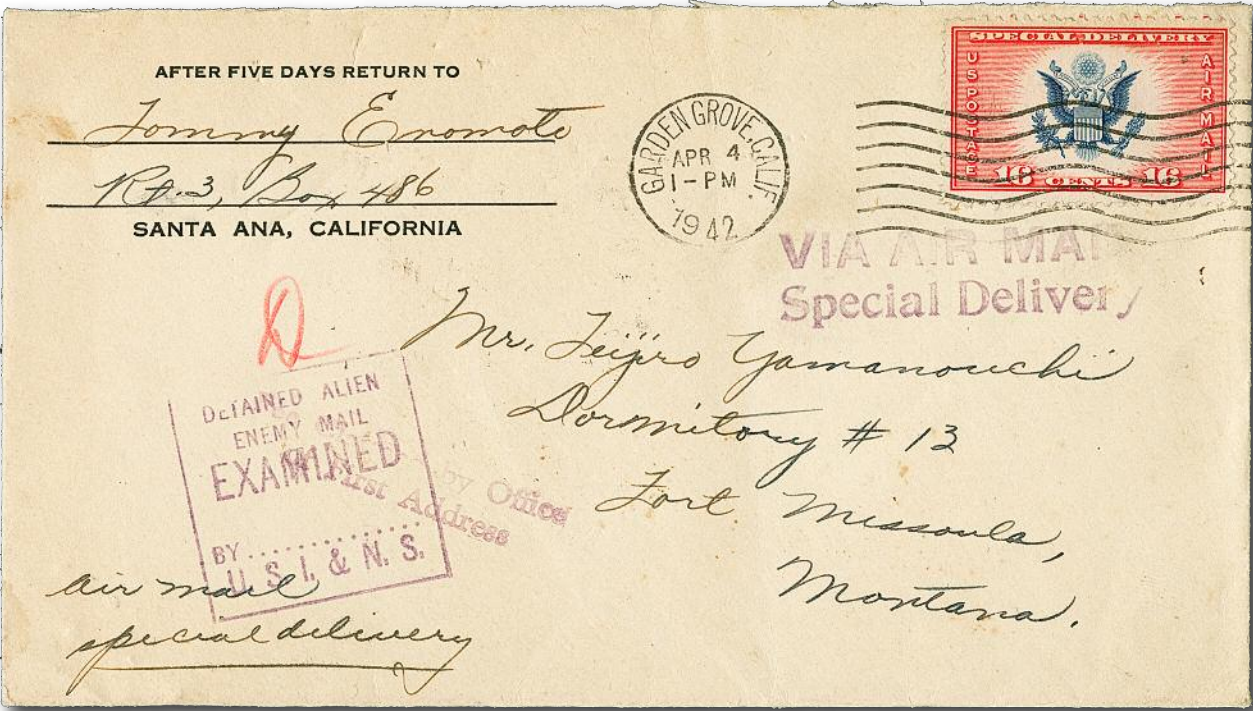
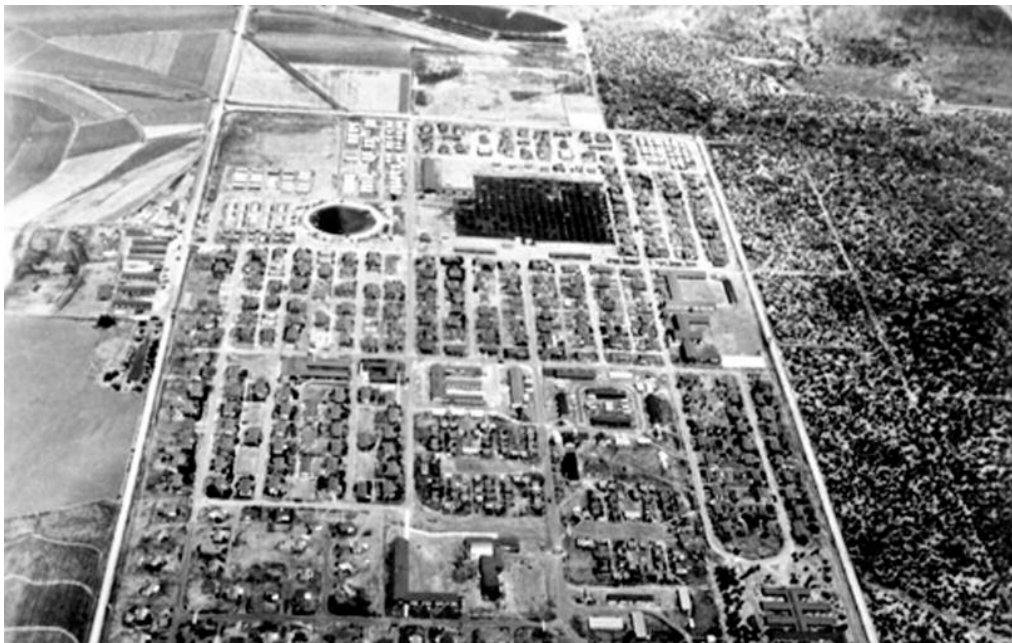
Heart Mountain in Wyoming was the second largest Relocation Center and produced a large volume of mail.



Tule Lake, in northern California, was one of the most infamous of the camps. Incarcerates there held frequent demonstrations and strikes, demanding their rights under the U.S. Constitution. As a result, the WRA used it as a “segregation camp,” and incarcerates from other camps who had refused to take the loyalty oath or had caused disturbances were sent to Tule Lake. At its peak, Tule Lake held 18,789 captives. Tule Lake was also one of the last camps to be closed, staying open until late March 1946.

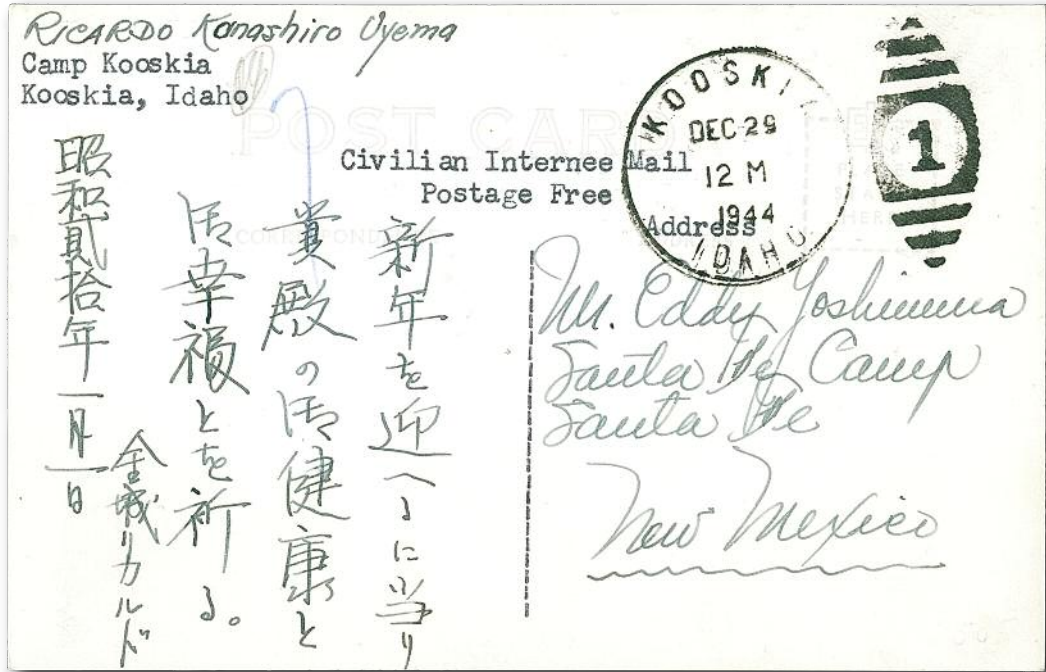


Department of Justice Camps



The camp at Crystal City, Texas, held German, Italian and Japanese American persons who were considered to be enemy aliens. It was one of at least seven Department of Justice (DOJ) camps that were managed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and policed by Border Patrol Agents. Crystal City held about 600 internees brought from Hawaii and 660 brought from Peru. The printed “Internee of War” forms, as shown above, were coated with a chemical that would reveal secret messages to censors. The “J” indicates the letter was written in Japanese.

All mail to and from persons determined to be enemy aliens at DOJ and U.S. Army camps was censored. The Airmail Special Delivery cover (above) to Fort Missoula, Montana, shows the INS “Examined” handstamp. The New Year’s greeting card (below) from the Fort Missoula sub-camp at Kooskia, Idaho, has the censor handstamp and was marked “Civilian Internee Mail Postage Free,” indicating that the sender was a prisoner entitled to free mail privileges under the Geneva Convention.



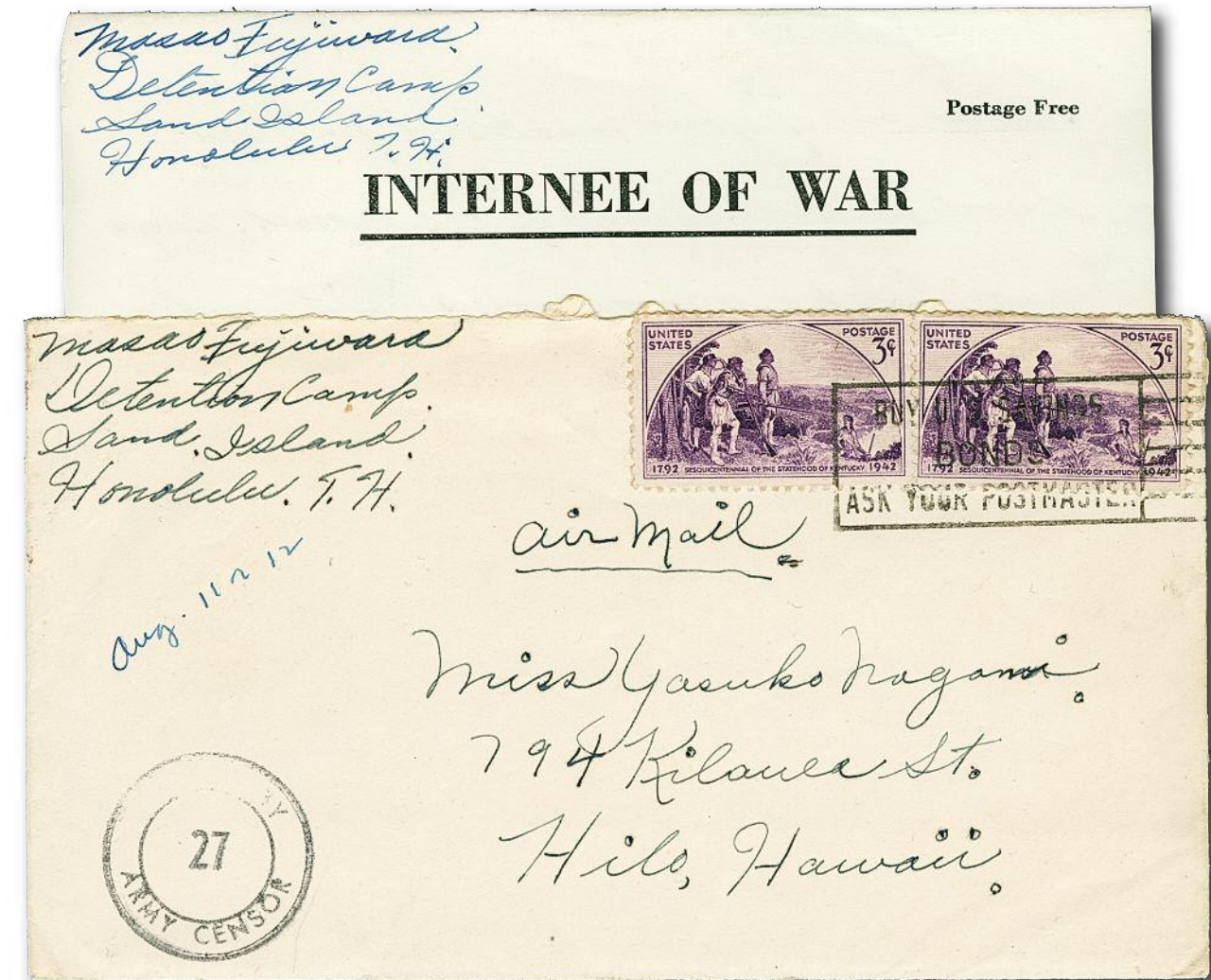


## United States Army Camps

The U.S. Army interned civilians at several camps on the U.S. mainland and in Hawaii during the first 18 months of the war. In early 1943 all civilian internees held at U.S. Army camps were transferred to DOJ camps (only military prisoners were retained). All mail to and from enemy aliens was censored.

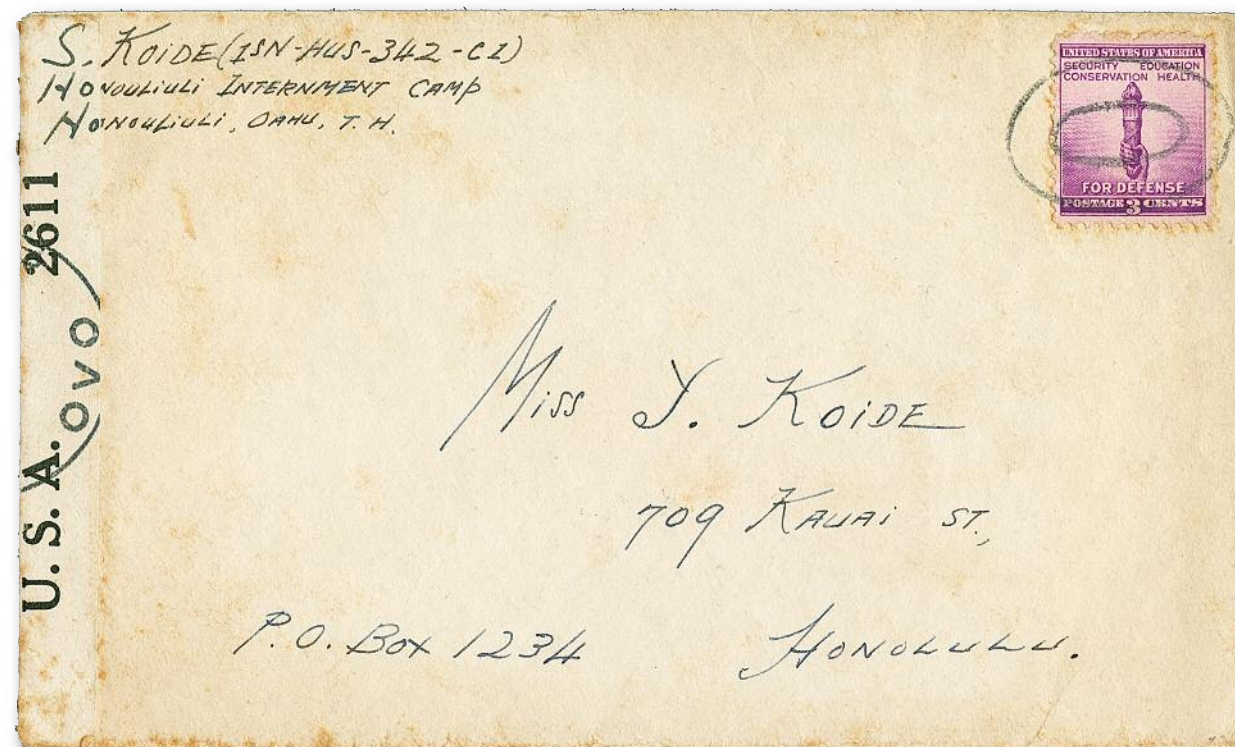


The cover at right with its "Internee of War" lettersheet was sent in August 1942 from the U.S. Army camp at Sand Island in Hawaii (shown at left). The sender paid air-mail postage from Honolulu to Hilo.



The cover at right was sent from the camp at Honouliuli (shown at far right). The camp at Honouliuli was constructed to take over from Sand Island after March 1, 1943.

Hawaii was under martial law, and U.S. citizens were subject to arrest, detention and internment. This is why S. Koide, the sender of the cover at right, was held captive as a U.S. citizen.



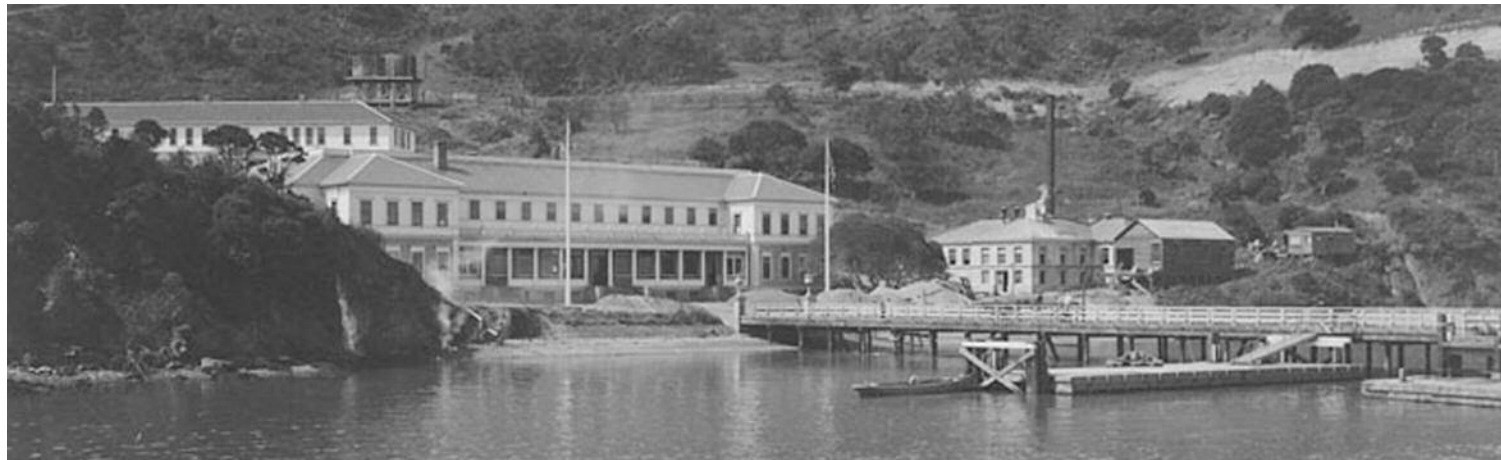
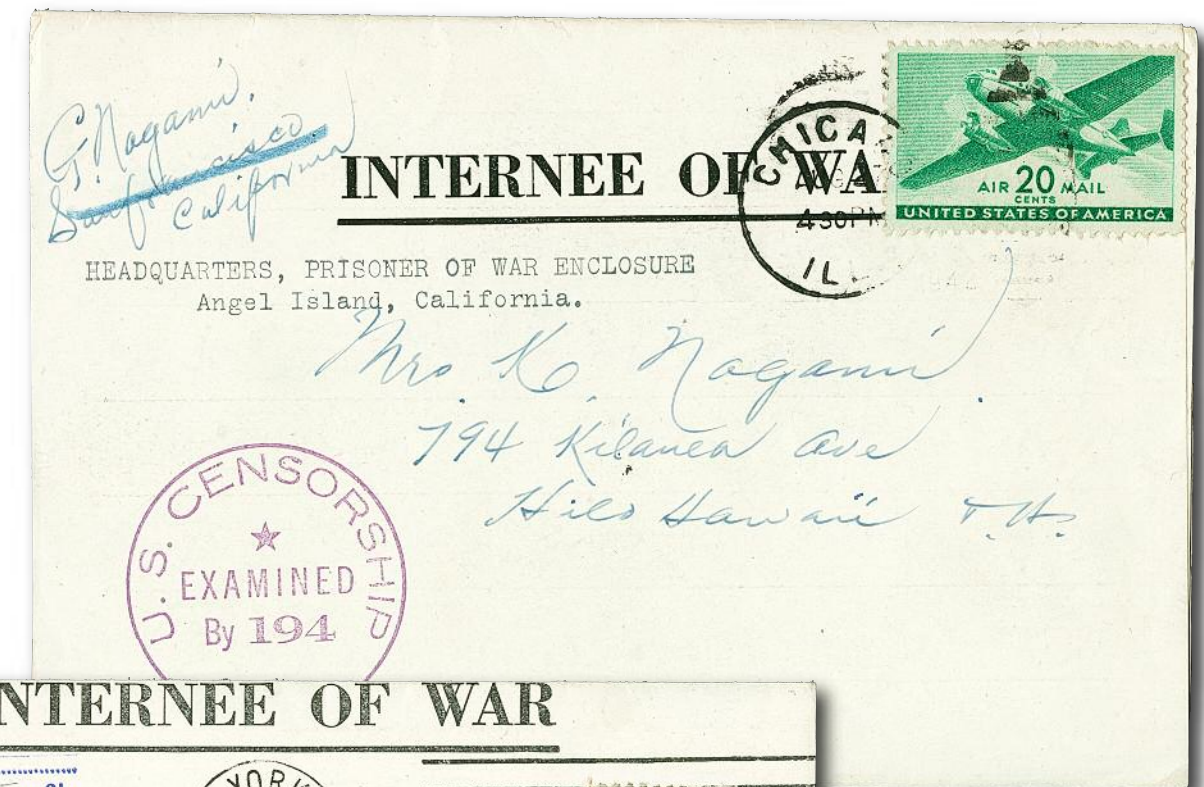


## Nisei Soldiers in World War II

Nisei soldiers were Americans of Japanese ancestry who enlisted in the U.S. Army to fight for the Allies. They distinguished themselves in battle, and many sacrificed their lives in the war.

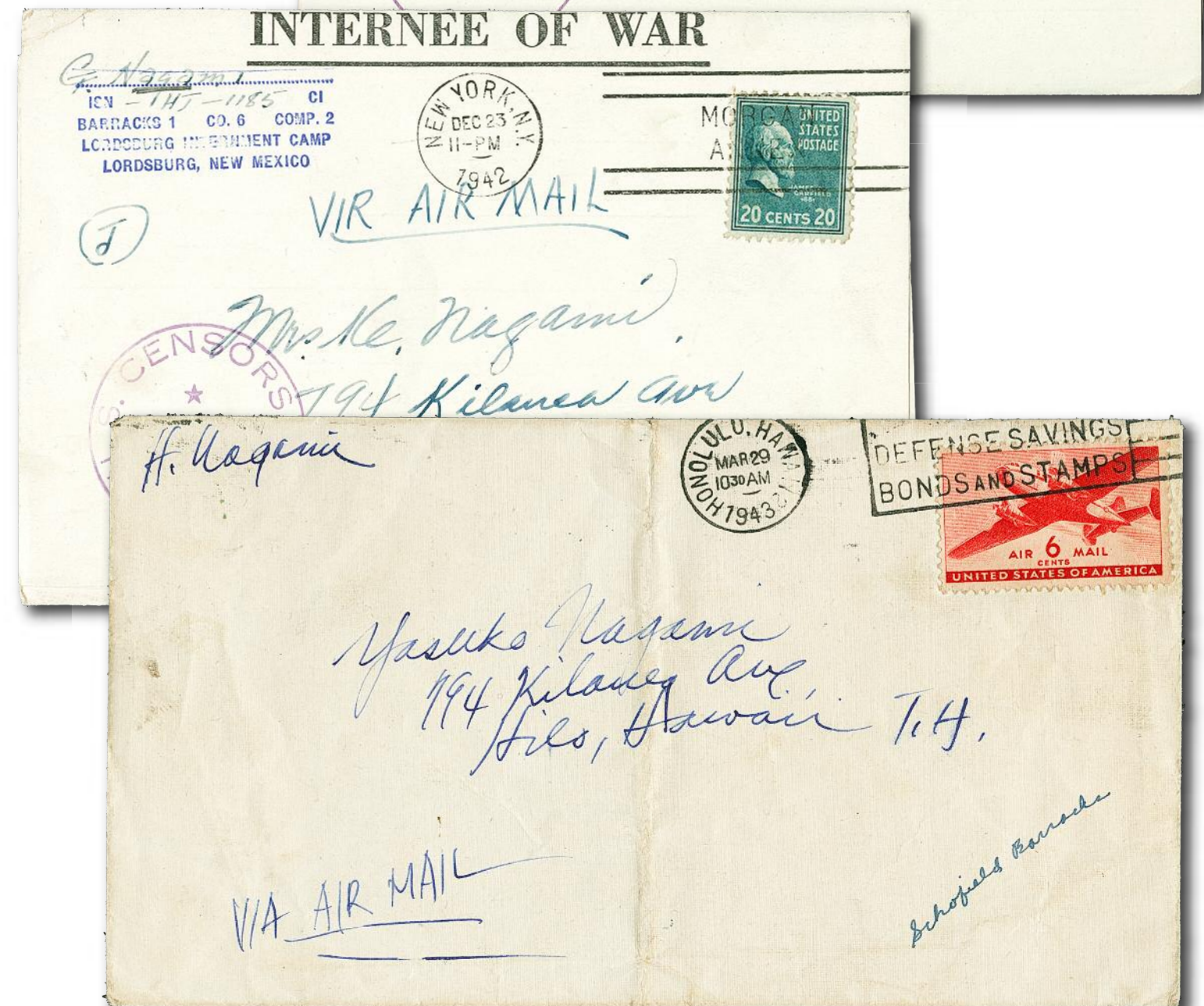
The sad irony of Japanese American internment is captured by this group of three covers from Genichi Nagami and his son, Hiroshi.

Mr. Nagami was a Hawaii resident who was classified as an enemy alien and moved to the U.S. Army camp at Lordsburg, New Mexico, via Angel Island. His son, Hiroshi (shown at right), joined the army in March 1943 and was part of the famed 442nd Regimental Combat Team, made up of Nisei. In July 1944 Sgt. Hiroshi Nagami was killed in action in Italy.



The “Internee of War” lettersheet at top right was sent by Mr. Nagami in August 1942 from Angel Island (shown above). In 1941 the U.S. Army took over Angel Island—the “Ellis Island” of the West—and made it part of Fort McDowell. When World War II began, the old detention barracks became a POW processing center. The first prisoner taken by American forces in WWII, the commander of a midget Japanese submarine at Pearl Harbor, was sent to Angel Island. He was followed by Germans captured in North Africa and by Japanese prisoners. More than 700 Hawaii-resident Japanese aliens passed through Angel Island on their way to army-run internment camps on the mainland. An additional 800 family members later joined them.

The “Internee of War” lettersheet in the middle was sent by Mr. Nagami from the U.S. Army camp at Lordsburg in December 1942. His son, Hiroshi, mailed the bottom cover from Schofield Barracks on the island of Oahu to his mother in Hilo. It is dated March 1943, sixteen months before he was killed in action.







## The Atomic Bomb

Faced with an unyielding Japanese government and predictions of enormous troop losses if Allied forces attempted to invade Japan, President Truman ordered two atomic bomb drops on Japanese cities. The first bomb exploded over Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, the day the cover below was mailed from Tinian Island by Sgt. George

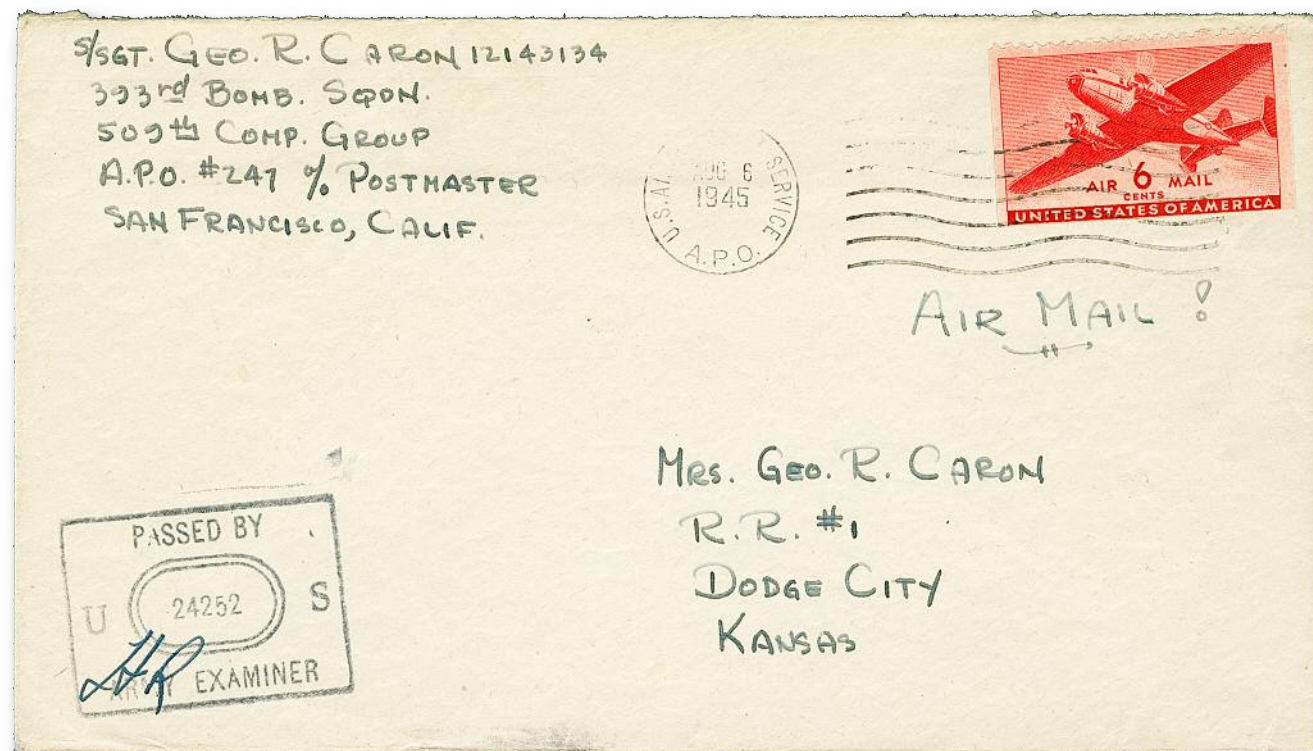
“Bob” Caron, the tailgunner aboard the *Enola Gay* who took the photograph of the mushroom cloud at left. The second bomb was dropped over Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. The “new kind of bomb” brought an end to the war and inaugurated the age of atomic warfare.

Sgt. Caron signed the original photographs reproduced at left.



## Surrender

After the second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Emperor Hirohito and his military council still refused to fully capitulate. The Soviet Union’s declaration of war on August 10 finally spurred Hirohito to announce Japan’s surrender on August 14. The formal signing took place on September 2, 1945, aboard the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay, an event marked by the souvenir cover shown below, mailed by a lieutenant on the USS *Sirona*.



## U.S. Government Apology and Redress

By the war’s end, one-third of WRA incarcerates had been released. President Roosevelt suspended Executive Order 9066 in December 1944, and President Gerald R. Ford rescinded the order in 1976. In 1988 President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which provided for an official government apology and a redress payment of \$20,000 to each surviving Japanese American who was incarcerated during the war.